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PERFECT HARMONY
Interior design successfully working with architecture:
Right: Penthouse apartment by Scape Architects. Top left: The Light House by Hudson Architects. Middle left: Interior by Hill House for Octagon's new development, the Burwood Park estate. Below left: Stairwell by Rob Ellis Design Studio.



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o just where is the dividing line between an architect's role and an interior designer's? 'In short, it depends on which party is bringing the other into the project, as to who will lead on the decision making,' explains Lori Pinkerton-Rolet, chairman of the British Interior Design Association (BIDA) and director of Park Grove Design. 'And it depends on the architect and interior designer involved,' she continues. 'Some architects like to stop at the shell of a building, some like to go further. From personal experience, I've worked with more than 30 architects on many different projects, and it's worked in a different way each time.'

In Pinkerton-Rolet's view, there is a major consideration. 'The key thing is to establish at the beginning who is going to do what, preferably at the initial design team meeting,' she says. 'It's in no one's best interests to duplicate effort, least of all the client's, so it usually works on whose skills are best in certain areas.' On some projects, for example, she expects to produce the electrical plans, design the bathrooms, and specify the surfaces, on others not. So, it's down to individual projects and preferences, then? It seems so, but Pinkerton-Rolet warns: 'Professional designers should not step out of their area of expertise, ever.'

Derek Taylor of Ishoka, an interior designer who specialises in working with residential property developers and designing show homes, agrees that a shared understanding and vision is crucial. 'If the property developer, architect, landscape designer and interior designer all meet round the table at the beginning, then everyone gets a clear understanding of what the development is going to look like and we all come away singing from the same hymn sheet,' he says.

Professional rivalry between architects and interior designers can be fraught, but those making use of good communication, clarity of roles and blending of skills are getting the best results

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Friend or Foe



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AESTHETICALLY PLEASING?

An architect's view Probably the biggest bugbear for architects is working with interior designers insensitive to their aesthetics. Architect Richard Young of Gilmore Hankey Kirke (GHK), admits to having a 'rather jaundiced view' of some interior designers. 'I get annoyed if an

interior designer disguises architectural features or designs in a way that is not in sympathy with the architecture of the space,' he says. Young specialises in top end residential work, historic buildings and commercial refurbishment. His annoyance has encouraged him over the years to take on more

responsibility for the interior of each of his projects. 'I'm inclined to think that architecture includes interior design, but possibly (although not necessarily) stops at curtains, soft furnishings and loose furniture,' he says. On each of his residential projects, Young expects to specify all the way

through to the floor finishes, tiling details, designs for bathrooms, concept for the kitchen and space planning, including layouts of furniture. 'An architect's role is to identify how the clients live, so I couldn't really envisage designing a series of rooms without having visualised how they will be used.'

While interior designer Diana Yakeley, who runs Yakeley Associates with architect husband Stephen, agrees that early involvement is key, she explains why this isn't always the way life works. 'Generally speaking, an architect is responsible for the design of the structure and planning matters, usually leading a team of consultants which might include a mechanical/electrical engineer, lighting designer, structural engineer and quantity surveyor,' she says. 'But what often happens is that the client suddenly worries that they are going to produce a lot of testosterone-fuelled design, and calls in an interior designer to soften the result.' This, in her view, is often where problems arise, because so much depends on the personalities involved. 'Some architects are only too pleased to work with an interior designer, and they don't want to get involved with the furnishings, fabrics and colours. Others are very protective of their purist design, and the last thing they want is somebody coming in and prettying it up.'

So many different arrangements and roles was one of the reasons that encouraged Diana Yakeley to drive forward a standard form of contract for interior designers. She has been responsible for producing the first BIDA interior design services contract, a joint publication with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), published in 2005, and is currently involved in producing an updated version. 'Everyone does things in a completely different way,' she says. 'It makes it very confusing for the general public, so a contract can help to produce clarity.'



Clarity is one thing, personality mix is another, as architect Cassion Castle of Turner Castle explains. 'The success of a collaboration between an architect and an interior designer works in the same way as collaborations in general,' he says. 'It hinges on a good relationship between the people involved, all pulling in the same direction. Then, as long as there aren't any big egos involved, in any discussion, it's the best idea that wins.'

But difficulties undoubtedly do arise. So much so, that design and construction firm Robin Ellis has recently brought an interior designer in-house to improve its service to clients. 'Interior designers do work in a different way to architects, and schooling, sensibilities and understanding can be different,' explains director and architect Sanjay Odedra. 'It's been tense in the past, especially when two professionals [an architect and an interior designer] come in front of a client and they have different ways of achieving the same goals with varying degrees of success. So now we've brought an interior designer into our team, so that we can learn from each other and take a more united approach with more joined-up thinking.'

LUXURY AND CLEAN LINES
Top three images:
Interior by Hill House for Octagon's new development, the Burwood Park estate.
Above left: Living room interior by Rob Ellis Design Studio.
Above: Perren Street kitchen by Scape Architects.

Stephen Yakeley, too, stresses the need for both architectural and interior design skills on a residential new-build or renovation project. 'Often architects don't realise that interior design is a separate discipline in its own right,' he says. And it's not just an interior designer's specialist knowledge of fabrics, furniture and fittings that is needed. 'The classic mistake that architects can make is to design rooms that are very difficult to furnish,' he continues. 'I remember seeing one house where the second bedroom was virtually uninhabitable, because it wasn't quite big enough to fit a bed and bedside tables.' Diana Yakeley agrees. 'If you're involved at an early enough stage, you may have very pertinent views on the layout, which could effect the position of doors and windows, as well as the size and shape of rooms,' she says. 'Working together with the architect is vital for the best outcome.'

Stephen Yakeley understands that some architects are sceptical of what interior designers and decorators can bring to the project. 'They are worried that their clean, modernist lines may be destroyed by the flights of fancy that some of the wildest of interior decorators may produce,' he says. But get it right, and the blend of design and comfort can bring unparalleled results for the client. The ideal, in Diana Yakeley's view, is for the interior designer to understand the architecture and design to be in sympathy to it, and not to cover it up. 'If you put blousy curtains into a very controlled space, it's bound to end in tears,' she says. 'The interior design needs to complement the architecture to create a harmonious whole. What really matters is that the interior design is appropriate, enhances and complements the architecture and allows the personality of the client to show through' *idfx*

The RIBA BIDA Form of appointment for Interior Design Services (ID/05) costs £18.80, including VAT per copy from BIDA. Tel: 020 7349 0800 www.bida.org

Contacts

» **Gilmore, Hankey, Kirke (GHK)** www.ghkint.com/architects » **Hudson Architects** www.hudsonarchitects.co.uk » **Ishoka** www.ishoka-uk.co.uk
» **Octagon** www.octagon.co.uk » **Park Grove Design** www.parkgrove.co.uk » **Robin Ellis** www.robinellis.co.uk
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