



MATERIALS GIRL
Fiona Barratt-Campbell is strongly influenced by Northumberland, England; rich, raw, tone-on-tone textures characterise her work (above right)

IMAGES: DAN AZIZ (FIONA); RAY MAIN (ROOM SHOTS)



INTERIOR MONOLOGUE

*Fiona Barratt-Campbell applies a bold, raw, powerful aesthetic to all of her interior design projects, including a forthcoming long-stay penthouse at Victoria Dockside in Tsim Sha Tsui. She gives **Christina Ko** the lowdown on what's hot—and what's most definitely not—in the design world*

Fiona Barratt-Campbell is a materials girl. What that means, practically speaking, is that you won't find a whole lot of colour and contrast in her interior design projects. You'll instead be bowled over by tone-on-tone textures that are both rich and raw, a reflection of her upbringing in Northumberland, England, which she says strongly influences her bold aesthetic.

Fiona Barratt Interiors was founded in 2006 and its first project was a ski chalet in Verbier, Switzerland, for Richard Branson. Since then, the firm has taken on many projects, from high-end residential to hotel redevelopments, including a redo of The Savoy hotel in London. Barratt-Campbell, who is married to former England football ace Sol Campbell, also designs furniture

which she sells alongside items sourced from artisans she discovers during her work, through the brand FBC London.

While she's handled designs for clients from Beirut to Moscow, Barratt-Campbell's first Asian project came four years ago when Hong Kong cultural entrepreneur Adrian Cheng invited her to design one of three penthouses atop the residential property at the Victoria Dockside mixed-use development in Tsim Sha Tsui. Though the two-year project has stretched into a four-year process, the designer is relishing every moment working in this city. She stopped by recently to check on the progress of the final stages and talk to potential new clients about expanding her footprint in town. She also spoke to us about working in Asia, the importance of restraint and how Pinterest is ruining her job.



LIFE AND SOUL
Barratt-Campbell has been married to England football legend Sol Campbell since 2010; bold shapes dominate her bathroom and living space designs (right)

Asian Sensations

This is my first project in Asia. The efficiency on the whole is so comprehensive. The theory of designing is almost always the same—it's just the application that is always different. We've been to quite a few places but I like it over here. There's still that feel of British colonialism mixed with Asian culture. The fusion and the energy: I like them. The mix of people that you get here from all over the world is nice. We want to get more work here.

When in Rome

When the team behind Victoria Dockside approached us, we didn't actually have to pitch. They just wrote and said, "We want you to work on the project." Which was really lovely because it doesn't often happen in this day and age. They basically liked our attention to detail and also that we've become known for using texture—mixing man-made textures with natural. I'm from Northumberland and I'm very much inspired by Roman history and Roman architecture, and they liked that influence and my bringing that history over here.

Bold Moves

Our aesthetic is very strong. You have to have the right interior for our pieces. The shapes are very bold. It's not soft furniture, but that is a reflection of where I'm from and where I grew up. Back in the day, Northumberland was no man's land between England and Scotland. It has a very bloody history and it's very raw. And I think that comes out in the furniture. It builds very strong people—and our furniture is very strong.

It's a Small World

Don't overfill a small space with furniture. Think very carefully about the proportions because often people use furniture that is too big for the space. You can still have something bold—just don't have so many things in the room.

Client Encounters

If you look at our portfolio, there is a continuity between all the projects but they're also very individual. There are a lot of our contemporaries where you look at their portfolio and every project looks the same.



In fact, it's the main part of my job—to interpret my client's vision and make that into a reality. And that's when you know that you're a successful designer. It's not my house, it's their house—therefore it has to be a reflection of them and we try and add a story into that process.

Common Denominators

Everywhere you're "right for space." No matter how big your house is, there's never enough space. I think people have no idea how many things go into an interior design package.

The Short-stay Situation

So much has been the same at hotels in the past but you have people who travel extensively now. Twenty or 30 years ago, people didn't see as much as they do now and travel wasn't as frequent, so they weren't as well informed. Now it's very hard for the hotel industry because they have to be at least 10 steps ahead. The traveller is so

well educated on what is out there—it's very competitive. You have to be providing something that's totally different.

The Pinterest Problem

Fifty years ago you would've had to go to a trade show to see a furniture supplier in China, which has made our job harder because the consumer has become well informed. They will come to us with a whole design and Pinterest boards. It's been a nightmare—they have these huge boards with hundreds of images and they're completely confused and don't know when to stop. You've got to get to a point when you say, "Enough is enough—do you want to finish this or not?" The consumer is much more informed now on the general look but not necessarily on how to achieve it. That's still hard. You either have a flair for putting something together or you don't. It's not as easy as people think. It's one thing to buy furniture but it's another to put it together. ●

Five things on my work desk

• A PC—not a Mac!

• Good paper. I'm also very particular about what paper I draw on. I don't like normal paper you put in a printer. I like tracing paper but thick tracing paper or paper that has a very smooth coating. And I will only draw on it with a click pencil.

• Pens. I'm very particular about my stationery and I get really annoyed if people take mine, so I have pots for all my different types of pens and I also have a stationery tray. That is the most important thing on my desk.

• Pictures of my family.

• Paw paw cream. I have a tub of it because of the number of times I wash my hands a day. They get really dry and then there's obviously my lips etc.

IMAGES: DAN AZIZ (FIONA AND SOL); RAY MAIN (ROOM SHOTS); SHUTTERSTOCK

