

INTERIOR DESIGN YEARBOOK 2020

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Kitchen, Dining & Entertaining

By Laura Hammett

Interior Designer and Founder, Laura Hammett

Laura Hammett creates luxury residential interiors. Husband and wife team Aaron and Laura Hammett bring a wealth of experience of the international property market, along with a thorough understanding of the dynamics and requirements of contemporary living. Founded in 2008, the multi award-winning London studio provides interior architecture and design services with a strong sense of identity. Laura Hammett's signature classic contemporary designs complement every architectural style, with a strong identity that draws inspiration from the location, building vernacular and the client's requirements, interests and lifestyle. Bespoke design is integral to the Laura Hammett approach. Every facet of a project can be custom made to exacting specifications, ensuring that the clients' needs are realised with unwavering creative expression, with the very finest quality assured. Recent work includes substantial family homes in India, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Brussels, as well as private apartments in New York, Miami, Athens, Paris, Hong Kong and China and a 19-seat private jet, and commercial projects in London and the UAE. Laura believes that quality of life can be enhanced through exceptional design.

My first question for a client when we begin working with them is always about a “feeling”, rather than anything too specifically related to the physical space. How does the home need to feel? Is it formal or relaxed, rich and luxurious, dramatic and moody or calm and serene? The answer is usually a combination of things, with a balance throughout the home for formal entertaining and relaxed family spaces. I then move on to understand how the home is used. Good design is just as much about functionality as it is style, and when it comes to a home it can even be more important. We do most of our kitchen design in-house rather than outsourcing to a branded kitchen company,



Above: Laura designs a lot of her own kitchens to get that truly bespoke finish and quality



Above: A statement island (one of two) for a statement kitchen

unless specifically requested by the client, which allows us to work much more closely with our clients and understand their individual needs, how they use every inch of their kitchen and what specific things are important to them.

When you have the luxury of space you can create designated areas for family time, formal entertaining etc, but the reality of modern living, especially in compact cities like London, means that many people need rooms to do both. Often kitchens are in an open-plan living space so the design has to work harmoniously with the rest of the room and not feel too utilitarian, but equally it needs to be highly functional and practical. Our kitchen designs are always done along with the rest of the joinery design so that finishes, colour tones and details work with other

elements in the room and beyond. For example, metal finishes in our projects will always be consistent so every detail looks carefully considered, and the cabinet finishes might tie in with a media unit on the other side of the room.

We have a number of tricks up our sleeve for designing hard working family spaces that look immaculate at all times, by using clever materials like sintered stone in place of marble, faux leathers and beautifully soft and luxurious outdoor upholstery fabrics, which allow you to have a stain resistant white sofa (which let's face it, is every parents' dream). Layered lighting scenes are also a great way to make a space multifunctional, such as a light and bright daytime setting for family time in the kitchen and then a low-level setting with

perfectly balanced lamps, wall lights and pendants, along with recessed LED joinery and architectural lighting for a more intimate atmosphere when entertaining.

In terms of what we need to know from you, the answer is - tell us everything! And I mean EVERYTHING, we need to know it all. The briefing process is the most important stage of a project for me. Designing a home is an extremely personal process and we like to know exactly how the home will be used. Starting from the moment you walk in the door, where you put your keys, exactly how many coats and shoes each family member has and how you like to store them. That same conversation goes on through every inch of the home, paying particular attention to the functional spaces like the kitchen, bathrooms, dressing rooms and

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playrooms. Storage needs are absolutely key because a well designed home should have a place for literally everything, making it very easy to keep tidy. During the briefing process clients often realise that they aren't aware of their regular daily habits because they are second nature so we often need a follow up meeting after asking them to pay particular attention over the course of a few days. For example, what exactly your movements are while using the kitchen on a daily basis with cooking zones and patterns. Photos of possessions or even inventories can be really useful for us to work with. Visiting existing homes is also a very helpful way to see what your needs are, seeing both what is working for you as well as what is not.

No matter what the project size, we find that expectations are always slightly higher than the budget will allow and that's understandable. Whether it's a modest budget or a very large one, there is always a budget and it's our job to use it as wisely as possible so that we can meet your expectations.

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There are so many tricks you can use to balance a budget throughout a home without it

looking that way. We will always break every project down into primary and secondary areas so we can prioritise where the budget should be spent. This doesn't always mean a huge design change, but rather a material change. For example, switching a marble to a good quality ceramic tile or composite stone. You can also do this within one space by choosing a number of key elements or pieces within a room to be the “hero pieces”, allowing everything else to be simplified. Joinery, light fittings and high quality bespoke upholstery are always my preferred pieces to focus on whereas flooring, wall finishes, and case goods can be quite paired back. Fabrics are also a great way to work with a tighter budget, using more affordable



Above: A modern, yet relaxed kitchen diner space for all family needs

KITCHEN, DINING & ENTERTAINING



Above: Beautiful, serene dining with a view

media. We designed a completely bespoke fridge for our client with antique brass framed glass double doors and marble internals, all set to the perfect temperature to chill her beautifully displayed baskets of fruit and vegetables. I think kitchen design, now in particular, is really moving away from a utilitarian space and people want them to feel like much more of a continuation of the rest of the home. Using warm timbers, rich metal detailing and concealing as many of the appliances as possible all make the space feel less like a kitchen and more like a piece of beautiful joinery. Almost all of our kitchens these days have pocket doors that give our clients the option to close off all of the everyday mess of kettles and toasters etc and we've recently completed a kitchen where it is completely hidden behind a beautiful bank of full height feature cabinet doors that can be opened and pocketed in to reveal a perfectly functional kitchen.

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plain fabrics for upholstery and curtains but splashing out on a statement accent fabric on cushions, which instantly elevates the whole scheme. Inspiration comes from everywhere, whether you are a designer or not, so take in all inspo you can and gather it up. I get so much inspiration from commercial design, particularly when it comes to joinery and kitchens. Hotels, restaurants and

shops have such a unique take on joinery and I'm always taking sneaky photos of a little junction detail or material combination, which, in the context of a residential project would create something so unique and exciting. A recent example of this is a display fridge we designed for a client in Isle of Man, which became the showpiece in the room and has been shared thousands of times on social