

DESIGNER Q&A

We talk to Orkney-based fashion designer Kirsteen Stewart

FINISHING TOUCHES

HOW DID YOU END UP DOING WHAT YOU DO?

It was always my plan to start my own business. I come from a long line of makers, both grannies knitted, and my mum is a fantastic seamstress and chef. I inherited the sewing skills, but not the cooking unfortunately. The women in my family love fashion and dressing for the occasion, so my love of colour, beautiful fabrics and embellishment as well as a strong work ethic came from them.

WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

I am inspired by the people around me and also by travel. I love to travel, people watch and explore other styles.

WHAT IS YOUR STARTING POINT?

I collect photographs, postcards and information that catches my eye. This collection is key to starting a storyboard, trying out a sample on fabric and taking it from there.

WHAT DESIGNERS/MAKERS DO YOU ADMIRE?

I am a big fan of Scottish designers, including Jonathan Saunders, Holly Fulton and Christopher Kane. But there are fantastic new designers, including Naromode – I love their use of storytelling through print.

WERE YOU INVOLVED IN CRAFT FROM AN EARLY AGE?

Yes I was always making something – I loved helping mum, my granny patiently taught me to knit and I watched the creative bit in *Blue Peter*.

WHAT MAKES A HOME?

For me, my family and pets. I also love an open fire or a stove, especially when the wild winter weather starts.

IS THERE ANY OBJECT YOU DESIRE?

As a lover of fashion, clothing and accessories, there is always something on my wish list. At the moment I am really excited to see the first sample from my new embossed leather bag



range. I will treat myself to one of those.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF A GREAT ESCAPE?

I love to travel. I am going to Japan for work and fingers crossed I have a bit of spare time to visit the Harajuku and Ginza districts. I would also love to take the bullet train out into the countryside. Escape at home is taking the dogs out for a walk on the beach.

CAMPING OR HOTEL COMFORTS?

Both. I don't camp very often but enjoy it, although having spent time in a cool teepee with a stove I don't want to go back to a small tent again. There is also something about staying in a hotel that makes me feel very spoilt.

BIG SCREEN MOVIE OR TV DRAMA?

I love *Homeland* – it's my must-watch at the moment. But I really enjoy going to see a movie – it's a break out from normal life.

WHAT BOOK WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

My ultimate book is *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

BEST MUSIC TO WORK TO?

I love Scottish bands The Phantom Band, Chvrches, Admiral Fallow and The LaFontaines. I love a beat to work to and a strong female icon so Beyonce, Stevie Nicks, Blondie and, of course, Dolly Parton.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR 24 HOURS IN ORKNEY?

Visit Skail beach in the morning to blow away the cobwebs, Skara Brae is next door and the Standing Stones are very close by too. Head to Orkney Brewery for lunch, where you can sample great local produce. A little bit of shopping in Kirkwall – we have fantastic shops, which sell different clothing and accessories brands that you don't see on many high streets. Visit St Magnus Cathedral for a guided tour of the upper towers with great views over Kirkwall. In the evening, a meal at The Foveran or the Lynnfield Hotel followed by a glass of red wine by the fire in my favourite pub the Ola – 24 hours isn't enough.

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON AT THE MOMENT?

We are coming into the busiest time and have a few designs in production for trade shows at the start of the year, which I can't wait to see. The spring collection has a painterly and hand-drawn feel mixed with a lot of colour.

WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?

My nephews – Scott and Jack. They are at a really fun age – even when they are up to mischief! ☐

You can find Kirsteen's work online at www.kirsteenstewart.com; www.studioshoporkney.com, as well as *Made from Scotland*, 9 Rose Street, Edinburgh

THREE OF A KIND



Reindeer hide
£135, *The Fabulous Fleece Company*
(07796 801 818,
www.thefabulousfleececompany.co.uk)



Mongolian Lambskin Rug
£215, *Sweetpea & Willow* (0845 257 2627,
www.sweetpeaandwillow.com)



Tan & White Cowhide Rug
£285, *Darlings of Chelsea* (0207 371 5745,
www.darlingsofchelsea.co.uk)

INTERIOR SOLUTIONS

A few simple steps to glamorous dining tables

ALTHOUGH dining has become a more relaxed affair, it's satisfying to push the boat out occasionally and create a glamorous dining experience.

Even if the dining space is located in the kitchen, it's possible to create an elegant dining space. A beautiful table setting, comfortable chairs and soft lighting can turn even the most modest space into

something special. Choose a style and colour scheme – you don't have to echo the style of the surrounding space since you will be creating a one-off space based around the table. Decide what table covers will suit the mood. Formal settings call for crisp linen – white floor-length cloth with central or individual runners always look chic – fine china and glassware, and gleaming cutlery. For more contemporary settings, think

bold colours, texture (slate and wood work well as both are heatproof), chunky crockery and sleek cutlery.

Red tends to be favoured by restaurants since it is said to stimulate the appetite, but any hue in any density can work well. Applying the same rules as those for interior décor, aim for a balance of shades and consider bold colour combinations, but bear in mind how these will work with the food you plan to serve.

Glamming up seating is easy. From floor-length slip covers to extravagant bows, complement your table with co-ordinating chair decoration. If you prefer bench seating, add cushions for comfort. Special occasion cushion covers in jewel tones or lavish patterns are simple to make from fabric or scarves.

Keep lighting soft with overhead pendant shades, chandelier-style or candlelight. Avoid candleholders or low shades that interrupt sightlines



across the table. Avoid scented candles – you don't want anything to conflict with the food. ☐

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