

“You have to follow the script,” muses interior designer Katherine Richards as I sit in her Hove office.

“As a costume and set designer if the script says there must be a door on stage left then there must be a door on stage left. But what the door looks like is up to you.”

It is this simple explanation that sums up beautifully how Katherine works.

She is not there to design a room that she would live in, nor is she trying to create something the client hates in a bid to push boundaries.

In fact Katherine vehemently states how much she hates TV programmes such as 60 Minute Makeover and the former BBC offering of Changing Rooms which did this.

“I was so appalled by it,” she grimaces when discussing the latter. “There is nothing clever about it.”

Digging further it turns out her disgust is based on the fact it goes against everything she believes is important in creating a home.

“We get under the skin of the people when I start working on a project,” she explains.

“You need to understand how they interact with their family and their children. It is integral. You also need to know how they interact with colour and feel about ideas.”

In other words her designs are practical as well as beautiful.

Katherine, who grew up in Wisborough Green near Billingshurst, has worked in almost every ‘art’ form you can imagine, from illustrator, graphic designer, artist, and sculptor, to costume and set designer, owning a hair accessory business, and being a hairdresser.

“I have always been hands on. I have been designing for 40 years,” she reveals.

And it is this experience and knowledge of all aspects of interior design - cabinetry, the importance of accurate measurements, understanding how fabrics work, knowledge of how houses are built and the different periods - that makes her stand out.

When I ask Katherine what her style is she takes a while to answer, instead pulling out books she has created that display her work in clients’ homes.

All of them are quite varied and none seem to be repeating ‘tricks’.

In fact she admits the only time she has ‘reused’ something is a leafy wallpaper that is in her son’s bedroom and also in a client’s hallway.

“I have never designed a room that I wish I could live in, mostly because it has nothing to do with me,” she says.

“It is not my style - it is their style. I love the



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room because they love it.”

Katherine started up her business ‘Katherine Richards Design’ 15 years ago and has since expanded, employing designers Lauren Johnston and Helen Kerr:

“I have got a really brilliant team of people here,” she says, adding she has an outstanding contacts book of craftsmen and tradesmen she uses on a regular basis.

The business recently moved to a new office at 111 Portland Road just along from her small, old shop.

What strikes me is the amount of colour everywhere, whether that is material samples, pictures of work in progress, or furniture.

Yet, as Katherine insists, colour does not have to always mean bright, bold colours. It can be white or beige or grey.

Aside from colour, fabric and wallcoverings play a big part in her designs.

The interior designer explains no job is too big or too small.

“We will do a couple of blinds or upholster a little chair - we are not snobs about it,” she states.

Rugs play a big part in Katherine’s designs. So much so she has started creating her own, teaming up with a factory in India to create some stunning items.

As I flick through her portfolio I am amazed at how different and unique each rug is, with my eye particularly drawn to a playing cards one.

I learn this belongs to one of her ‘celebrity’ clients, although she says she does not want to drop names, preferring to keep her client base a private matter.

It is clear Katherine takes her relationship with clients very seriously.

This has seen her go as far as to hire out the Royal Pavilion in Brighton to host a magnificent dinner for clients past, present and future.

The feedback from that event, Katherine shares, has been incredibly positive.

This down to earth creative is keen to draw out the designer in everyone of her clients, with her enthusiasm and love for her job contagious.

“I think people call up an interior designer because they want guidance and want to do something a little bit different this time,” she ponders.

“I know we are really good at helping people see new ideas.”

And what more can you ask for in an interior designer?

For more information, call 01273 386560 or visit www.katherinerichardsdesign.co.uk

