



From Beverly Hills to the Surrey Hills, Alex's globally inspired design is in evidence

There's no dispute that Alex Kravetz Design's portfolio is both varied and very impressive, encompassing everything from the styling of a family home in Surrey and the sympathetic work on a listed property, right through to The Dorchester Hotel, a sprawling Beverly Hills mansion and even a private jet. So Tim Price was keen to learn a bit more about the man behind this dynamic company...



How did you start Alex Kravetz Design?

I started my design career as a stage designer working at the Royal Shakespeare Company in the late 80s. Soon after, I joined a world leading firm in Hospitality design and in 2003 I ventured on my own. I run Alex Kravetz Design as a Boutique Design Studio, but in the global sense of the word as we work internationally. Apart from hotel work we also undertake high end residential design commissions as well as some commercial. Last year we also designed the private jet of one of our residential clients.

A varied range of projects then? So how best would you describe your approach?

My approach to design is based on several pillars – classical architecture in terms of symmetry and proportions, the lifestyle of today in terms of space planning, and holistic wellbeing in terms of teachings of Vastu and Feng Shui.

When looking at this as a whole they are all connected and form our comfort factor within the spaces we live in. These spaces are very important as they have their own philosophy of inner peace – something that is very difficult to define. For example, when looking at the the best interiors from the past – they all have this quality and our mission is to deliver the same karma but with the contemporary understanding of today's lifestyle.

With this in mind, what would you say is the most challenging project you have ever worked on?

There is no single most challenging project per say – there is always something that makes it a challenge but it is never the same – be it design, budget or timeline challenges. One that does particularly stand out however, is a Grade I listed mansion in Buckinghamshire, which was extremely complex and everything was bespoke, it took eight years to restore but it was a labour of love for most of the time.

What are some of your methods to stay motivated, focused and expressive?

Staying focused and motivated is very important – enthusiasm is contagious and since we lead the projects most of the time, it almost becomes our responsibility. The excitement of the future transformation and belief in your design is something that you must carry through for the team internally, as well as for your client and the fellow design team members. It is incredible how much more can be achieved by the positive energy of individuals – and it is exactly what in return, becomes the success of the project. Innovations, experiments and creative drive can only be maintained by constant exploration – travel, exhibitions, reading, music, theatre, fashion – all are important elements to keep you inspired and charged. I often play specific music tracks to suit the interior when working on the concept. Recently I went through my entire Jazz collection whilst working on a bar concept. For the work on the transformation of the Imperial Hotel in Vienna it took an adventure into

history, many exhibitions and building a dedicated play list. It helps you to build your vision and continue to be inspired and charged. Inspiration can be found in everything around us – nature, architecture, art, fashion, to all the people we meet along the way. Fictional characters can also be very inspirational – like Ayn Rand's architect Howard Roark in her book Fountainhead. His drive for uncompromised and unconventional excellence in spite of the more accepted conventionalism is incredible.

Tell me about inspiration. What inspires you to create?

There are many tangents in inspirational terms – sometimes it can be a colour combination, an experience, a particular theme or simply a styling detail which captures your imagination. It is very important to understand the Client's brief, which is where the real professionalism comes in, as you need to go much deeper into each statement you receive from your Client as a



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design brief. Sometimes you also have to look through the cultural prism and understand the aspirations and what is driving them to what the project should become. I generally draw on a “360 degrees” evaluation of the site and views, light factor and environment, massing of the interiors and general proportions. Combined with the full understanding of the Client’s



brief and budget you can then begin to see what is possible to create. One of the firm’s specialities is interior architectural master planning. On our hospitality projects we often start work on the project way before the architects in order to create the fully integrated design. The Imperial Hotel in Vienna, Grand Hotel Kempinski in Riga and

Intercontinental in Porto were such examples. The same applies to the large scale private residences. Our work in Beverly Hills and Surrey as private commissions were also exciting in terms of landscape – everything must function from the moment you enter the property gates. I learned this principle many years ago when working on a Grade I listed property in Buckinghamshire – the landscape was originally created by the famous Capability Brown – our entire interior design started from the research into the past entrance to the Estate and recreating it again. We are now drawing on this experience on a 60 acre residential project in Windlesham. We are involved on the entire site as well as the full remodelling of the interiors. We completed the main house areas last year and the current phase includes all the Entertainment areas as well as the Spa.

In your opinion, what is the most challenging part of being an interior architect today?

Maybe the challenge for today’s architects and designers is to stay unique and inventive, create something that can stand a test of time and be relevant at the same time. Our way we do business is also changing constantly and it is important to make sure you foresee the new challenges. Keeping your business model fresh, networking globally and working with local craftsmen and producers is what I believe is important for future success.

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