

## DESIGNER PROFILE

This month **Ben Clarke** (Director of *Curve Interior Design*) shares his design passions...

### What was your first big break in the design industry?

After graduating with a degree in 3D Design from Manchester Met I was offered a job at the Lloyd Davies furniture shop (now Panacea) on John Dalton Street in Manchester. I worked in the furniture department and it was a great place to soak up information about the various products that were available. It gave me experience of talking to real people about what they wanted for their homes. I also had the opportunity to visit the first European trade fairs and some of the large Italian factories to see how the products are made.

### What inspires you?

I'm really inspired by modern architecture. Projects such as the Millau Viaduct by Norman Foster feature some incredible engineering, but are also almost works of landscape art. The buildings being planned and built across the North of England at the moment are also pretty inspirational. I recently went on a tour of the bell tower at Manchester Town Hall and it's quite a view from the top. You get a real sense of the history of the city with buildings like the Beetham Tower and National Justice Tower taking their place alongside Victorian and 20th century counterparts.

### How would you describe your style?

I suppose it could definitely be described as modern – it's a word that means different things to different people. To me modern doesn't mean harsh or cold. I think modern style is about understanding how you use a space – mixing elements that excite you but also choosing products and finishes that work hard for you on a day-to-day basis. I have a real passion for new designs that push boundaries and challenge the way we live but – as with fashion design – some of the catwalk stuff is just too outrageous to be useful so I'm definitely on the side of 'form follows function'.

### Who are your design heroes?

Charles and Ray Eames are heroes of mine. Some of the furniture that they designed in the 50's is so thoughtfully created that you can really feel the years of research and development that went into the final product. I think that Jasper Morrison is also a relatively unsung hero of modern design. His 'Glo-Ball' light for Flos looks like a white tangerine on a stick, but the relaxing effect created by dimming it down in the evening is fantastic.

### What is your greatest extravagance?

Maybe it has something to do with the weather in Manchester but my greatest extravagance has to be my outdoor clothing. Apparently my winter jacket is suitable for climbing Everest, but you're more likely to find me in the Lake District than the Himalayas. You can't beat being wrapped up nice & warm. Perhaps I could be termed an anorak anorak!

### Please nominate one design classic and one future classic:

I would nominate the Citroen DS as a design classic. Not only is it a stunningly beautiful car, something of a tarmac bound UFO, but when it was first introduced in 1955 it was so far ahead of its time. Choosing a future classic is a tricky one but Apple have a great track record, so I suspect that whatever they have on the drawing board at the moment could become a classic of the future.

### What are your plans for the coming months?

I'm in the process of buying a new house with my wife, Lucy, so I can see quite a bit of decorating on the horizon! Work-wise we're currently completing the latest show home for August Blake at The Residence, Hale. It's a stunning development with Boffi kitchens and bathrooms throughout. I'm really looking forward to seeing the completed project as the materials and finishes they've used are top drawer. I'm also talking to Missoni about supplying their 'Home' collection, which includes cushions, throws and furniture – so expect a big splash of colour this spring!

Ben can be contacted through Curve. Tel. 0161 237 9300 or visit: [www.curveinteriordesign.co.uk](http://www.curveinteriordesign.co.uk)

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