

London - The Ultimate Guide speaks to celebrities who are setting the capital alight

Hoppen on the Hill

If proof were needed that designers have become hot property in London, Kelly Hoppen's ascent to full-blown celebrity should be it. In an exclusive interview the interiors guru speaks to **George Sell** about her life in the capital and gives us a look around her new home.

There was a time when interior designers were seen and not heard. You'd admire their work in London's most fashionable homes, hotels and restaurants, but unless you were in the trade, you wouldn't know them.

Kelly Hoppen has changed all that, riding a seemingly unstoppable wave of interest in all things designer. A regular fixture in the tabloid press, thanks to romances with English premiership footballer Sol Campbell and coiffeur-to-the-stars Nicky Clarke, as well as her A-list friends and family - Hoppen was married to actress Sienna Miller's father

and counts clients Victoria and David Beckham as close friends. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that Kelly is a successful businesswoman and one of the world's most in-demand designers.

Her trademark palette of restrained colours described as "a calm, elegant aesthetic," has become much imitated, and she is now a successful author and retailer, with outlets in Europe, the US and Dubai. She designs everything from fireplaces and fabrics to hotel and retail interiors.

Kelly, 49, was born in South Africa and moved to England aged two. Explaining her inspiration, she says: "London to me



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Kelly Hoppen has designs on her new west London shop. Her signature designs featuring neutrals and elegant, simple lines are evident in the interiors of her own home.

was such a big city, with a lot going on, but I loved it. It felt magical. It definitely had an effect on me, as did my grandparents' home in Cape Town, with its eclectic mix of furnishings, and my mother taking me to furniture shows. She says that I kept changing my room around which drove her crazy."

London is now well and truly home to Kelly, who recently moved to a classic Georgian townhouse in Notting Hill. After six months of renovation, the 2,500-square-foot house is a shining example of Kelly's style, featuring neutral

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colour schemes, white walls, black wooden sliding doors and flooring, and grey poured resin flooring.

It hasn't taken long for the new neighbourhood to make a big impact on her. "Notting Hill is definitely one of my favourite areas of London. It's got such a lovely village atmosphere. I love walking around and discovering all its little shops. I particularly love going to Portobello Road Market – its great having everything so close."

Her new store, The Yard, is also in Notting Hill following a move from Fulham Road. A stunning shop – described as 'Kelly Hoppen meets shabby chic' – it also houses a studio and the design assistants, architects, technicians, accountants, public relations staff and personal assistant making up Team Hoppen.

"The lease in Fulham Road was coming up for renewal and I thought I could change the way I do things. Having more space in Notting Hill allows me to move the shop here and spend more time with my clients. If they want to pop in to ask advice then we're on-site. We have 20,000 catalogues in my studio with



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every sofa, chair, fabric, tap, and lamp. Therefore, we can tailor any design at a small cost using computer-aided-design technology."

The relatively new appreciation of good design in the UK has helped boost Kelly's empire. "The British, Londoners in particular, have become much more style-literate in the last 10 years, and this is reflected in their interior design tastes and purchases. Things have changed on the High Street too especially at shops like BHS and John Lewis, where you can find so many styles. People really enjoy re-doing their interiors and it has become much easier to do without spending a fortune," says Kelly.

As one the UK's foremost interior designers, Kelly has collected her fair share of awards and plaudits. She was the first recipient of the Andrew Martin International Designer of the Year Award, and won gongs from Grazia and Elle Decoration magazines, among others. In 2007, she won the European Women of Achievement Award for Entrepreneurship.

But her proudest moment came in January when she was invited to the ultimate London house, Buckingham Palace, to receive the title Member of the British Empire (MBE).

"Receiving the award from the Queen was incredible. I've been designing since

I was 16, and the MBE made me feel that I'd accomplished something enormous, as well as inspiring me to achieve more," said Kelly.

My clumsy attempts to get a critique of the Queen's taste in curtains was met with a suitably tactful response from a woman who moves in London's A-list celebrity circles: "I thought the interiors of Buckingham Palace were lovely," she replied. Perhaps the Queen shops at The Yard. 📍

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