

Design/life



Caroline Flannery
— Interior designer

INTERVIEW
BY
AILEEN LEE

Letting the details be the design

■ What's your background?

>> In the early '90s whilst living in London, I first discovered the joys of interior and furniture design, spending many blissful weekends in Chelsea Harbour or mooching around Camden or Portobello markets searching for inexpensive quirky pieces for my little flat.

When I returned home I completed a three-year full-time course in interior design after which I gained a lot of experience working for a number of architects and interior design consultancies.

I eventually relocated to Spain where I worked in commercial and residential interior design for many years. When I returned to Ireland, we were right in the middle of a recession, so I decided to use this downtime to upskill and completed a BA (hons) in interior and furniture design, after which I set up my own company, Interiors by Caroline, where I have been working ever since.

■ What's a typical work day like for you?

>> Thankfully no two days are ever the same and this is one of the reasons I love my job so much. Having said that, I actually do try to create some kind of routine in my day by allocating slots for certain tasks, for example, early morning for emails; client meetings before lunch; and contractor/supplier meetings in the afternoon, if possible.

I regularly attend trade shows and exhibitions overseas to ensure I keep up-to-date with the latest product

and fabric designs, which can be quite time-consuming although extremely enjoyable and worthwhile.

I try not to work late into the evening but unfortunately, it does happen quite regularly.

■ What's your design style?

>> Great design is all about balance and honesty. I love when a home reflects the personality and style of the person or people who live there.

I always start the design process by asking lots of questions, so I can gain a good understanding of my client's personality, likes/dislikes, interests, and lifestyle, etc.

I try to bring out the personality of the people who will live in the space rather than imposing my own design style which is eclectic, experimental and playful to say the least.

In my opinion, everybody has their own unique style even if they don't think they do, it's my job as a professional interior designer to create a space that when complete, it feels familiar, comfortable and beautiful to its inhabitants.

■ What/Who inspires your work?

>> My clients, nature and travel inspire my work.

■ What's your favourite trend at the moment (if you have any)?

>> I am glad to see that Ireland is embracing the dark paint colour trend, in particular, those inspired by our natural environment.

■ What's your most treasured possession?

>> That's a difficult one, I guess animals and people

aren't really possessions, are they? I love my home and everything in it — can that count as one thing?

■ Who would be your favourite designer, or style inspiration?

>> I don't really have a favourite designer — having said that when I travel I will always check out the latest fit-outs which are making waves in the design world.

I like to experience design first hand and will make my way to the latest hotel, bar, or restaurant, etc, to take a peek, preferably with a cocktail or two.

I have recently returned from a trip to Iceland where I took in an exhibition and lunch at Alvar Aalto's Nordic House — he was an acclaimed Finnish architect, and it was hugely inspiring.

■ What would be a dream project for you to work on?

>> I would love to work on a retirement or convalescence home as I feel that a lot of improvement could be made to assist the healing and well-being of the people who live and work in these places.

It is well known that the buildings and spaces we inhabit affect how we feel and with a little consideration and sensitivity a lot of people could benefit greatly.

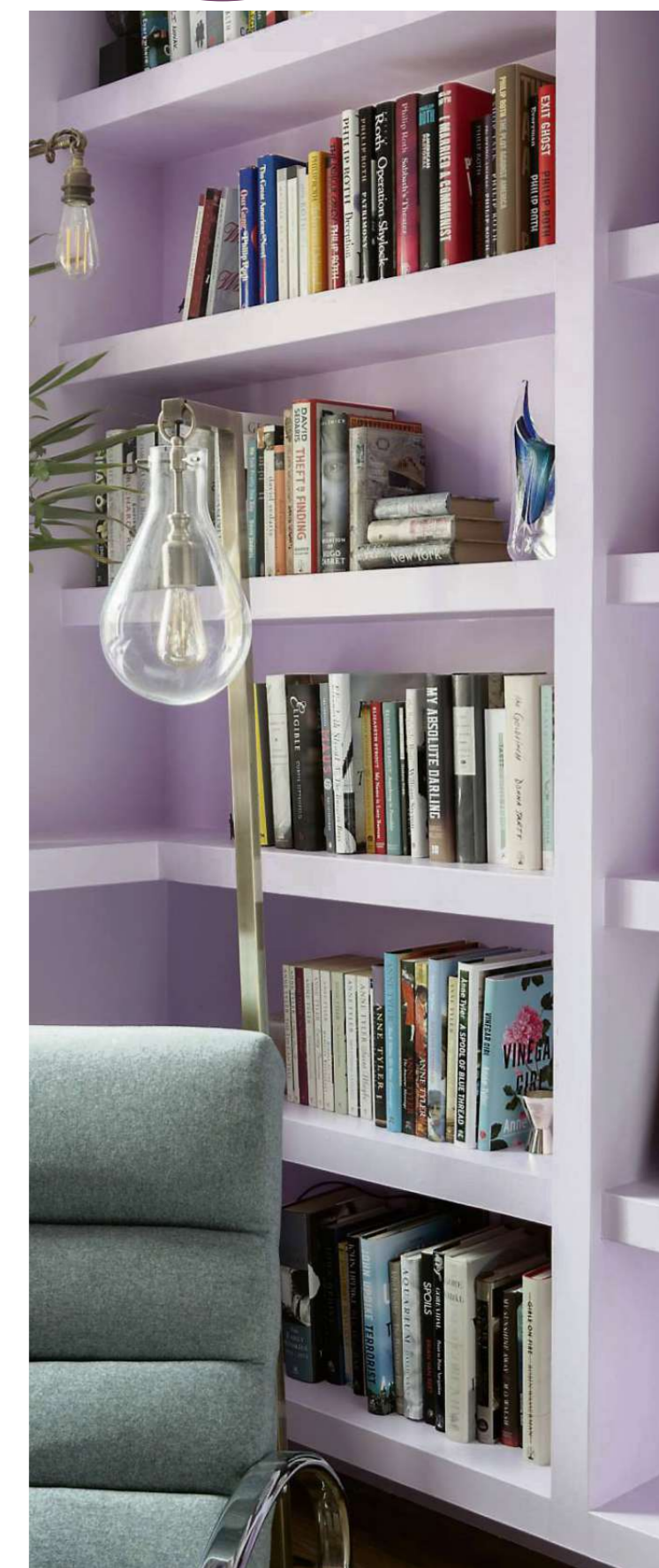
■ Have you any design tips for us?

>> As the great Charles Eames said: "The details are not the details. They are the design." I'm not sure I could put it any better than this.

■ www.interiorsbycaroline.ie
■ Instagram: @interiorsbycaroline



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Above: Caroline Flannery did the interior design of the Rathfarnham home of Irish author John Boyne.