

# Grand designs

Tara Michelle Interiors is a smart, young design company intent on making its mark on London's most prestigious addresses and **Lydia Williams** finds out how

**T**wo and a half years ago, interior designer Tara O'Gorman had not long graduated from KLC school of design in Chelsea. Practising with a larger design studio she always had plans to branch out alone. 'It was a huge risk to take but with my background (O'Gorman has a degree in business from University College Dublin), I knew I could combine my passion for design with a strong business model and make it work,' says O'Gorman confidently. Her first forays into solo interior design were mainly stand-alone design projects for friends and family. 'It was a great first step, I did some designs for family friends and soon word-of-mouth started to generate more work as their friends in turn liked what they saw,' she continues.

Fast forward two years and O'Gorman's client base has become even more discerning. 'We are at a stage now where we can focus on a few high-end, high-profile projects at a time and it means my attention is not diluted and I can deliver 100 per cent to the client,' she explains.

A focus on a full and uninterrupted service is at the heart of what O'Gorman wants to achieve, from the briefing process on day one through to the realisation of her designs and the fine-tuning after completion, 'I want a seamless, stress-free experience for my clients,' she says.

'My latest project is a new-build 5,000sqft penthouse, overlooking the river in SW1. The client has asked me to design the whole apartment and because it's a new-build, we really do have a very blank canvas to work with'. Does such a prospect daunt or excite her? I ask. 'For me, modern new-builds really engage my design potential as I have no constraints or existing designs to work to, so it is a very exciting project indeed.' With such a vast space, has the client given her a detailed brief of their ideas?

'The client wants an opulent home, without any sense of the ostentatious; I think that's what

a lot of clients are looking for. They are high-net-worth individuals and they want luxury but not in a showy, unpractical way. No one wants a home that looks like you can't live in it,' O'Gorman says.

Another facet to Tara Michelle Interiors is the full refurbishment and project management service on offer. 'I am currently managing the renovation of a period town house in Notting Hill. I have a team working

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on it currently and it is a complete refurbishment which is a very different challenge to the new-builds I do,' she explains. Indeed, it is O'Gorman's super-organised approach, tried and tested address book of contacts and head for business that ensures she delivers efficient project

management. 'It's all very well putting colours and fabrics together but if you can't project manage, you're finished,' she surmises. O'Gorman's head for business is certainly a strong ally to her creative character, making for a clearly successful combination.

Can she sum up the Tara Michelle Interior's winning design formula?

'I'm drawn to calming palettes rather than riots of colour, but we mix pieces from different vintages – I think the key to our design ethic is not to fill a space with furniture, fabrics and detail in an attempt to create impact. A few key pieces can say it all.'

Ever the consummate professional, when I try to probe as to the details of some of O'Gorman's most famous clients she is steadfastly resolute, 'I don't want to talk about my clients in that way, they are busy, successful people who expect a high level of service and attention,' she divulges. 'Yes, they are high-net-worth, international people: we are certainly very popular in those circles,' she concludes.

With barely three years under her belt, O'Gorman is already working with some of the capital's biggest property developers and winning contracts with the upper echelons of London society. Nice work if you can get it and O'Gorman certainly has.

**Tara Michelle Interiors**

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A Notting Hill penthouse apartment designed by Tara Michelle Interiors in 2006.