



The last WORD



Blacksheep is a highly creative architecture, interiors and branding design agency founded in 2002 by Jo Sampson and Tim Mutton.



Inside Out - Why architecture and interior design should work together

By Jo Sampson & Tim Mutton, Blacksheep

Architecture and interior design aren't always easy bedfellows. People rarely study both and, after the long haul (seven years or more) to full qualification, architects may understandably feel that theirs is the superior profession. They build, after all, with one eye on the present and the other on posterity and the history books. Not only has their job title been around a long time, but the older an architect gets, the more he or she is finally trusted, it seems, with major and significant commissions.

But what age is architects, newness is to interior design. However classic an interior design treatment, it is nonetheless related more closely to fashion, trends and consumer behaviour than architecture possibly can be. Interior designers think of spaces from the inside out, are concerned above all with how people use spaces and, of course, are always considering and tracking consumers' ever-changing desires and need states.

In the wider world, this association with newness might lead some to think of interior design as a lesser profession, dealing only with the superficial - with styling and decoration rather than with structure, shape or the flow of a space. This perception hasn't been helped in recent years by the spate of interiors makeover programmes, which leave the impression that interior design can be carried out speedily and fairly thoughtlessly as a quick fix.

Of course, this isn't true at all. Interior design (or 'interior architecture' as the discipline is perhaps more helpfully called in many countries) is all about improving any given space with robust thought and appli-

cation, often via structural interventions, to optimise movement, light and sightlines. Interior designers create the atmosphere, touch and texture of a space, plan circulation, use furniture to suggest dwell times and colour, light and surfaces to create mood. Architecture creates context and space but interior design determines much of how that space feels to be within.

More helpfully, it pays to have real mutual respect and to realise that, although different professions, the two are actually completely interdependent and, if working to a common purpose or common brief, can produce truly glorious results. Many architects' practices now have interiors teams, whilst a smaller number of interiors agencies also now associate with architects' practices or employ architects directly or as a freelance service in order to offer clients the full spectrum of expertise.

Having worked together in this way, we believe that the two disciplines can cross-pollinate and have an entirely positive effect on each other, with the real benefit being felt by the client and the client's end-user(s). If a building is built from the outset to create optimum spaces for the interior designer to use, then the user will feel that seamless flow. If branding and graphic design is also part of a brief at the outset too, then things can work even better. A simple and single idea can be expressed via architecture, colour, shape, form, lettering, lighting, texture - and how much better must that be for a client than to have solutions bolted one on top of the other, with gaps in understanding and thinking between the disciplines creating compromise and lack of integrity in the final outcome. ■

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Blacksheep likes to stand out from the crowd. This is a design agency that won't offer conventional, by-the-book, house-style solutions, but looks instead for the unexpected, thinking laterally and seeking to surprise clients with solutions that are innovative, charming and pragmatic. Blacksheep's portfolio includes the multi-award-winning Cuckoo Club; the UK HQ of luxury brand Hermès; an experimental bar for Diageo; celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay's first gastro pub, The Narrow; cool Farringdon brasserie St Germain; new hotel public space designs for Mercure, Ibis and Novotel; radical new Soho restaurant Inamo (where diners order interactively from their table tops) and Whisky Mist at Zeta.