

The Oldie Bell and the Crown

By Zoe Crawford

She Crawford is the designer of choice for the hip, creative crowd. She's crafted interiors for John House and its foreign and British offshoots and works for brands such as Asong. Her style is quintessentially British, fusing classic and contemporary with a hint of eccentricity. At the Oldie Bell and The Crown — coaling fires in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire — this means hanging an antler chandelier above a simple oak dining table and accessorizing it with Windsor chairs with sheepskin throws. In the bedrooms, oak trunks are topped with Andropoe lamps, soft Welsh wool blankets cover the beds and rush mat rugs under foot.

"We wanted to create a new English vernacular that picks up on the past but can also evolve and be modern and relevant today. The materials — oak, silk, rush, wool, wax — are very important to the look," says Crawford.

To get the look at home, head the rails a little and not sacrifice comfort for style. "Keep it simple, elemental and practical. Focus on building layers and use materials that improve over time," says Crawford. www.tropez.com (www.tropez.com) is great for floor cushions and cushions; John Lewis for bread chests, patterned sofas, and tables (www.johnlewis.com); and Trest (www.trest.com).

For a more affordable version, Scopy from Houli (www.houli.com) and Woven Ground (www.wovenground.com) are good for wicker, steel and reed rugs. Wool is covered in sofas and easy chairs but choose contemporary upholstery. If that isn't to your predilection try traditional British sofa makers George Smith (www.georgiesmith.com) for more affordable versions. Scopy from Houli (www.houli.com) does personal touch, find local designers and artists to display photographs in a mix of old and new frames. And a discrete splash of bright color such as seagrass chairs (try Bunka from Bernhardt range) around a plain oak table.

The Oldie Bell, Harley, Berkshire (www.theoldiebell.co.uk); The Crown, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (www.thecrowninteriors.com); Double Rooms from £350.



ONE IN A SUITCASE

Employing a top designer demands a trust-fund budget. But thanks to a new wave of holiday lets, you can take their interiors secrets home for the cost of a weekend away, says **Trish Lorenz**

Employing the services of top designer designers like Jude Jagers, Sophie Courant or Kelly Hoppen demands a trust-fund lifestyle. But if you plan your next holiday well, you can tap into the style secrets of the best interior designers for no more than the price of a weekend break.

It's a growing trend for holiday lets, which employ the services of big-name interior designers. This month it was announced that a boutique hotel will open in Hong Kong next year with interiors by celebrated Dutch designer Marcel Wanders. Closer to home, a Kelly Hoppen-designed spa opens in the Cotswolds in December with a hotel set to follow in 2012.

And there's plenty more to choose from both here and abroad.

HOUSE DOCTOR

'How long until I can get on the first rung of the property ladder?'

Sam Dorn

Colour, distortion of scale and visual surprises are all on the cards. "It will be modern and magic," says Wanders.

For a more French flavour, Le Bourgeois Sir Mier Beach Club (www.lebourgeois.be.com) opens on the bay of St Tropez this summer with a pavilion by Japanese architect Toyo Ito. The hotel, Le Bourgeois Paris, opens next spring. Details of the interior design are being kept confidential but expect classically French, wood-imparted interiors.

... or just a day's work?

Can't spare a bit of time away? Interior designer Susan Lewinshin this month launches a series of day tours in London. They include Leighton House and William Morris's workshop (the latter will see two of the Arts and Crafts master's design and interior creations (www.theartsandcraftsmuseum.co.uk)).

Finding inspiration further afield

If all this restrained Britishness just isn't your thing and you've after the glamour and sexiness of the international jet set, then head for Morocco and the Jale-Jalego-designed Radisson Marrakech, (pictured below). It's a mix of low-wattage luxury, with four-poster beds for sunbathing beside the infinity pool and multi-ethnic touches. Moroccan lights, coloured ceramic tiles, beamed metalwork and terrazzo-gloss floors. Add tons of navy blue and burnt orange for drama and you've got the look nailed.

Or maybe quirky Dutch is more your thing, in which case you'll have to wait until 2012 when the Marcel Wanders-designed Jale Hotel opens in Hong Kong. Details are still under wraps but Wanders says interiors will combine "fantasy, woodwork and a sense of humour".

also show a luxurious French-style bed with drapes of gold brocade; another has a soft pink day bed beneath an antique chandelier. And all are dotted with an eclectic mix of cushions ranging from an African zebra to the ornate-style pieces and hardware from the 1940s.

In contrast, the kitchen and dining room are open, clean and modern with a long oak dining table and a pale roker scheme. "I like things quite simple," says Courant. "You don't need much in a kitchen or dining space; people are what happens here, they bring the colour".

To get the look at home, Courant suggests "buying a quilted aviator's canvas table and choose things that are beautiful and in good condition. Things you really love," she adds. Then combine those with pared-back modern designs. Try the French Bedroom Company (www.frenchbedroomcompany.co.uk) for a selection of French-style beds, pictured below; the Curran Shop (www.curranshop.co.uk) for James dining chairs; and Hello's (www.hello.co.uk) for dining tables. *Tempo Coating, near St-On-ge-the-Bild, is a fab for home parties. You can rent the barn, which sleeps 80, for £200 per night (www.sophieseventy.com).*

The Barn at Temple Guiting

By SOPHIE COURANT

When your dad is Tommaso Courant there's a good chance

that an eye for design is in your genes. Sophie Courant's interiors for

the Barn at country house Temple Guiting illustrate her heritage: a combination of sophistication and luxury with just a hint of romance. The Barn, a century-old building with exposed beams and historic coloured Cotswold stone walls, is worth a visit if you're looking for ideas on making the most of traditional architectural styles.

"The bedrooms are quite rustic so I wanted to bring a sense of elegance and glamour to them," says Courant. In one room

and gorgeous textures, finished off with modern

textures," says Hoppen.

With a neutral palette — creams, whites, warm grey and mushroom brown — try Parson and Ball, www.parsonandball.com, for a selection of neutral shades in solid colours.

Combine with natural wood, rattan and wool. Plump cushions are a must — on sofas, chairs and even outdoors. The White Company's Santorini bed linen and Meris bedspread in cream is a soothing combination in the bedroom (www.whitecompany.com).

The Natural Curtains Company (www.naturalcurtains.com) has a selection of linen blends and curtains that will work for this look too.

The Laces by Fox, Cotswolds, rent a 4-bed house from £2,500 — £5,500 per week (www.thelacesbyfox.com).

The Lakes by Yoo

By KELLY HOPPEN

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Question: I'm due to graduate with a Master's degree and have been fortunate enough to land a job paying a very nice £25,000 a year. Given that I don't have much in the way of savings, how long will it take to rent before I can buy? Many of my friends are also to buy and, at 32, I'm wary of being very late to the property ownership game. John Townsend, Chester

Answer: Ever since this year, housing minister Grant Shapps suggested that the average age of a first-time buyer FTBs would increase to 37 (although it's roughly 27) with help from the so-called Help to Buy (Mark Dodds).

This is hardly no surprise given the sums that need to be invested for a deposit. According to the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the typical previous deposit hovered at around £17,000 at the start of 2007, but by the second half of last year it had soared to one popping £25,000.

It's no wonder that many FTBs expect to be nearly 40 before they even get on the ladder, a recent survey by MortgageExpert.com says. Yet housing's hypnotic pull could be about to be broken in a Halifax report of 8,000 potential FTBs

"Two-thirds of first-time buyers have no chance of becoming home owners in the next five years"

aged between 20 and 45, only a tiny 6 per cent are expected to get on the first rung of their property ladder in the next five years and the report added, did not have a "strong sense of financial maturity" required for a deposit.

"But there's no need for you to become a long-term member of 'Generation Rent'," says Melanie Birt at estate agent Painsan. "Savings dedication and determination should only play a tiny role towards that first rung," she adds.

"Most importantly, don't be put off by the cost — average £26,000 deposit, adds Andy Monteath at lender Currys. "You don't need to save 25 per cent of your desired property's value: there are plenty of mortgage rates for those with a smaller sum to put down," he says.

For example, if you can muster enough for a 10 per cent deposit, the Yorkshire Bank is offering a three-year fix at 5.99 per cent for a £20k.

Alternatively, Santander has a two-year fix at 5.29 per cent with a £20k for people without. But remember the larger deposit you can save the better deal you'll get.

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