



# 10

OUT OF

# THAMES



WORDS **KAREN McCARTNEY**

London's design scene is rich and diverse, offering visitors any number of spaces, galleries and precincts to inspire. Here, 10 local experts reveal their favourite design destinations in the UK capital.

**EACH YEAR** in mid-September, the London Design Festival showcases the UK capital's design credentials with an exhaustive program of exhibitions, workshops, talks and tours. This year's festival, its 12th, looks set to further cement London's reputation as the world's design capital, an accolade bestowed upon it by *The New York Times*' Julie Lasky in 2012.

According to the festival's deputy director, Max Fraser, the key to a successful program lies in striking a balance between "commercial and cultural, subtle and showy, exclusive and accessible, grassroots and established". >

Brodie Neill with his Cowrie Rocker

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Corner Room bistro,  
Town Hall Hotel



24 Lamps by Paola Patrobelli (2013) at Gallery Libby Sellers; Marc Peridis (below)



It's a tightrope organisers are managing to walk without so much as a wobble, despite the 300 events that will span the entire city.

Fraser believes a festival works best when there is local talent to draw on and when creative collaborations give rise to the unexpected. This allows the festival to become "a crescendo moment when the fruits of everyone's hard work is exposed, scrutinised and celebrated".

The London Design Festival pivots around six trade shows, some of which are open to the public as ticketed events. Shows such as Designjunction target design-aware consumers, setting up retail opportunities and bringing food culture into the traditional exhibition space. Many of those involved have jettisoned the dour trade-show "box" for "theatre sets that inspire", according to Fraser.

Major arts institutions, in partnership with leading architects and designers such as John Pawson, Zaha Hadid and Marc Newson, create installations that push conceptual notions out into the public domain. These tend to be positioned in Trafalgar Square, the V&A and Somerset House, setting up a telling dynamic between the heritage of London and its design future.

During the festival, different districts create events, shop openings, experiences and parties. Brompton Design District's character is quite different from that of Shoreditch Design Triangle or, for that matter, Clerkenwell Design Quarter. "We never force the existence of design districts," says Fraser. "They have to evolve naturally."

While the London Design Festival is a cohesive moment in the design calendar for local, national and, increasingly, international designers and brands, the city has plenty of permanent attractions, from design-led hotels and discreet, hole-in-the-wall shops to globally renowned museums and institutions.

Here, 10 design-credentialed locals reveal their favourite design destinations, all of which can be visited any time of year.

**BRODIE NEILL**

*A furniture designer born in Tasmania, Neill recently launched Made In Ratio, which embraces experimental processes to deliver confident sculptural shapes in furniture and lighting.*

"Situated within the urban landscape of my home neighbourhood of Bethnal Green, the Town Hall, now a hotel, offers a design oasis where every detail merges history with function, making you always aware of the past while enjoying the best of the present. It's a real design gem in the grit of East London and is such a personal favourite that I even

proposed to my girlfriend there." *Town Hall Hotel, Patriot Square, E2. townhallhotel.com*

**MARC PERIDIS**

*The creative director of 19 Greek Street started the gallery to pioneer change through an approach that favours resourcefulness and sustainable practice without compromising on style.*

"Located just a stone's throw from Soho, Gallery Libby Sellers is like our friendly neighbour up the road. One of the leading voices in London's design scene, Libby's carefully curated collections elevate everyday items to the



Pop-up restaurant Shrimpy's occupies an old filling station (left and below)



status of fine art. Every exhibit is a testament to her devotion to craft and quality, and her mission to nurture talent and creativity."

*Gallery Libby Sellers,  
41-42 Berners Street, W1.  
libbysellers.com*

#### **WILLIAM MANN**

*Architect with Witherford  
Watson Mann, winner of the  
2013 RIBA Stirling Prize for  
restoring Astley Castle in  
Warwickshire.*

"I've been going to the Whitechapel Gallery for 25 years. Its gallery spaces are luminous and generous, and you enter off one of East London's busiest streets. Back then it was pretty much the only gallery in that part of town – now there are hundreds. It has the confidence and curatorial ambition that comes from 100 years of being an awkward, independent pioneer."  
*Whitechapel Gallery,  
77-82 Whitechapel High Street, E1.  
whitechapelgallery.org*

#### **MANDI KEIGHRAN**

*Deputy editor of N By  
Norwegian magazine and  
editor-at-large of Australian  
design periodical InDesign.*  
"If you're in London during June or July, visit some of the graduate shows. In particular, the Royal College of Art in Kensington and Battersea, and Central St Martins,



whose beautiful new campus is in King's Cross. Both provide good insight about where design is heading and a lot of the work focuses on new materials."

*Royal College of Art, Kensington  
Gore, SW7. rca.ac.uk; Central St  
Martins, Granary Building, 1  
Granary Square, N1. arts.ac.uk/csm*

#### **KIT KEMP**

*The owner and design  
director of Firmdale Hotels  
has pioneered a distinctive  
aesthetic encompassing  
colour, craft and independent  
design. Firmdale's Ham Yard  
Hotel opens next month.*

"My favourite building in London is the Natural History Museum in South Kensington, opposite our

design studio. It is Alfred Waterhouse's Grade I-listed terracotta-clad masterpiece, built in 1881, and is renowned for inspiring architecture that celebrates the natural world. The creatures carved into the walls seem both mythical and real. My children used to play in the gardens, accepting it as part of their childhood, and I hope they will be influenced by it always."

*Natural History Museum,  
Cromwell Road, SW7. nhm.ac.uk*

#### **MARTIN RAYMOND**

*The trend forecaster of the  
East End's Future Laboratory  
runs annual seminars in  
Australia about the future of  
retail, design and society.*

"Shrimpy's is a pop-up restaurant ingeniously inserted inside an old filling station near London's Kings Cross and the Regents Canal. Famous for its soft-shell crab burger and hard-nosed hipsters, it's better known and liked for its gentle treatment of light – soft light (it has fibreglass walls), reflected light (the canal shadows), and syncopated urban light reminiscent of Ed Ruscha signage. Designed by Carmody Groarke, it is a temporary, soft-burn gem of a building that will vanish at the end of 2014. Certainly worth a visit before the Filling Station sign is switched off for the last time."  
*Shrimpys, Kings Cross Filling  
Station, Goods Way, N1.  
shrimpys.co.uk*

## Jasper Morrison Shop



### STEPHEN BAYLEY

*Design critic, award-winning journalist and author of Ugly: The Aesthetic Of Everything.* "I would recommend the Riverside Walk in Battersea Park. This is Whistler's Thames and Turner's, too. Look west to see Ordish's Albert Bridge, a Victorian spectacular that looks as if pastel-coloured fairies worked in iron. Look east to see the distant city with its insistent 21st-century hum of money. Best, look north to see the lovely red-brick houses of Old Chelsea, England's outstanding contribution to world architecture and the ultimate in urban felicity." *Battersea Park, SW11.*

### LINA KANAFANI

*Established Mint Shop in 1998 to champion emerging and established design talents, alongside crafted one-off pieces and contemporary collections. Always at the cutting edge, Mint Shop is consistently inspiring.*

"Just around the corner from Mint is the Victoria & Albert Museum, which I am always too busy to visit during the day, but luckily they have late nights on Fridays. The museum foyer comes to life after 6pm with DJs, performance artists and a bar, and it hosts all sorts of weird and wonderful activities. The atmosphere totally changes and develops a real buzz. By contrast, a stroll through the halls with resident collections and current shows is totally quiet and serene. The building and grounds are beautifully lit at night – it's like stepping into a romantic and magical wonderland."

*Victoria & Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, SW7. vam.ac.uk*

### NIKKI TIBBLES

*One of the UK's most celebrated florists, her Wild At Heart business designs artful arrangements for weddings, events and special occasions.*

"The hottest restaurant and hotel on everyone's must-visit list is the

London Edition on Berners Street and it has fast become one of my favourite places. What Ian Schrager has achieved is inspiring. The hotel has preserved the finest aspects of the iconic landmark building while adding a touch of Schrager's creative genius to revolutionise the concept of a hotel. Plus, the Berners Tavern at the Edition is a gastronomic gem under the direction of Michelin-starred executive chef Jason Atherton."

*London Edition, 10 Berners Street, W1. edition-hotels.marriott.com/london*

### MAX FRASER

*Deputy director, London Design Festival and author of London Design Guide.*

"A few years ago, the well-known British designer Jasper Morrison converted a section of his design studio into a shop. It's a sort of

✦ London Design Festival, September 13-21. [londondesignfestival.com](http://londondesignfestival.com)

anti-retail endeavour as there is no shop window onto the street – instead you're presented with a black-painted door on a grimy stretch of Kingsland Road in Shoreditch. Buzz for entry and you enter a calm oasis where Morrison sells a selection of his own designs alongside products he loves and has discovered in other parts of the world. All of them adhere to his functionalist ways and are displayed simply and without pretence. The name of the brand and designer is irrelevant – only the price is displayed. The place is great for no-nonsense gifts and, crucially, everything is useful." *Jasper Morrison Shop, 24b Kingsland Road, E2. [jaspermorrison.com](http://jaspermorrison.com)*

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