

# THE LAKES

byyoo



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# INTERIOR MOTIVES

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We catch up with interior design legend  
**Kelly Hoppen**, who was influential in designing  
the first vacation home at The Lakes

Award-winning British interior designer Kelly Hoppen, 65, has an awe-inspiring career spanning four decades. The Queen of Taupe has published 12 books and appeared as a Dragon on BBC's *Dragons' Den*. Career highlights include being awarded an MBE for services to interior design in 2009 and a CBE for promoting British creativity and business in 2020. We caught up with the busy South African-born entrepreneur to find out how it started, what makes her tick and her influence on The Lakes' look.

**Have you always had a flair for interior design?**

I designed a friend's kitchen when I was 16, but my career took off the following year when another friend asked me to help her design the home of Guy Edwards, the Grand Prix racing driver she was dating at the time. They had both seen the apartment I had bought and renovated myself. Guy's mansion was in The Boltons, South Kensington, and I essentially did all the work and that was my first real design project. I found builders, resources and other designers that I had met, and I built a business off the back of it. After that,

I got work from Keke Rosberg, another F1 driver who went on to win the world championship. This led to a lot of work coming my way from other Grand Prix racing drivers, by word of mouth. I was young, confident and raring to go.

**Can you instantly envisage the transformation of a space in your mind?**

Being dyslexic, everything I do is visual. When I walk into a space, I start to see shapes and grids and walls appearing. I can see it in my mind before it's even done, and when it's designed I can lie in bed at night and see it and move things around in my head. I have that ability. It's weird because clients and my other half notice that I can walk into a room and move something ever so slightly and no one will see that it needs to be moved but they agree that the room looks better for it. I can now switch it off when I go into other people's homes for dinner, unless someone asks me.

Sometimes people say you can't come over because their renovations or whatever aren't finished and I think, why on earth not? I mean, years ago I remember having Gordon



KELLY HOPPEN





Ramsey over for dinner and I'd prepared something that was probably revolting and he said, "have you ever used this magnificent kitchen?" and I said "of course" and he then opened a drawer, and every utensil still had the John Lewis tag on it and so I was absolutely busted! So, I do understand.

#### Which designers have influenced you?

Off the top of my head, I'd say that Christian Liaigre was one of the greatest designers, because his eye for detail was amazing. I often use his furniture books for reference and his studio is still open and they're still creating extraordinary projects. Also, people from the past such as the architect Mies van der Rohe and the greats such as the American designer and architect, Charles Eames. But I try to be inspired more by nature, music and art rather by people or design.

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#### Is it true that you ask your clients to describe the look/feel they want for a room as a song?

I design to music, and the right music must be playing for me to be creative. There have been clients who are musicians who I asked the question, and they totally got it, and I understood what they wanted in terms of design. I once had a client tell me that they wanted their bedroom to be like my shoes! I understood what they meant by the shape, texture or colour and the very being of that particular shoe. But it's more about music and if I go to the opera or a concert in my head I'm designing, and I can't stop because it's a very creative process for me.

#### How do you get clients to agree on a project if their styles are completely different?

People come to me for my design, and I've worked on a cross section of projects, some of which people wouldn't expect me to do. I will design whatever people want but it will always have the Kelly Hoppen DNA in there. If somebody wants a more traditional design I will give it a more eclectic edge. But if somebody wanted a very traditional home, they probably wouldn't come to me. My portfolio is very varied and early on it became a brand, although obviously I've expanded and done all kinds of different things over the years.

Below Neutrals work as a base for Kelly's interiors because it's easier to change things around and add in layers of texture







Above Kelly in her studio. "One of the things I love most is meeting clients and diving into their past"

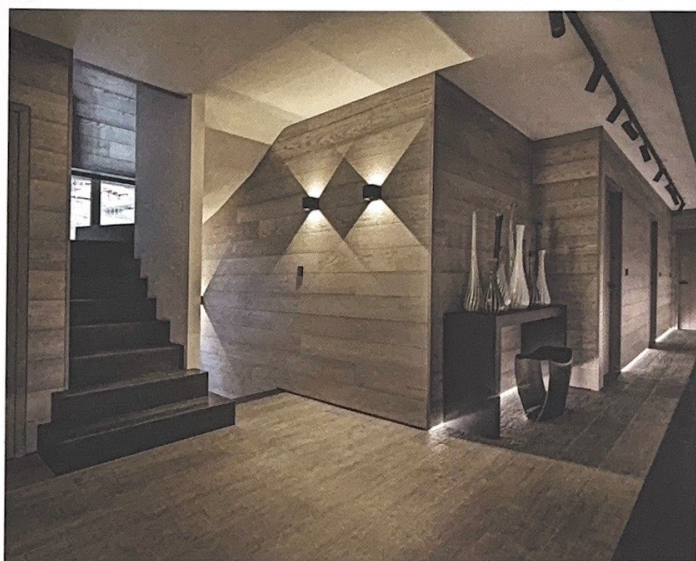
**What is the first thing you notice when you visit the home of a new client?**

I have a magic for getting into people's heads and extracting information. I believe that's my job and I don't go there with an ego and tell them what to do. I think you need to have that relationship with clients so that you can work together and be excited about the process. I'm a people person and one of the things I love most is meeting clients and diving into their past and finding things that they can use to integrate into their home so that there's a history there. And then the lightbulb moment comes when you know you've got them, and the process can begin!

**You're quoted as stating that your signature design is always neutral, can you please explain why?**

I haven't actually said that, but I have said that neutral palettes are very harmonious to live in. I love to add colour except in bedrooms which I believe should remain neutral. As human beings, we become bored very quickly and so neutrals work as a base and it's easier to change things around and I love art, and my clients love art, and it looks spectacular on a neutral background. I'm into the layering of textures which is for me, colour also.

"I HAVE A MAGIC FOR GETTING INTO PEOPLE'S HEADS AND EXTRACTING INFORMATION"



**You designed the interior of a vacation house for The Lakes by YOO, what inspired the overall design?**

The Lakes was an extraordinary concept, it was about 20 years ago and the project was in its infancy. It was exciting to be in that building by a lake in the Cotswolds where I have had a home for many years, it was a dream come true. For me, there was an element of how I would want to be in it but when you're designing a holiday home for other people to use you have to imagine the experiences that people will have when they're in it. And that's the key for great design – creating experiences and backdrops for people, to be the theatre. So, whether it's lying on a sofa and not moving for the weekend or having a party or swimming in the lake or cycling, that whole community in the country that was being created was very forward thinking and new. To be a part of that was great and my design was very eclectic with vintage pieces and adding some crazy elements. It was the inside out kind of living and an exciting thing to launch.

The dream has become a reality. When I look at how The



## "THE LAKES BY YOO HAS EVOLVED, THERE'S SO MUCH TO SEE AND DO"

Lakes by YOO has evolved, there's so much to see and do it's incredible and so holistic with inspiring guest speakers and workshops for wellbeing. It's very tangible because people want to feel the earth and be in the country in a community with other families around, it's just amazing.

### **Do you approach projects in urban and rural settings differently?**

Yes, because every project in every country is approached differently, it's very much about the client's needs, how it's going to be used, and the brief. It has to be international at the same time because other nationalities will use it, so you have to have a worldly way of thinking today.

### **What is your favourite room in a house to design**

When I design a space I want to feel fantastic in every room and each room will evoke a different feeling. That's what's important about design – having the flow but equally understanding that every area must have a different feeling.



This page When designing a space, it's important that there is a flow between each room, but that every area has a different feeling

### **You've designed the interiors of many unique spaces including private homes, hotels, cruise ships and commercial buildings, is there a project that stands out as a favourite?**

No, they're all amazing and every job is as important. The most unusual was designing first class for British Airways because it was up in the sky, but I've designed so many unusual projects over the years and that's what makes my job so exciting and why I'm still doing it.

### **What advice would you give to your 16-year-old self?**

It's a question I pondered on, but I think I honestly just jumped in and believed in myself, and I simply haven't stopped since.

### **What's next for you?**

I guess I'm working all over the world designing wonderful projects. I'm also excited to have just launched an exclusive collaboration of homewares with Marks & Spencer: Luxury Meets Accessibility. The luxurious collection comprises 75 statement pieces blending rich textures and timeless elegance with neutral tones and clean lines to perfectly balance style, comfort and affordability.