

ONE DESIGNER'S DIARY... *in which the walls have ears and the decor speaks volumes*

10TH

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

One of my annual summer pleasures is attending the graduation ceremonies of the top London design schools and it is interesting to see how these ceremonies reflect their schools' very different personalities. Glamorous KLC has been described as the 'Oscars of interior design', owing to the chic nature of the graduates as well as their work. When you compare this with the military precision of the Inchbald event and the laid-back professionalism of the Interior Design School, you get a reassuring sense of the sheer variety of our industry's future stars.

16TH

COUNTER ATTACK

After being filled with optimism at the graduate shows, I fall back down to earth with the day-to-day realities of actually being an interior designer. A client decides to go with the contractor's recommendation for a stone supplier for a rare granite kitchen worktop rather than my own trusted source. I am horrified to see the end result not only bears little resemblance to the sample I proposed but that each countertop has been sliced into three sections. My heart sinks at the thought of ripping the whole thing out and starting again but we compromise on a heavy discount from the supplier and a promise to listen to me next time. It's a far cry from glossy mood boards and exquisite renderings.

20TH

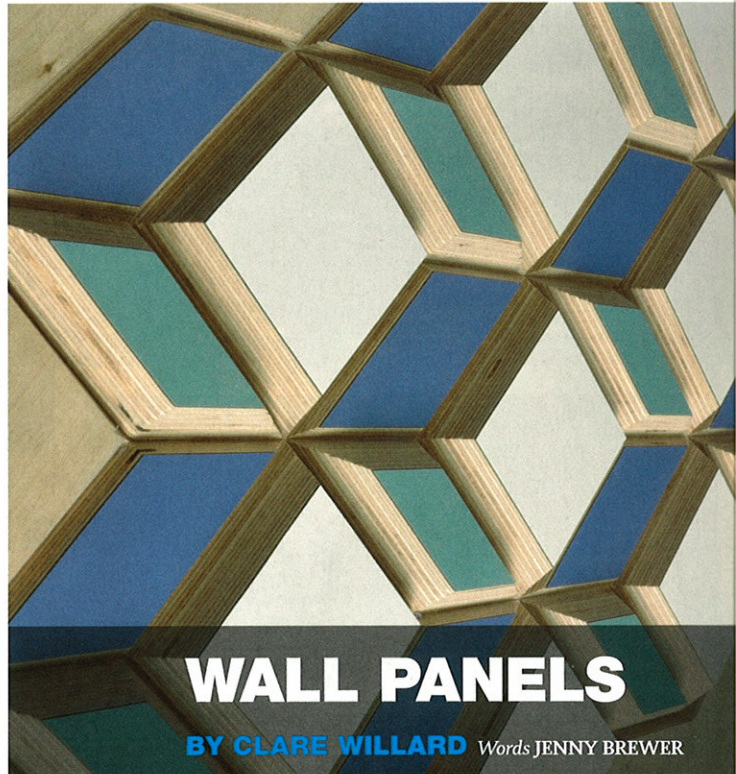
DEAD LOSS

As the granite saga illustrates, there are many advantages to working with tried-and-tested suppliers but you can take this too far. A colleague tells me that her trusted carpet fitter of 20 years literally dropped dead on the job of a heart attack. A client who had booked the now deceased fitter did not take kindly to the change and the fact that the alternative quote was slightly higher. After a quarter of an hour of the client's complaints, my colleague lost it and said: 'I have many skills as a designer but resurrection is not one of them.' End of chat, as my own cockney fitter would say.

30TH

BRAG ARTIST

I bump into a designer acquaintance at a drinks party, who tells me at great length how marvellously his career is going and how he has been nominated for a prestigious award. Eventually, I catch the eye of a more modest friend and flee. The friend has also been on the receiving end of the boasting and sums it up beautifully with his grandmother's words: 'If he were chocolate, he'd eat himself.'



WALL PANELS

BY CLARE WILLARD *Words* JENNY BREWER

It is no wonder that Clare Willard's wooden wall panels stand out from the craft crowd, given their creator's unusual professional background. Willard believes her love of colour stems from her degree in social anthropology, quoting influences such as 'appliqué molas [blouse panels] of the Kuna Indians of Panama and the inter-cut shyrdak felt rugs of Central Asia'.

After graduating, Willard worked in the public art sector and launched her own design practice. She then moved into screen printing before deciding to study for an MA in textile design at Chelsea College of Art and Design, which is where the ideas for this piece originated. 'The course was a foray. I searched for a material and process that would suit my unusual and uninhibited approach to textiles,' she says. Willard had ideas for a mixture of saturated colour, layering and crisp lines and her investigations took her to 3D workshops. Here she began experimenting with woods and laminates on the fretsaw before examining the more intricate possibilities of laser cutting and routing machines. This technology gives Willard the precision her colourful graphical designs require, enabling her to create large-scale pieces with low-relief patterns.

Willard's ideas have since taken flight. A Crafts Council residency between 2007 and 2009 gave her the chance to explore bigger scales and combine hand crafting with cutting-edge technologies. 'Constructed with a printmaker's logic, the shapes are distilled and clean, referencing wood and textile traditions,' says Willard. Intended for use as installations, feature walls and furniture, the bespoke 3D designs use laminate in an innovative way, which Willard believes 'creates a tactile quality, encouraging interaction and playing with light'.

Her latest pieces will make their debut from 23 to 29 September at Origin, the influential craft fair at Old Spitalfields Market that showcases the work of 220 designer-makers. www.clarewillard.co.uk