



ONE TO WATCH

SARAH COX

Interior design consultant

What was your first ever paid job, what did it entail, and what was your boss like?

When I was 16 I had a Saturday job in a shoe shop. It felt so grown up to be earning my own money, and there was the bonus of having a staff discount – who doesn't love shoes? My boss was lovely, a real gentleman.

How did you find your way into interior design?

I knew that I wanted to do something creative, so I did a foundation art course at college. This led to a specialism in interiors – I found three dimensional design fascinating.

Who have been your biggest influences and role models throughout your career?

Design-wise there are many, but if I had to narrow it down – I admire Charles and Ray Eames who were way before their time; their classic chair designs still look contemporary today. I have a soft spot for Philippe Starck – he is a bit of a maverick who has brought innovative and playful design to everyday household objects, turning them into works of art. Also Charles Rennie Macintosh, for completely different reasons. There was a delicacy to his work that mesmerised me as a student, and still does. His use of watercolour to depict his ideas was stunning. On a more personal level, my parents always believed in me and encouraged me to follow my dream.



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**What's the best bit of career advice you've ever been given?**

My mum used to say to me, "don't be afraid to blow your own trumpet, because nobody else will!" – she was half joking, but it was her way of saying 'have confidence in your own abilities'.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

I am very lucky to work on a diverse range of projects, including retail, hospitality, leisure, offices and residential. Being multi-disciplined, I offer surveys, space planning, detailed CAD drawings, 3D models, CGI visuals, and specifications – as well as regular meetings with clients. This keeps my days varied – there is never a dull moment! After 20 plus years in design, I still get the same buzz of anticipation with a new project – I love it!

What has been your greatest professional achievement to date?

There are two that stand out. The first was at the start of my career – seeing my first design project being built. It was an exhibition stand at the NEC Birmingham for a women's fashion brand. I remember being so excited to see my vision in reality. The second was my first commission since going freelance. In 2016 I designed a brand new store for 'Amos Lighting + Home' in Topsham. It was a great project to be part of and I am delighted with the results.

What are Exeter's strengths as a place to work?

I am based just outside Exeter, but often come into the city for work as well as pleasure. It's a fantastically diverse place, steeped in history, culture, amazing food and drink, and of course shopping! It's also an exciting place for students, with amazing educational opportunities from the college and university. I've seen so much change in Exeter in the last few years, it really is a city making its own mark, creating its own style and some of the commercial interiors rival the best I have seen in London. Definitely an exciting place to be.

And its weaknesses, or things that could be better?

The traffic queues! But I guess you get that with any city, and it's not an easy one to resolve.

What are your favourite stress-busting strategies?

For me it's rowing. I regularly train and compete in Teignmouth. We race Cornish Pilot Gigs, which are sea-worthy boats originally used as transportation to and from ships, as well as being lifeboats. It's an exciting sport, and the best stress-buster ever!

What's the one item in your workplace you can't live without, and why (not including computer or phone)?

It's got to be my diary – one of the only things in my office that isn't computerised. Literally everything in my working day is recorded in it. At a time where most day to day processes have become digital, it's a nostalgic habit that I will cling on to.

What's the best bit of advice you could give a young person wondering what to do with their life?

If you can turn your passion into a career, what could be better? But never be complacent; success requires constant drive, determination and discipline.

What's your motto?

Never give up.

For more: www.sarahcoxinteriors.co.uk