

The interior life of a City bachelor

From the Ukrainian Changing Rooms to EC1; Mila Podiablonska on interior design

What does a man want to come home to after a long day's work in the City? This is the question that's constantly plaguing the mind of interior designer Mila Podiablonska, who has found herself interpreting the will of the professional male bachelor on many occasions.

"Most of the clients I work with are male. I find it easy to understand what men want," says Podiablonska. "They're all about functionality and practicality. You've got to have the large TV set, and they like to be able to control everything, from the lighting to the temperature. The men I've worked with really like their gadgets and they rarely change their mind about anything. They know what they want and that's it."

In fact, a City worker whose home she recently decorated in Clerkenwell was so particular about the sort of cabinet he wanted to house his vast collection of CDs and DVDs that he sketched it for her. Podiablonska searched London for the right wood to correspond with the rest of her designs, and hired a carpenter to make it for him. While her clients are undoubtedly looking for someone to take decorating out of their busy hands, this attention to detail seems to be what they're really looking for.

"That's why people hire interior designers; we can make the picture in their head a reality. There are also lots of companies that won't sell to the public, but will only sell to designers."

Podiablonska took a winding path on the road to becoming a designer. She graduated from art school in Ukraine's capital Kiev at the age of 21, unsure what to do with her degree, so she tentatively embarked on her first interior design job. "It was epic," she said. "I was working with a bunch of alcoholics who made things very hard. It was a lot of work, but I am thankful to them, because it made me realise that there was more to interior design than putting some pretty pictures on a wall. It's also about management and solving problems."

Newly-empowered, Podiablonska embarked on a career in design, boosting her profile by taking a job as a resident interior designer on the Ukrainian version of Changing Rooms. The frantic deadlines meant she found herself carrying far more furniture than she was used to "but it was a lot of fun. My mum was very proud."

After her TV stint, Podiablonska set her sights firmly on London, where she enrolled in the Kelly Hoppen School to study interior design with the eponymous entrepreneur and Dragon's Den investor. Her own style soon emerged, a sleek, luxurious aesthetic using a diverse range of materials, topped off with artworks and thoughtful accessories.



Bottom left: Interior designer Mila Podiablonska. Above: the master bedroom at her Clerkenwell bachelor pad project. Right: the sleek, masculine living room.



Her design process involves sussing out her client's preferences by asking them to choose two images from a magazine that appeal to them, then deducing their taste across a series of mood boards. "I need to get a sense of what their priorities are in life, whether they like to show off what they've got or just need somewhere

warm and comfortable.

"I've found that the fashion now is not purely contemporary and cold, but something that's modern and comfortable at the same time."

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SALES DIRECTOR, DOUGLAS & GORDON

New business was up over 100 per cent from August to October, demonstrating that politics hasn't completely stymied the market. Applicants increased by 10 per cent while offers received increased by almost 30 per cent, indicating that buyers will commit to a purchase if they feel the price is right. Many purchasers are trying to leverage pre-election uncertainty to chip away at prices, but vendors are standing firm against bold offers, creating something of a stalemate.

The number of properties available is at a 36 month high. Earlier this year, buyers were restricted by lack of

availability, but are now able to secure their preferred property and, with average transaction times up to 16 weeks, the pressure to offer has been alleviated.

October saw new applicant registrations up 40 per cent compared with the same month last year, with activity South of the river storming ahead of Prime Central London. The number of properties on the market to rent was down 33 per cent.

Although in October we valued 31 per cent fewer properties (potential new rental instructions), the number of actual new instructions was in fact only 16 per cent lower than in October last year.

With the growth of the private rented sector set to continue, we expect to see the average time spent by tenants in rented accommodation increasing as well as rents continuing to move upwards as demand grows.

DOUGLAS & GORDON AVERAGE LONDON SALES PRICE INDEX

	Q4 2013	Q1 2014	Q2 2014	Q3 2014
1 bed flat	£489,583	£535,116	£542,500	£544,583
2 bed flat	£765,833	£819,583	£843,750	£847,083
3 bed house	£1,645,833	£1,745,417	£1,787,500	£1,788,750
4 bed house	£2,458,333	£2,604,167	£2,631,250	£2,618,750

