

Mary Leslie was born and raised in Scotland. After graduating from the Inchbald School in 1980 she trained with Anne Charlton, and ran Nina Campbell's Interior Design Department for 7 years.

She founded her own company in 1996 specialising in Residential Interior Design. Most projects combine the best of traditional and contemporary design, and the company happily moves between both idioms to suit the client and the property.

If there were such a thing as a Mary Leslie 'look' it would combine a creative use of colour, form and function, sensitive to the client's needs, aesthetically pleasing, practical, and supremely comfortable.

The team on each projects may include architects, draughtsmen, lighting and audio visual designers, building contractors, curtain makers, upholsterers and all the other tradesmen and specialists who might be required. Each team is project specific and is compiled after discussions with the client and the appropriate team members. Everyone is committed to ensuring that we maintain the highest standards of creativity and finish.

Mary's work is predominantly in the United Kingdom and range from contemporary London flats to traditional country houses. Recent overseas commissions have included a Chalet in Switzerland, a ranch in Oman, Villas in Lagos and a penthouse in Miami.

Mary Leslie is a past Vice-Chairman of the BIID (BIDA), past Chairman of the BIDA Charitable Foundation and a Professional Member of the IIDA.



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Creating a Beautiful Home

Iwould guess that even if you have strong ideas about the layout of your kitchen you will work with a specialist designer. Some really do give thought to your project, but there are too many who are too reliant on their CAD

Hub of the home

Kitchens have changed immeasurably over the past few decades. Indeed when my parents were house hunting some 40 years ago the estate agent would rush them through the back of the house with scarcely a chance to have a good look at the kitchen or laundry room. Nowadays the kitchen is the hub of the home, and the chances are that it will also be the dining room, hobby room and the main gathering point for the family.





LEFT: Combining classic style with a modern twist - the Malham Ivory kitchen collection from William Ball certainly delivers in style!

BELOW LEFT: This island unit is unusually high to accommodate tall clients.

RIGHT AND BELOW: Trefurn hand crafted, this beautiful kitchen was commissioned for a period vicarage. Trefurn kitchens are available in a range of period and contemporary styles, in hand painted or polished wood finishes. Prices start from £20,000.



computer programmes and pushing the most profitable appliances to give you a genuinely well thought out kitchen.

I would like to give you a series of pointers to help you with the design, and if you feel your designer is not giving you enough attention then raising some of these will make him (or her) make more effort.

Your first consideration will be style and flow. In a harmonious home the areas flow naturally, one into the other. Even if you have a traditional home you may want a slick, contemporary kitchen. Will it fit with the rest of the house? It can be confusing if everything else has the soft lines of traditional furniture and the kitchen is aggressively linear and minimal. However, if you have created contemporary interiors in an old property a modern kitchen can look wonderful.

If you are going to use a strong colour in one area I suggest that you should keep the rest calm, otherwise the room will not be restful. Also when choosing colours, take the shape of the room into account. Let us say you have a long, narrow kitchen. If you have a monochrome space your eye will be

pulled beyond the space, towards the garden, say, so that you have a sense of a larger space than it really is.

If you want a farmhouse kitchen I suggest you keep it fairly simple. You may be tempted by fancy mouldings and cut outs, but who is going to keep them clean? A shaker style kitchen, or one with simple panel mouldings is much easier to maintain. By the same token I suggest you build the wall cupboards up to the ceiling, rather than having a gap at the top – it is a terrible dust trap.

When you are discussing the drawers and doors I would ask for soft close hinges and runners. It makes for a much quieter space than one where the family slams things shut. They are so much better designed these days that you can include more drawers than used to be the case. I love deep drawers for pans and crockery. They are much easier to use than cupboards where stuff gets lost at the back. The same goes for corner cupboards. Modern magic corners mean that you can easily get to things in the corner without having to get down on your knees and scabble around at the back.

I think that tall skinny pull out larder cupboards are a good idea for storing tins and dry goods. They are also a practical way of filling in space next to fridges or oven stacks.

I would be wary of choosing unusual colours for your appliances. They may look fun at the time, and you may be told that they are the next big thing, but they will almost certainly make the house more difficult to sell in the future. I always encourage my clients to get all their appliances from one company, so that they match. Three different suppliers will have slightly different shades of stainless steel or nickel and it will show.

If you have an eat-in kitchen it is essential that you include a really good extractor. These are not cheap, and the best have ducting out to the atmosphere, but they are a worthwhile investment. The visible ones are generally very contemporary, and are another dirt trap – how often are you going to clean the top of the glass on a modern extractor? I think you are better having one which is built into the run of top cupboards. Also think about the amount of space

between the hob and the extractor. If you are tall make sure that you will not hit your head when you lean forward to cook.

There are all sorts of new gizmos for the kitchen, and some of them are very tempting but will you use them? A steam oven is a great way of encouraging healthy eating, but is not cheap. I would suggest that it is a much better investment than a fancy coffee machine, which may look sexy but will be expensive and have to be maintained. A cafetiere makes excellent coffee and only costs a few pounds.

Lighting is incredibly important. You will need several circuits, particularly if you are going to eat in the kitchen. These will include task lighting, ambient (background) light and mood lighting for eating. When looking at the lighting layout check that you will not find yourself working in your own shadow. You will need lights under the top cupboards to light the work surface, and can get excellent low energy fittings nowadays for these areas. If you have an island unit I suggest that you have four directional downlights, each one set out about 250mm from each corner of the worktop. That way wherever you stand you will always have plenty of light.

It is also quite fun to have a row of lights down the centre of an oblong island. If you have a round table it is useful to have a rise and fall light fitting. I think Holloways of Ludlow are a good source for kitchen light fittings.

You can either use dimmer switches to create different moods, or if you have more than a couple of circuits you could consider a scene setting system. That enables you to change from bright light for cooking, hobbies or homework, to gentler light for eating and entertaining.



You will have to consider the floor finish. If you are going to stand and cook for long periods of time I would avoid stone, unless you throw down rugs and mats. On the other hand stone and ceramic tiles are excellent if you want under floor heating. I like wood, which is lovely to stand on, and linoleum which is incredibly hard wearing. Cushion floors are not expensive but they can tear. I recently saw the most amazing stone floor cut to look like wood, but sadly it is not available in the UK yet. When it is I look forward to using it.

Your work surfaces will probably be wood, granite, a stone composite or post formed laminate, depending on your budget. Do look at a large piece of granite if you are considering it. Some granites are very busy which you do not pick up from a small sample. I love wood as a work surface. If you are considering it then I suggest that a combination of wood floor, a mixture of wood and stone work surfaces and coloured units will always be a successful

combination. I like to vary the height of the work surfaces. One way of doing this is to have an island with two heights. If you are tall you can have units higher than the standard which makes working in the kitchen much easier. My partner and I work most comfortably with nearly 100mm or 4" difference in worktop height.

If you have a very small kitchen I think it is worth having a bespoke kitchen built by a specialist joiner or kitchen manufacturer. They can fit unusual sizes of cupboard or drawers into every corner so that no space is wasted.

Finally, when your kitchen designer presents you with the layout do the spaghetti test. Imagine that you are cooking and serving a meal to the family. Draw the journey from fridge to work space to cooker to sink as you create the dinner. If it looks like a neat triangle the kitchen is well designed. If it looks like the scribbles of a creative three year old then I suggest that you have a re-think and start over again.



ABOVE: Available from Davonport, this Shaker style hand painted kitchen is priced around £30,000.

LEFT: This beautiful hand painted kitchen in a classic shaker style has chamfer detail on the doors and pillars. A tall, vented larder with wicker baskets, a breakfast bar with wooden top and large wooden knobs was designed and installed by Simon Taylor Kitchens to the client's exact requirements.

RIGHT: This hand built kitchen is barely 5ft x 7ft and clever carpentry uses every inch of space.

