



# Homes you don't want to leave

CHRISTINE YORATH DESIGNS FOR COMFORT AS WELL AS STYLE, AS SHE EXPLAINS TO HELEN MEAD



Christine Yorath

When Christine Yorath was a schoolgirl, her essays contained a clue about her future career.

They were all about houses, and how they should look inside.

"I have loved interiors since I was a child," she says. "My mum tells me that all my school compositions were about 'my ideal home'."

Growing up, her passion for interiors did not wane. "As a teenager I bought House & Garden magazine before Vogue and I have a collection of Architectural Digest magazines dating back to 1973."

That early desire to create her perfect house

was to blossom into a lifelong career in property and interiors. She can cleverly transform any space into a stylish, comfortable and distinctive room.

Christine's interiors are very much her trademark, offering a look that is inspirational and timeless.

She started out not in property, but beauty, than a fledgling industry. She trained as a beauty therapist and owned the first beauty salon in Yorkshire before going on to lecture in the field. She is still involved in the beauty business - she and her daughter, TV sports presenter Gabby Logan, are European

representatives of the Metrin skincare company.

Her love of houses remained constant and in 1989 she bought her first investment property, kicking off a new career.

She hit the ground running, having already tackled a number of projects in the homes she shared with her former husband, footballer and Wales national team manager Terry Yorath.

"I had eight homes in four cities and two countries in the first 13 years of marriage," she says. "I was more than used to dealing with tradesmen and sourcing what I wanted."

She began by renovating and selling a terraced house in Oakwood, North Leeds.



After a few years of renovating and selling properties, she began to keep them to let.

Christine has since progressed to building apartment developments in Leeds city centre and the sought-after suburbs of Chapel Allerton and Roundhay.

"I developed my own rental and property management company which managed several hundred properties and which I subsequently sold," she says.

"I was able to put my stamp on everything from building materials to room layouts, kitchens, bathrooms, lighting, doors, wardrobes and décor. I completed many show homes and was involved in marketing. Often, buyers asked me to furnish their homes.

"I also often furnished properties for our landlord clients so I became experienced at furnishing according to the type of use and budget."

Meeting clients and getting to know them is a vital, and rewarding part of the job, says Christine.

"I find out what their expectations are, how they like to live and what they hope to achieve. Even if I am furnishing a show home I imagine the people I am designing for."

How a room feels is crucial. "Ideally it should be warm and comfortable, as well as functional with good use of space, then it's down to personal style."

Her own North Leeds Art Deco home is an imaginative mix of elegance, glamour and comfort. "For me it's eclecticism - I love a room to have interesting décor," she says. "I don't want a precious interior where guests feel they have to take their shoes off or are scared to put a glass down."

Once she knows her client, their aims and budget, she focuses on areas that are harder to alter later, such as door positions, fireplaces, wiring, sound systems, and plumbing.

She spends hours seeing suppliers and going to trade shows, and usually knows where to source what she needs. "I have many furnishings made bespoke so that I can get exactly the style, colour, fabric or material I want. I love finding new craftsmen."

Liaising with developers, architects, builders, and surveyors, on properties from new builds to historic buildings, the job is not as glamorous as you might imagine - in the early stages Christine can often be seen on site in a high-visibility coat, hard hat and steel toe-cap boots.

Some projects span years. "One area of my work is as a consultant to other developers. I have worked for more than a year in this capacity on properties at Howley Hall Golf Club in Morley, and similarly on five new homes, Harewood Villas, in Leeds and Biba House apartments in York."

It is important to Christine that her homes reflect her clients' personalities and lifestyle and are comfortable spaces in which to live.

"An interior can be photogenic, but if it doesn't have comfort, warmth and good form and function it won't survive. The test of a good design is that staying in is a luxury and when friends visit they don't want to leave."

Simple steps can transform a room. "It is often about getting rid of something rather than adding," explains Christine.

Lighting is one of the most important elements, she says. "It needn't be costly but light should come from many sources not just one, and be dimmable and warm - I don't know why anyone installs cold white light."

"It's also good to light up features and art work."

People can be afraid of veering away from traditional norms.

"I like to colour the ceilings to match or tone with the walls, I don't know why so

many people have a white ceiling regardless of the décor - it's like getting dressed up and not doing your hair.

"In my home I have a ceiling with gold glittery paper and one with special painting effects and a mirrored centrepiece - much less boring than white."

Christine's a mother of four with five grandchildren, and her son Jordan inherited his mum's passion, owning the Leeds-based property investment firm UK City Residential.

Gabby is also "brilliant at interiors" and has completed fabulous projects on her family homes.

"My daughter Lulu, a Las Vegas performer and model, has a 1960s home once owned by American TV host Johnny Carson, which she and her partner Elvis have refurbished."

Christine sadly lost her eldest son Daniel, a promising footballer, to an undetected heart condition at the age of 15.

She is immensely proud of her work, through which she has made lasting friendships with clients.

She is especially proud of the 18 apartments she built in a Grade II-listed building in Wellington Street, Leeds. "I won an architectural award for my lighting scheme and made every apartment individual with different kitchens, bathrooms and other features. I sold each one, achieving the highest price per square foot for an apartment in Leeds and held the record for many years."

Her own home, where she has lived since 1984, and extended, is her haven. "I love, love, love my home. I am so happy here," she says.

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