

MY ICON

REBEKAH CAUDWELL,
FOUNDER, REBEKAH CAUDWELL
DESIGN, REVEALS HER DESIGN ICON

Rebekah Caudwell founded her design practice in 2009. She is based in London and NYC with clients on both continents. Her design work is residential. In 2012 Nicolas Dupart, Rebekah's husband, took partnership one stage further and joined as co-President & CFO. Rebekah and Nicolas personally design and manage every project themselves, with the help of their team. They believe in value for the client and in creating something personal, warm and expressive.

WHO IS YOUR DESIGN ICON?

I'm fascinated by the early female originators of interior design. This was a field that started to become acceptable for women around the turn of the 19th century. The originators pushed all the boundaries with their intelligence, talent, ambition and charm. My favourites are Madeleine Castaing, Sibyll Colefax, Elsie de Wolfe and Syrie Maugham. And then there is Dorothy Draper who could make colour sing in the most outlandish and fabulous ways.

WHAT WAS DOROTHY DRAPER MOST FAMOUS FOR?

Draper was a maximalist through and through, and brought in the Modern Baroque. She created interiors like 1930s film sets, bringing the drama and glamour of Hollywood into people's homes and hotels. She was a pioneer, unafraid of colour, unafraid of pattern, unafraid of scale. We have seen much of this kind of work now, and she has spawned many great designers so it is hard for us to really comprehend how extraordinary Draper's colours and design were at the time. Alongside of her strong colour use she is renowned for her large-scale chintzy floral patterns, huge leafy carpets and extra wide stripes.

HOW WAS DRAPER'S WORK RECEIVED DURING HER HEIGHT OF PROMINENCE?

Draper was a six-foot tall beauty, extremely well connected in society, confident and a wit. She and her work were highly and widely admired. It may not have been to everyone's taste, but she was soon receiving important commissions. She was brought in to do the Carlyle Hotel, NYC. Subsequently the Greenbrier Hotel, W Virginia established her as the leading decorator of the day in the USA. The Hotel had served as a rehabilitation centre during WWII so she was tasked with transforming and relaunching it. The grand reopening attracted luminaries and society alike, with figures such as Bing Crosby and the Duke & Duchess of Windsor in attendance.

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN DOROTHY DRAPER AS YOUR 'ICON'?

I love fearlessness in life. This is not the same as recklessness. It is being able to live with courage, to follow your own path with your own convictions. I first heard the adage 'A life lived in fear is a life half lived' watching *Strictly Ballroom* by Baz Luhrman (another glorious maximalist!) and it is something that struck a chord and stayed with me. Draper did what she wanted, against convention, against the restrictions of gender and era.

IF YOU COULD BE REMEMBERED FOR ONE ELEMENT OF YOUR DESIGN, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Creating happiness. This is something that does not sound very serious, but ultimately there is nothing more serious in life.

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