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Perfect storm

Caught up in George Clooney's
whirlwind of charm



Guests who check into Kit Kemp's boutique hotels can expect vibrant, idiosyncratic interior design. Nicole Swengley wonders if her home follows suit.

Photographs by Rebecca Duke

ROOM SERVICE

Kit Kemp's flamboyant hotel interiors are a world away from the cream/beige/taupe rooms with geometric layouts and matching pairs of everything that frequently pass for chic hotel design. 'I've tried to do beige and white interiors but never can,' she says. 'Putting different colours together has always come naturally to me, and I believe an interior is much more enjoyable if it's lively and tactile.'

Kemp's decorative schemes reflect her passion for art and sculpture and her strong attachment to colour. 'I try to create an environment that's an adventure for the senses,' she says. 'So many hotels are formulaic and universal but when you're travelling you still want to feel like an individual. If a guest asks about a painting or sculpture, I feel I've really achieved something.'

As the design director and co-owner (with her husband, Tim) of the Firmdale Group, Kemp has decorated 10 boutique hotels over the past 23 years including the Soho, Covent Garden and Knightsbridge hotels in London, and the work-in-progress Crosby Street Hotel, due to open in New York next summer. What unites their interiors is a combination of exuberant glamour and comfort. Her brave approach to colour and distinctive choice of furnishings and artworks has raised the bar for the decoration of city-centre hotels – so



In the living-room of Kit Kemp's west London house, the cardboard cutout dog by Peter Clarke is one of her favourite pieces. More of these dogs appear in public rooms and guest rooms at the Knightsbridge Hotel. The sofa by Plinth is covered with old mailbag fabric with inside-out seaming. A pair of deeply buttoned Robert Kime chairs have fabric-covered legs and are upholstered with contrasting central strips

