

## Designer Interview | Dara Huang



We love sharing insights to the creative industry incorporating all aspects of design and innovation. Recently Editor Natasha had the pleasure to talk to interior designer [Dara Huang of Design Haus Liberty](#) on her inspirations and advice on entering a creative career.

Previous to setting up her own practice, Dara contributed to the new Tribeca skyscraper, 56 Leonard Street, New York City; The New Tate Modern Museum, London; and Manolo Blahnik stores worldwide. She was also personally invited to design the Samsung Pavilion for the London Olympics 2012.

Dara, please give us a little insight into your creative background.

Growing up I have always been creative. As a child, I was drawing and painting before I could read or write. While it probably started as finger paints and crayons, there was an acute level of detail that led to a series of art schools and winning local competitions.

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My passion for art and social obligation lead me to pursue a career in architecture, so that my ideas and creations can be important and pertinent to people's lives. This aim guided me to my masters at Harvard and first job at, my dream practice, Herzog de Mueron in Switzerland. Following this, I held a job at Fosters, before starting my own practice in 2013.

## What was your influence when you discovered interior design?

I am interested in design in all aspects from product, packaging, branding all the way to ground up new build. Interiors is just another category of design that is incorporated into my career, and something that has been requested of me by my clients. My role as architect is more complete, when I can design the interiors as well as the 'shell'. I feel the same way about landscape design - design should be continuous, in and out of the building. I taught interiors to myself; it's a whole other business intuitively, logistically, practically. There is another skill set that you must develop to begin to understand how to pair things. Ultimately, it boils down to taste and personal style.

## What have been your key inspirations for your design and concepts?

At first I was lost when I approached interiors, but I think that design works with your intuition; ability to curate, and create statement environments.

Having an architectural background my intuition wants me to work with the space first and use raw materials with textures, rather than just graphics and prints. After we've built the 'base' layer, we look at adding softer textures to the space to make it feel warm and inviting. The biggest criticism architects receive from their work is that it's too cold and not liveable.

## Describe your ideal space and interiors that have really impressed you.

I'll always be more inspired and attracted to architectural interiors



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over interior design and decoration. Some examples include; John Pawson, David Chipperfield, Joseph Dirand, and Vincent Van Duysen. I like filling interiors with interesting objects – old African stools, light objects by Michael Anastassiades, a statement sofa, and so forth. One of my essentials is amazing artwork, my personal favourite is Adam Ball.

## Are there enough opportunities for emerging designers to showcase their designs and enter this competitive industry?

Absolutely, that's like asking if there are any more songs to be written. Design will always be repeated, reinterpreted and reinstated – it's all about the approach and personal flair. I always say; if I knew how many people were competing in this industry I would have never joined it! But at end of day, passion and willingness drives me.

## What has been your most memorable success to date?

I think the perception of success changes, when I started the practice three years ago, winning our first RIBA competition felt like the entire world to us. These days we have prolific clients like Four Seasons or Art Basel and it's now hard to say if that is a success or just another day in the office. Regardless of the task at hand, every day I am thankful for being here and being able to create things that people are interested in. For me the true definition of success is to be happy.

## On a personal note, how would you describe your style?

Bold, edgy, monochromatic, simple and modern.

## Do you have any advice for designers entering this industry?

Everyone says stick to your guns, I know that sounds cliché, but it's true. There were urban concepts (integrating interior design) I was preaching two years ago, to my clients who didn't bite and now they are jumping at it.

An example of this is a large mixed-use scheme where I wanted to design a buzzy lobby lounge that was like a cafe, internet, soft seating and meeting area instead of a dead lifeless residential lobby like all the other developments. My point being, it sometimes takes the industry a while to recognise and appreciate your vision. Trends are there to be set, not followed.

I found inspiration for the idea of a buzzy lounge following my days in New York City. Making sure to travel, explore and ask questions, are the



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three biggest components when it comes to inspiration.

## Do you recommend any key resources for aspiring interior designers?

I don't read them. I use to work for Herzog that would constantly reference themselves or artists and I never really got that until now. What I mean is concept is best when born out of something abstract rather than copied.

## In your opinion is design an art or a science?

Both. Especially architecture, as it's very technical, beauty that has the ability to kill someone if not executed properly. It's the highest emitter of carbon dioxide and it's one of the pillars of basic human need. At the same time, it is one of the seven wonders of the world - an amazing part of culture and humanity.

We'd like to thank Dara for sharing her passion and inspiration on pursuing a career in the creative industry.