

A Week In The Life Of Stephanie Dunning

Stephanie Dunning has designed schemes and interiors for private clients throughout the UK and overseas since 1989, and was previously Deputy Chair of the BIDA. Stephanie is married to Peter Everard of The English Joinery Company, and with seven children between them they live in a recently re-constructed 18th century house close to Salisbury.

Monday

I love Mondays, the week starts with a morning of meetings and social media. This is a fairly recent activity to our timetable, but social media is now so important for any business and especially one that is design-led. Firstly we have a run down on what is happening during the week, who is going where, and what deadlines have to be met.

My senior interior designer Jenny and I have started a weekly notebook 'Indigo Blue' which will be launching soon on our website, as well as an informative 'Indigo Blue' podcast which listeners can tune into, and subscribe to hear Q&A sessions with ourselves and other designers, discussions on many design topics - and we break script to give you an insiders' view of the design world.



Penny does Instagram and Lizzie updates the website. The rest of the team continue with their general tasks. It is a little known fact that a design studio needs not only interior designers and interior architects, but accountants, CAD technicians and project managers to complete the picture.

We have our delivery of Graze boxes mid-morning and always have a bowl of fruit on the table. Tea and coffee are always on the go as are Spotify, but it has to be without words or I start listening to it!

Lunch is a time for chat and eating, I try to keep it light, sometimes it's tricky when we have a massive deadline.

Afternoons are for email catch up and design work. Currently we have two of

our very large projects that are at the crucial and very busy stage of specifying and ordering all FF&E (furniture, fixtures & other equipment), whilst we are in the planning and drawing stages of several other large projects, plus numerous smaller ones. This afternoon I am choosing artwork to complete the FF&E schedule on these two projects, and adding the breakdown of the curtains and blinds to Estimate which is the pricing programme we have used for 20 years, it's invaluable.

Monday evening is club squash night, followed by supper with my husband.

Tuesday

Today Jenny and I are meeting a new client in Bristol, he is a successful developer and has a fabulous home, but it looks like a typical generic



▲ development. He has asked us to create a home that is about everything they love, but works. This will mean saying goodbye to the cream carpets, everywhere and the cream tiled floors everywhere else. It is going to be a brilliant project for us - great client, reasonable budget, and an open mind. He says he called us because "we practise the dark art of interior design." He looked at our web site and has seen other projects we have completed. Love it!

Jenny is brilliant; she has taken notes of everything we discussed with the client, we already have a measured survey of the house with floor plans and sections, but took measurements of window and sill heights. The timeline is agreed so off home to report back to the team and start on this project next week.

Book club this evening, so no cooking; a dog walk and then off at 7.30. My book club is the best, we sometimes

read the book and sometimes we don't, nobody worries about that bit, but the conversation and the food are always fantastic!

Wednesday

This week is just a bit mad with client meetings. Today we have three site meetings, the first at 9am is on the south coast, looking at a site where we are designing a new pool house for a client we have already worked for, which is lovely.

Many of our clients return to us if they move, buy a second home or just need a revamp or extension of their existing home. They become good friends and it is a joy designing for them. So 9am on the coast with my husband Peter Everard of The English Joinery Company, and Jonathan, our CAD technician and interior architect, measuring and discussing the design, then up the road to an old barn where I am meeting Jenny to discuss redesigning the kitchen/dining/sitting

room, the entrance/drive, front door, master bedroom, bathrooms, and the estate colour.

Back to the barn, then Jenny and I are off west to meet a new client and an architect who we have worked with before, to discuss the interior design of a vineyard's new reception area, meeting and wine tasting rooms - the main house is yet to be built and will be part of the discussion.

Squash match this evening, it's at home so no travelling, thank goodness after today!

Thursday

Riding 9am until 11am - my passion - I ride twice a week, I would do more but there just isn't the time. There is a fantastic event stable up the road where they are a kind enough to let me ride one of their horses. If I hadn't become an interior designer I would have gone back to riding professionally. Although





I did train and qualify as a physio at St Thomas's London, I just didn't have the passion I have for design.

Back in the studio and now working with Jonathan on the design of a town house in Cambridge for a young professional couple. The floor plans are pretty straight forward but the exterior rear elevation is tricky. Getting from the ground floor to the garden and from the lower ground floor up to the garden has to be seamless and easy, but the heights are an issue.

I am in love with Crittall style doors and windows, they look just fabulous in a graphite or bronze colour. Now we have the technology to create these with

double glazing the options are endless, although they do not fold back in a series, which we have to make clear to our clients from the outset.

We have to have the final price for one of our big jobs completed by tomorrow, so the last couple of hours are spent with Jenny going over the figures yet again. If you want to be an interior designer, you need to be competent at maths, and if not make sure everyone else is...

Dog walk and supper, just Peter and me, bliss!

Friday
Dress down day! Jenny and Debbie

aren't in as they work part time and the 4/3 days work/play works really well. The studio is just a bit quieter, and today Penny, Lizzie, and I will get all the schemes for one of our large projects laid out on the design table with the paints, tiles, flooring, furniture and lighting images ready for Monday. We have a presentation a week next Thursday and so need to live with the schemes for at least two weeks to know we like/love everything.

We have already been working on this for three months with the drawings and inspiration images. Now it is a matter of checking everything is covered from the sofas to the loo seat, and the pull handles on the kitchen

▲ units. For a job of this size - a large five bedroomed house - there will be between 1300 and 1500 individual items that have to be specified, this does not include designing the floor layouts, elevations, specifying joinery and mirror detail, corning, doors, colour schemes, and outdoor furniture and paint colours.

We have to be so organised; interior design and architecture is unlike any other profession I know. The attention to detail is paramount but if you can't deliver your client's expectations on budget and on time then you have not fulfilled your role as an interior designer.

We may always have fruit on the table but a slice of cake on a Friday is a bit of a treat!

Friday evenings are either a trip to the theatre in Bath or Salisbury, or we visit one of our local restaurants or bars. I try not to drink during the week so Friday nights are keenly anticipated.

Saturday

Riding first thing, such a great start to the day, then a quick game of squash followed by a visit to Waitrose as six children are home for the weekend, always a treat. The afternoon is spent cooking, and hopefully an early evening trip to Josie Eastwood's Gallery and the Autumn exhibition. We love the collections she puts together and recommend our clients to her.

Sundays

I am going to lie in today, then go for a family walk, lunch with the family and then chill.

We have a really hectic week coming up, and what makes this even more exciting is that with improved technology, lighting, TVs, AV systems and building techniques all add to the extensive possibilities that are available in design. Interior design is something you live and breathe all the time and you have to be on it constantly to be as good as you can possibly be. However I wouldn't change it for anything else.

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