

# ROSE



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**Head to Head**

– with Tony Little

**STEM or STEAM**

– that is the question

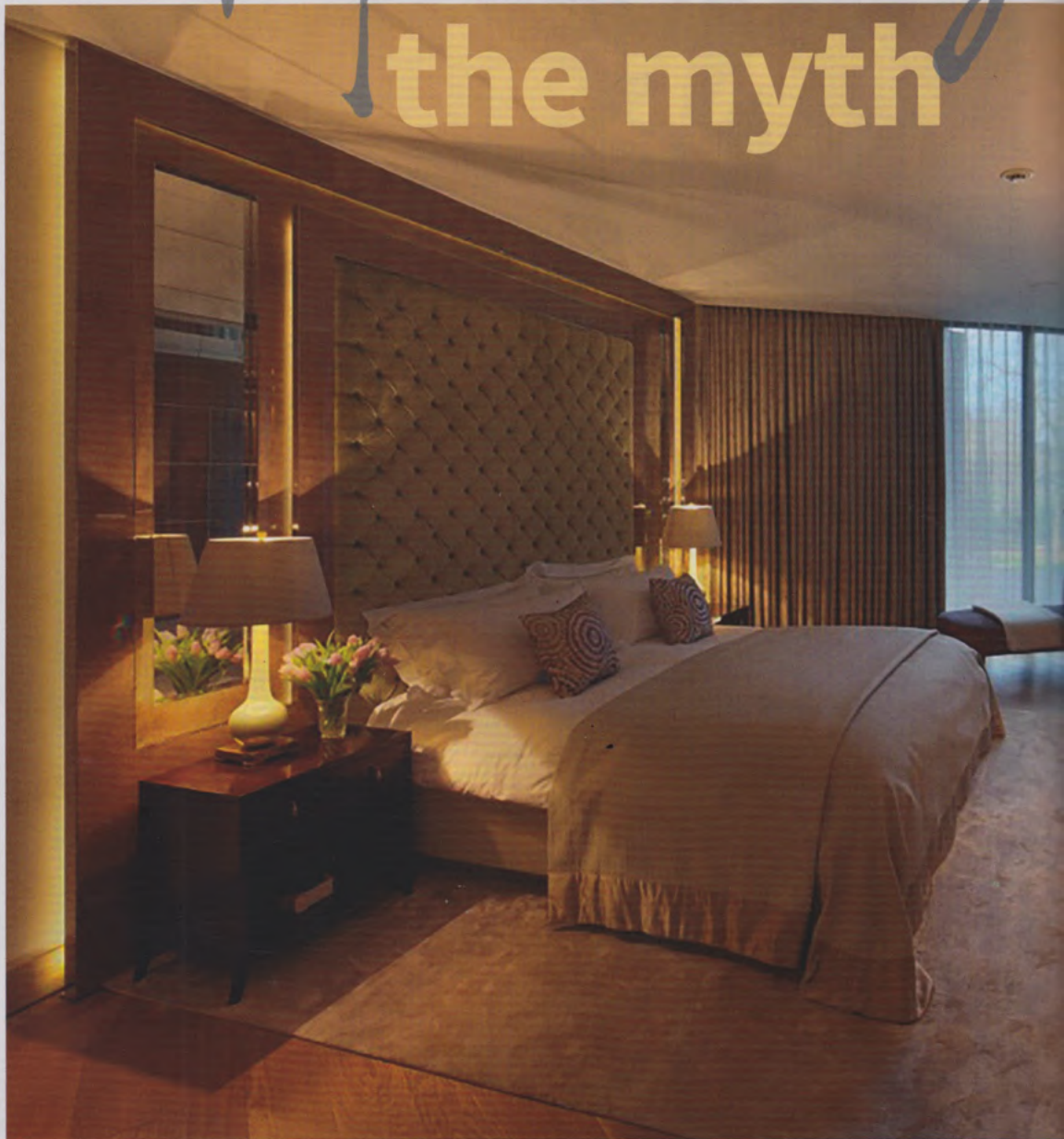
**21st Century Women**

– the challenges ahead

**Teaching Centre**

– future developments  
at Tudor

# Exploding the myth



*Below: The stepped joinery in the master bedroom at One Hyde Park*



## **Antonia Stewart**

**(Lazenby, 1993)**

explores the creative and management sides of interior design

**At Tudor Hall, I studied history of art,** geography and art at A level, a great combination as I enjoyed the two very different styles of discipline. On the one hand there was the structure of history of art and geography; two academic subjects requiring research, reading and essay writing. On the other hand, art required visualisation, hand to eye co-ordination, appreciation of materials, texture and colour as well as a great deal of imagination. Fast forward 25 years, and having chosen a career as an interior designer, my working life is still very much broken down into these two areas.

Interior design has two sides: the creative side for which it is known but accounts for no more than 20% of an interior designer's time, and the project management side of the business which encompasses client meetings, budgeting, ordering, payments, invoicing, financial spreadsheets and marketing. Both elements are inextricably linked and are critical to achieving fabulous, successful and unique interiors delivered on time and on budget.

I work on projects of all different styles, budgets and sizes. A typical project involves an initial meeting with the client, usually on site, to enable a full brief to be taken. Understanding the client and finding out how they like to live or whether or not they have existing pieces of furniture or artwork they would like to





reuse, is very important in laying the foundations for creating a home for them. I won one design project in London because of the five designers interviewed, the client felt I was the only one who listened to them and incorporated their ideas into my suggestions. I subsequently went on to work for the family for six years and have completed three further projects including another 5,000 sq ft house in central London and a large farm in Sussex.

After an initial meeting with a client, I put together a fee proposal outlining the various stages of the project and the associated fees. Once approved, the initial package of information starts to be collated often in conjunction with an architect. Building specifications are drawn up and sent to tender, and in-house work will commence on the furniture and electrical layouts, joinery sketches and drawings, soft furnishings, furniture and lighting schemes, schedules, budgets and timelines. During this time, several meetings are held with the client enabling ideas to be filtered ending up with the perfect distilled scheme.

Organisation and perseverance are required when delivering your scheme. Sometimes a scheme cannot be achieved as first imagined due to site conditions or limits to manufacturing techniques. A new idea may need a huge amount of time and effort to make it work successfully, and being able to think around a problem is critical. On a recent project at One Hyde Park, the client had approved some striking Art Deco inspired stepped joinery for the master bedroom using kidskin for the finish. However, at the manufacture stage it became evident that the goat hides were too small with the many seams distracting the eye and reducing the overall wow factor of the joinery design. After much thought, we found a specialist artist in Dulwich who digitally scanned in the natural design of the kidskin and tessellated the pattern across a huge area. The artwork was then printed out to scale and coats of stain and lacquer were added one by one, layering up the base until had a natural patina and depth to it.

This attention to detail, and research and imagination required to achieve it, is my favourite part of a job.



*For left: A close up of the computerised kidskin finish on the joinery. We combined the high gloss lacquered finish of the kidskin with a silk velvet on the headboard and antique mirror.*

*Left: A vignette from the master bedroom at the Oxfordshire house where we sourced antique furniture to work alongside a bespoke wallpaper, printed in this green specifically for this project.*


*Above: The client's brief for her new London kitchen was to have hand-painted tiles around her La Canche range. Having sourced a company to do the hand-painted tiles we then composed the design around a hunting larder theme. The design had to take into account the position of the cantilevered shelves, the range and the cooker hood, none of which had been installed when the tiles were being painted - and fired.*

Research and development is time-consuming but with perseverance some really spectacular outcomes can be achieved. At a 16th century house in Oxfordshire, the client wanted to reconfigure the previously unused attic space into two bedrooms and a bathroom whilst retaining the character of the building. We searched reclamation yards in Sussex to source and choose reclaimed timbers and employed the skills of local joiners to make doors, skirtings and architraves out of the reclaimed wood. A blacksmith made hinges for the doors to the original designs sourced from a book about the house.



*Reclaimed oak beams and joists were used to create a screen, door architraves and skirting in this 16th century cottage in Oxfordshire*

The key to interior design comes down to the relationships developed with suppliers. After many years in the industry, I have a phenomenal and far-ranging book of contacts. With increasingly demanding clients any interior designer has to be able to call on, or source if necessary, the right person for the job and so being able to forge and maintain good relationships with suppliers and manufacturers is the

key to bringing it all together successfully. There is no question that interior design is a fun, sometimes challenging, learning curve that involves a big skillset. If you thought interior design was all about fabrics, you would most certainly be wrong. 

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