

CHANGING ROOMS TO CRIBS: THE RETURN OF INTERIOR DESIGN TV

# ELLE DECORATION

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**DECORATOR INDEX**

**ECHLIN**

*This London duo are experts when it comes to adding light, space and natural beauty to interiors*

**Who are they?** Sam McNally and Mark O'Callaghan co-founded Echlin in 2011 and between them have a wealth of experience in design, fashion and property development. McNally, who heads up the design team in their Notting Hill studio, previously worked for high-end developers supplying bespoke furniture and finishes; his passion for design goes back to his childhood. 'As a family we moved house frequently, so creating new homes was something I grew up with,' he explains. O'Callaghan, meanwhile, is a retail and interior design expert who's had senior positions at Burberry, Mulberry and Alexander McQueen, as well as being an independent property developer. A dedicated traveller, he's on the lookout for great style wherever he goes. 'I'm always comparing different cities and the effect that good design has on the wellbeing of their inhabitants.'

**What's their style?** Echlin interiors feel serene and expansive, thanks to the duo's love of broken-plan layouts that create light, airy spaces (see point 3 in 'Expert Advice'). They're influenced by classic 20th-century design and Britain's industrial past – the latter comes through in their love of patinated metals, which they say have longevity and an imperfect beauty. 'We like to use natural, organic materials,' says McNally. 'You'll often see pale timbers and stones in our schemes, which give a sense of calmness. When combined with an abundance of natural light, they convey that all-important sense of space.' Wellness and sustainability are core to their philosophy. 'We rely heavily on inspiration from the location itself, but always



Mark O'Callaghan (standing) and Sam McNally

with an eye on wellbeing,' says O'Callaghan. 'Connections to nature are important; we're looking to create a calm, contemporary feel.'

**What are their recent projects?** Their newest design is a mews house in Knightsbridge. The decoration combines crafted natural textures with bolder colours, drawing on its owners' Middle Eastern heritage, while the architecture was remodelled to improve light levels. 'London mews properties often started life as stables or outbuildings, so are usually quite dark,' explains McNally. 'We heightened the ceilings, installed a six-metre-high living wall and added eight rooflights to transform how the property feels.' They've also recently finished a penthouse interior for Great Portland Estates, part of its Rathbone Square master plan. Inspired by the Bloomsbury Group artists who once lived in the

area, it features a palette of blues and greens and puts a modern twist on historical interiors. Updating heritage influences in an experimental way is something Echlin finds richly rewarding: in 2019 they transformed the Jermyn Street store of 300-year-old perfumer Floris with an 'imagined living space' inspired by its fragrances.

**What are they currently working on?** A penthouse for Canary Wharf Group on the 41st floor of a landmark new tower building and a collection of apartments on top of an existing building in Camden. Revamps of a grand Mayfair townhouse and a Belgravia villa are also underway. Meanwhile, the pair dream of designing bigger, mixed-use developments, where they can put their stamp on the capital's landscape in even more dramatic fashion. [echlinlondon.com](http://echlinlondon.com)





**Opposite** Natural light is key in this colour-rich living space in the largest Rathbone Square penthouse

**From top** A bedroom and the kitchen in Holland Park's Kenure House - completely rebuilt behind a Victorian façade, it's now a contemporary home with traditional proportions; the dining room and bathroom are part of Echlin's serene restoration of a Grade II-listed South Kensington townhouse



**'WE RELY HEAVILY ON INSPIRATION FROM THE LOCATION ITSELF'**



**EXPERT ADVICE**

*Sam McNally and Mark O'Callaghan on how to enhance light, space and nature in your home*

**1 We know greenery improves our wellbeing** and in the warmer months this is fairly easy to achieve. However, in winter, it can be hard to feel a similar connection to plants and nature. We like to think year-round in our approach and create an indoor alternative to the garden, installing living walls and internal planting schemes.

**2 Many of our projects are in dense urban environments**, where access to daylight is one of the biggest luxuries. We think carefully about how to get natural light into as many spaces as possible; if this can't be done easily, we either lean in to a dark space with interesting natural materials and textures or seek to maximise the light with reflective metallics and calming tones.

**3 The sense of flow between spaces is important.** We use a lot of broken-plan elements, such as dividers, sliding doors, linking steps and split levels, to create separate zones for living that can also work as one when required.

**4 Craftsmanship is a vital tool for creating atmosphere.** We work hard on the details to ensure elements are stitched together invisibly and services are hidden from view. We believe crafted materials with a handmade quality can enhance your wellbeing, delivering an artisanal feel that helps you connect to the space.



**THE LITTLE BLACK BOOK**

*Every project has its own unique list of suppliers and craftspeople. Part of making it special is finding the right mix*

**RUGS**

We love British rug maker Deirdre Dyson for her creative, high-quality designs, and her commitment to ethical production methods.

She's part of the Goodweave programme, which works to eradicate child labour in global supply chains.

[deirdredyson.com](http://deirdredyson.com)

**CRAFT**

Flow Gallery in Notting Hill is a wonderful gallery and shop that's local to us. Established 20 years ago by Yvonna Demczynska, it showcases work by phenomenal craftspeople and artists, including ceramicists, glassmakers, metalworkers, textile artists and more.

[flowgallery.co.uk](http://flowgallery.co.uk)

**LIGHTING**

CTO Lighting designs and makes contemporary lighting in the UK.

Founders Chris and Clare Turner work with the best British craftsmen and use refined materials.

[ctolighting.co.uk](http://ctolighting.co.uk)

**ART**

Cadogan Contemporary in South Kensington is a family business that's been in operation for over 40 years. It has an excellently curated and eclectic collection of both local and international artists.

[cadogancontemporary.com](http://cadogancontemporary.com)

