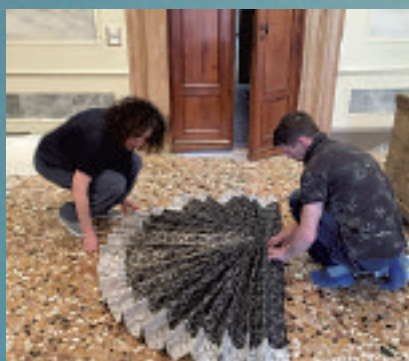


Venetian

inspiration



The Palazzo Michiel



Katherine working on the fan

ALEX JENKINS meets the Hove interior designer showcasing her work at a prestigious exhibition in Venice.

Katherine Richards is used to pushing boundaries with her work – challenging her clients to try something new in their homes.

Yet her most recent project and the reaction to it has taken her by surprise.

The Hove-based interior designer was invited to take part in an exhibition as part of the world-renowned and highly-regarded Venice Architecture Biennale, which is currently open in 'the city of canals' in Italy.

The opportunity came about after she was approached by So Far So Near – a London and Milan-based, Italian-inspired interiors shop, known for its unusual fabrics.

The Grosvenor Place company had secured a space at Venice Design 2016 and needed someone with a theatre background to come up with a design to showcase its collections.

However, Katherine's final creation, which was given the thumbs-up by So Far So Near, seems to have caused a stir among those behind the event, according to the designer.

"I came up with a design that I thought was dramatic and theatrical and showed the fabrics to their advantage," Katherine says.

"But it appears to be quite controversial

and seems to have rubbed people and I do not know why," she exclaims, describing it as a simple 'window display'.

"I do not know why it is so different."

The strong reaction to her design – which features So Far So Near's unique pure copper woven material as well as a stunning light installation by the Czech company Sans Souci – meant they were apparently *only* accepted into the show by the skin of their teeth.

And all of this was a surprise to Katherine and her team who only knew of the furore when she arrived in Venice to set up.

"There were people there that really did not want it there.

"One person came up to me and asked 'are you satisfied with the monster you have created'," laughs Katherine with a shake of her head.

"I feel like Tracey Emin with her unmade bed – it is the last thing I expected."

Despite all this, it is clear the designer has enjoyed the experience and feels honoured to be involved.

The exhibition, organised by the European Cultural Centre, is one of the first to show current design developments during the Venice Architecture Biennale.

Held at the prestigious Palazzi in Venice, Palazzo Michiel, it brings together an international set of designers from 17 countries, and aims to demonstrate that design might have a bigger canvas than just creating beautiful functional objects.



According to the exhibition's website, the works show 'how powerful an everyday piece can be and its ability to express and represent rituals, cultural particularities and embody human emotions'.

Clearly Katherine's work ticks the last criteria.

Her exhibition is designed to draw attention to the very unusual material So Far So Near is known for – a fabric that is unlike anything Katherine has worked with before.

"It is incredibly unforgiving and difficult to work with," she reveals when showing me samples of the copper woven material, explaining how it is stiff and does not drape.

In fact, it holds its shape so well that Katherine was able to create fans out of it.

Along with using six of these fabrics she also incorporated a satin silk from another of the fabric company's collections.

To tie the fabrics and the unusual light installation together and create interest, she balanced an electric blue chair high up in the display and used a matching coloured ribbon to tie everything together:

"The blue was inspired by all the gondolas as they are covered in this blue at nighttime. It is very Venetian," she says.

The display took three days to put together and was a work in progress as Katherine and the team altered parts of the design as they went along.

"It looks wicked," she says, with a satisfied nod.

"It is taking a while to sink in that I have an amazing exhibition in Venice for six months.

"They expect 300,000 people visiting, it is a massive international event, I am very proud of it."

“I feel like Tracey Emin with her unmade bed...”



The Venice Architecture Biennale is open until November 27. To learn more about the event, visit www.labiennale.org/en

For more about Katherine Richards Designs at 111 Portland Road, Hove, visit www.katherinerichardsdesign.co.uk



The Venice scene that inspired Katherine's design