

/ DESIGN

DEFINING AN ICONIC STYLE

Melissa offers a unique insight into the history of Quinta do Lago and talks us through her personal approach to interior design.

WORDS / MIKAILA MENEZES

Designing the most beautiful homes in the Algarve for over 15 years, Melissa Jane runs a full service interior design company, working on projects ranging from refurbishment, through full building renovations, to large scale new villas.

She has also been holidaying, living, and working in Quinta do Lago since its very beginning and so has a unique perspective on how the Quinta style has grown and evolved over the years. We met her at her showroom in Quinta Shopping to talk about the history of the resort and her role in defining its unique sense of style.



Melissa Jane, founder of
Melissa Jane Interiors



**Thanks for showing us around the showroom
Melissa! You're from the UK originally, when did
you first come to the Algarve?**

I first came here many years ago, in 1985, my husband at the time worked with André Jordan, and was involved at the very beginning in the creation of Quinta. He had a helicopter business, we used to fly down from Cascais - I suppose that was the start of something here!

At the time they were just starting Lakeside, I think the Four Seasons club was there, and Gigi's of course. It was a very different place back then, but even then it was a place of some memorable days.



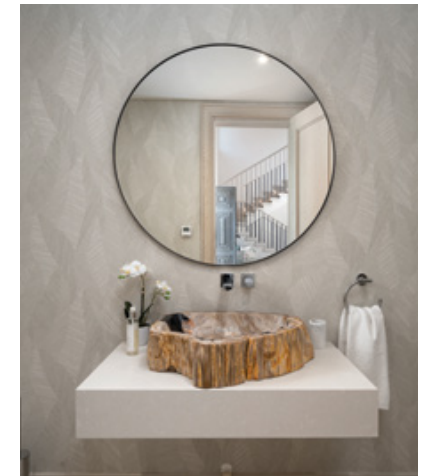
Quinta must have changed a lot since then?

In the last 8 years or so it's completely changed as it's become a year round destination. We used to spend 6 months here and then 6 months abroad, and I dreaded the winter months because there was no one here. But now there's a great sense of community the whole year round.

The financial advantages, year-round events, new facilities, you can really see the effects. There are so many people that come here now, it's become a lively place to visit throughout the year and the whole place has a different vibe from 15 years ago.

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visit throughout the year.”*



How did you get started in interior design?

Well I started doing it in England - and it used to drive me crazy! But we noticed a gap in the market here to renovate properties turnkey, for clients who wanted to just show up and unpack.

So we started our own development company, buying properties and renovating them, and luckily we just got out of it before the financial crash. Then as we neared the end of the recession, in 2014, we decided the time was right to open a tiny shop in Bougainvillea Plaza - but I never thought it would take off like it did!

One year later we had the shop in Quinta Shopping, people saw the houses that we'd done for ourselves and since then it's been renovating homes for other people instead!

It grew organically, it was never planned, our portfolio was the work we had done before the crash and that showed the quality of our work - and as people started to buy here again there was a huge surge of business.

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Interiors should feel harmonious, they should flow through the home.”

// WWW.MELISSAJANEINTERIORS.COM

// INFO@MELISSAJANEINTERIORS.COM

// +351 289 397 194

You have the shop in Quinta Shopping as a showroom?

Yes, we don't sell from the showroom, it's just to give clients a space they can really explore, so they can get a sense of our style, and it helps build trust in what we can deliver.

We redo the shop twice a year to reflect the current trends and styles, and we also have another office with all our samples and textiles for clients to go over all the details. It separates the two experiences, the overall style and then the fine details.

How would you describe your style?

Trends change, twice a year we go to a huge trade show in Paris, that keeps me ahead of current colours, trends, and fashions.

But I still have to like these trends myself. I think if you look through our portfolio, you can see that the interiors feel harmonious, that they flow through the home. I mean some clients want bold statements, but I tend to lean towards a more timeless style. Blending and flowing - but still with room for bold touches.

What is trending right now?

It's funny because when we first opened everything was stainless steel, glass tops...

5 years ago it all swung towards brushed steel, wood, and more tactile elements. It's like a cycle, that's why people renovate every 5-10 years. It's funny, because of this, we're getting some of our original clients coming back now!

You get a lot of repeat clients?

Yes, we do. Most of our clients are Irish, English, some Americans, and, increasingly, Central Europeans, but it's interesting, wherever they're from, most clients want that Algarve style, it has to fit the lifestyle here, its minimalist, people want it open, uncluttered, outdoorsy - different to what they have back home.

We work closely with our clients, we love when they have a clear idea of what they want. We can do everything for them from here, from project management to interiors. We have built a network, a great team and long-term relationships with local tradesmen and suppliers.

Do you ever miss the UK?

Well I'd never move back! Waking up to blue skies is too great a feeling. It's understated here, in Quinta no one dresses up, everyone is relaxed, everyone's the same - it's only the cars that give it away!

