

BUSINESS PROFILE

# Bhavin Taylor

Owner of Bhavin Taylor Design

Words **Markus Bidaux**  
Photography **Jamie Field**

**A**fter discovering that the fashion world really is full of Prada-wearing devils, Bhavin Taylor switched his career path to the more welcoming realm of interior design. He now runs his own interior design service, although he admits that no industry is perfect when we discuss the lack of racial diversity in the sector.

**Why did you decide to go into interior design?**

When I first graduated, I did fashion design, which was something I wanted to do for a very long time. I loved studying it, but as soon as I got into the industry, I hated it. I did about two years, and then I ended up working in finance, of all things. Then, in 2009, I had one of those moments where you have that decision about where you're going in life and saw that interior design was something that has always been a passion of mine. I decided that was the way forward and went back to school and studied it.

**What are the differences between the worlds of interior design and fashion?**

I found that, in the fashion world, the people weren't very nice, and it was always a case of someone wanting to kind of stab you in the back. And I just felt that, for me to succeed, I'd have to become a person I'm not and that was something I wasn't prepared to do. The interior design industry is a lot more friendly; people support each other and it is generally a much nicer industry to be a part of. Because most of my work is for residential clients, you really create a bond with your customer.

**Do you have a team or are you a one-man band?**

I'm a one-man band. Obviously, I employ specialists as and when needed, but pretty much it is just me, myself and I.

**How would you describe your design aesthetic?**

Everything that I do is based on my company motto, which is: Love colour, embrace pattern. Basically, the way I go about each and every project is so they're all catered to the individual customer. I try and get to know as much as I can about them, to extract their

personality and the things that they're not actually seeing, because a lot of people come to me and they're like, "We just don't have a vision." I try and dig down deep and figure out who they are as a person. And from that, I work out what level of colour and pattern I can use with them. My style is to push them a lot further than they would potentially go on their own, and then push them a bit more than that.

**What do you say to clients who want a Harrods-furnished home, but have an Ikea budget?**

To be honest, whatever budget someone sends me is never enough. But you've just got to work with what people are giving you, and if the budget is, as you said, on the Ikea end, you just have to be smart about how to create the best home and visual impact that you can within that budget. One of my

**"If you love something and you want it in your house, have it"**

first projects was a £5,000 budget to dress the whole property.

**Do you have any examples of a situation with a difficult client which you turned into a positive experience in the end?**

I had a customer once who just couldn't visualise what I was trying to present to them. It got to the stage where they wanted to visit a carpet showroom with me. I avoid taking clients to showrooms, knowing it's going to be overwhelming, and the whole reason they are hiring me is to narrow things down for them. We went to the carpet shop and pulled almost every sample out, to then have the client say they were super-confused. We kept filtering through the samples until we narrowed it down to the sample I had put forward in the first place. It wasn't an ideal situation, but it did give them the trust to just jump on board with what I was suggesting.

**Have you had to deal with cowboy builders?**

One of my first projects was one outside London, so I had to hire local tradespeople.

Together with the client, we narrowed it down to a guy who promised to do a lot of work within the client's tight budget. It started off great, but as the project went on, there would be days when there was no one on site, and after chasing him, it turned out he had taken on more work than he could handle. When he did turn up, he was just doing cover-up work to make it look like he was working, rather than doing the things that needed to be done. It got to a point where we ended up firing him and finding someone else last minute. Luckily, six years on, I have a full range of reliable tradespeople.

**How quickly do you think design trends change?**

Firstly, I'm not a fan of the term 'trends', because they change so quickly and people can't keep changing their houses at that pace. And just because it is a trend doesn't mean it's a good one or that it suits everyone.

**Do you think the avocado-green bathroom will ever come back into fashion?**

Personally, I love a coloured bathroom. Will avocado come back? I'm not sure, but I'm seeing more colours and styles coming through, like pink and blue.

**Have you done a pink bathroom for a client?**

Not yet, if there is anyone out there... I tell a lie, I have done one for myself.

**What is your top design tip?**

If you love something and you want it in your house, have it. Don't feel you have to ask each and every person you know whether they like something. It's about you; if you like something, have it and make it work within your interior.

**What lesson do you wish you had learned before you started your own company?**

As much as you think you can do everything by yourself, it's not possible. Previously, I did all the accounts, but now I've learned to bring in an accountant to let them reduce my stress and pretty much take advantage of their expertise. My mind is design, project management and things like that. So, if you can avoid doing everything and you can afford to pay someone else to do it, then do it.

**You were recently a panellist for an online forum with *Frame* magazine, discussing the** >

## CV

**2003**

Graduates with a Bachelor of Fashion Design and Textiles from University College Northampton

**2009**

Earns a Certification in Interior Design from KLC School of Design

**2010**

Design assistant for Maurizio Pellizzoni Design

**2012**

Interior designer and visual merchandiser for Liberty

**2013**

Freelance design assistant for Andrew Pike Design and Moment Design and Production

**2014**

Starts Bhavin Taylor Design



**under-representation of BAME people in the interior design industry. Can you tell me what was discussed?**

Basically, the format of the panel was to discuss our experiences from the past, present and the future. So, for myself, coming from an Indian background, a creative industry isn't always one that we're encouraged to do, because our parents are not seeing it as a safe and secure job further down the line — just because we're not seeing any role models that look like me that I can then relate to or look up to them and say, "Look what they're doing. It is possible."

Presently, diversity is a huge topic, but this is definitely something that I've been talking about for a long time now and I have been wanting to change how the industry is portrayed and bring forth people of colour, like myself, into the foreground. Bring us in at the same level of all the celebrity designers you see in the media. I'd like to help myself and other people get a similar level of status. And then, hopefully, in the making of these changes, it will encourage and educate people of any age to say, "OK, the interior design industry is diverse and is something that we can be a part of."

**How can we break down the barriers to allow BAME people to enter the industry?**

There are definitely barriers in terms of not feeling a part of those industries. I wouldn't say there are closed doors or anything like that, but when you look at the interior design industry itself, it's very white-faced. And that can be quite daunting for people who don't have the strong will to deal with that on a daily basis, or if you know you don't want to stand out in a crowd. For myself, I'm quite strong. I can find my way through, make some noise and make myself heard, whereas a lot of people from cultural backgrounds may not want to draw attention to themselves.

**Do you think the recent publicity surrounding the Black Lives Matters protests is changing how consumers interact with BAME-owned businesses?**

It's taken such a horrific situation in America to happen to get people talking, which, firstly, is really a sad situation in itself; it shouldn't need something of this level to get people talking. But on the positive side, people are talking, people are being made aware, and the best part is, people are listening to what people like myself are saying and listening to our experiences and they're working out how they can move forward and make sure that they are promoting or employing or collaborating diversely.

**Do you think being of Indian descent has slowed your progress in the industry?**

This is a tough one, because I don't think it



**PASSION FOR PATTERN:** Bhavin's style is all about using bold colours and prints

T. R. APPLETON

has because of the type of personality that I have: I'm going to fight my way [through] and keep going. One thing that I have been trying to do ever since I joined the industry is put myself forward for TV and interior design shows. And still to this day, things have started to happen, but have not got sign-off from channels, or show formats have changed — you never really know what's happening in the background on these things. I don't think I'll ever know if it was the colour of my skin that stopped it or if there were other reasons.

**"When you look at the interior design industry, it's very white-faced"**

**What sort of television programme would you like to see on TV that would ignite people's passion for interior design?**

One where I'm in the lead role [laughs]. We need more shows that showcase a range of diversity within the industry. And, more so, we should move away from very safe, what I call, 'greige' design (a mix of grey and beige), and just start having programmes which showcase braver, bolder design to encourage people to be braver with their own homes as well.

**Ethnic designs, patterns, textiles have often been adopted by Western designers. Where is the line drawn between appropriation and celebrating different cultures?**

In this day and age, everybody is using bits and bobs from here, there and everywhere to develop their own style or adapt to what

customers want. But all of these ethnic influences have come from traditional local crafts and there is a responsibility for everyone to go back to the original people who are making them to employ and promote them, rather than trying to recreate these things and create potentially misinterpreted versions.

**What advice do you have for BAME and LGBTQ youth wanting to break into the industry?**

First of all, don't be afraid to enter the industry at all, if that's where your passion is. It's definitely not an easy industry; each day presents a different obstacle, especially being self-employed. One minute you've got so many clients and in the next minute you can have none. It's a very up-and-down industry to be a part of — especially with the current situation. But I always say to people, if you really believe in something, and it's something that you really want to do, don't let anybody get in the way of following your dreams.

**Where do you see your business in five years' time?**

I plan to continue to grow my interior design business — expand my range of products that I will be launching later this year, in-house and through collaborations with other companies. And, hopefully, in the near future, have my own TV show, in which I create interior spaces that are bursting with personality — in the hope that I will (a) inspire home owners to be braver with their interior choices and (b) inspire the new generation (and all ages) of BAME designers to become a part of the industry. 🎯

**bhavintaylordesign.com**  
**@bhavintaylordesign**