

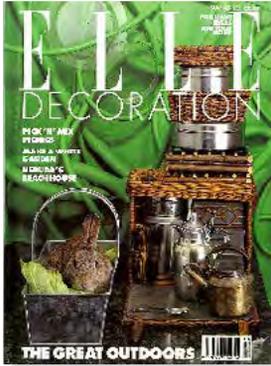
# 1989



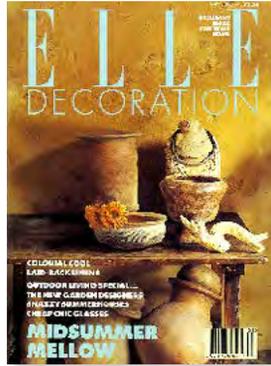
# 1998

# ILSE CRAWFORD

*Ilse Crawford was the founding editor of ELLE Decoration UK, which launched in 1989. She edited the magazine until 1998*



1991



1993



1997



1998

## Why did you decide to launch ELLE Decoration?

It started off as a supplement with ELLE, but it suddenly took off. I was young – 27 or 28 – and there was obviously a gap in the market for people of my age who were buying first or second flats. My friends were people like Georgina Godley and Tom Dixon – none of them were about to move into Laura Ashley any time soon!

## What did the interiors landscape look like when you launched ELLE Decoration?

Utterly different – the only interiors coverage was in trade or very traditional homes magazines. Ours was the first useful consumer design magazine; the first that actually took design into the domestic sphere. Shops that sold modern design were almost non-existent. No one knew where to get contemporary furniture – it was still a contract thing. In a way, my favourite shop was ELLE Decoration. What was great about our philosophy was the idea of mixing high and low – a Welsh blanket with a Cassina sofa and something from The Conran Shop. No one else brought those things together at that time.

## What was it like editing a magazine then?

Very hard work! We were a tiny team in a tiny back room, working all hours, but we were fantastically enthusiastic. We were very much looked down on by other magazines published by Hachette because they all had their glamorous racks of thin clothes and we had great piles of furniture and boxes of paint. We were known as ‘Dennis the Menace’.

## Share with us a memory from your time as editor.

I remember the worst shoot ever. I sent a stylist to Miami to shoot inflatables in a pool and absolutely everything went wrong. The person who was supposed to set up the shoot turned out to be a complete fraud and hadn’t done anything, so this poor girl was left with the responsibility of almost a whole issue’s budget. I remember running around London

trying to speak to her on payphones, because there were no mobiles then. I was always convinced I was going to be fired the next day anyway, so in a way it was quite liberating.

**Name four designs that you loved then that you still love now.** The ‘Tolomeo’ lamp by Giancarlo Piretti and Michele de Lucchi for Artemide, because it works so well. A 1960s lamp by Danish designers Fabricius & Kastholm (pictured). I have some glasses by Ingegerd Råman, who’s amazing. I’ve always loved African stools, too. Most of the things I loved then I still love – good design lasts.

## What do you love most about ELLE Decoration today?

It’s international, optimistic and relevant.

In a global context, it really stands out.

## What do style and living well mean today?

I’m absolutely not interested in style. That comes as a consequence of having a coherent, ethical attitude to how we live – being aware of human behaviour, of what’s happened before us and what happens after us in terms of sustainability.

## What did you do after you left?

Number one, panic. Number two, I went to work at *The Observer* on the style pages.

Then I got a call from Donna Karan asking whether I would like to go and work in New York. I launched homeware for her. It was fascinating, but after a couple of years, being a corporate girl didn’t appeal, so I set up my own studio in 2003. I was asked to do Soho House New York, and it hasn’t stopped since. Now I have 25 people working for me; we’re doing projects all around the world.

## Have you carried through what you learnt as editor into your current work?

Definitely. Being a magazine editor teaches you so much about people. I must have looked at thousands of houses over ten years, which was an education in itself. The other thing that was hugely useful was learning how to communicate, because building spaces is all about communication. ►

