

YPN NO HOLDS BARRED PROPERTY COURSE REVIEW

THE COURSE:
Interior Design Workshop
HOSTED BY:
Julian Maurice, Icon Living

Interior design is a sexy topic – who doesn't love the 'property porn' before and after photos and TV programmes where interior designers have worked wonders? Beware confusing design, however, with décor. The sumptuous colours, lighting and fabrics that make up the 'after' shots are the final stage of a much longer, well planned process.

It is this level of preparation that forms the heart of Julian Maurice's interior design workshop. The day is dedicated to getting your product right, from the business plan phase right through to presenting that product in a way that will appeal to your target customers. To that end, an important part of the course is about the refurb – get the details right at this stage, and the décor phase becomes much easier. Retro-fitting is never a good idea and if you're going back to brick, it makes sense to plan it properly before you put it all back together again. This is what Julian will show you how to do.

Who is it for?

First up, this is interior design for property investors, so the numbers play an important part. As Julian is a former building contractor and an investor, the day is geared towards getting a good return from your property investment.

The course starts with identifying your market, and where you want to position yourself in it. HMO and serviced accommodation operators will get a lot from this, as it covers how and where to do your market research. But you will also benefit if you are in the buy-refurb-sell business. What you will learn will give you the knowledge to set yourself apart from the competition when it comes to presentation and (particularly important for any form of rental) durability of your product.



What's it like?

Julian keeps course numbers below 20, so the day has an intimate feel and the small group means there are plenty of opportunities to ask questions. The venue, I feel, is carefully chosen to complement the course. It is held in a hotel that is

individual, full of character and beautifully designed and maintained. On top of that, the food and coffee were ace.

Small as the group is, this is a full-on day, so be prepared! Taking in information on the complete product creation process – from finding the right product to getting it ready for market – can blow your mind and this, perhaps, would be my only, though very minor, criticism. There's almost enough content here for two days, but that would inevitably push the price up, as well as travel and overnight costs; and plenty of people travelled far and wide for this course, from all over the UK.

What did I learn?

To list out all that I learned would eat up all of the space allocated for this review, so I will condense it by saying ... a lot! I attended the course with two projects in mind, expanding and refitting an HMO and a refurb on a 1950s bungalow. I came out of it

with a stack of fresh ideas for decorating – not least of which was how to go about creating your own colour scheme and signature look. But the real gem for me was in planning and managing the refurb. Julian covers everything from how to identify what you need to do (bearing in mind the all-important customer perspective), to spec'ing it out, to communicating effectively with your trade team. He also covers what you need to know to make sure your project complies with the law and safety procedures.

One of the risks of a course like this is that you leave at the end of the day and forget the lot. True to his design principles, Julian has thought that through too, and provides materials to support you long after you have arrived back home and got back to work on your properties.

I've done a lot of professional courses in my working life, and Julian's manual is by far the best I have seen. It comprises fact sheets, design and décor themes, suggestions for fittings and suppliers, sample forms, checklists and more. He also provides a USB containing the slide presentation with supplementary documents and materials – all beautifully branded and presented. The manual alone is a lesson in design.

Did the course deliver?

The answer is a resounding yes! If you want to set yourself apart from the crowd in your market, it's a no-brainer. And you get to play with colours and fabrics on the day – what could be better!

