

# in+ ex

## in[sight]

A profile of the influential individuals, companies and partnerships driving the interior design industry forward

## ex[rated]

inex showcases striking exterior installations and products that blend cutting-edge design with practicality

## in[spire]

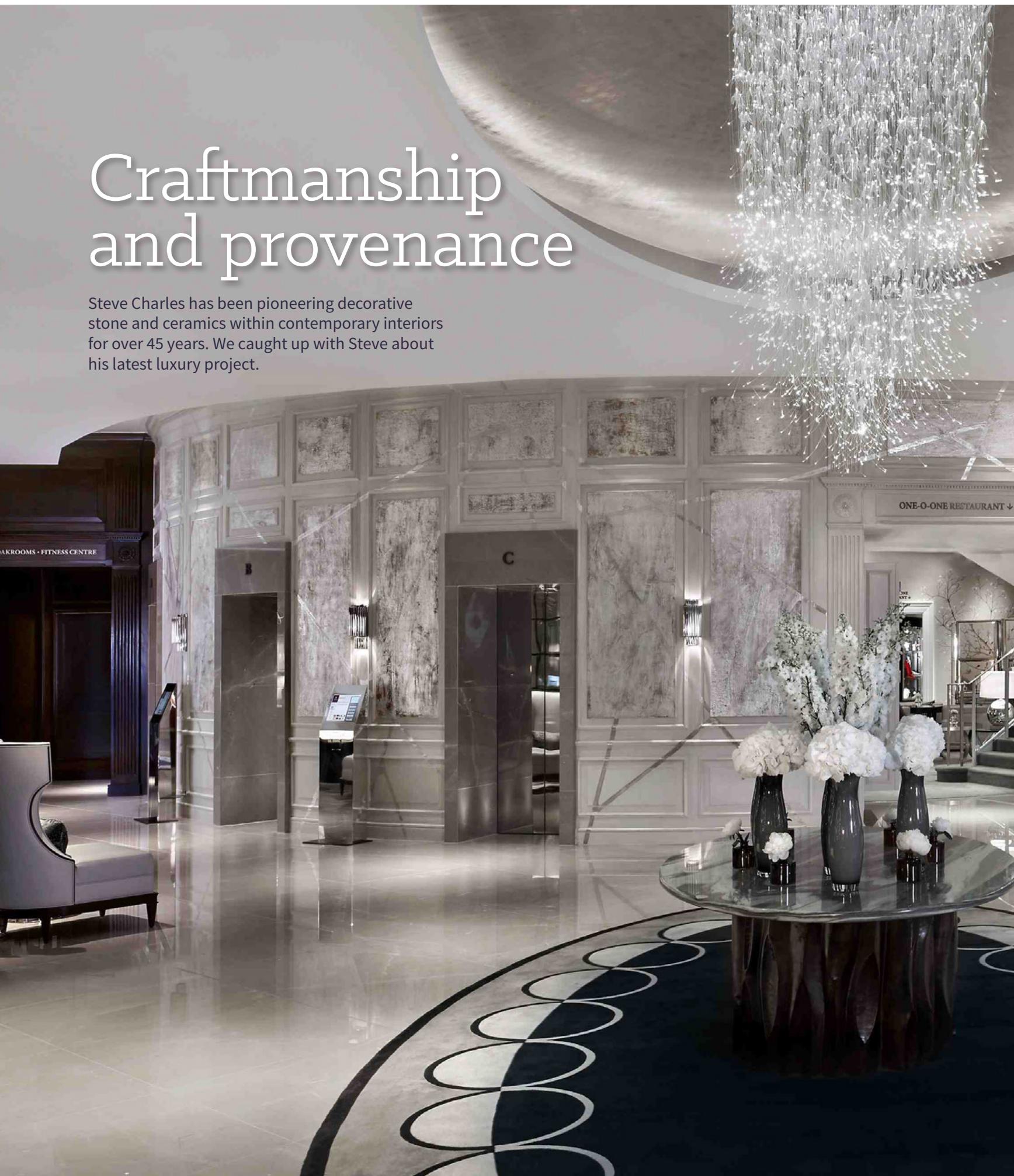
Helping professionals to keep abreast of trends, this focus highlights styles in texture, pattern and tone

## ex[pose]

inex unveils the greatest iconic furniture pieces still prevalent in today's contemporary design world

# Craftmanship and provenance

Steve Charles has been pioneering decorative stone and ceramics within contemporary interiors for over 45 years. We caught up with Steve about his latest luxury project.







Steve began his career in the tiling industry and opened his first shop in the early 1980s when he founded Paris Ceramics. To break with the ubiquitous quarry tiles and mass produced 6" square bathroom 'splash back' tiles, Steve launched first his reclaimed antique stone and terracotta floors and then a wave of handmade products which celebrated ceramic craftsmanship and provenance.

Not seen anywhere in Britain before, he forged enduring relationships with leading designers and architects in Britain, USA and Europe who all demanded his products for their most prestigious clients and innovative projects.

He launched Decorum Est in October last year, along with founding partner David Abrams, to offer a service that they felt could not be found anywhere else. "We are not just commissioned for our specialist expertise in rare decorative surfaces, but also consultation services that include sourcing and provenance for unique and rare materials, colour studies and historical research," explains Steve.

"We launched Decorum Est to provide customers with a unique, tailored service like no other in the market. From sourcing the rarest materials to the implementation of the most complex and intricate designs, we work with our

clients and architects from the outset of a project to ensure a wholly collaborative process. We use a revered network of highly skilled craftsmen from around the world, each with unparalleled expertise in their field, which enables us to realise any project no matter how complex or extraordinary."

Steve and David worked closely with interior designer Anita Rosato to transform The Park Tower Knightsbridge hotel's lobby, bar and lounge areas to create opulent public areas that would "wow" guests staying at the hotel.

"We employed our signature Decorum Beige marble for the lobby floor and lift, an established and beautiful

Left: The double height domed ceiling in the lounge area is transformed with a stunning chandelier. Below: Decorum Est used Decorum Beige marble for the lobby floor and lift.



marble used in the construction of Epidaurus' Theatre in Greece, for a truly luxurious feel. We finished the reception desks in the lobby with Maroon Emperor, an elegant Spanish marble with chocolate brown colouring and cream veining, and Belgium Blue stone for the external floor of the hotel's forecourt, a material synonymous with timeless quality that was also used for Burberry's flagship store on Regent Street," continues Steve.

"When creating a luxury hotel environment, the choice of materials and how they are employed is paramount as well as ensuring that it is fit for purpose as well as looking beautiful. Stones, for example, need to be really dense with a water absorption rate of around 0.2 so that the stone is hard enough and therefore practical

for a high traffic area. Only then can you think about its aesthetic and the finishing touches."

In order to produce only the very best in materials and craftsmanship, Steve has travelled to the furthest corners of the world for the past three decades to discover the very best craftsmen around. Their services include sourcing and provenance for unique and rare materials, colour studies and historical research. Working with talented craftsmen and artisans in Britain too, he is constantly innovating and pushing boundaries to design in almost any natural surface material, accessing techniques from many different cultures which are now extremely rare and practiced only by very small numbers of craftsmen.

"Alternative flooring materials are on the rise, especially concrete derivatives which can be made from a mould. They can replicate virtually any texture and, because shapes and designs can be set within the moulds, they are a great material to work with and I see them being a real trend in 2014.

"At Decorum Est, we make organic shapes from these moulds, like the scales of fish, which can produce truly opulent floors. Another key trend is using different materials, like liquid metal on

Below: Decorum Est contributed to the refurbishment of the lobby, lounge and bar areas at The Park Tower Knightsbridge hotel.

Right: Steve Charles (left) and co-founder David Abrams.

Lower right: Antique techniques updated with contemporary technology were used to transform the space.

limestone, to create surfaces that really stand out. Finally, expect pattern to be big next





year. From fashion to textiles and flooring, pattern will be everywhere in 2014.”

Decorum Est opened a flagship store on London’s King Road last year and have since opened a second in Petworth, West Sussex. “We are always looking to experiment with different products and materials, so you can expect to see some really fantastic collections launching over the coming months,” says Steve. “Early next year we are launching Hollywood, a collection inspired by 1940s Hollywood glamour that I think will be hugely successful. We are also hoping to create a diffusion line of furniture, collaborating with a furniture label to surface their tables, desks and coffee tables for example with our rare materials.”

When asked what piece of advice his career has benefited from, Steve answered: “Always trust in your own conviction and try not to be influenced by those around you.”

[decorum-est.co.uk](http://decorum-est.co.uk) «

