



# MODERN MASTERS

The meeting of old and new, vintage and contemporary, technology and function, are ideas that Russian clients and designers are keen to employ. Lorna Davies investigates the trend

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**OPPOSITE AND BELOW:**  
Gregory Phillips designed this  
Berkshire country home for a  
Russian client

**W**ith an increasingly global world, it's no surprise that Russian and CIS interiors style has expanded to reflect worldwide trends. The mixing of old and new is a common theme among

luxury residential both in Russia and the CIS and London. Interiors experts say clients are increasingly asking for contemporary design and cutting-edge technology mixed with vintage treasures or artwork harking back to old estates, dachas and the bourgeois apartments of the Belle Epoque. Clients are mixing ideas and movements, from classic and art deco, to art nouveau and 1960s.

"At the moment we have a period when it's impossible to identify any single particular style... it's a huge mash-up. Overall I'd say that universalism is the keyword in today's design," says Oleg Klodt, director of his namesake design firm.

"Technology and functionality are now the two key elements," says Anna Agapova, head of interior design at the Moscow-based bureau. "We take styles which have been developed over centuries, and whose emergence has needed a huge amount of time, but time is in desperately short supply in our modern world. We transform styles using the latest technological trends, and this is how design is developing."

Oleg Klodt has worked on projects for private homes, corporate and leisure businesses all over the world, but the approach is consistent.

"My personal approach to my work always remains the same – you have to give every single project the greatest possible care, responsibility and creativity that you can... no matter whether it's in Moscow, London or New York. The special aspect of working in London is that you need to know in depth the local regulations governing architectural work. By contrast, in every building in Moscow, even in listed buildings, architects still have a great deal of liberty. But in London, things are very different. The moment you start designing any







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Lasvit's light installation spanning six floors.  
TOP RIGHT: Eclectic design by Oleg Klodt



kind of interior that's inside a historic building, you're already seriously reined in. You're obliged to respect the style of the building's period in every detail: the doors, the cornices, the skirting boards, everything. But it's a scenario which has its pluses and minuses – yes, you become hemmed in, but the restrictions can actually prompt you into looking for unorthodox creative solutions," Oleg says.

Although they work in a range of styles depending on the client, the classic English approach is close to Anna and Oleg's hearts, so they use British furniture and products in interiors in Russia and beyond. Art is an incredibly important element of the design.

"We have an art department, which is continuously involved in monitoring major art exhibitions and important art markets. Alongside that, we actively prowl the flea markets, and enjoy doing so. I might be going past a market, pop in to look around – and find some amazing door-handle, which I then bring back to be used in one of our projects," Anna says.

The project budgets can be "wildly different," says Oleg. "There are quite a lot of clients who don't limit us on budgets, while there are others who want to impose specific fees for the design work, and try to cut corners. If asked to name a figure, I would say from €4,000-5,000 (about £3,500-4,500) per square metre up to €9,000-15,000 (£8,000-13,500) per square metre. We're very flexible with budgets, and everything depends on the complexity of the project."

Bespoke commissions are common in the market, and this is something lighting designer Lasvit – a Prague-based firm with offices and showrooms in London, Moscow and across the world – is experienced in. The stunning light installation [pictured above] consists of hand-blown glass beads which form doubled layers that spiral around a crystal centre, resembling the double-helix of DNA. The installation as a whole is monumental, measuring 17 metres and spanning the entire height of a private Russian-owned London residence, with separate circuits for each of its six-floor span.