

**BRITISH ARISTOCRAT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER  
LADY HENRIETTA  
SPENCER-CHURCHILL  
VISITS ABU DHABI**



**'I spend 90 per cent of my time running the business these days but it's still something I really enjoy'**

**T**all and slender with beautiful skin, belying her 49 years, Henrietta Spencer-Churchill, or Lady Henrietta to you and I, shows no signs of the seven-hour flight which brought her to Abu Dhabi from her native London just hours before we met up. In fact, very little flusters the daughter of the 11th Duke of Marlborough, whose upbringing behind the gilded gates of one of the UK's most illustrious addresses, Blenheim Palace, could very easily have bred a trust fund princess rather than the highly successful businesswoman and author who stands before us. Born into the aristocracy and a privileged life in rural Oxfordshire, Lady Henrietta studied in Paris and Florence before finishing her education at the illustrious Inghild School of Design. After first working below a famed interior designer, Diana Hanbury, Lady Henrietta launched her own company, Woodstock Designs, named after the area surrounding her family home, in 1981. She has gone on to write nine books and lectures across the world on interior design, which is what brings her to Abu Dhabi. Lady Henrietta sits down with Hello! to discuss her passion for interiors. **Welcome to Abu Dhabi, tell us a little about what you are doing here?**

"I would love to say I'm on holiday but I'm in town for work. I'm here to lecture on Classic Interior Design at the *Living with Art* seminar in Abu Dhabi. I'm also promoting my latest book on Georgian architecture and interior design called *The Georgian Style: Living with Refinement, Proportion and Elegance*."

**You have written nine books so far with your latest focussing on your family home, Blenheim Palace. How was that experience?**

"It's an historical book focussing on the building rather than my family so there wasn't too much need to interview my nearest and dearest. I knew a lot of the history then I went to the Blenheim archives and the British Library to do research. It was really interesting."

**Has interior design been a lifelong passion?**

"Yes. I have always loved architecture, then I studied Art History at university."

**So how was it turning your passion into a successful business?**

"It's been an amazing experience but you have to accept that you can spend a lot less time being creative. I spend 90 per cent of my time running the business these days but it's still something I really enjoy. It's very satisfying to have made a career out of something I love."

**Do you think your family name helped you as you started out?**

"Not to begin with, it was more of a stumbling block. People didn't take me seriously. They thought I was just doing it as a hobby. Luckily, after a while people look at the work you have done rather than your name."

**You travel a lot for work, where is your favourite place to visit?**

"I always love to come home. I live in London midweek for work but I go back to Blenheim every weekend to get away. I couldn't stand being in the city the entire time."

**What are your plans for the future?**

"I'm in negotiations at the minute to present another TV show. I used to present *Classic Interiors* on Granada. As long as it's not too heavily scripted it's an experience I really enjoy, although there is a lot of sitting around, which drives me a bit mad."

**So you're not a lady of leisure in the most traditional sense, you like being busy?**

"Oh yes, I would go mad otherwise, it's lucky I do enjoy my work as I have so much on. I'm in the middle of renovating a house in London for an Arabic family. It's going to be amazing, they have two rooms dedicated to Arabic design with mosaics and dark woods while the rest of the house will have a more Western theme. I'm also working on a property in Moscow which is where I'm headed next." **H**

INTERVIEW BY: EMILY McCARRICK  
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Left and above: Lady Henrietta relaxes in the grounds of Abu Dhabi's beautiful Emirates Palace



Above: Lady Henrietta's family home, Blenheim Palace