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**20 QUESTIONS WITH KAREN SEALY**

By: Elaine Song

Learning the ins and outs of renovation and construction from a young age, to then studying the art of interior design, it is clear that being a designer is not just a career for Karen Sealy, but a genuine passion. As owner and lead designer of *Sealy Design Inc.*, Karen strives to create fabulous spaces that are not only beautiful, but keep the homeowners' needs and lifestyle at the foreground. It's no wonder this talented woman is an award-winning designer, HGTV series host, and has had numerous television appearances, newspaper features and magazine spreads. Amidst her demanding schedule, we were fortunate enough to chat with Karen and learn what inspires her and get the scoop on her best design tips for your home.

20 questions with Karen Sealy  
Author: Style At Home

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Photography by Donna Griffith

**1 If you could shadow any designer for a day, who would it be?**

**KS** This was a much tougher question than I thought it would be. I had a million possible answers, from iconic architects to innovative interior designers to fantastic fashion designers. I spent days trying to pick just one but I couldn't narrow it down. Then, boom! It hit me and I knew... Ray Staples. I sat as a young girl watching her on *Cityline* and knew I wanted to be an interior designer. More than that, I loved her no guff advice. She use to say if you asked her for her opinion you'd better take it. She was fearless.

**2 Where do you look for an obscure source of inspiration?**

**KS** Inspiration is all around us and it's more about awareness – from nature to art installations to graphic design to built spaces. Most recently, I was on the Rocky Mountaineer Train from Calgary to Vancouver and the delicious food that is coming out of their tiny mobile kitchens is amazing. As much as I enjoyed the food I couldn't help but sneak a glimpse inside the galley to see what tricks they used to make efficient use of the space.

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**3 Favourite restaurant?**

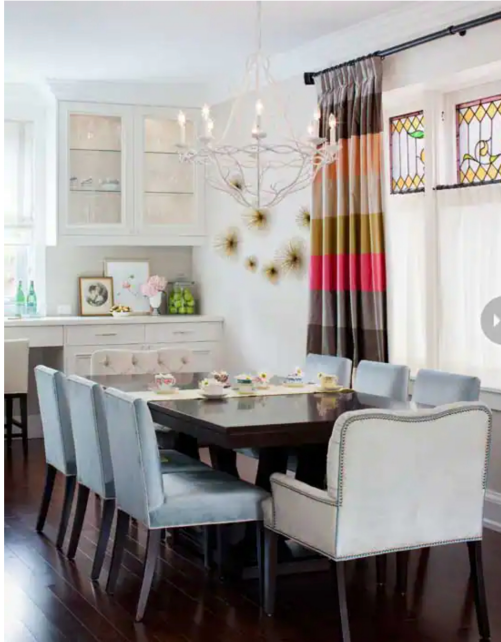
**KS** This is a tough question for me – a foodie and a designer. A restaurant isn't something I want to see pictures of but I want to experience it. The formula for my favourite restaurant is more than thoughtful or innovative design but how that translates into a favourable experience for the people

...magical of interior design that has translated into a memorable experience for the people who use and enjoy it, from the chef to the staff to the patrons. With all these factors in mind, I am going to say my new favourite is *Hawthorn* in Vancouver. With its amazing ceilings, stunning chandeliers, one-of-a-kind art, working wine room, kitchen (with the cobalt blue stoves), there is so much to love. Not to mention the fresh and wholesome food that tastes wonderful and is plated to match.

**4 What's your favourite room to decorate?**

**KS** Any room where the person we are creating it for allows their personality to be reflected in the space. That is what true design is all about. It isn't meant to appeal to absolutely everyone. That's impossible and far too safe.

*Lead image by Tim Leyes.*



*Photography by Donna Griffith*

**5 What's your current paint colour obsession?**

**KS** Blue. Ideally rich, saturated blue and the closer to black the better!

**6 If one song could be the soundtrack to your life, what would it be?**

**KS** *Ordinary Day* by Great Big Sea. "I've got a smile on my face and I've got four walls around me".

**7 What's the one store you could spend hours browsing?**

**KS** *Illums Bolighus* in Copenhagen. I find shopping more pleasurable when I'm not on a mission, just wandering and enjoying, and Copenhagen is a perfect city for that!

**8 London, Paris or New York?**

**KS** Paris.



*Photography by Andreas Trauttsmandorff*

**9 If money were no object, what one thing would you buy?**

**KS** A 50-foot sailboat with a centre cockpit.

**10 What do you consider to be the most iconic design piece of the past century?**

**KS** A tuxedo-style sofa is as current today as when it was first introduced.

**11 Favourite movie?**

**KS** *Holiday Inn*, a 1942 American musical with Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire. I sing along to every song, but my favourite is still White Christmas. I'm definitely sentimental and watch this every year and, between you and I, I tear up every time. Yes, I'm an ol' softy.

**12 What's your favourite movie interior?**

**KS** Peter Sellers's *The Party*.





Photography by John McQueenan

**13 What do you think is the easiest way to update a room?**

**KS** Introduce new decor accent pieces in a new colourway. I also like to circulate my art to freshen things up.

**14 Best coffee table book?**

**KS** 20th-Century World Architecture: The Phaidon Atlas. It showcases over 750 of the most outstanding works of architecture built between 1900 and 1999.

**15 What's your favourite way to spend a lazy Sunday?**

**KS** With coffee and a book on the dock at the cottage. Followed by a BBQ with good friends who stay over until Monday.

**16 Do you like to be the entertainer or be entertained?**

**KS** I love both. As long as I'm with people I care about I'm happy.



Photography by John McQueenan

**17 What do you think is the best renovation you can do to your home?**

**KS** One that fixes functional issues for you and your lifestyle; it's funny to me that people have a hard time identifying this for themselves. I often go to clients homes and they start off thinking we are going to renovate one area, but after some time together we all agree another area will have a great positive impact on their daily lives.

**18 What is your favourite space that you've designed?**

**KS** The one I'm currently working on. In the services industry we often joke we are only as good as our last project. I'm always excited about the projects I'm working on. It allows me to put new information and design practices into action to deliver the best possible end product. If this were to change, I would change my job.

**19 What's the biggest design faux pas?**

**KS** Not spending enough time planning with the advice of a professional. If you don't start with the right plan you'll never end up with a successful end result. Many people fancy themselves a decorator, but design is broader and encompasses some of the less sexy elements of renovation. This includes good space planning. So, for example, the mechanics in the home are efficient but don't detract from the final product, or the flow from public space to private space, or sight lines from the house and throughout the house. This takes a true understanding of the overall process and the ability to get into your client's head to plan and visualize the space/home that works for them.

**20 Marilyn, Audrey or Jackie?**

**KS** Audrey. She has incredible timeless grace.

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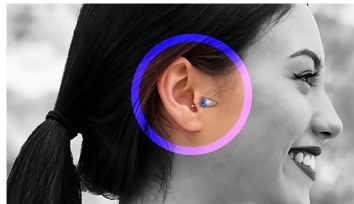
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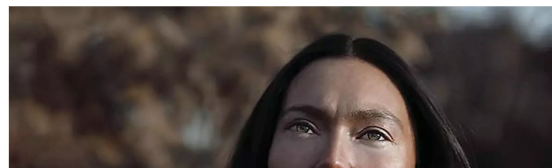
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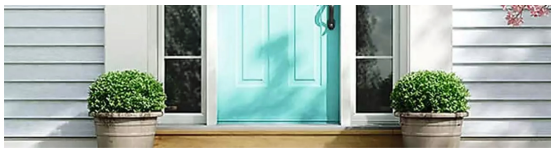
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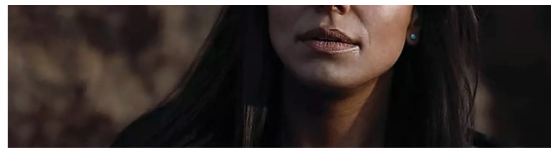






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