

## In conversation with... Kevin McCloud

The host of *Grand Designs* is returning to Australia for another Grand Designs Live event. Here he speaks to *HB* about the future of sustainable design

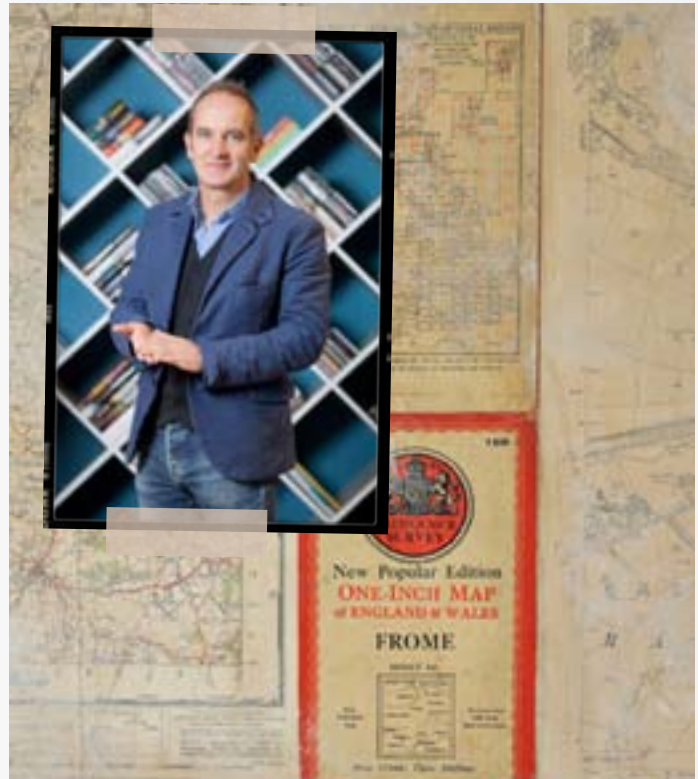
AS TOLD TO ANNA McCLELLAND

*What does sustainable living mean to you?*

"I'm no saint, that's for sure. I have to fly for work and my professional carbon footprint is enormous, so I try to make my personal one very small. I take the train whenever I can, I tend to wear clothes that fall apart on me and then I like to mend them myself – my style, I suppose, is charity shop. And charity shop is not-so-chic at my age! The story of where things come from and who made them and how they're made is more important than the product itself sometimes and knowing that story really enriches your experience of the product."

*What needs to happen for a sustainable way of life to become mainstream?*

"One thing that's changed the way a lot of people live [in the UK] is the recession. There are smaller cars on the road and people are staying put, so they're developing a more intimate relationship with their home and perhaps furnishing it more autobiographically. I connect sustainability with value and also with a sort of materialism. We need to develop longer-lasting relationships with the things we own and that we take an interest in where they're from. If there's something we need to change, it's that we've lost an understanding of how things are made. Take furnishing fabric: it could be made in three mills in China, dyed in circumstances that pollute the environment and damage the health of the people that work there, but usually there's no way of knowing that."



"Like everybody, I enjoy the **material** pleasures of life and it's a question of trying to find a **balance** you're comfortable with" - Kevin McCloud



*Last year you built your own cabin in the woods near your home (pictured) – has it fulfilled your expectations of the self-build?*

"Absolutely. I spent quite a bit of last winter in it. I could do a bit of work and then retire there and make a cup of tea and sit on the porch in the rain and watch the world go by. That's what it's all about; that's what it's for. It's on wheels so we've taken it to the seaside for the summer and to film a new series, but next winter it will be back in the woods to serve the same purpose." >





Tell us about your company HAB's 'one planet living'?


"If everybody in the world lived their lives to the same standard of living that we do (in the UK), we'd need more planets to support us. We simply don't have the resources on earth, we don't have enough fish, enough wood, enough fresh water, enough minerals or raw materials to sustain our way of life as it is now. We need to move towards a way of living that is literally sustainable, which will allow our kids and their kids to really enjoy themselves. Our principle area of work is making homes as ecologically high performing as possible and creating places that have a rich identity in response to their context. We like to do a lot of work with the spaces in between buildings – shared spaces for cars and people, edible hedgerows, orchards, car clubs and bicycle clubs – these are some of the ways we give people the opportunity to share."

Green Heroes is your showcase of the best eco-friendly innovations each year. What do you set out to achieve with each exhibit?

"For Green Heroes there are several criteria. First of all, the product has to be something that's not in the public eye – something that hasn't had the exposure it deserves. Secondly, it mustn't be a green-washed product, not just another concrete block with a specious environmental credential. One of my favourite examples is [London product] Eco Friendly Tiles, which are made from recycled aggregate in a solar-powered factory that's changed all their ovens from gas to electric. It's a thoroughly connected approach – they've thought about every aspect of the product's impact, from raw materials to waste."

Out of all the previous entries, what are the ideas that you think will take off?

"The ones that really matter are mainstream products like insulation or a building material, because frankly, none of us are going to save the planet by buying a table made of upcycled skateboards. When it comes to greening our lives, things like the Plumen lightbulb [top right], which was a Green Hero last year, make a big difference because they alter people's perceptions of an existing product and provide an alternative, which in this case could really seriously reduce your electricity consumption."

Grand Designs Live takes place in Sydney from 18-20 October and Melbourne from 25-27 October. Visit [granddesignslive.com.au](http://granddesignslive.com.au). 



Above: Kevin judging products for Green Heroes. Right: The 'Plumen' lightbulb is the world's first designer energy-saving bulb.



"I spend my life on **building** sites so I come across new **design** products all the time" ~ Kevin McCloud



London brand Eco Friendly Tiles uses renewable energy sources to create a sustainable product.



Left: The 'Picnyc' table by Haiko Cornelissen allows apartment dwellers to enjoy nature inside their home.

Right: The 'Energy Collection' by Marjan Van Aubel uses solar glassware to gather energy. The cabinet has sensors that store the energy, and use it to charge a phone or power a lightbulb.

