

SUPERKALLYFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS

*Hardly atrocious or even precocious, giving up a career in the City to become a floral entrepreneur was a stroke of genius for Kally Ellis of McQueen's, says **Mark Nayler***



In most City workers there must be a seed of freedom. They sit at their desks and wait for it to germinate into a new enterprise, a different direction or just a riotous weekend. Few turn this seed of freedom into actual blooms. Kally Ellis, however, shut down her spreadsheet and took up flower arranging, leaving the marketing division of a French bank in 1991 to start one of London's most fashionable florists, McQueen's.

We meet in the over-plush surroundings of the Jumeirah Carlton Tower for a chat over Eric Lanlard's sumptuous afternoon tea (see page 23). Kally confesses that she had tried to resist a career in the creative industries. 'Growing up,' she says, 'I was the youngest of four sisters and my three siblings had all gone into careers in art and design. I was always a bit of a rebel so although I loved art, I had taken off in another direction. I studied languages at university — hence the job at the French bank — but I came to realise that the artistic impulse was stronger than I cared to admit.'

Again, to learn that someone who used to work in the City harboured secret artistic ambitions is not surprising; the private banks of London must be full of aspiring (or frustrated) novelists, composers and painters. Even so, flower arranging seems like an unusual choice, especially given that inspiration is not abundant in the Square Mile, where beautiful flower arrangements are dwarfed by steel, glass and concrete structures.

Kally's inspiration for McQueen's came from abroad. 'My best friend was living in Paris and while visiting her I noticed how beautiful the hand-tied bouquets were over there; there was a symmetry and simplicity to them that you simply



Left: Kally Ellis abandoned the City to follow a path strewn with rose petals

