

COMMERCIAL

Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

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June Vol.6 Issue 6

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Fashion forward



Design has a decidedly uneasy relationship with fashion. They are members of the same family, of course, but fashion is the flighty, flirty, slightly irresponsible younger brother to design's older, more pragmatic sister.

Where fashion is transient, fast-moving and ever-changing, design is more permanent. Fashion is whimsical; design is dependable. Design is, in theory at least, free from fads. It is a long-term solution to a very real, very human need. It has a

longer life span and, arguably, a more lasting impact on its users.

Interior designers are always slightly wary when you ask them to talk about their 'style', or the recent 'trends' impacting their work. These are words too closely linked to fashion, and too fleeting in their nature, to sit comfortably with most serious designers.

Philippe Starck perhaps best summed it up when he launched his clothing line last year, but steadfastly refused to refer to it as 'fashion'. "I will never be idiotic enough to do fashion," he was reported as saying. "Fashion has a very high speed of turnover. It produces energy, materials, waste, and gives birth to a system of consumption and over-consumption that has no future."

Yes, the relationship between fashion and design is decidedly uneasy... but that doesn't mean that the two are not irreversibly interlinked. These seemingly opposing entities are constantly meeting and merging. The fact that Starck was designing clothes at all is testament to how far the lines between fashion and interiors have been blurred.

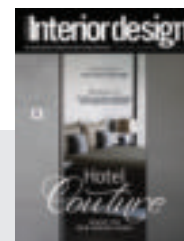
If anyone needed further evidence of how irrevocably intertwined these two worlds have become, the new Armani Hotel Dubai is a larger-than-life example. We take a look inside the new hotel (page 26) to see what happens when fashion and interiors finally decide to put their differences aside.

Correction: On page 27 of the May issue of *Commercial Interior Design*, we stated that LW Design was responsible for the design of the Emirates Towers Hotel. In fact, Lars Waldenstrom and Morten Hansen were the principal designers, working on the project for Design Division, prior to setting up LW Design Group.

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Armani
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Getting creative

‘CREATIVITY SHOULD NOT BE LIMITED BY THE TOOLS’ SAYS ADOBE EXPERT

UAE: Adobe Systems marked the Middle East launch of its new Creative Suite 5 (CS5) product family with the Adobe Beach Bash. Creative professionals, from architects to interior designers, photographers to gamers, and animators to artists, were invited to attend the event, which took place at The Ritz Carlton Hotel, Dubai on May 8.

Alongside its partners, HP, Nvidia, WinSoft and others, Adobe presented five live demonstration islands – including Photography Island, Flash & Gaming Island and Calligraphy Island – offering a first glimpse of the latest video, print and web tools from the newly-launched CS5, in action.

The new CS5 family offers over 250 new features that are designed to embrace interactivity, enhance performance and maximise the impact of creative content and digital marketing campaigns. Interior designers will be particularly interested in Photoshop’s enhanced ability to handle 3D objects, or Illustrator’s ability

to design on perspective planes, noted Joe Karkour, business development manager – creative, Adobe Systems Middle East.

“CS5 also gives you the ability to move your work from any print design to the web. That’s something that interior designers definitely look for because they all have websites, online portfolios and galleries that they need to be able to update. Traditionally, they would have to give that work to a website developer. Today we integrate all the web tools inside the Creative Suites.

“It makes it much easier to go from print to web to other different

media – so different screens, for example, from mobile phones to computers to TV screens,” Karkour explained. “Imagine an interior designer going to a customer with their portfolio on their BlackBerry, for example. Why not?”

When it comes to interior design, technology has a massive role to play, Karkour continued. “First of all it enhances productivity, and time to market. At the end of the day, interior designers are selling a product. The faster they can go to present and the faster they can meet their deadlines, the faster they can get their jobs done. CS5 is mainly about productivity, about

how all the different tools integrate together. You design in Photoshop, you import to Illustrator. You design in Illustrator, you take to In Design. And the structure of the data is maintained. All the applications across the creative suites exchange documents very easily and that is the most important part of CS5 – its creativity.”

After all, technology exists to facilitate and enhance the creative process – rather than hinder it, Karkour noted. “Creativity should not be limited by the tools. You should be able to use the tools to unleash the creativity.”

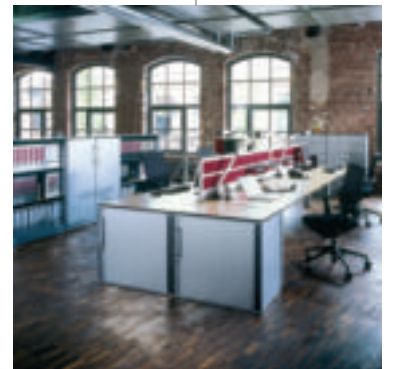
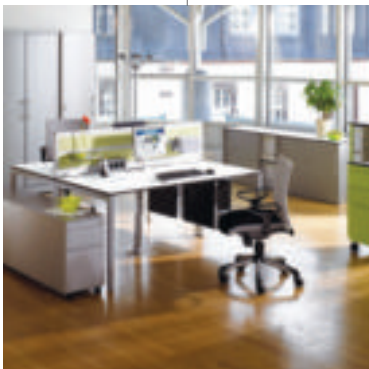
Ultimately, designers must be masters of the technology that they use, rather than slaves to it. “There’s a danger of this happening if the tools are not properly presented. With CS5, this is what we won’t be seeing, because the tools are so easy to use.

“You should never work your creativity around the tools that you have at hand. This is what I stress to my customers – get the proper training on the tools you use.”





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Winging it

RIYADH'S AL FAISALIAH, A ROSEWOOD HOTEL, WILL UNVEIL ITS CONTEMPORARY NEW SOUTH WING THIS SUMMER

SAUDI ARABIA: In celebration of its tenth anniversary, Saudi Arabia's Al Faisaliah, a Rosewood Hotel, will unveil its new south wing this summer. The extension will include 106 rooms and suites, an Italian dining venue and a ladies-only spa.

Designed by HRH Princess Al Anoud Bint Khaled Al Saud, owner and founder of Al Dar Designs, the new wing will bring a fresh new feel to the hotel, with vibrant colours and touches of Arabian and Islamic culture recurring throughout. The design will maintain a sensory connection to the 'dune' theme of the original hotel and will be modern, elegant and cutting-edge, setting it apart from Saudi Arabia's other hotels, Princess Al Anoud explained.

"Many hotels you see in Saudi are elegant but very traditional in design. Al Faisaliah Hotel has been the pinnacle of elegant design but with this wing we wanted to bring international hotel design to the kingdom. It will stand out for its unique infusion of Arabian

culture into the central theme.

This was a very important element for us" she maintained.

"We've chosen to go with art deco classic and use Royal Ottoman Iznici patterns and Arabic calligraphy as a key element of the Arabian and Islamic art throughout the wing. We're also using four to five vibrant colours that, when integrated, give it a very fresh feeling."

Al Faisaliah, a Rosewood Hotel, is located in Riyadh's Olaya district. Dubbed as one of Riyadh's most luxurious properties, the hotel features the largest column-free banquet, conference and meeting facilities in the country. With the introduction of 24-hour butler service, the hotel has also established itself as a leading provider of personalised service.

"We at Al Faisaliah, a Rosewood Hotel, strive to always offer our guests the very finest in luxury surroundings and service that is second-to-none," commented Peter Finamore, managing director of Al Faisaliah.

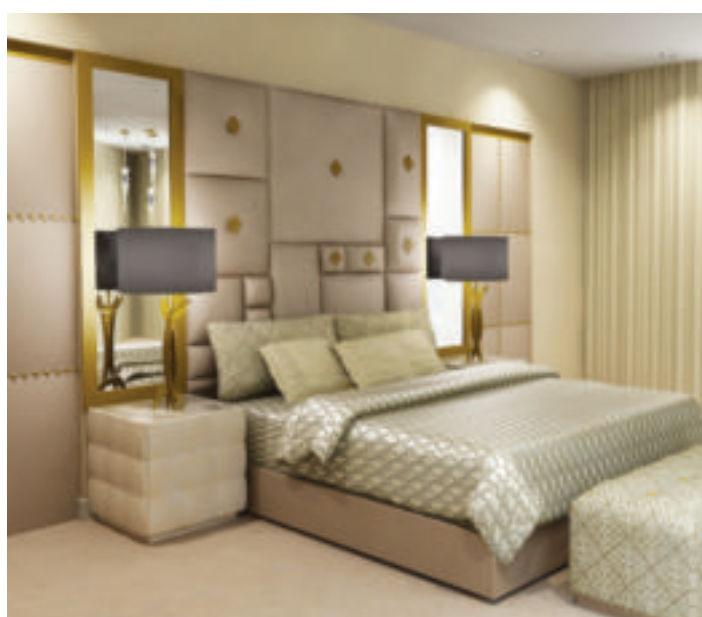
"Approaching our 10th anniversary, we want to ensure that this expansion to our offering delivers a standard of design and comfort not seen before in Saudi Arabia.

"We're very glad to be able to work so closely with HRH Princess Al Anoud in order to deliver a new product to the market which embodies the very best of international design, infused with a new interpretation of Arabian culture and tradition," he continued.

The new wing will significantly bolster the hotels' room offering, Finamore pointed out. "The new rooms and suites will be by far the largest hotel units in the kingdom. We are also introducing the kingdom's first ever concept spa suite," he said.

"The Oasis Suite will have dedicated in-room spa facilities and has been specially designed with the discerning guest in mind."

The new wing will bring the total room count at the luxury hotel up to 330 units, and will boost its food and beverage offering to a total of five restaurants.



Big plans afoot

FLOORING INDUSTRY REMAINS BUOYANT, DOMOTEX REVEALS

UAE: Sustainability is still the key trend when it comes to flooring, according to Angela Schaschen, managing director of the Dubai branch of Deutsche Messe, organiser of Domotex Middle East, the trade fair for carpets and floor coverings, which took place in Dubai from May 10 to 12. “The ‘environmentally-friendly’ part of the show is becoming more and more important,” she said.

Looking forward, the flooring industry is all set to be revolutionised by nanotechnology, according to John Alexander Smith, professor and Emeritus chairman of the department of interior design at the American University in Dubai, who gave a presentation entitled ‘*Flooring – Old Problems, New Materials*’, as part of the APID seminar session at Domotex.

“If we apply nanotechnology to flooring finishes, there are unlimited potential benefits. Floors could be self cleaning. They could have thermo-insulation, UV and solar protection, fire proofing, anti-graffiti, anti bacterial, scratch proof, and even anti-fingerprint properties,” Smith said.

“We are at the outset of a new era. Nanotechnology means that you will no longer have to specify a product or material that you know will be in the builder’s yard.

“As an architect or a designer, what you will basically do is write the specification of the material that you want. So let’s say you wanted it to absorb solar radiation during the day and, at night, emit energy as light. Instead of working with what already exists, you are starting with a clean, blank piece of paper.”

When it comes to current buying trends in this part of the world, it is no secret that wooden flooring has become more and

more prevalent over recent years, but there is still high demand for wall-to-wall carpeting, particularly amongst the expat community, Schaschen pointed out.

“They don’t like marble flooring. It’s too cold for them. So, wall to wall is a trend and, within this, there is a trend towards high-volume flooring,” she said.

While regional buying trends continue to evolve, there are some obvious constants, Schaschen continued. “Luxury is still a major factor. You have to give them something to play with! The

Middle East likes luxury and it likes intelligent toys!”

The current economic climate is also having a clear – and not entirely negative – impact on the flooring industry. For property owners looking to add value to their investment in a highly competitive marketplace, flooring is an obvious place to start.

“There are so many empty properties around right now. Owners trying to add value to these properties will start with flooring; it’s the most obvious thing you can do,” said Schaschen.

In a hospitality context, the tendency right now is to keep flooring longer than might traditionally be the case. Renovation and replacement cycles have been extended, Schaschen noted, with surprising implications for Domotex.

“As a result of the current financial situation, some of the hotels are keeping their flooring or carpet longer so, this year, cleaning and maintenance has become a more important part of the show, which we didn’t expect.”

This is in keeping with Deutsche Messe’s efforts to make Domotex a show that covers every single aspect of the flooring industry. “Domotex Middle East is a show that covers everything on the floor, from sports stadium flooring to hospital flooring, to supermarkets and hotels, to handmade carpets – everything is here. It starts from the production of the floor, the machinery that you need to cut it and lay it down, all the way through to how you clean it; there is nothing related to flooring that is not here,” said Schaschen.

Further broadening the appeal of the show, Domotex this year partnered with R+T Middle East, a trade show organised by Messe Stuttgart dedicated to roller shutters, doors, gates and sun protection systems. “We have been trying to enter this market for many years but it is difficult to get a slot at the World Trade Centre, so we joined forces with Domotex,” explained Bernhard Muller, division direction of Messe Stuttgart International.

“It is obviously very difficult to launch a new show in Dubai right now, but many of the industry’s key players already do business in the region and many of them approached us saying we need a more focused show,” he added.





Vertical industry

UNIQUE DESIGN ELEMENTS TO FEATURE IN NEW KUWAIT RESTAURANT

KUWAIT: Dubai-based restaurant consultant, Thomas Klein International, and its Chicago-based architectural office, PS Studio, have introduced a 'vertical farming' concept in their latest project, a Prime and Toast outlet in Kuwait.

The concept of vertical farming was introduced in 1999 by American professor Dickson Despommier, with the aim of growing food in crowded urban areas. Thomas Klein International has converted the revolutionary concept into the centrepiece of its latest restaurant, which is set to open after Ramadan.

"Prime and Toast is well known for the quality of the produce used in its large selection of salads and

sandwiches, incorporating only the freshest ingredients and vegetables, as well as the best prime USDA beef in their dishes.

"The main feature of the restaurant is therefore the vertical farming section, and the rest of the restaurant was designed around this unique and innovative concept," explained Daniel During, managing partner, Thomas Klein International.

The feature will be watered using condensation from the air-conditioning system. "Due to the high level of humidity in Kuwait, especially over the hotter months, we have the perfect weather conditions to enable us to use the water from the air-conditioning as

a by-product to water the plants. We will also be using energy-saving light bulbs within the system, and within the entire restaurant," said Paula Palombo, principal of PS Studio.

The vertical farming section and kitchen will take central stage in the eatery, with all tables enjoying direct views into the production area. Two central tables will be available for communal seating while smaller tables have been included for individual seating. To add to the ecological approach of the restaurant, all the wood used in the production of the furniture will be from sustainable forests.

The new outlet will also feature a metre-wide 'blackboard ribbon'

running along the restaurant's entire walls, as well as a shelf above the blackboard which will feature a selection of the finest mineral waters from around the world.

"The strip of blackboard originates from within the kitchen and runs all the way around the space from the kitchen throughout the dining area, linking the restaurant and the kitchen and enabling the chefs to write on the blackboard not only their daily specials and recommendations, but also to express their thoughts and creativity. We believe this 'ribbon of ideas' will create a link between the chefs and the customers and will entice customers into trying new food," added During.



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What's in store?

IS THE RECENT OPENING OF A NUMBER OF INTERIORS-RELATED STORES AND SHOWROOMS A SIGN OF RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN THE MARKET? CID SPEAKS TO THE EXPERTS TO FIND OUT



Recent months have seen a number of new interiors-related stores and showrooms coming onto the market. Existing companies have been expanding or strengthening their presence, while new brands have been establishing a footing in the region. While this invariably means greater choice for interior designers, it may also signify greater confidence in the industry as a whole.

The recent opening of the new Mirdif City Centre brought the likes of Pottery Barn, Freedom Furniture, and the UAE's 11th Home Centre, to Dubai's retail market, while Crate and Barrel opened its first store outside of North America in the Mall of the Emirates in March.

March also saw the opening of a new Western Furniture showroom on Dubai's Sheikh Zayed Road. The 22,000ft² facility showcases five mid- to high-end Italian brands, Italsofa, Zanette, Tomasella, Minifoms and Calligaris, as well as the US-headquartered Lexington.

Representing a significant investment, the new showroom is a mark of the buoyancy of the retail sector, according to Mikdad Babhrawala, general manager, Western Furniture. "I'm very upbeat about the market in terms of retail business. What we realised in 2009 was that, although the market was in decline, because of the product we are offering, we did more or less the same as we did in 2008."

Babhrawala is expecting 2011 to be a particularly strong year for the business and is looking at potentially expanding into a number of new markets. "We are looking at Oman and we are also looking very closely at India. In three years time, we plan to have three or four showrooms in India. We already have a small presence in Abu Dhabi, in Abu Dhabi Mall, and we are negotiating to have a stand-alone unit there also. Doha could be another possibility," he said.

However, while market confidence played a significant role in Western Furniture's decision to invest in a new showroom, it was not the only incentive, Babhrawala revealed. Depressed market conditions have had a considerable impact on real estate – and opened up the possibility of picking up prime retail space at more affordable, realistic rates.

"There was an opportunity, which I took," said Babhrawala. "This was the kind of a property that you might not get otherwise. The price was tempting and the partners were ready. This whole thing came at a time when we could not say no, so although the market was kind of repressed, we said let's do it. And since we opened, we have been very happy with the amount of footfall and the business we are generating. So I think it was a very prudent decision."

German kitchen manufacturer, Hacker, which opened its first showroom in Dubai on June 1, also recognised the benefits of expanding during a downturn. "Launching during a downturn means your business is lean, streamlined, hungry and motivated, which make the upturns even easier. Dubai has also become more realistic in terms of leases, rents and overheads during the past year, making our location and showroom size feasible," said Steven Pardoe, director, Hacker.

The Middle East is seemingly still an attractive proposition for international brands. "Not only is Dubai becoming known as a luxury travel destination, but it is fast becoming the centre of commercial trade both in air and sea. The Middle East in terms of luxury brands and shopping pull is now the new London for clients coming from Africa and Asia," said Pardoe.

And even if confidence in Dubai has faltered slightly, the emirate still acts a vital gateway into other, highly lucrative markets. For the recently launched Arte



1 Mikdad Babhrawala.

2 Rania Lahori.

3 Steven Pardoe.

4 D.L. Narayanan.

Vivo, a manufacturer of high-quality, custom-made furniture products, Dubai is the ideal setting for a satellite hub.

"Lots of people have said to us, why have you started a new venture, in Dubai, at this time? Why would you take the risk? But we set up the company here not necessarily to only target the Dubai market. We are here for the whole Middle East, but we are also here for Africa, India and Sri Lanka, and even as far afield as Russia. We are looking at Dubai as our satellite hub. We want to target Abu Dhabi, and we are looking at Qatar and are working on some projects

Our furniture is of a higher quality standard; we're targeting the top end of the market. If I can get them to come and look at the product, it's easier to convince them. The furniture speaks for itself," Pass said.

In challenging market conditions, making sure that you stand out from the crowd is a worthwhile investment, agreed D. L. Narayanan, group general manager of Afkar Financial & Property Investment, owner of 2XL Furniture & Home Décor, which recently opened a new store in Sharjah. "Indirectly, the pressure is on retailers to provide

proper space in the right location is not easy but we are confident that our new location is ideal and visible to both our trade and retail clients," he added.

When it came to location, Palmon Group opted for Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone for its new showroom, which was inaugurated on May 6. Coinciding with the company's 25th anniversary, the opening also marked a new partnership with CP Furniture, a leading European supplier of contract furniture.

"As a group, we have expanded and diversified over the last 25 years, with a consistent strategy to bring brands and services to this region that haven't been offered before, or have a strong USP. We consciously seek out brands that have an innovative edge and hence are excited about our new partnership with CP Furniture," said Rania Lahori, marketing director, Palmon Group.

Speaking of the new alliance, Andrew McGillivray, head of business development at CP Furniture, reiterated the importance of an effective showroom. "We needed a tool box and that tool box is a showroom. And you can see from the results that The Palmon Group pulled no punches. They've given us the space and they've given us the personnel," he said.

In spite of the recent flurry of activity on the market, McGillivray remains confident that there is enough room for everyone. "We're not about pushing and fighting for space. That's not an issue. We think that all good products have a viable place in the market. We'll have our clients, they can have theirs. Forget about 60% market share, or whatever. We go for the high-margin, long lasting business relationships."

And key to creating those relationships is showing commitment, he maintained. "A real brand is there for the good and the bad. A brand doesn't leave the minute things get difficult. Did you see all of Dubai's Armani stores closing down because of a drop in sales? No. It's just not something you do.

"You commit, you stand up and you say, I'm here. We were especially bullish in 2009. When everybody was leaving, we ran in. You increase your profile ten fold by standing up when everyone else is lying down." 

“A real brand is there for the good and the bad, and doesn't leave the minute things get difficult. You increase your profile tenfold by standing up when everyone else is lying down.”

there right now. We've also quoted for a number of hotels in India and we are getting quite a lot of interest from Saudi as well," explained Mike Pass, managing director of Arte Vivo.

The company's preferred partner is Pacific Traders, a Philippines-headquartered manufacturer with 37 years of experience. Arte Vivo launched its showroom – a vital tool in enabling potential customers to fully understand the brand – in March. "We would like our clients to see the quality and the craftsmanship that goes into each piece of our furniture. All of the furniture that you see in the showroom is manufactured in Cebu, Philippines," Pass pointed out.

In this way, the company can also counter any misconceptions that people might have about its products. "What we've found, being at different trade shows, is that people ask where our furniture is manufactured and I say the Philippines and they immediately put us into a window, as if it's the equivalent of coming from China or Malaysia or Indonesia, so it has to be either low price or low quality.

"One of the challenges is to convince people that we are on a different level.

state-of-art design which engages the customer and make them stay longer.

"Having huge showrooms helps us create a better visual for the consumer. The settings are very illustrative to help the customer make their final decision quicker. Hence a larger showroom was warranted," Narayanan continued.

Italian mosaics brand, Sicis, has also seen the benefits of a larger space and opened a new 4,300ft² showroom in Dubai last month. The new space showcases a range of contemporary wall and floor mosaics, as well as the company's famous stiletto shoe-shaped bathtub, Audrey, mosaic mannequins and a newly-launched range of designer chairs from Sicis Next Art.

"Although we have had a showroom in Dubai for the past six years, our diverse range of products and customer base have both grown to the extent that we need more space to allow us to showcase these collections," explained Tareq AbuRoza, managing director, Sicis Middle East & Gulf.

"Sicis is a worldwide brand and we have specific and unique requirements for our showrooms in the likes of Paris, Milan, New York and Tokyo. Finding



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Debbas Group

WHO?

In 2010, Debbas Group celebrates 100 years of growth to become a multinational technology and services conglomerate which operates from the US to China in the fields of lighting, systems, MEP contracting, manufacturing and trading. Our journey started in 1910, when Cesar Debbas established 'Le Grand Magasin d'Electricité' in the heart of Beirut, a pioneering commercial space dedicated to innovative products in the electric and lighting fields. Today, through a network of 25 companies in 16 countries, four factories, six showrooms and a workforce of more than 1,000 people, Debbas Group is dedicated to providing its customers with innovative turnkey solutions to create the human spaces of tomorrow, today.

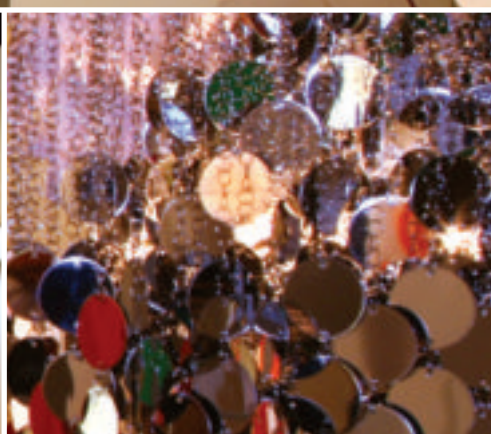
USPS?

After 100 years of providing innovative solutions, the Debbas brand has become synonymous with quality, high performance, responsiveness, uncompromised service efficiency and excellence in execution. Yet, our prime identifier is the fact that we strive to be the leading technology provider to high-end construction projects by delivering the finest turnkey solutions through our dynamic process: engineer, source, supply, install and maintain.

WHAT'S NEW?

2010 is a festive year for Debbas Group as we are currently enjoying the 100th anniversary of our foundation.





BEST SELLERS?

At Debbas, we are proud of our diverse brand portfolio. Debbas Group has the privilege of enjoying exclusive relationships and partnerships with some of the most renowned manufacturers in the world. In fact, many of those relationships have been consistent since the 1950s. Our six showrooms reflect that diversity as they propose a distinctive and extensive selection of premium lighting, from iconic, to contemporary and classical, as well as decorative and technical luminaires.

PROJECTS?

Debbas Group has successfully tackled numerous projects, ranging from the Mecca pilgrimage site to the state-of-the-art New Delhi International Airport. Our strength is in the versatility of our engineering corps and the logistical power of our network.

Over the past 100 years, Debbas Group has effectively provided solutions for intricate and diverse projects in the hospitality sector, including Royal Monceau in Paris, Burj Al Arab in Dubai and Intercontinental Phoenicia in Beirut; the healthcare sector, including Hamad Medical City in Doha, American Hospital in Dubai or CMC John Hopkins in Beirut; as well as the corporate and public sectors, with projects such as the Citibank headquarters in Dubai, the Nestle headquarters in Paris, the ministry of industry building in Khartoum or the Grand Serail in Beirut.

Also, Debbas Group has efficiently delivered top notch solutions for airports in Dubai, Beirut, Sharjah, Doha or New Delhi, museums such as the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Musee d'Orsay in Paris or Bahrain National Museum in Manama, and sports facilities such as Stade de France in Paris or Beirut Horserace Track. The abovementioned projects are but a few select examples of the diversity of projects Debbas Group has provided solutions for.

CONTACTS?

Debbas Group has operations in 16 countries. Find out more by logging on to www.debbas.com. Dubai office: Debbas Electric, PO Box 30571 Dubai, UAE, Zaabeel Road, Karama, tel: +971 (0)4 335 0006, fax: +971 (0)4 335 3543, and email info@debbas.ae.



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At the high end

ABBODD MALAK OF STUDIO M HAS DESIGNED SOME OF THE PLUSHEST OFFICES IN DUBAI. CID FINDS OUT MORE ABOUT HIS WORK

Abboud Malak's interior design career began in the US, in the midst of a frenzied, dot com-driven boom. Fresh from university, Malak set up his own studio in west Hollywood, initially focusing on the residential sector. After a successful six years, he started hearing about an up-and-coming city halfway across the world:

Dubai. Being a Canadian citizen of Palestinian origin, and having lived in Qatar as a youth – before moving to Europe and, eventually, the US – Malak was drawn to the region.

He moved to Dubai to take on the role of in-house designer for the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), and was responsible for the interiors of the iconic Gate building. Once his

work with the DIFC was done, Malak again branched out on his own, setting up Studio M, a design consultancy that has enjoyed particular success in the high-end corporate governmental sector. We caught up with Malak to talk about the dangers of being pigeon-holed, the importance of promoting local talent and the definition of good design.

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Trenza

Collection by
Lievore Altherr Molina

How did you get into design?

I think there was always an interest, ever since I was a little kid. But it became serious after I finished a Fine Arts degree and I realised that I was going to end up being either a painter or a university professor – and that neither was for me.

I studied in Los Angeles. I graduated from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, with a BA in Fine Arts and then I attended the Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena, California, and studied Interior Architecture. In the US when you are starting out and you want to open your own studio, you normally start off in the residential sector – unless you go and work for a big firm, which I didn't want to do.

From the get go, I started off on my own. It was a bit harder, of course, but I think I started off at the right time. It was the late 1990s, so the dot com, 'boom' years. I opened my own studio in west Hollywood. I had a partner and we worked there for about six years. We did a lot of great work, mostly residential, but also a lot of retail stores.

How did you become involved with the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)? Is this why you moved to Dubai?

Yes, I came specifically for DIFC. I was hired by them to be their in-house designer and to handle their image. Interestingly enough, when I arrived, DIFC was just about to get started. The Gate building was barely under construction. None of that existed.

I came here when the market was still quite young and even shopping for furniture was difficult. There were a couple of furniture stores and that was it. I have to say it was quite hard sourcing the right materials, finding the right suppliers, and getting the right manufacturers and contractors. It was a huge learning curve for everybody.

The first year was very difficult for me because I had to deal with shifting countries and starting all over, while getting used to a new way of working. For example, I had to shift from the empirical system to the metric system, which is a big deal, even though you don't even realise it. And on top of all

those issues, you had to deal with finding the right people to build things, so it was definitely tough.

I was the lead interior designer for the DIFC Authority at the Gate building. When we completed that project, the international crowd thought that it was the most interesting corporate work to come out of Dubai. And equally, residents of Dubai were amazed by the new style of design and the unique architecture of the Gate. They embraced it, and look where we are today.

Were there cultural differences to contend with when you first arrived?

Once you understand the reasoning behind it, it becomes just another challenge to embrace. Being of Arab origin and speaking the language helped me a lot in dealing with this environment from a different perspective. I understand the nuances. You pick up things that you might not, otherwise. It's like when you translate a joke into another language. It loses something. You have to speak the language to get the joke. It's like that. It helps a lot.

You have to be aware of the cultural differences, even in your choice of colours. Here people prefer their woods to be dark. They don't like light woods. They don't like white, so you tend to be a little bit more colourful and more vibrant. Here people prefer polished, mirror finishes. They like marble. In the west, the preference is for finishes to

be more honed, muted, matt. You have to be aware of these things.

Has Dubai managed to create a design language of its own in the time that you've been here?

I think it does exist. It's not necessarily noticeable because there is such a large number of people having their first experiences here in Dubai. I also think a lot of work in Dubai is designed outside Dubai for Dubai, rather than designed in Dubai for Dubai. And that makes a really big difference.

Doing it remotely, you can miss a lot of the details. It's important to come and live in a space, and get a feel for a city, before you start designing. For me it's very important. You can give me a floor plan but I have to go and visit the space in the morning, and again at noon, and then in the afternoon. I want to see where the light is, I want to see how it feels, the orientation of it. If you are doing it 12,000 miles away, it may be difficult. You could miss that. You could do a great job, but you could also miss something.

You notice it in Lebanon, where they do have a modern, Middle Eastern aesthetic, or in Turkey where they also have a modern Middle Eastern aesthetic. You can't mistake it for anything else, it is definitely Middle Eastern. And that's probably because the majority of designers doing work in Turkey, are Turkish, or in Lebanon, Lebanese.

1&2

Malak studied in the US and started his career doing residential and retail work.



1



2

DESIGNER Q&A



3&4

Good design doesn't have to be expensive, Malak maintains.

In Dubai, it's not an easy thing to do. The carpenters that build the dhows that you see alongside the Creek, for example. We are very far removed from them. I would love to go to one of those dhow builders and find out what kind of wood they use and find out whether we could build furniture out of that.

It would be nice to take those raw materials and do something with them in a completely different context. But I don't find that that is a particularly accessible thing to do, which is a shame.

Whose responsibility is it to guide the evolution of a local design aesthetic?

I think we all need to make the time, because it is in our interests to build that design culture here.

As the 'older' generation of designers here, we need to take the time and push the younger generation through. We need to invest in them. It's there and it's still young, but there is definitely talent around. I've gone to a few exhibitions at Traffic, and at some of the other galleries in Dubai, and I've seen these young Middle Eastern designers and it's impressive how far they've come in just the last few years. It's quite amazing.

The standard has shot up so dramatically. I think that in a few years time, with the next surge of the economy, these 'kids' will have a lot to say. It will be their time to shine.

That's when you are going to see true, authentic, modern, Middle Eastern work. I'm 100% sure that is going to

happen. The trick is to keep those kids here. Not have them feel like there's no work for them here so they should go abroad. It's very important that we put that talent to good use because if you don't use it, it's just another great opportunity wasted.

What makes a good designer?

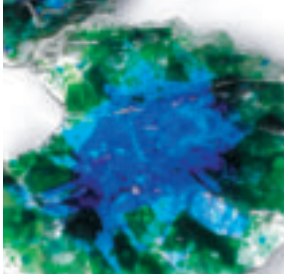
It's about levels of passion for what you do. You have to be very curious. You have to be nosey, you have to want to touch things and not be shy. If I walk into a hotel room, I'll pretty much tear it apart. I want to know how it is put together. I want to understand it. Having a curious nature helps a lot. You

understand how things are built and what materials are used, and how they are connected. All of that helps you in the design process. When I first came to Dubai, I really looked around, and took a lot of pictures – not just of Burj Al Arab. I took pictures of the old stuff, and the little things. That's what's interesting.

Tell us about Studio M.

Once I finished work on the DIFC project, the governor of DIFC suggested that I stay in Dubai. DIFC offered to help me get a license and they started feeding me projects. At the time, all of these government entities, such as Dubai Holding, the Executive Council and the





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Executive Office, were very young and were just starting out.

All of these entities were very new to the landscape, so one project led to another and there was a kind of snowball effect. Because they were all successful, you get that repeat business.

Do you predominantly focus on commercial work?

It's interesting because I've been put into that niche. I would love to do more hospitality work. That really attracts me. I find that a lot of my corporate work, because it is always very high end, ends up leaning towards the hospitality look. That's why I would love to get into hospitality a bit more. But yes, for now we mainly concentrate on high-end, governmental corporate work.

Are there inherent challenges when you are working with government entities? How modern are they in their approach to design?

I think things are changing. Maybe because I have done work for some of the most important entities in Dubai, and those are the places where most of the big decisions are made. Important people end up visiting those offices and

when they see them, they think: "This is interesting, and it's very different to our office space. Why can't our office look like that?"

What are you working on now?

I am doing another corporate office. This one is in Emirates Towers and it's for the ministry of state. Because we are a small firm, we tend to – depending on the market, of course – work on two or maybe three projects at a time. We don't like to spread ourselves too thinly.

Are attitudes towards office spaces evolving in this market?

I personally believe that there are spaces that, without you knowing it, make you feel good. And I think in a working environment, which is where you are spending the majority of your day and your life, it is really important to focus on that.

It's like your home. Your home should be an important part of your life and so should your office. It's funny how you find a lot of people focusing on the things that they spend the least amount of time in, like their cars – but their homes and offices are not necessarily important. That's ironic. You'll find

somebody willing to spend AED 700,000 on their car but not willing to spend AED 30,000 on a sofa. And I think, wait a second, how many hours a day do you spend in your car, and how many hours do you spend sitting on that sofa?

I think that the most important thing about an office is that it makes you feel comfortable. And how do you make someone feel comfortable? You give them the right chair, you give them the right desk, you make sure that the material of the desk makes sense. Light it well, and use materials that are comfortable and relaxing to the eye. It's not about shock value or something that looks amazing for five minutes but then gives you a headache.

How do you define good design?

First of all, good design doesn't need to be expensive design. And bad design is not always cheap. You can spend a lot of money on bad design. And you can spend very little money on great design.

It's about having the right client who is willing to see the design through and who trusts their designer. That's very important. You have to have a good client and a good designer. One of the two is not enough. **CD**

5&6

Malak recently completed new offices for the Boston Consultancy Group.



5



6

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Designer hospitality

AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK INSIDE THE NEW ARMANI HOTEL DUBAI

From the A-shaped swimming pool to the capital 'A' carved into each and every sugar cube, Giorgio Armani has made his mark on every inch of his new hotel.

This relentless reiteration of the brand starts in the lobby of the Armani Hotel Dubai, where a series of bronze columns arch overhead, meeting at a point to create a towering collection of artful As. Beneath the arches, mirroring their shape, lie two oversized sofas. The combined result is a consciously contemporary, highly fashionable take on the traditional majlis.

The A-shaped arches are a recurring theme – they reappear on the hotel's logo,

and then again, as a creative alternative to run-of-the-mill table legs. The message is clear: this is an Armani hotel in more than just name.

FASHIONABLY SEDATE

Set into a corridor leading off from the lobby is a glittering showcase of Armani's exclusive Privé accessories collection. Available for purchase by invitation only, these one-of-a-kind creations are a striking reminder of how closely fashion and hospitality sit side by side in this new property. At the end of the corridor are the Armani/Fiori and Armani/Dolci retail spaces, where guests can purchase Armani-inspired flowers and sweets.

CASE STUDY: ARMANI HOTEL



2

Difficult decisions had to be made. You want to meet the criteria of the Armani ‘look’ but you still had to look at safety standards and water proofing and durability and acoustic standards, for example. We had to translate it into a constructible site that met the standards of the world’s tallest building,” Saeed explained.

Time restraints were the biggest challenge that Fino faced with this iconic project, which was completed in 36 months by a team of 2,500 people. “We were racing against time. We had to do so many things in such a short space of time. The logistics were also a challenge. It is a whole world in itself, this building. I think it will house 10,000 to 15,000 people, eventually. You are not simply creating a building. You are creating a small town – just upwards.”

SIMPLIFIED

Armani Hotel Dubai occupies floors concourse to eight, as well as levels 38 and 39 of Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world. The property consists of 160 rooms and suites, complemented by 144 private Armani residences, located on floors nine to 16.

Additional facilities include eight food and beverage outlets, including the Armani/Privé VIP lounge, and the world’s first in-hotel Armani Spa. Rooms come in a range of different types, ranging from the 45m² Armani Studio Room to the 340m² Armani Dubai Suite, which is priced at AED 45,000 per night.

The hotel exists as a larger-than-life showcase of Giorgio Armani’s creative breadth. The world-famous fashion designer is reported to have overseen every single element of the design, from soap bars to suites.

In fact, getting the shape and colour of the soap right took a rumoured 22 months, and was inspired by a pebble that Armani came across whilst on a beach in his native Italy. “I had not been involved with construction itself but I followed every single step in design and style,” said Armani during the grand opening of the hotel on April 27. “After five years of working on this project on paper I saw it for real. It was marvellous to see how it came to life.”

Fino International was enlisted to transform Armani’s vision into a workable reality. “What we received was a concept design created by the Armani team. This concept was, I believe, personally prepared by Giorgio Armani himself. In a sense, we had to make it workable,” said Talal Saeed, managing director of Fino International.

“For instance, the Armani team specified a large quantity of a certain type of marble; we had to make sure that there was enough quantity in the quarry to ensure that we could do the entire job to the same quality. These were the technical challenges we faced.

“Almost everything was doable – it just took a while and some real guts.

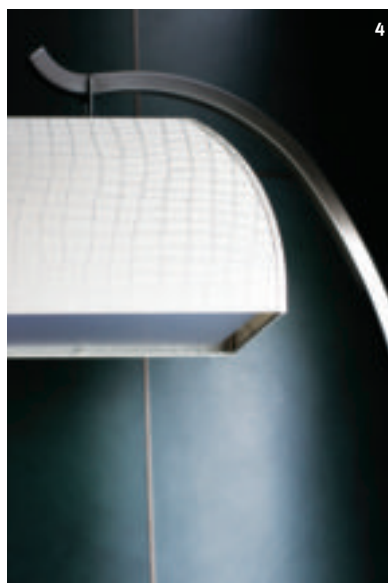
1
Bronze arches
tower overhead
in the lobby.

2
A muted
colour palette is
used throughout
the property.

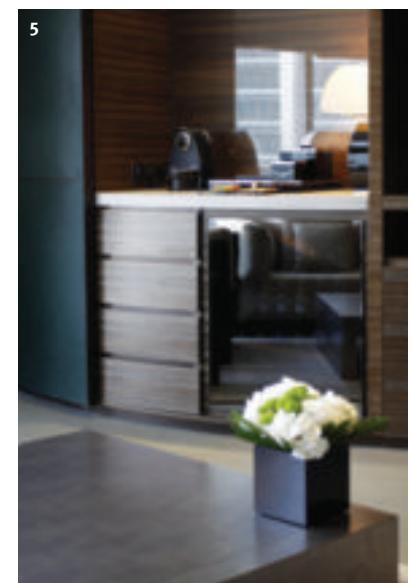
3,4&5
Giorgio Armani was
involved in every
aspect of the design.



3



4



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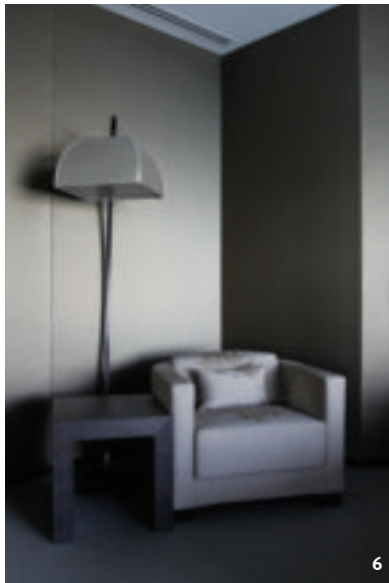
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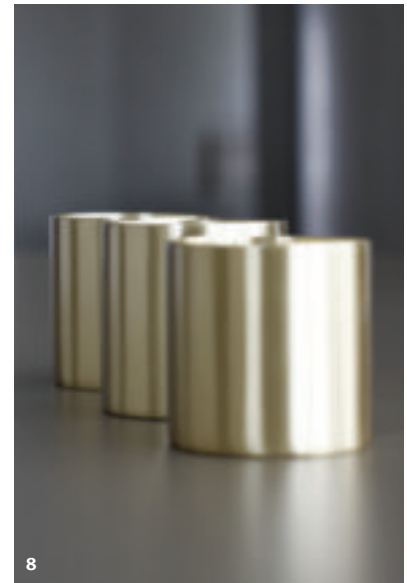
CASE STUDY: ARMANI HOTEL



6



7



8

6,7&9
Furniture was
supplied by
Armani Casa.

8
The design is simple
and understated.

10
Each bed has a
unique headboard
and matching
bedspread.

Its prestigious location – and there are few more impressive addresses than the Burj Khalifa right now – coupled with the fact that it is the first Armani property in the world, placed the hotel very firmly in the global spotlight. Which, in turn, placed enormous pressure on everyone involved.

“Everybody is looking at this with a microscope. Your drawings, your technical expertise, your people, safety systems, quality control – everything was scrutinised,” said Saeed.

Which is one of the reasons why the finished product is very different to anything else on the market, Saeed suggested. “It is as simple as can be but also as beautiful as can be. I can’t describe it. We could not visualise how the hotel would look like once it was finished; but it turned out to be a one-of-a-kind,” he said.

The design is defined by its simplicity. Unlike many of the region’s hotels, Armani Hotel Dubai is understated, and free of overly excessive design features. “There are no colours, no crystals, no gold leafing and no chandeliers in the building, at all. It is a totally different concept. It is very elegant, very exquisite, very refined,” said Saeed. “You will not see colourful fabrics or wallpaper. There is nothing hanging on the wall. You don’t see paintings or anything like that,” he added.

When he was first approached by Emaar Properties to design a hotel, Armani questioned whether he was the

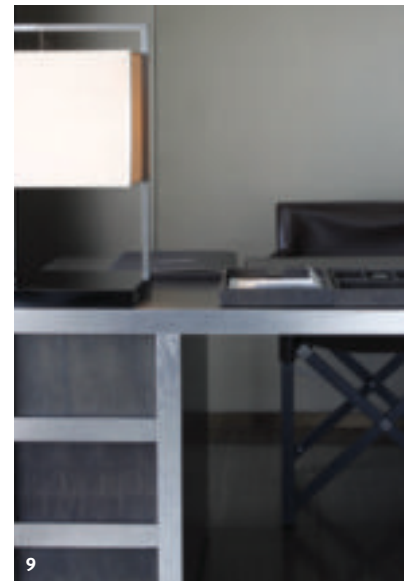
right man for the job – given his minimalist sensibilities. Armani recalled saying: “Are you sure you want me? I believe in minimalism, less is more. And when you looked at what was happening here [in Dubai five years ago] you would have thought exactly the opposite. It was a very different style”.

Armani’s ‘less is more’ approach is perhaps most apparent in the muted colour palette used throughout the hotel. Bronzes, discreet golds, browns, beiges, greys and dark olive greens set the tone in rooms and public areas, with bright colours notable only in their absence.

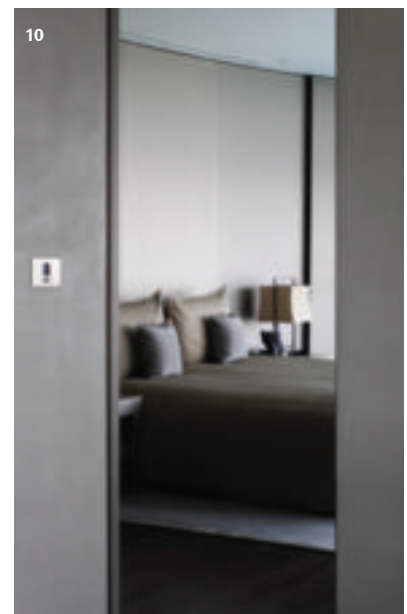
But while the colours used are at the more subdued end of the spectrum, they are not lacking in richness. In true Armani style, the palette has been injected with a touch of glamour, converting muted tones into warm, shimmering, sensual colour schemes.

Materials further reiterate the richness of the design. Satiny, smooth and often curved, walls cry out to be touched. Japanese tatami flooring lines the corridors, soft and spongy underfoot. Elsewhere, multi-faceted Eramosa marble covers the floors, mirroring the complexity of corresponding Zebrano wood walls. Every bed has a unique, elaborately-patterned, custom-made headboard and matching bedspread.

The Armani team was very specific about the materials it wanted to use, Saeed explained. “They were very precise. They knew exactly what they



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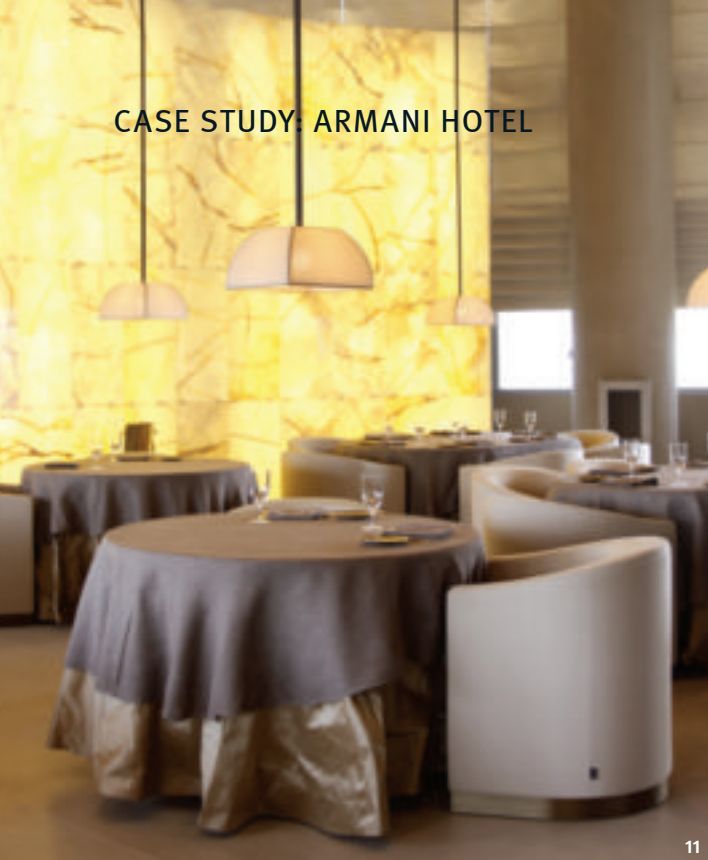
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CASE STUDY: ARMANI HOTEL



11

11
The hotel is home to eight food and beverage outlets.

12&13
The lobby is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional majlis.

14
Corridors promote an air of mystery.

wanted. Most of the suppliers we used were from Italy and Europe. We brought fabrics from the States, and paint, glass, wood and veneer from Italy.

“The marble came from Canada, Iceland and northern Europe. The furniture was Armani Casa. It was supplied by Armani himself and we installed it for him,” Saeed explained.

AN AIR OF MYSTERY

While Armani’s design may be simple, in terms of the muted colour palette and limited accessories, it is also surprisingly complex. Built into the design is an inherent sense of mystery, with a constant interplay between what is shown and what remains to be discovered.

Corridors give no indication of where they might lead. Intersected by reflective doors, all you see is your own reflection as you make your way from one end to the next.

Room doors are set flush into the walls of the corridors, and are made of the same wood so they are barely discernible. The impression is of a secret entrance to a mysterious destination.

Once inside the rooms, a sense of secrecy continues. Sliding panels and doors hide corridors, televisions, kitchens and cupboards, making journeying through the room a voyage of discovery. Guests can choose what they want to reveal and what they wish to keep hidden away.

Smooth and sinuous, the curvaceousness of the walls further adds

to a sense of mystery. This is a design with hidden depths – where decorative side tables unfold into fully kitted-out work desks, and cupboard doors, once opened, can be slotted into the wall to save space.

But if a sense of secrecy abounds in the guest rooms, it is the direct opposite in the restaurants, where transparency is the defining characteristic. All restaurants have open kitchens, to enable guests to fully appreciate the effort that goes into their food.

The hotel’s eight food and beverage outlets include the Armani/Lounge, which sits overlooking the Dubai Fountain and offers light meals throughout the day; Armani/Peck, the Dubai branch of Milan’s 125-year old Peck Deli, which offers a range of signature dishes, fresh pastas, hot and cold counters, and a striking black-and-white checkered design; the casual but elegant Armani/Mediterraneo; Armani/Ristorante, a fine-dining restaurant that draws on Italy’s rich gastronomic traditions; Armani/Amal, which offers fresh and innovative Indian cuisine, along with one of the most dramatic entrances in Dubai; Armani/Hashi, a modern Japanese eatery; and the exclusive Armani/Privé lounge.

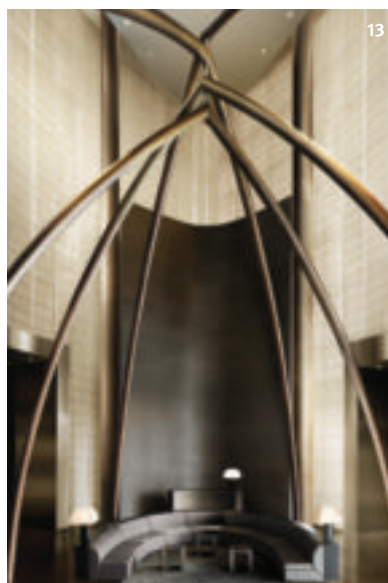
Designing his first hotel was an experience that Armani relished. “There are so many elements when you are designing a hotel which makes it a very, very exciting project; so many spaces, so many areas, restaurants,

lounges, rooms,” he said. “The real difference is that when you design some clothing, journalists say after six months ‘it’s off’. With Hotel Armani it cannot be really the same. So it’s a much bigger commitment and a much bigger risk, which is why I love it,” he continued.

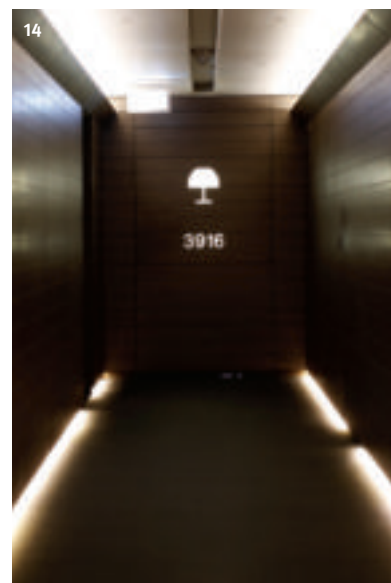
“It’s very difficult to create space with spirit and lifestyle,” commented Mohamed Alabbar, chairman of Emaar Properties, during the opening of the company’s latest – and arguably greatest – venture. “Armani has an incredible common sense that makes him a designer and a hotelier; and that makes him a person that understands what works, [and] what doesn’t work”. 



12

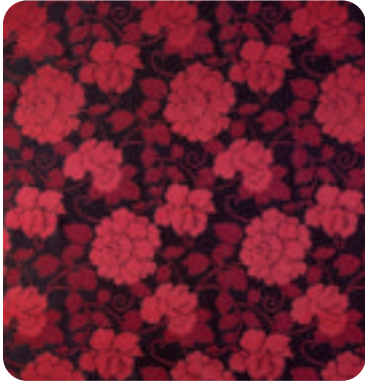


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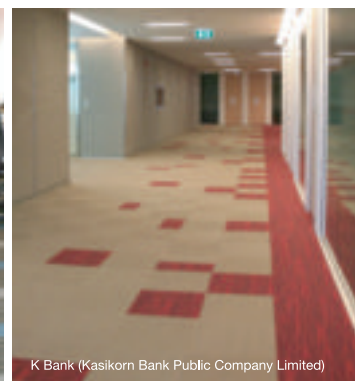
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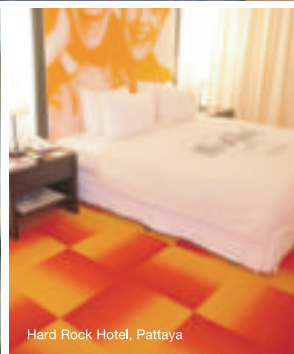
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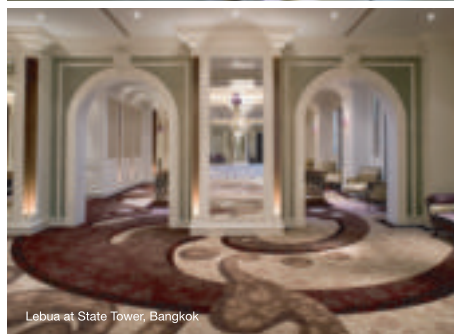
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In with the old

AFTER 20 YEARS, LONDON'S MARCHANT ANTIQUES STORE WAS CRYING OUT FOR A REFRESH

Modernising a space that exists solely to promote 'the old' was far less complicated than it sounds, according to Steven Southall, associate at SHH, the UK-based architecture, interiors and branding consultancy. Southall was the project architect responsible for a complete

overhaul of the Marchant antiques store on London's Kensington Church Street. This included a new brand identity, store fascia, extension and interior concept for the 85-year old family business.

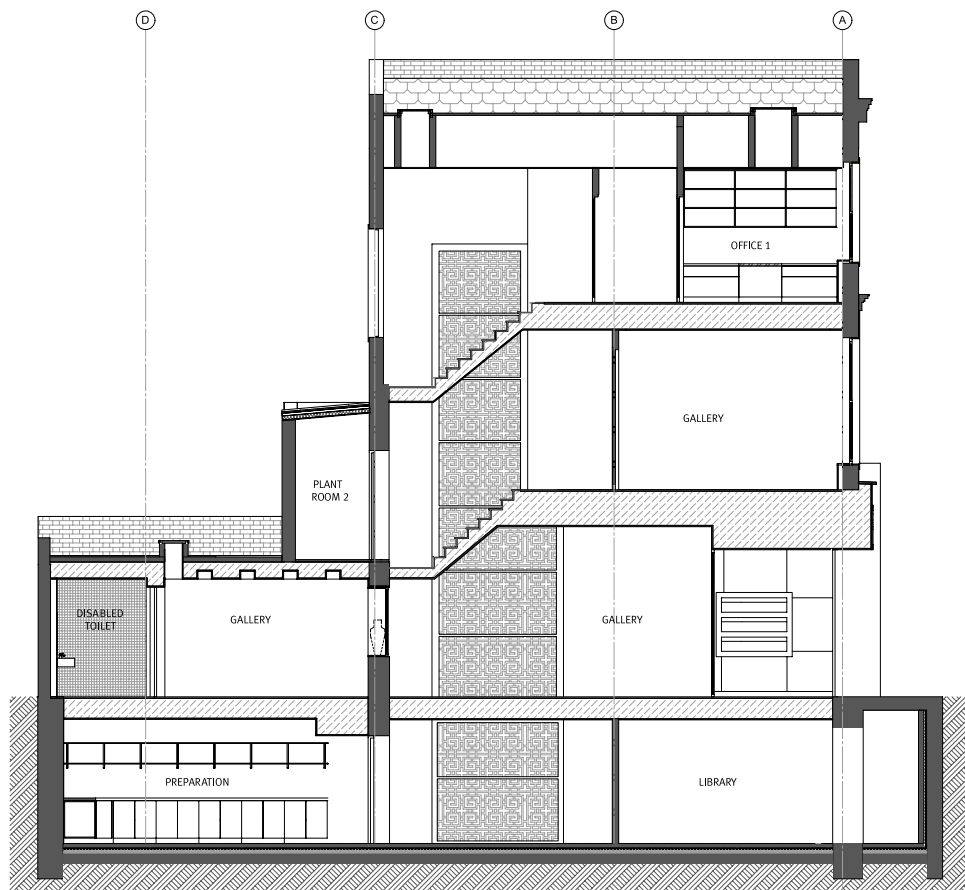
Established in 1925, the S Marchant & Son dealership is a specialist in Chinese ceramics and artworks. It has

been managed by three successive generations of the same family, with father and son team Richard and Stuart Marchant currently at the helm.

The rebranding exercise started with a change in name. From the previous 'S Marchant & Son' brand, SHH developed the more concise 'Marchant' identity. A new visual identity was inspired by the

1
The antiques store hadn't been changed in 20 years.

CASE STUDY: MARCHANT



importance of jade in Chinese artworks and plays with the two shades of classic green and 'white' jade, which is in fact a lighter shade of green. A pattern was developed around the logo, tying in with an Asian motif that is used for interior fretwork walls surrounding the store's staircase.

Previous to this latest upgrade, the store hadn't been refurbished in over 20 years – and was beginning to show its age. In need of an injection of contemporary style, the store required a fresh new look that would strengthen the brand and enhance the overall Marchant experience.

The brief called for a rationalisation of the building's space plan, in order to increase and enhance the display/gallery area. The design team was instructed to pay particular attention to functionality, as the existing store had in fact functioned extremely well.

"We were asked to create a scheme that was contemporary but with a classic and timeless air, so that it could easily last another 20 years without looking dated," noted Neil Hogan,



creative director, SHH. “It was also important to maximise gallery space and indeed, thanks to our new space plan, we have increased gallery space overall by 20%.”

The display area is the heart of the store and, as such, was a critical component of the new design. Dedicated gallery space is found on the ground floor of the four-storey building, which is entered via a lobby space that leads in from the main entrance.

In this main space, the entire left wall houses a new, bespoke display system, made of non-reflective glass and bamboo. Storage is incorporated into the bottom of the system, while top and low-level front lighting, custom designed by SHH, enhances the overall ambience. Artefacts are set against a deep red wall, a dramatic backdrop that draws immediate attention to the items on display.

It was essential that the design of the display area was not overwhelming and didn’t detract in any way from the protagonists of the show – the antiques themselves. “A successful modern or

contemporary scheme is the result of clean detailing and the utilisation of simple, clean forms and materials,” Southall explained.

“The clarity of display that is derived from the detail of the artwork contrasting against the simplicity of the display cabinets was the brief from day one when creating the concept; a process which is adopted in auction houses and museums throughout the world,” he continued.

“We worked very closely with our joinery manufacturers in conjunction with the non-reflective glass and Corian suppliers, obtaining multiple samples and fabricating off-site mock-ups. This facilitated the creation of the most important aspect of the gallery – the display – in order to meet the practical and design requirements successfully,” Southall said.

Another defining feature of the new Marchant interior is a striking stair spine that links the store’s four floors. White, full-height fret-cut panels, in a pattern that echoes traditional Asian motifs, envelop the stairs.

2

A floor plan of the Marchant store.

3

A library is located on the lower ground floor.

4

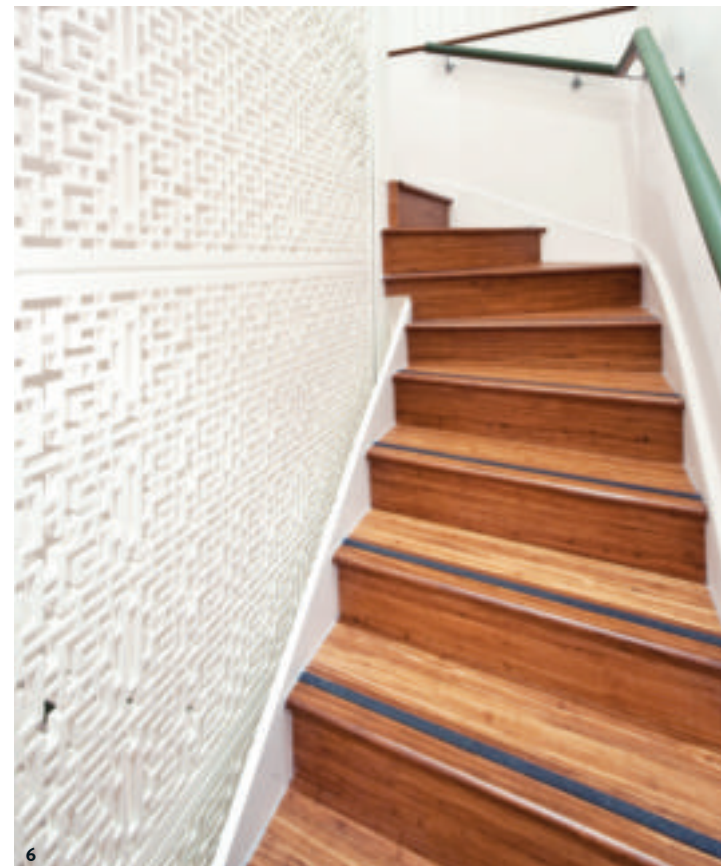
Office areas were also given a revamp.

5

The display area is the heart of the store.

6

Fret-cut panels are Asian-inspired.



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7



8



9

“We wanted the showcases to be the biggest and most powerful element in the space, but when travelling between floors we needed to leave customers with a sense of identity. The fret-cut stair spine is just right for this in terms of intrigue and authenticity,” said Southall.

A major interior feature, the staircase’s Asian overtones are a nod back to the products on show. “An element of heritage and history, in this case the Asian fretwork motif, was adopted in the spine and in the branding and signage, creating connections between the display and the culture from which it originates.

“The utilisation of bamboo flooring and veneers, while not a literal interpretation, was also a practical material with a subtle reference to Asia. We did have a little fun with the handrails to the staircase, which are clad in green leather with stitch abutments creating a more literal bamboo interpretation. While not necessarily a reflection of heritage and history, this is certainly a reference to geography and culture,” he detailed.

The first floor of the store has a similar layout to the ground floor, with a gallery section and the same basic finishes, but it has a slightly more informal feel and is home to a meeting area fitted with chairs and a sofa. The second floor, which was always an office area, has been reconfigured to be more user-friendly. It is now more open-plan with more storage. It also makes fuller use of the ceiling void area, after the designers removed the existing flat ceiling and raised it up to rafter level.

The lower ground floor, which now has the same footprint as the floor above, is home to a store room, library and preparation room where antiques are painstakingly cleaned and restored.

The greatest challenges that SHH faced with this project were linked to the restrictions of the site and the condition of the existing building, Southall explained. “The refurbishment encompassed all floors, including major structural works. This required stringent site safety requirements in conjunction with an element of phasing the works, so that site welfare facilities could be relocated around the building to allow

the works to progress diligently. As the works progressed, a number of site discoveries also came to light, resulting in a large degree of additional works such as bricking up concealed chimneys.”

In order to facilitate this revamp, the pre-existing store was completely gutted and the building’s back wall was removed. This allowed SHH, which worked closely with contractor Paragon Management UK, to extend the rear of the property. A steel box frame was employed to create the new rear façade, which was then re-clad to match the existing rear brickwork.

Around the front, the store was granted with a completely new fascia, which was glazed to the maximum allowed by planning regulations. A total of three windows were set into a solid timber frame. The main entry door, previously set in the centre of the façade, was moved to the far right to maximise the window display area.

Behind each of the three windows, SHH has hung a white panel in order to set off display items, again making sure that the antiques on offer are the undisputed stars of the show. **CD**

7
Bamboo flooring makes subtle reference to Asia.

8
Antiques are painstakingly restored in the preparation room.

9
The first floor is home to an informal meeting room.



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Windows 2.0

FROM FABRICS TO FUNCTIONALITY, TECHNOLOGY IS DRIVING INNOVATION IN WINDOW DRESSINGS, SAYS FIDA SLAYMAN

Not so long ago in the Gulf, office workers used their bodies to shield their computer screens from the glare of the sun, and restaurant diners avoided window seats for fear

of ending up as roasted as their lunch. Fortunately, the region's window dressings industry has advanced considerably since then.

Blinds have transformed offices, hotels, restaurants, hospitals and

schools into light-filled, energy-efficient commercial spaces. Although many manufacturers are increasingly paying attention to the decorative aspects of blinds, they nevertheless remain a pragmatic choice. "More

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often than not, given the nature of our projects, we install blinds as a practicality rather than an aesthetic detail,” said Jason Roberts, group design manager, Bluehaus.

“Interiors are very ornate here,” added Yvonne Tobien, sales executive, Hunter Douglas Gulf, referring specifically to the hospitality industry. “I don’t know if this region is ready for the European style, which is more practical-oriented; more ‘less is more’.”

PARING DOWN

The global financial crisis, however, has left its mark on interior design, in many cases veering it away from traditional, over-the-top opulence towards a subtler, more understated

style. “People have been really scared with everything that’s been going on in the past couple of years and design has been reflecting that,” said Marie-Noelle Swiderski, managing director of interior design firm, Blanchard. “Clients want something that’s a bit pared down, not too much excess.”

When it comes to window dressings, “people are turning towards simpler solutions, like shutters or roman blinds,” Swiderski noted. But this change in style does not indicate a lapse in craftsmanship, she was quick to point out. Although the fabrics that designers are using are simpler, they still stand out for their quality.

“There’s very little overload of detail or texture or colour, but when you look

at it, the fabric will be of a particularly beautiful weave or it will have an interesting pattern,” she said.

In fitting out offices, Bluehaus looks for blinds that are “as inconspicuous as possible,” Roberts maintained. “They’re very minimalist and very sleek, although we don’t ignore the aesthetics of that either.”

Aesthetics aside, blinds have a very practical purpose: they must allow as much natural daylight as possible into a building, while keeping out heat and glare. “We look for something that has a degree of transparency – a fabric that you can see through. Some of the larger buildings have good views that they don’t want to block out, so we usually use a white or very light grey fabric.



1
Solutions from
Hunter Douglas Gulf.

2&3
Blinds by
Verotex Gulf.

4&5
Hunter Douglas’
Duette shade.

Nine times out of ten it's a roller blind as well," said Roberts.

Catering for hotels, shopping malls, offices and other commercial enterprises, the Hunter Douglas factory in Dubai produces fibreglass fabrics with openings of 5% or 10%. "Those are roller blinds and they're our biggest sellers here," said Tobien. The screening fabrics allow a person to see out, and are available in light colours that reflect the sunlight away.

Curtain manufacturers, similarly, are under pressure to produce fabrics that can resist the harsh elements of the Gulf climate, Swiderski pointed out.

"Because the light, temperature, wind and the sand are quite harsh on any finish you're going to use, you need to make sure that the fabric has an excellent dye quality, that it has a colour fastness with UV protection, and that the weave is solid enough to withstand having sand particles lodged in it," she explained.

Full-length, custom-made silk curtains are an investment, she continued, and must hold up to rigorous use.

"Blinds are easier to change because they're cheaper, but curtains are hopefully something that you don't have to change – even if the whole room is changed, the curtains usually stay the same," Swiderski said.

QUALITY CONTROL

Dubious about the quality of fabrics available locally, Swiderski sources Scotch-guarded, colour-fast curtain fabrics from local representatives of international manufacturers.

"You can find beautiful fabrics on the local market but it's a gamble on quality, and these are risks I don't want to take," she said.

"Where Dubai is lacking," she asserted, "is the hanging systems. There's not a huge selection of beautiful rods or poles here – you can find very cheap ones, or ornate ones, but

if you want something that's going to stand the test of time, and that's going to suit a cosmopolitan interior, you still have to import."

Though blinds are chosen for their practicality, they are increasingly being designed to be a style choice as well, albeit not one as rich as curtains. "The biggest innovation at the moment is with fabric," said Holger Scholz, director of engineering, Verotex Gulf.

The company's Verofashion line of blinds is designed to offer the versatility of a blind with the fashion of a curtain, an innovation popular with style-conscious companies and hospitality outlets. The company has also developed PVC-free fabrics which, as well as being thinner and lighter than PVC fabrics, control natural light and save energy, thereby helping companies to meet LEED requirements.

"It's certainly a buzzword at the moment," said Roberts of LEED certification, adding that many companies have

6
Good curtains
are a long-term
investment, says
Marie-Noelle
Swiderski of
Blanchard.



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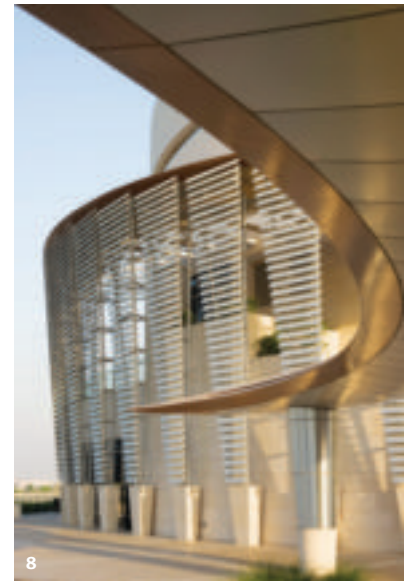
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7 Screen fabric roller blinds by Hunter Douglas Gulf, at the InterContinental Festival City Hotel.

8 Hunter Douglas also supplied the Four Seasons Golf Course.

9 The Duettes shade in a hospitality context.

started to invest in blinds systems to reduce their energy expenditure.

Tobien agreed. "It's definitely picking up. A lot of companies have strict rules and regulations about their carbon footprint; they want to be aware and do the right thing." To meet increased demand for energy-efficient blinds, Hunter Douglas has released the Duette Architella, a fire retardant honeycomb-design blind which can reduce energy loss by up to 50%.

FLYING THE FLAG

As a designer, Swiderski takes up the environmental mantle even when her client has not specified a desire to install energy-saving blinds. "Some of our clients make a point of specifying them," she said, "but most couldn't care less. We try and promote it anyway, and to find suppliers and manufacturers that have these ethics."

Suppliers in the UAE, she continued, have "a real awareness" of environmental issues. "They have a real will to develop that side of things, and a lot of them realise this gives them an edge to place them on an international level."

"Promoting environmental awareness has become a major issue," added Scholz. "There are always people who go only for the price, but after so long of buying cheaply, clients' buying habits are changing; they are looking for quality, they are looking ahead."

Companies with a serious commitment to reducing energy consumption

are leaning towards electronic blinds systems which automatically regulate the amount of natural light entering a building, said Roberts. "This is one of the big trends at the moment – what we're noticing is that people are more open to technology-driven controls, especially in the larger-scale projects."

Though it's "not widespread", he admitted that "more and more of our clients are becoming interested in applying LEED standards."

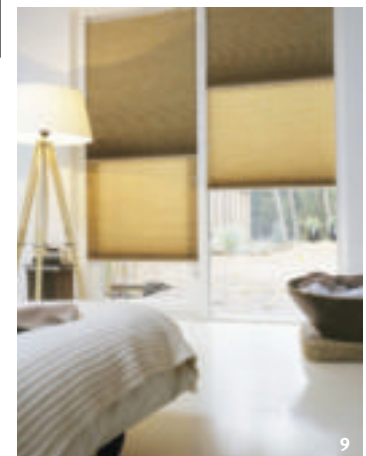
"One of the projects we're working on at the moment is a building with over 15 storeys, and all the blinds are electronically controlled through a main system that calculates the amount of natural light that comes into the building," he explained. "So, if the amount of daylight is high then the lights are switched off automatically."

Coupled with exterior blinds, which reflect the sun's rays before they come into contact with windows, electronic blinds systems go a long way in making a building LEED compliant. "The use of outside shutters will increase a lot," Scholz predicted.

Having completed projects for the Sharjah Maritime Museum, Al Badia Golf Club in Dubai, and Airbus Middle East, Verotex's Middle East office has seen a marked increase in demand for electronic blinds systems. The German company is planning to open a factory specialising in motorised exterior blinds coupled with a shading system, to meet local demand.

Looking further ahead, advances in window glazing and solar technology may mean an end to having to put blinds in at all, Roberts predicted. "Huge advances are being made in glass and external blinds that disperse solar heat and reflection away," he said, but admitted that "it's definitely more expensive."

If the lifespan of a building is taken into account however, "then it will be cheaper because there may be no need to install and replace blinds". 



TOP TRENDS FOR 2010

- Automated interior and exterior blinds systems
- Transparent, heat-reflective fabrics
- Simple, effective designs
- PVC-free blinds
- Investment in quality blinds systems
- Window insulation



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Capital gains

COMPANIES MUST SHOW COMMITMENT IF THEY WANT TO SUCCEED IN ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi has not escaped entirely unscathed from the economic downturn, in spite of the hype. However, a number of factors have left it in a stronger position than many of its peers. "The UAE has not been immune to the global downturn," said Stephen Embley, managing director – Middle East operations, Aukett Fitzroy Robinson (AFR). "However, Abu Dhabi is well placed for economic recovery, with over 100 years of oil reserves, a balanced economy and enlightened leadership," he added.

"Leading this recovery has been government investment in 'social infrastructure', so healthcare, hospitals, education, universities, and key worker and Emirati accommodation. Hospitality and cultural investment remains

strong but luxury residential and retail developments are suffering from over supply and competition from the Dubai market," he detailed.

AFR was one of the first design practices to establish a presence in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the 1970s and 80s, and was responsible for a number of iconic projects at the time, including The Arab Monetary Fund and the Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed office buildings on the Corniche, which appear on the AED 1,000 bank note. After some time away, the company returned to Abu Dhabi in 2007 and was responsible for the architecture and interior design of the Radisson Blu and Park Inn hotels on Yas Island.

AFR has offices throughout Europe, with 'hubs' in London, Moscow and, now, Abu Dhabi. "Strategically, we

believe the global economic and cultural centre of gravity is moving eastwards. Abu Dhabi's position as a bridge between east and west is significant, being only six hours travel time to 100 global capital cities," said Embley.

US-headquartered design firm RW Armstrong is also convinced of Abu Dhabi's potential. "We came to the Middle East in about 2005. Our president is of Middle Eastern origin and he wanted to come back to this part of the world and try to be part of the growth," said Mona Salem, senior associate and programmes director, RW Armstrong.

"When we moved to this region, our president saw that the opportunity was in Abu Dhabi. Even though everybody was in Dubai, he decided to start with Abu Dhabi, and I think that was a good move," she continued. "We started

looking at opportunities and then in 2006 we won our first project, which was lead consultancy for the Soroush Sky Tower project. Since that time, we've grown from an office of about three people in the Middle East to nearly 250 people."

According to Salem, it is this level of commitment that has guaranteed the company's success in the UAE capital. "Our philosophy and strategy for growth, whether in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world, is to grow locally. We don't go into a place and just have one person working out of a suitcase. We actually establish roots; we give back to the community."

Embley reiterated the need for long-term commitment, but also highlighted the challenging nature of the market. "The expectation of world-class design, combined with competitive fee levels, payment periods and aggressive programmes, will test the best in the world. Accept to be here for the long term, investing in the local economy and society. Respect the rich local culture and values and promote a synergy between the best of Emirati and western culture, design and enthusiasm for the future," he suggested.

According to Embley, Abu Dhabi boasts world-class interior design

in certain sectors, but is lagging in others. "In the hospitality, retail and residential market, Abu Dhabi's interior design offering is truly world-class and competitive. Commercial offices and workplaces currently lack the sophistication of western markets in relation to the integration of new working practices, empowerment culture and IT integration," he suggested.

For British artist Kevin Dean, Abu Dhabi has presented great opportunity for creative expression. Dean, who is celebrated for his floral designs, was involved in the design of the Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Grand Mosque. "I was asked to provide some impressions of what the main courtyard or sahan floor might look like.

"Sheikh Sultan had already put down some quick ideas on paper, which was very helpful. I was surprised to be given so much freedom but Sheikh Sultan was interested in moving away from traditional Islamic pattern in favour of more free-flowing floral designs. Once my concept was approved I was then asked to design internal marble floors and the relief marble decoration on most of the external archways," Dean detailed. Following on

from this experience, Dean is currently working on a range of floral designs inspired by the Middle East, which will be featured on wallcoverings, rugs and china. The Oasis Collection is due to be launched at the end of 2011.

"In the same way that the UAE has undergone enormous growth, so too has the nation's design industry. In the malls, of course, you can find many of the big international brands in interior design products and furnishings," Dean explained.

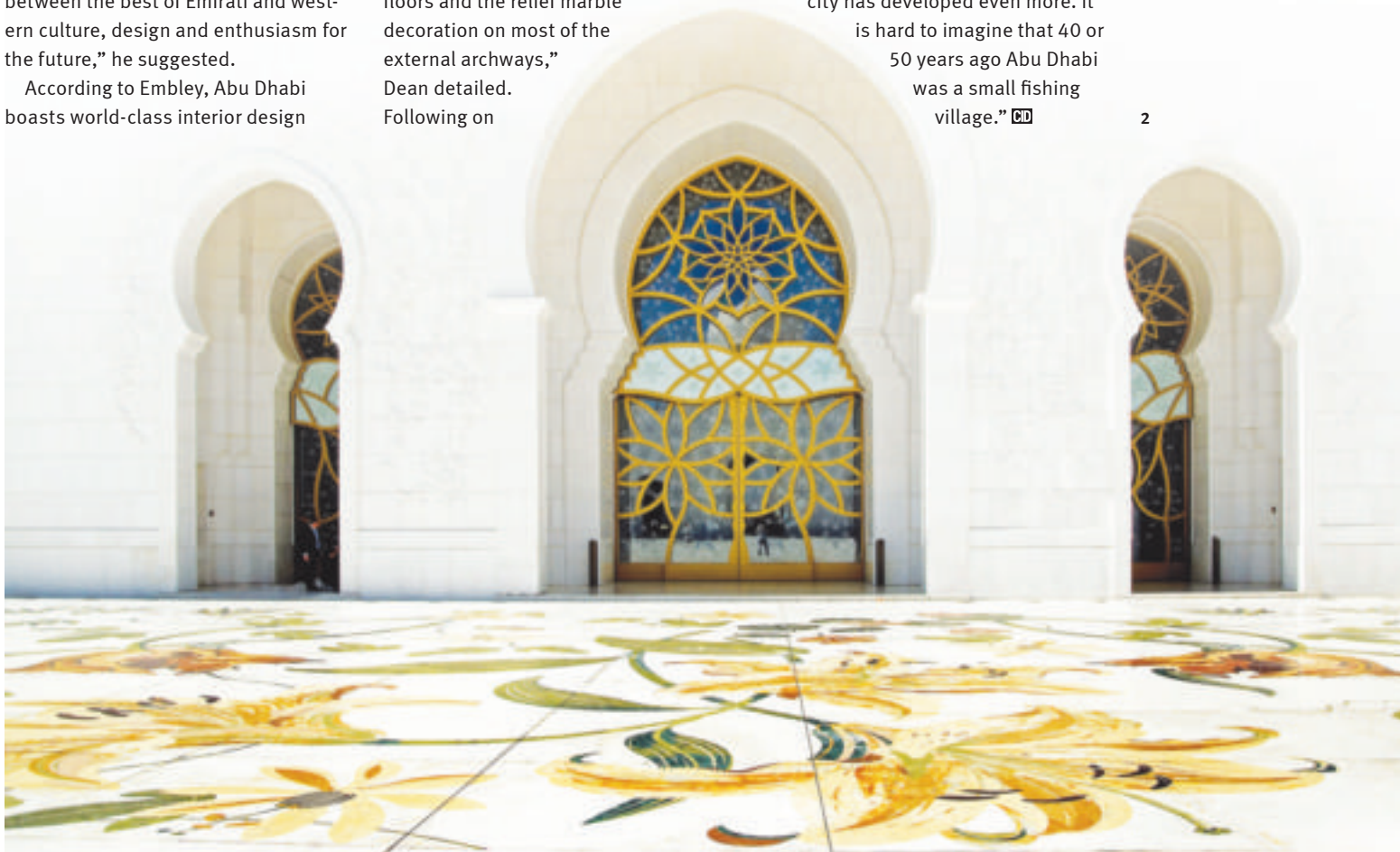
"I think it is only a matter of time before even more indigenous design begins to take centre stage, particularly in the homeware and furnishing stores. I am currently developing a collection of wallpapers and textiles that uses floral motifs from the region. I'm not from the Emirates but that's the sort of thing I mean – using local elements to reflect the country's culture."

Dean's impressions of the UAE capital are overwhelmingly positive. "I love Abu Dhabi; the people are so charming and helpful. Every time I return I'm astonished to see how the city has developed even more. It is hard to imagine that 40 or 50 years ago Abu Dhabi was a small fishing village." 

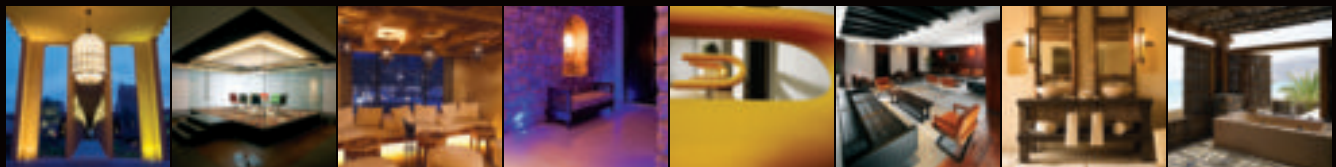
1 & 2

Sheikh Zayed Bin
Sultan Al Nahyan
Grand Mosque.

2



50 FAVOURITE INTERIOR DESIGNS 01.07.10



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Environmentally friendly

ABU DHABI'S ENVIRONMENT AGENCY'S NEW OFFICES HAVE SUSTAINABILITY AT THEIR VERY CORE

It is fitting, of course, that the new offices of The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi are inspired by the topography of the United Arab Emirates. The sabkha, or salt flats, that line the coast; the dominant desert landscape; the mountainous terrain that snakes along the Omani border; the dunes of the Empty Quarter; and the islands that hug the coastline; all had an influence on this interior design scheme.

RW Armstrong, a US-headquartered architectural, engineering, project management, planning and design consultancy with a presence in Abu Dhabi,

was responsible for the interiors of the three-storey office. "The project brief was for 12,000m² of office space that would house the entire Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi.

"The agency was interested in a design that reflected its values and that showcased the UAE's environment, but was also sustainable," explained Mona Salem, senior associate and programmes director, RW Armstrong.

The Environment Agency is a governmental body that was established in 1996 to protect and manage biodiversity, create a clean environment and promote sustainable development in

Abu Dhabi. "We are also committed to giving environmental protection, regulation and natural resources conservation a high priority on the national agenda. We provide a direction for government, business and the community to build environmental considerations into the way they plan and live, without compromising Abu Dhabi's development," says the agency's mission statement.

As a highly prominent entity, the Environment Agency receives a high number of dignitaries from around the world, Salem explained. Furthermore, the offices are located in Abu Dhabi's

1
The Environment Agency protects and manages biodiversity in the capital.



prestigious Al Mamoura Building, which presented an additional incentive to get the design absolutely right. Home to the Mubadala Development Company headquarters, Abu Dhabi's Urban Planning Council, The Council of Economic Development, the Emirates Foundation and various other high-profile inhabitants, the Al Mamoura building is no stranger to good interior design, Salem pointed out.

"What we did initially is we developed a concept that was based on the environment of the UAE. There are, I think, seven different environments in the UAE so, for example, we looked at the dune environment, the marine environment, the sabkha environment, the wadi environment, and we looked at the desert. We looked at all these different environments, at the colours, the textures, the type of animals and wildlife, the patterns, and incorporated those influences into the interior design," Salem detailed.

RW Armstrong introduced two distinct themes on each of the office's three floors. Each theme was characterised by a specific set of forms, textures and colour schemes, which shaped the flooring, ceilings, façade and furniture.

Throughout the design, the focus was very much on sustainability. "The office has a luxurious feel, but it's still sustainable. That's a tough balance to strike but we believe that we accomplished that. We used a lot of recycled



materials, environmentally-friendly materials, and materials with a low carbon imprint," Salem said.

"Most of the materials were sourced locally or from a nearby source. Electrical consumption and MEP systems were a major focus and we introduced intelligent lighting and intelligent security systems. We also did a lot of customisation when it came to furniture and artwork."

But while sustainability was a primary concern, it was equally important to create an intelligent space that facilitated the agency's work flow and promoted progressive working principles. "We put in a RPX digital conference room, which is the first of its kind in this region," Salem said. "We are very very proud of it."

"We spent a significant amount of time with the agency, developing the space programme. There are a total of 270 work stations. We took the structural hierarchy of the organisation and looked at having the majority of

the staff occupying open workstations. Even the enclosed offices have sheer doors and sheer partitions to allow natural light to seep through and flood the rest of the space."

In this, and many other ways, the new office is strictly in keeping with current trends in workplace design, Salem pointed out. "The main trend in office design right now is sustainability. Use of technology is very important too – being able to plug in anywhere, not being limited and not having wires all over the place."

"IT is playing a major role in high-end commercial offices and conference spaces. Minimising bulk is also important, so there is a trend towards lightweight, modular furniture that can be assembled and moved around, and materials that are lightweight. Being able to use spaces for multiple functions is also popular."

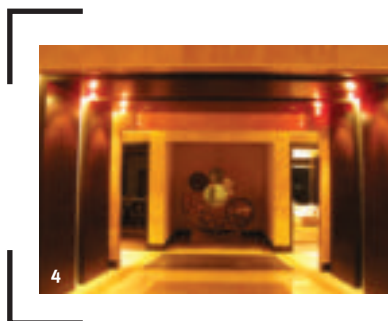
All in all, the Environment Agency project took nine months to complete, a time scale that presented significant challenges, given the size of the space. "The schedule was the greatest challenge. The agency was moving and had to vacate its old premises. They had to move into a temporary space and were very anxious to move into their new offices," said Salem.

In spite – or perhaps because – of this, the project was particularly rewarding, Salem noted. "It was a fun job to do. It turned out very nicely and was well worth the headaches caused by the tight schedule," she said.

"It's a project that we are extremely proud of, for many reasons, but mainly because of the sustainability angle; the client's mission was very near and dear to our hearts so we were happy to be a part of the project, and hope to do many more like it." 

SOURCES

Office furniture: Estel
Workstations: Herman Miller
Training centre: Lamhults
Waiting areas: B&B Italia and Minotti
Lounges: Mauro Mori and Moroso
Management suite: Estel, B&B Italia, Minotti, Molteni&C



2
The design was influenced by the natural environments of the UAE.

3
Materials were sourced locally, where possible.

4
The office has a luxurious feel.

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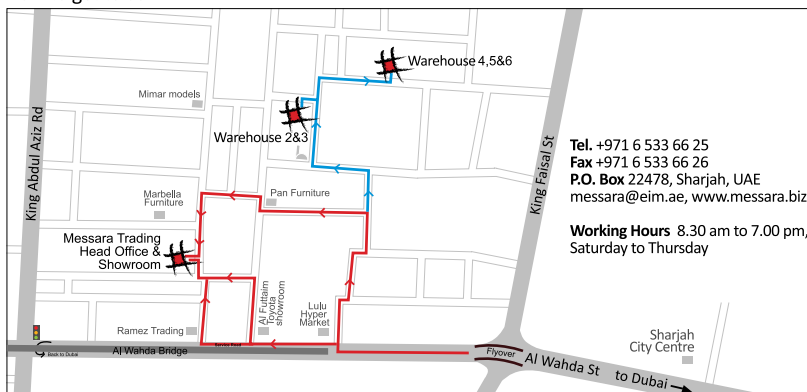
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SPANISH SUPPLIERS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Spain has been slow to carve a niche for itself on the global design scene. Often overshadowed by their Italian counterparts, Spanish manufacturers have traditionally struggled to compete on an international level. But while Spain may have been a little slow off the starting block in terms of global marketing, back home its design

industry has been steadily – and stealthily – gathering strength.

Embracing a fresh, innovative approach to design, Spanish manufacturers are quietly positioning themselves as a refreshing and unique alternative to more traditional design solutions. The Association of Spanish Manufacturers of Office and Contract Furniture and Equipment (FAMO) has adopted the tagline ‘Sunlight shaping

design’, a reference to the way that natural light infuses and influences Spanish architecture and design.

In fact, light is a fitting metaphor for the clean, contemporary, uncluttered lines that are inherent in many Spanish products. Over the next few pages, we speak to some leading players on the Spanish design scene, to find out more about how they are differentiating themselves.



Roca

CID speaks to Victor Schoone, country manager, Middle East, Roca.

Tell us about your company.

Roca's vision is to be the 'leading global bathroom brand' by the year 2020. The definition of this vision was set by Jose Miguel Roca in 2007 and has sparked the creation of numerous 'total change' strategies through the company, and worldwide.

Roca is aiming to be the leader in everything related to our business. It has defined five key values, which are innovation, design, wellness, sustainability and leadership. Any change programme or strategy must ensure that we improve in one or more of these five areas.

New designs like W&W show our commitment to the environment and to innovation, as the water from the washbasin is reused for flushing the WC. This revolutionary concept has won numerous awards. Other innovations in wellness include Transtube, a shower cabin with automatic sliding doors, and the Home Beach.

Roca has also shown its leadership in the bathroom sector through the establishment of a new concept of showrooms called Galleries, in which our values, goals, objectives and desires are transmitted to the end customer. We explain about the projects we are working on and the history of the company.

Roca now owns such Galleries in Barcelona, Madrid and Lisboa, and in 2010 a new London Gallery, designed by Zaha Hadid, will be opened.

What sets you apart from the competition?

The fact that Roca is still a family business, and is considered to be one of the largest family-owned businesses in Europe, makes it unique within the bathroom sector, and really makes a difference to the company. The fact that a family runs the business allows for good ideas, and even philanthropic ideas, to find a way to the market, which really puts a signature on each and every Roca product.

What projects have you worked on in this region?

Large-scale residential projects like Sky Courts, luxury hotels and resorts like Grosvenor House II and the Westin, as well as Saadiyat Island projects in Abu Dhabi, and many other housing and hotel projects across the whole of the Middle East.

What are the defining characteristics of Spanish design?

Latin and Arab influences have created a unique combination of style, originality and commitment, which, combined with technology, quality and hygiene (in the case of bathroom products), is putting Spanish designers at the forefront of international design.

How do we contact you?

Please visit our new website, www.roca.com or call +971 (0)4 347 6400 to contact our regional office at Emaar Gold & Diamond Park, Building 5, Office 111, Sheikh Zayed Road, 4th Interchange.

Buro 45



Catching up with Jill Gordon-Keep, Buro 45's business development manager.

Tell us about your company.

Buro 45 is an established, progressive company headquartered in Dubai offering a broad range of modern European office furniture complemented by related services across the Gulf region.

What projects have you worked on in this region?

We have undertaken a large number of diverse projects across the Gulf region and we believe our track record speaks for itself. A selection of our latest appointments includes: Linklaters (DIFC), Omnicom Media Group (DMC), TBWA/RAAD (Dubai and Abu Dhabi) and also the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology (Masdar City, Abu Dhabi).

What sets Buro 45 apart?

Buro 45 exclusively offers product lines from a number of leading Spanish providers. Through long standing relationships and direct sourcing with Forma 5, Bordonabe, Perobell, Oken and Vilagrassa, we offer extremely competitive

prices, enabling us to offer exceptional value to our clients, from sourcing and delivery to installation. Each supplier that Buro 45 has selected to work with comes highly recommended and possesses demanding certifications covering both quality assurance and environmental management.

What are the defining characteristics of Spanish design?

Our clients place high value on contemporary office design – and so do we. When researching and selecting innovative furniture systems, we have found that Spanish product lines not only deliver minimalistic, modern design, but also offer a complete package. This comprises strong design, superior quality, competitive pricing, low environmental impact, and services such as unmatched technical support and custom specification work.

How do we contact you?

We invite you to visit our showrooms in Dubai (+971 4 283 1928) and Saudi Arabia (+966 2 60 79 426). Find out more about us at www.buro45.com.

The low-down from Albert Granados, export area manager, Mobel Linea.

Tell us about your company

Mobel Linea is located near Barcelona in Spain's north-east region and is one of Europe's leading manufacturers of office furniture and seating. Founded in 1973, the company is now present in over 20 different countries.

What sets you apart?

Large production capacity and facilities; short delivery times – two weeks from the order confirmation; a tracking system on our website; flexibility to produce special items; no minimum order value; our own logistics network, which consists of 30 trucks running across Europe; office project support; back office support from 6am to 6pm; ISO 9001 and 14001, and Aidima, including TÜV certificates. We are one of the top three office manufacturers in Spain, with a huge range of standard products and finishes to choose from. We have huge experience in exports and overseas markets, with 50% of production devoted to exports.

What projects have you worked on in this region?

The Toyota showroom, Abu Dhabi, the Central Bank of Qatar, the National Bank in Qatar, The Qatar Foundation, United Precast Concrete in Qatar, Qatar's ministry of interior, the United Nations office in Qatar, a real estate office in Abu Dhabi, MTTs in Jeddah, Dolmen in Jeddah and EYAD in Jeddah.

What are the defining characteristics of Spanish design?

Nowadays, it is at the same level as Italian design, just less well known. Spanish design offers modern and classical shapes. Ergonomics and functionality appear in all our products. You get a similar quality and assembly to German products but price-wise, Spanish design is cheaper than German, Italian and American products.

How do we contact you?

Albert Granados can be contacted on tel: +34 973 530 050; fax: +34 973 530 649; email: albgrand@mobellinea.es. Please visit www.mobellinea.es for more information.

Mobel Linea



SUPPLIERS YOU SHOULD KNOW



Tell us about your company.

FAMO is the Association of Spanish Manufacturers and develops activities in foreign markets to support our members' presence abroad, with activities such as commercial missions, marketing campaigns, international fairs and product presentations.

What sets you apart?

We are the only body entitled to talk and act on behalf of the companies of the office furniture sector to the administration, and therefore the only one able to manage public funds to back the above activities.

What activities have you undertaken in this region?

So far we have organised a Spanish pavilion at the Office Exhibition three times, in 2008, 2009 and 2010, and have carried out several trade missions in the area, as well as published and distributed a special newsletter three times a year, for many years now.

In June we are setting up a trade mission with nine Spanish manufacturers, which will be visiting importers and

distributors in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Qatar. The nine companies involved in this mission are Actiu, Forma 5, Imasoto, Inclass, Kron, Megablok, Ofifran, Ofita and Vilagrassa.

What are the defining characteristics of Spanish design?

On the one hand, design is always understood by Spanish manufacturers as an added value that must be linked to quality. That is why behind Spanish office and contract furniture you will find well-known Spanish designers such as Mario Ruiz or Patricia Urquiola, among others, as well as the use of the best materials.

On the other hand, our southern character is found in any product made in Spain, where sunlight fosters creativity. As a result, you find unique Spanish products, as well as unique Spanish architecture, caused by a process that is lit up by our Mediterranean spirit.

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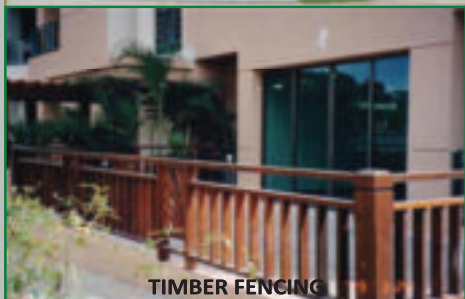
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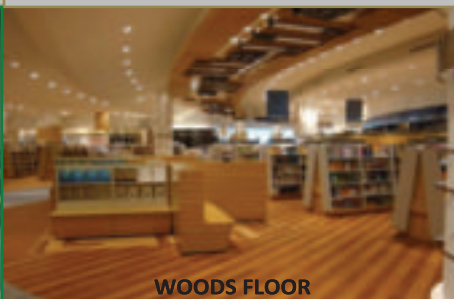
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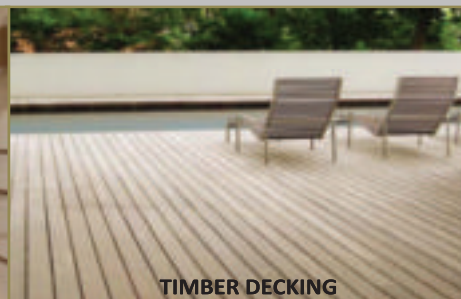
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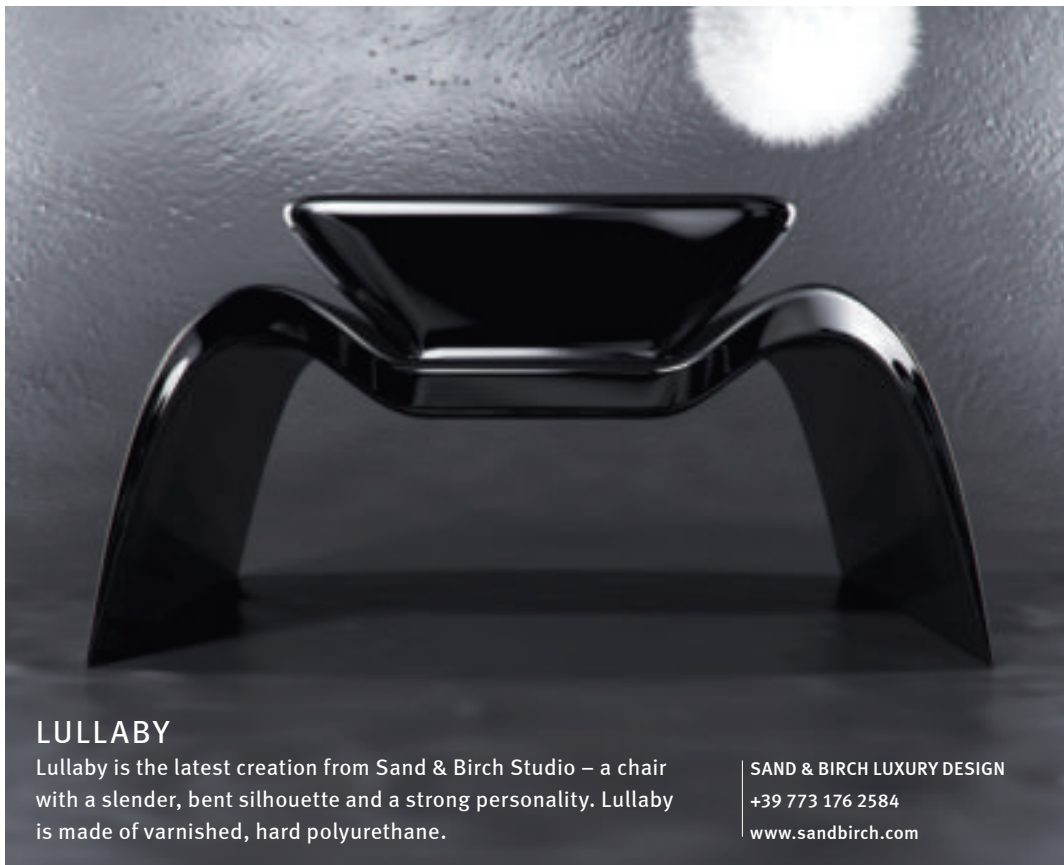
BOCONCEPT

BoConcept has unveiled its latest collection of lamps. While the colour basics are still black and white, this year's palette also includes turquoise, orange, red and multi-coloured stripes. Shades come in all sizes and

in a range of materials, including glass, wood and coloured aluminium.

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PRODUCTS



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www.sandbirch.com



TOP BIMATERICO

TechLab Italia has mixed stainless steel and DuPont Corian to create the innovative new Top Bimaterico. The collection of kitchen surfaces combines the tactility, beauty and mouldability of DuPont Corian with the practicality and high temperature resistance of stainless steel. Large sheets of stainless steel are set flush into slabs of DuPont Corian, using an exclusive flush-mounting system that gives the surface exceptional stability and solidity, and is easy to install.

TECHLAB ITALIA
+39 432 403 500
www.techlabitalia.com

LITTLE LUXURIES

Little Luxuries is promoting its new spring/summer wallpaper collection in its Town Centre Jumeirah store. The home accessories, wallpaper and fabric boutique is also offering its customers free installation when they purchase wallpaper throughout June and July. Little Luxuries was created in 2006 to offer original items to the interiors and home accessories markets. In addition to wallpapers and fabrics from across Europe and the US, the store offers cushions, glassware and tablecloths, a small and unique range of furniture that includes drawers, chairs and garden items, as well as ladies and children's accessories.

LITTLE LUXURIES
+971 (0)4 349 4755
www.littleluxuries.ae

TWISTED

LG Hausys has introduced Twisted, an eclectic collection of furniture designed by Philip Michael Wolfson. The collection's complex shapes create a choreography of motion and continual transformation. Twisted includes Eruption, a low table, the Twisted Bar, the Split stool and low chair, the Twisted Desk, and the Why Not console.

WOLFSON DESIGN
+44 207 229 3221
www.wolfsondesign.com



TWISTER & WISPER

Orange Technology has introduced Twister and Wisper in the Middle East. Developed by Austrian environmental engineer, Siegfried Kogelbauer, the brass fittings are inserted into shower and tap fixtures and contribute to water savings of up to 68%. Water is swirled as it passes through the fixture, ensuring that it is enriched with oxygen.

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LOOP, COAT & IKI

Axil has collaborated with Italian designer Ilaria Marelli to create a series of new products, including three double beds. Coat is inspired by the tailoring trade and the world of fashion. Fabrics have been wrapped around the structure to create a soft and sumptuous silhouette. Resembling the lacing of a corset, the point where the covering is fastened is particularly striking. Marelli was also

responsible for Iki, which means beauty or grace in Japanese. This king-size bed has a lacquered white frame that can be matched with four different headboards. Meanwhile, Loop is a bed and armchair combination characterised by light, hollowed-out volumes. The armchair's silhouette is created by a continuous line that bends to become the base, sides, backrest and armrests.

AXIL

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www.axil.it



ZANINELLI BAGNI

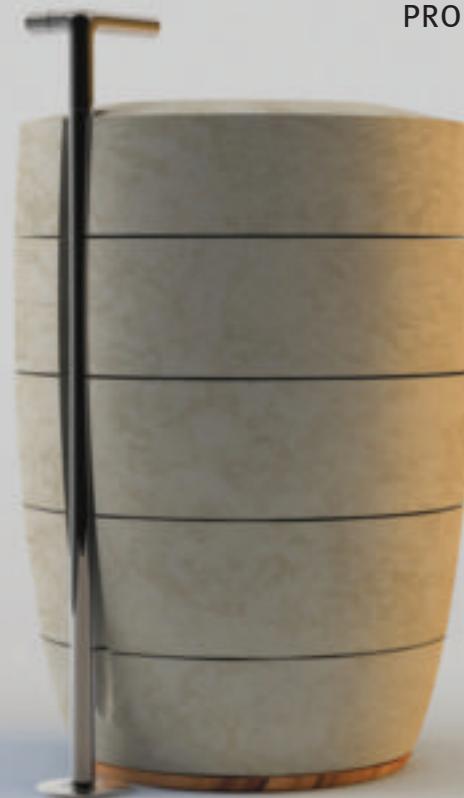
Italian bathroom furnishings brand, Zaninelli Bagni has launched a collection carved out of precious, natural stone. The CNC Collection was designed by Mr Smith Studio in Milan. It includes single and double washbasins, built-in or

floor standing basins, countertops, shower receptors and bathtubs, each carved out of big blocks of stone.

ZANINELLI BAGNI

+32 461 858 482

www.zaninelli.it



JUNGLE

Ceramica Cielo has extended its Jungle collection of decorated bathroom fittings with new iguana-, pony- and crocodile-inspired products. Additions to the collection include 'iguana' in white, the black and piebald 'pony', Cocò Blanc, or white

'crocodile', and Cocò Retro, a vintage grey crocodile effect. The collection now includes a total of ten different 'skins'.

CERAMICA CIELO

+39 7615 6701

www.ceramicacielo.it

PRODUCTS



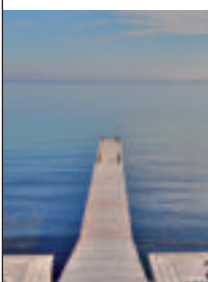
SUBWAY

Villeroy & Boch's popular Subway range has been given a facelift. In the seven years since its launch, the product family has been extended to include a complete shower and tub series, as well as a new generation of wall-mounted toilets and bidets. For 2010, the rectangular Subway washbasin range has been redesigned to include a more delicate vocabulary of shapes. A total of 11 rectangular models, including double-washbasins, are now available, along with six round washbasins in a variety of sizes.

VILLEROY & BOCH MIDDLE EAST
+971 (0)4 364 2613
www.villeroy-boch.com



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www.nordichomeworx.com



The Rolls Royce of Floors



B_CAUSE

Stackable and versatile, Bene's latest offering, B_cause, comes as a cantilever chair, or as a four-legged model with castors or glides. The backrest is made of ergonomically shaped plastic, and is available in black, white and graphite grey. The frame comes

in a choice of chrome and is powder coated in black, aluminium and graphite grey. The seat is always upholstered.

BENE
+971(0)4 204 57 22
www.bene.ae

COMMERCIAL Interior design

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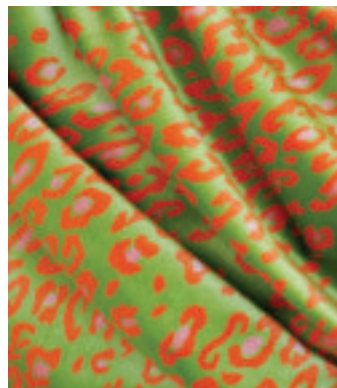
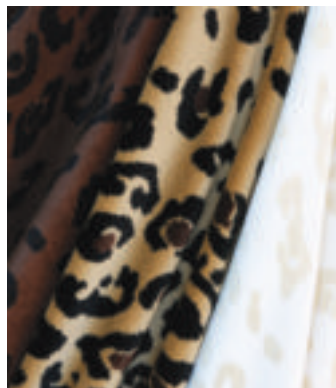
LAUFEN
bathrooms



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ConstructionWEEKonline.com

PRODUCTS



PERENNIALS FABRICS

Perennials has taken the richest velvets in the industry and combined them with exciting animal-inspired jacquard prints. Catwalk has a rich, comfortable texture and lush hand, and appears in four wildly imaginative colourways; Cool Cat is white with grey leopard spots; Sophisticat is grey ground

with black; Alley Cat provides a brown background for black markings; and Crazy Cat is the wildest of them all, with a green background, orange marks and pink accents.

PERENNIALS FABRICS
+1 888 322 4773
www.perennialsfabrics.com

THE CRYSTAL COLLECTION

Bisazza has unveiled its new Crystal Collection, a series of decorative patterns in glass and mosaic, embellished with Swarovski crystals. Five distinct patterns – coral and seahorses, skulls and crowns, flash, stars and rain – are outlined against a monochromatic background of white, lapis lazuli, blue and black.

BISAZZA
+971 (0)4 204 5252
www.bisazza.com



SHIO AND UXI

Arturo Alvarez has reiterated its commitment to the environment with its two latest product lines, Shio and Uxi, which are both made from birch plywood sourced from protected forests. The Shio collection consists of a table lamp, floor lamp, two suspension lamps and a wall lamp, which are all characterised by curvaceous shapes and a sequence of layers. The Uxi family consists of a suspension and wall lamp made of glued laminated board on methacrylate.

Arturo Alvarez
+34 981 814 600
www.arturo-alvarez.com

Make a green difference everyday

Philips believes that with a little responsibility, each of us can make an immediate and meaningful difference to our world:



- Keep air conditioners at around 24 degrees centigrade.
- Don't leave the tap running when brushing your teeth, shaving, bathing or washing up.

- Air dry dishes instead of using the dishwasher's drying cycle.
- Maximize dishwasher and washing machine efficiency by doing full loads.

- Check water pipes for leakage.
- Use a swimming pool cover to prevent water loss due to evaporation.
- Carry your own re-useable, eco-friendly bag on shopping trips.



- Use eco-friendly cleaning products.
- Buy reusable water bottles.
- Recycle plastic, glass, paper and old batteries.



- Use home appliances and products with the Energy Star® label.
- Plug home electronics like TVs, DVD players and chargers into power strips and turn off (standby mode still uses several watts of power).

- Turn off your computer, monitor, lights and A/Cs when leaving home or office.
- Enable the 'sleep mode' on your computer- it uses less power when inactive.

- Pay your bills online and replace faxes with emails.
- Print only when necessary, use recycled paper, print on both sides and print in black & white.

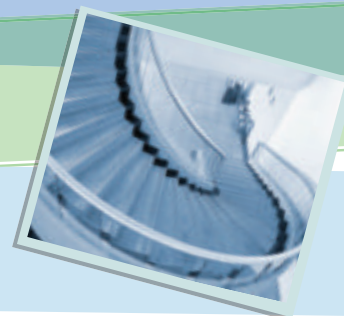


- Donate or repair your old electronics.
- Open shades and blinds to take advantage of natural light during the day.



- Replace your old incandescent bulbs with energy saving compact fluorescent lamps to save up to 80% on energy, and live in a greener environment.

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.



- Use public transport or car pool to reduce carbon emission (1 gallon of fuel= almost 20 pounds of CO₂).

Project Focus

COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGN IS COMMITTED TO HELPING ITS READERS GROW THEIR BUSINESSES, SO WE HAVE TEAMED UP WITH VENTURES MIDDLE EAST TO BRING YOU THE LATEST TENDERS FROM AROUND THE REGION ON A MONTHLY BASIS.

UAE PROJECTS DATABASE

PROJECT TITLE	CLIENT	CONSULTANT	MAIN CONTRACTOR	VALUE / VALUE RANGE (US\$. MN)	PROJECT STATUS	PROJECT TYPE
City of Lights - C10, C10A and C11	Tamouh Investments	Palm & Turner Architects	China State Construction & Engineering Corporation	101 - 250	Project under construction	Mixed Use
Royal City Seasons Hotel in Abu Dhabi	City Seasons Group	James Cubitt & Partners	Tae Young Contracting	101 - 250	Project under construction	Hotel
Ritaj Mixed-Use Complex in DIP	Dubai Investments Real Estate Co.	Al Jabal Consultants	Robust Contracting	155	Project under construction	Mixed Use
Layia Hospitality in Dubai	Gulf General Investment Co.	National Engineering Bureau	Not Appointed	31 - 100	Bidding underway for the main contract	Hotel
Al Falah Development in Abu Dhabi - 2000 Villas	ALDAR Properties	Al Torath Engineering Consultants	El Seif Engineering & Contracting Co.	251 - 500	Project under construction	Residential Development
Fisherman's Quay in Ras Al Khaimah	RAK Properties	EDAW	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Project under design	Residential Development
Union Co-Operative Hypermarket in Al Barsha	Union Co-operative	Archdome Consulting Engineers	Bu Haleeba Contracting	33	Project under construction	Shopping Center
Extension to the Ruler's Court in Souk Al Kabir	Dubai Municipality	Arif & Bintook Consulting	Not Appointed	22	Project under design	Others
Arjaan Hotel Apartments in Adnec	Bin Hamoodah Properties	GA Architects & Engineers	United Engineering Construction (UNEC)	31 - 100	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Bafco Headquartes in DIC	Bafco Trading, Dubai	Model Engineering Consultants	Evan Lim Penta Construction	2.5 - 15	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
Frankfurt Sports Tower 1 in DSC	Memon Investments	Al Hatmy Design & Engg. Cons.	OST Constructional Projects	92	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
The Villa in Dubailand - Phase 3	Dubai Properties	Shadeed Engineering	Al Shafar General Contracting	91	Project under construction	Residential Development
Lilies Tower in Emirates City	R Holdings	Adnan Saffarini	Abou Seif Building Contracting Co	87	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Champions Tower II in Dubai Sports City	Memon Investments	Adnan Saffarini	Al Sarh Contracting	30	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Champions Tower III in Dubai Sports City	Memon Investments	Adnan Saffarini	Al Sarh Contracting	40	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Refurbishment of Oasis Hospital in Al Ain	Oasis Hospital	Peddle Thorp Architects	Not Appointed	31 - 100	Bidding underway for the main contract	Hospital
Watani Residential Development - 600 Villas and 48 Buildings	Sorouh Real Estate	Ewan Arch. Engg./WSP Group	Not Appointed	251 - 500	Project under design	Mixed Use
Sandoval Townhouses & Residences in Jumeirah Village	Bavaria Gulf	Diar Consult	Al Sayegh Contracting	31 - 100	Project under construction	Residential Development
Al Gurm Complex in West Abu Dhabi - Banyan Tree Hotel	ALDAR Properties	Dar Al Handasah	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Award awaited for the construction contract	Hotel
32 Villas in Al Barsha	Mr. Mohammed Al Nasser	City Space Engineering Consult.	Moal Contracting	31 - 100	Project under construction	Residential Development
Champions Tower IV in Dubai Sports City	Memon Investments	Adnan Saffarini	Al Jassmy Contracting	122	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Altitude Tower in Emirates City	BL Properties	Adnan Saffarini	Mehwal Building Contracting	44	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
British Business Group Building in Bur Dubai	British Business Group	Emirates Engineering Consultant	Jasaf Building Technology	16 - 30	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
The Kingdom of Sheba Resort on Jumeirah Palm	International Financial Advisors (IFA), Dubai	Wimberley Allison Tong & Goo	Dubai Contracting Co (DCC)	251 - 500	Project under construction	Mixed Use
New Building for Sharjah Municipality	Sharjah Municipality	Art & Design Engineering	Globe Constructors	41	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
Medical Complex in Arzanah	Capitala	HDP Overseas	Not Appointed	31 - 100	Bidding underway for the main contract	Hospital
Masdar City Car Park and PRT Station Building in Masdar City	Masdar (Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company)	Foster & Partners (UK)	Amana Contracting & Steel Buildings Company, Abu Dhabi	164	Project under construction	Others
City Center in Masdar City	Masdar	Laboratory for Visionary Arch.	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Project under design	Mixed Use
Mall at Deerfields Town Square	Mubarak and Brothers Investment	RMJM	Not Appointed	31 - 100	Bidding underway for the main contract	Shopping Center

BAHRAIN PROJECTS DATABASE

PROJECT TITLE	CLIENT	CONSULTANT	MAIN CONTRACTOR	VALUE / VALUE RANGE (US\$. MN)	PROJECT STATUS	PROJECT TYPE
Isa Town Health Center Building	Ministry of Health	Adel Ahmadi Associates	United Arab Construction Company	7	Project under construction	Hospital
Crystal Heights	Dadabhai Contracting	Habib Modara Art & Architecture	Dadabhai Contracting	20	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Mall at A'ali	Al Namal Group	United Engineering	Al Namal Construction	2.5 - 15	Project under construction	Shopping Center
Riffa Views - The Oasis Estate	Riffa Views	Mohamed Salahuddin Consulting Engineering Bureau	Poullides Construction Company/Terna Contracting	31 - 100	Project under construction	Residential Development
Al Matrook Tower	Mr. Faisal Ali Al Matrook	Mohamed Salahuddin Consulting Engineering Bureau	Charilaos Apostilides (Chapo)	19	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
Apartment Building in Juffair	The Islamic Association	Modern Architects	Middle East Contg. & Trade Center	16 - 30	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Millenium Tower in Seef	Hani Group	Middle East Architects	Classic Construction	31 - 100	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
Shopping Complex in Saar	Eskan Bank	Not Appointed	Not Appointed	66	Project under concept stage	Shopping Centre
Qatar Embassy in Seef	Qatar Embassy for MOFA	Arab Engineering Bureau	Not Appointed	2.5 - 15	Project under design	Commercial Buildings
Reflections of Bahrain	Ithmaar Development Company	DP Architects	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Project under design	Mixed Use
Diplomat Commercial Office Towers	National Hotels Company	Mohamed Salahuddin Consulting Engg. Bureau	Chase Perdana Berhad	70	Project under construction	Commercial Buildings
Light of Bahrain	Ithmaar Development Company	DP Architects	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Project under design	Residential Buildings
Villa Compound at Al Areen	Al Khaleeji Commercial Bank	Modern Architects	AAA Homes	6	Project under construction	Residential Development
Abu Obida Al Jarrah Primary Girls School	Ministry of Education	Dheya Towfiqi Engineering Bureau	Not Appointed	2.5 - 15	Project under design	Educational Facilities
North Bahrain New Town - Phase 1	Ministry of Works & Housing	Not Appointed	Not Appointed	101 - 250	Project under concept stage	Residential Development
Mansoori House	Mr. Hassan Mansoori	Mazen Al Umran Consulting Engineers	M & I Construction	2.5 - 15	Project under construction	Mixed Use
Manama Tower Complex	Manama Municipality	Not Appointed	Not Appointed	251 - 500	Project under concept stage	Commercial Buildings
15 Storey Mixed Use Building at Seef	Mr. Essa Bukhowa	Arabian East Bureau	Salah Al Qaed Contractors	2.5 - 15	Project under construction	Mixed Use
7 Storey Building at Riffa	Sheikh Khalifa	Arabian East Bureau	Charilaos Apostilides	5	Project under construction	Residential Buildings
Diyar Al Muharraq	Diyar Al Muharraq/KFH	AECOM	Not Appointed	3,200	Project under design	Mixed Use
@bahrain Development	Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Co.	Aedas	Not Appointed	1,000	Project under design	Mixed Use
Renaissance Bahrain Hotel at Amwaj	Ossis Property Developers	Davenport Campbell	Charilaos Apostilides	16 - 30	Project under construction	Hotel
Edamah Headquarters	Bahrain Real Estate Investment Co.	Syrconsult Consulting Engineers	Not Appointed	31 - 100	Project under design	Commercial Buildings
Retail and Commercial Tower in Bahrain Bay	Salhia Real Estate Co. (SREC)	Pan Arab Consulting Engineers/SOM	Not Appointed	125	Project under design	Commercial Buildings
Energy Tower	National Oil & Gas Authority (NOGA)	Gerber Architects/RMJM	Not Appointed	251 - 500	Project under design	Commercial Buildings

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The Market Leader

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middle east



Shush... it's supposed to be a secret

BY EMMA DOO

It's hard to imagine the perfect 'work-life balance' when you are rushing around in the heat of the Gulf... caught up in traffic jams and coping with the daily grind of life.

However, there is a small piece of paradise where this really is possible, and it's only a three-hour flight away. Trust me, high-class design does exist elsewhere in the region.

Where, you may ask? Well, it's the third largest island in the Mediterranean and has been a member of the European Union for six years. It's a place where the sun shines at a comfortable temperature for an average of 340 days a year. There is an abundant variety of outdoor activities to experience. The skies are vivid blue and it has a host of clean, free, beautiful beaches.

It has mountains just high enough to ski on real snow during the winter months. This island is steeped in history dating back 10,000 years, with an eclectic mixture of cultures – sort of east meets west. Add to that, the people are genuinely warm, friendly and happy to help and be involved. Have you guessed where yet? It's Cyprus!

There are five-star hotels, golf courses, clubs, spas, bars and restaurants that would easily compete on a world stage for design, finishes and memorable experiences! They are similar to those that I enjoyed in Dubai, where I spent five years working in the design world.

As we all know, the Mediterranean design style is an enviable one and is replicated around the world. To really understand the Mediterranean, its roots and culture, and how that is reflected in its design, I moved here. Now I am able

to feel it, breathe it, smell it, taste it, see it and live it. What better way to understand its true character and culture.

Living here for the past nine months, I started to incubate an idea that I felt would satisfy a number of requirements both here on the island and for overseas buyers, especially from the Middle East.

I noted that there was a high number of 'boutique' developers and suppliers, all with very interesting stock, but few of them seemed to combine their services and products with that of an interior design/architectural influence. I learnt from my own experience that quickly finding the suppliers that best suited the needs and tastes of myself and my clients takes a lot of time.

I also noted that property agents would show you everything they had on their listings and generally didn't take any time to understand what the client's lifestyle needs truly were when making their recommendations.

I saw developers struggling to differentiate themselves and looking for ways to overcome the changes in the market caused by the global financial crisis. I have met interior designers that tend to specialise in soft furnishings and furniture but have nothing to do with hard surfaces, kitchens and bathrooms. I met retailers looking to increase their footfall and client loyalty, and hotels and restaurants looking to take the next step with their successful brands.

So, I decided to set up Mood Group Interiors. I decided that there was obviously room in the market here in Cyprus for a discerning interior design and architectural practice – a high quality, boutique practice that works across the disciplines with its clients, suppliers,

developers and other designers, on a project-by-project basis.

In that way I am able to work across a variety of projects, and my clients use me for the aspects of the process that they can afford and where they feel my talents deliver and add value.

This piece of paradise offers designers the freedom and space to create endless possibilities. Cyprus is also looking to come on line with the rest of the world with regards to green initiatives. As a LEED qualified designer I am able to apply the latest thinking in environmental and sustainable design to all my projects. I am one of a very few in Cyprus able to provide this service.

With respect to Middle Eastern clients and design projects in the Middle East, I am able to interpret some of the tastes and preferences that they currently enjoy into a fusion of Mediterranean/Middle East lifestyles. After all, it is often said that developments in the region will have a Mediterranean choice in their list of options, but many of the designers involved are without the daily inspiration that I receive, working in a studio perched on a hill 650m above sea level, with a cool breeze and Mediterranean influences all around me.

I have heard it said that a rut is a shallow grave. I consider myself fortunate to have found an environment which places great value upon innovative interior design, tempered with a dose of what is commercially realistic. For those of you that think this might be of interest, please send me an introductory email... but shush, don't tell everyone. 

*Emma Doo can be contacted at
www.moodgroupinteriors.co.uk.*



FORM FOLLOWS FLOW.

IL BAGNO **ALESSI** d'Ot, design Wiel Arets

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ARES designed by Luca Scacchetti

The manufacture of Ares returns to a forgotten era, repositioning itself like a classical collection through the simplicity of shape. With the decisiveness of the elements, the materials and the metal inlays on the edges, and the same inlays in saddle leather and wood on the tops, it alludes to a timeless wealth in design.



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www.officelandme.com. Showroom timings: Saturday to Thursday 9:00am to 9:00pm. Closed on Friday.

