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Issue / 02

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WELCOME

to a life of

LUXURY



A very warm welcome to the second issue of DAMAC Properties' quarterly luxury lifestyle magazine.

In this issue, our regular focus on seasonal travel takes us from the powder-soft sands of the Maldives to the snow covered mountains of Aspen, with a myriad of hot spots in between – including our reporter's first-hand experience of booming Moscow.

Revered car brand Aston Martin opened its inaugural Dubai showroom at the end of last year, and this year celebrates a century at the forefront of luxury motoring – we tell its story so far. We also speak exclusively to gastronomy's most renowned restaurateur, Michael Chow, whose global spread of restaurants has served the great and the good of society for decades, and include a special report on how auction house Christie's has helped drive Dubai's fledgling art scene.

If you've decided that the new year is the time to reinvigorate your home décor, you'll enjoy our expert tips on this year's must-follow interior trends, and no doubt draw inspiration from the beautiful living spaces we've searched the globe to bring you. Your new interiors may well include a piece of work from one of the UAE's up-and-coming artists, whose work we also profile.

In property, we look back on a year of price rises as Dubai continues its upward trend, consider the factors behind its success and what the coming year will likely bring. And we also take a sneak peek at DAMAC Properties' collaboration with FENDI Casa, an exciting partnership which is set to reinvent the concept of luxury living.

We hope you enjoy the issue and would like to wish you a happy and prosperous 2013.

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Where to Go...

Despite spring being Dubai's most glorious season, jet setters still seek out more exotic spots in which to relax and recharge. DAMAC takes a look at six stellar getaways...

BEST FOR...

GUARANTEED SUN

Baros Maldives, Republic of Maldives

High season sweeps over the 26 Maldivian atolls from December to April, making it *the* place for sun-worshippers to flock to when winter hits. As well as stellar weather, couples can be sure to savour the height of luxury – and blissful silence: Baros is an adults-only resort. Picture-perfect water villas hover over the sea, making your transition to ‘island life’ a breeze. Inside suites you’ll find inviting four-poster beds, while outside a private wooden deck is a prime spot to soak up the sun. And if the turquoise waves look too good to resist, leave the blond sands behind you and make for one of 30 nearby dive sites for a magical voyage beneath the Indian Ocean.



BEST FOR...
AN EXOTIC GETAWAY
Royal Mansour, Morocco

You'll be glad of Marrakech's milder climes come March (though be warned, nights take a dramatic dip), where you can traverse its maze of streets, haggling for treasures and trinkets, or walk around the history-drenched medina free from the merciless summer sun. After a busy day of sightseeing, head behind the fort-like walls of the Royal Mansour hotel, where marble-paved pathways shaded by olive groves will lead you to one of 53 extravagant riads – and with three floors there's ample space for all the family. Reserve a Luxurious Riad and you can make straight for its private roof terrace, complete with Bedouin tent and open fire. While, elsewhere, gourmands can delight in the seasonal menus of the hotel's three Yannick Alleno-supervised eateries, and spa-lovers can savour the hotel's mystical Moroccan spa (its Chanel facials feel divine).



BEST FOR...
BOND-STYLE GLAMOUR
Taj Lake Palace, India

There's no better time to experience the vibrant beauty of India than now – and we can't think of a single hotel to trump this floating Udaipur palace for all-out glamour (it was once the star of eighties Bond film Octopussy, after all). Sail to its jetty and a vision of white marble unravels before you, all arches and ornate moldings. Happily, you won't find James Bond villains anywhere inside (though you will see the Roger Moore movie played daily), rather, opulent suites that drip in gold detailing. And while it's tempting to stay inside your standout suite, romantic ventures beckon you outside; from sailing into the sunset on a century-old barge to devouring an authentic Rajasthani feast on a grand pontoon, served by your very own butler.



BEST FOR...
THE GREAT OUTDOORS
Solio Lodge, Kenya

If lying on a sun-soaked beach doesn't float your boat, how about a spring trip to the wilds of Africa? Nestled off the tourist trail, beneath the curves of Mount Kenya, you'll find the six spacious cottages of Solio Lodge. Inside, each spacious abode merges the contemporary (floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking wildlife-dotted plains) and the cosy (real log fires, standalone tubs) to stunning effect. By day the Kenyan sun illuminates helicopter rides up Mount Kenya, bush breakfasts and epic game drives (expect majestic lions, sleek cheetahs, genteel giraffes and sturdy rhino). And when night falls and climes plummet you can snuggle up by a log fire and savour the lodge's first-rate fare.



BEST FOR...
A LUXE CITY BREAK
Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Paris, France

Ok, so it will be chilly – very chilly – but there's something wonderfully enchanting about Paris in springtime. When it comes to where to stay, the Hôtel Plaza Athénée is Parisian to a tee: grandeur rings out from each and every room – plump for a Louis XVI-inspired suite for a true taste of decadence – while its three Michelin-starred Alain Ducasse restaurant is one of the city's most celebrated. Take a pew beneath its ice-like chandeliers and savour the likes of pigeon followed by a wicked bitter chocolate dessert. Most magical of all, though, is the hotel's seasonal ice skating rink (left) which holds a temporary restaurant brimming with heartwarming French fare.



BEST FOR...
STYLE-SAVVY SKIERS
Amangani, USA

Snow-seekers will strike paradise when stepping into the white-blanketed mountain valley of Jackson Hole. Here, the luxurious redwood resort of Amangani teeters on the edge of East Gros Ventre Butte – and around you frost-dipped peaks pierce the sky. Wrap up in only your finest winter wear and make for the resort's on-tap pursuits: skiers are 20 minutes from the slopes, animal-lovers can embark on an eye-opening safari (moose, elk or white tail deer, anyone?) and adrenaline-junkies can rush over ice on a husky-led sled. When frost bites, retreat to a valley-view suite, recline on a faux fur wolf-skin throw and bask in the flickers of a real log fire. Bliss.



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This year the Aston Martin brand will turn 100 – marking a century of design, innovation and some truly memorable cars



Words: CHRIS ANDERSON

TALE OF THE CENTURY



Aston Martin is a company that values its anniversaries. In 2012 it unveiled the V12 Zagato – the most expensive vehicle it has ever produced – in honour of 50 years since the release of the DB4GT Zagato, one of its most reputable cars. A collaboration with an Italian coachbuilder, the original established many of the iconic design cues still used by the brand today and can fetch more than US\$1 million at auction. And the company surely must have recognised that it is also 50 years since the release of the first James Bond movie, a franchise with which it has an unmistakable association.

So what is the brand planning when it turns 100 this year? There can be no better way than with another new car. “This will be an entirely new model,” Aston Martin CEO Dr Ulrich Bez said recently. “We have to do something remarkable to mark our centenary. It won’t be a DB9 with a Centenary Edition badge, and it won’t be a limited edition like the One-77 supercar.”

There are so many impressive, desirable cars from the marque – and Aston is currently offering its biggest, most varied line-up ever. Rumours have circulated that the centenary car will be a 550 bhp version of the current Aston Martin DBS coupé, although an official announcement is yet to be made. “It will be a US\$320,000 car,” offers Dr Bez as one of the only clues. “It doesn’t have a name yet either, but it will be a mainstream Aston.”

There will be other celebrations too. Again, exact details are yet to emerge, but plans are currently forming on a global scale. The main focus, however, seems to be a dedicated Centenary Week, to be held in the UK at the company’s Gaydon headquarters, with an opportunity for driving experiences and factory tours, as well as the chance to see key models from Aston’s past. But the point is that there is much to celebrate. A lot has happened in the past 100 years, which began with a very different company to the one we know today. From a tiny business, Aston Martin has grown into an incredibly strong brand, offering a wide range of models, expanding into new markets around the world, and working with an exciting list of partners, including Jaeger-LeCoultre and Bang & Olufsen, plus that famous link with a certain British spy.





> Opening page: V12 Zagato. Left: DB9 Coupe. Above: DBR 1. Next page: Virage

It was Lionel Martin and Richard Bamford who formed the company back in 1913, with a common desire to build high quality sports cars, showcasing both elegance and performance. Martin was also a keen racer, competing regularly in hill climbs at Aston Clinton, in Buckinghamshire, England. He eventually combined his own name with the venue to christen his 1908 Isotta-Fraschini, which he fitted with a beefed-up engine. It would be a while before that became the company name, however, and the two simply operated as Bamford & Martin Ltd.

The First World War saw the two putting their business on hold, heading off to join the fight. After reforming in Kensington soon after, Bamford left in 1920. There then came a plan to compete in the 1922 French Grand Prix, and the company built two cars for the race. This helped to establish the brand as a major force in motorsport, and later that year it went on to break 10 world records on the circuit at Brooklands.

But this success came at a price, and extra backing would be needed to get its other projects off the ground. Lionel Martin decided to sell to new owners Bill Renwick and Augustus (Bert) Bertelli, who renamed the company Aston Martin Motors Ltd and moved it to Feltham. Their attraction to the business was mainly to showcase a powerful four-cylinder combustion engine they had already designed. Under their control, Aston Martin soon upped its production, and with Bertelli also a keen racer, continued its motorsport success. The brand entered


*An iconic era began in
 1947, when Aston Martin
 was purchased by
 industrialist David Brown'*


the Le Mans 24-hour Race for the first time in 1928, taking a clean sweep of the podium there with its 1.5L model in 1933. Then, after the Second World War, an iconic era began. In 1947, Aston Martin was purchased by industrialist David Brown, who saw great potential, pairing it with the Lagonda marque he had also bought. Cars were produced with his 'DB' initials throughout the '50s, becoming well known in racing as well as on the road. In 1954, he also moved production to Newport Pagnell, while the DB3S and DBR1 both performed well at Le Mans. And in 1964, the DB5 won itself a starring role alongside Sean Connery in James Bond movie Goldfinger.

This was a good time for Aston Martin, and the

DB6 and DB6 Volante were among the cars produced during the '60s. In the '70s, the company was picked up by American investors keen to modernise it, developing the V8 Vantage and the Volante convertible. But the economic downturn in the early '80s made business tough, and entrepreneur Victor Gauntlett stepped in to help. He bought a stake in the company, then created an engineering subsidiary, Tickford – lending its expertise to different makes and models, creating a Tickford Ford Capri among others. He also met with the producers of the James Bond movies, lending his own pre-production V8 Volante for The Living Daylights in 1987, featuring Timothy Dalton. His plan was to raise the brand profile to attract bigger investors, and Ford soon stepped up, buying a sizeable stake.

With some serious financial muscle behind it, Aston Martin flourished. Ford invested heavily in manufacturing and increased production, reintroducing the DB name with the DB7 in 1993 and taking full control of the company that same year. When Pierce Brosnan became James Bond, Aston Martin featured in both GoldenEye and Tomorrow Never Dies, and in 1998 was presented with the Queen's Award for Export, for contributing to the UK economy.

Dr Ulrich Bez was appointed Aston Martin CEO at the start of the new millennium, and the new V12 Vanquish appeared in Bond movie Die Another Day. In 2003, the brand's first purpose-built factory at Gaydon opened, and the DB9 coupé was introduced.

*'We are not just any car, not just any brand,
and we want people to realise this'*



Then came a return to motorsport, with Aston Martin Racing emerging as a dedicated entity. The American Le Mans Series at Sebring in 2005 was the team's first test, with a fantastic GT1 class victory for the DBR9 racer.

In 2006 came another milestone, as Aston Martin was becoming too big for even Ford to handle. A number of investors came together as a consortium, led by chairman David Richards and Dr Bez, purchasing the company for US\$848 million – Ford retained a small share, but the company was independent again. "Aston Martin was a very small cog in a large organisation," David Richards told Car magazine at the time. "Now it is a small independent car manufacturer. By its very nature it changes the whole behaviour and culture of the business. Aston Martin has always been an exclusive product. We must always keep that – a luxury product. We will never do mass volume. The way to avoid devaluing by oversupplying any one market is to have that broad reach across the world."

And that reach, along with the emergence of new models – diversifying slightly with a new city runabout, the Cygnet – is where the company is growing. Over the last few years, Aston Martin's dealer network has started to develop in emerging markets such as the Middle East, India and China, bringing the name to more potential customers. "In 2001 we had 60 dealers, now we have over 140," says Dr Bez of the expansion. "To develop in China or these markets, there needs to be an understanding of the Aston Martin brand. We are not just any car, not just any brand, and we want people to realise this, so it is important to communicate the message."

The name Aston Martin never seems far from the headlines. Further racing success, including a win in the recent Six Hours of Shanghai, followed the launch of the latest Vanquish, V12 Vantage Roadster, and the new DB9, all of which serves to emphasise the current strength of the company. There is a reason it has lasted 100 years already, and is showing great potential for lasting 100 more.



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Under the hammer



Y

ou don't have to look too hard in the Middle East to find a world record, with tallest buildings and biggest shopping malls among those grabbing the headlines. Revered auction house Christie's has even managed to set a few in the region, raising impressive sums for Middle Eastern art. "Some highlights over the last six years include the sale of Mahmoud Said's *The Whirling Dervishes*, which went for US\$2.5 million in October 2010 – the most ever achieved with a painting by an Arab artist at auction," reveals Michael Jeha, Managing Director

of Christie's Middle East. "And in April 2008, we sold Parviz Tanavoli's sculpture *The Wall* (Oh Persepolis) for US\$2.8 million, which is still the highest price achieved for any work in the Middle East."

Christie's first established a Dubai office back in 2005, in a move to capitalise on the region's growing art scene. With rapid expansion comes the need for expression, and just as cities in the Middle East offer more business, hotels and leisure facilities, so too will they offer museums, galleries and dedicated exhibitions – Art Dubai, held every March, now attracts over 20,000 visitors. "Very early on, we realised that the modern appetite for art was so strong that in 2006 we decided to hold auctions," Jeha explains. "We decided to focus on Middle Eastern art, as that is the heart and soul of the region. Since our first auction, we've sold US\$220 million-worth of art, over 2,500 works by Middle Eastern artists, and set over 350 world records for regional artists at auction."

Works by the late Egyptian artist Mahmoud Said, or Iranian sculptor Parviz Tanavoli, are typical of what is usually on offer. Before his 1929 painting

The Whirling Dervishes sold for US\$2.5 million, the previous record belonged to another of Said's works, achieved just six months earlier, *Les Chadoufs*, depicting Egyptian peasants drawing water from the Nile and fetching US\$2.4 million. There is no doubt that regional art and auctions are becoming big business, and Christie's has had to adapt its format since 2006 to keep up with demand. "We started with one sale a year, which expanded into two sales – one every six months," says Hala Khayat, Christie's Middle Eastern art specialist. "Recently we split each sale into two parts."

In fact, the most recent Dubai sale by Christie's was in October 2012, with Mahmoud Said featuring prominently again – his 1941 painting *Pêcheurs à Rashid* (Rosette) sold for US\$818,500. But there was also evidence of increased interest in other regional artists, such as contemporary Syrian painter Louay Kayyali, auctioned for the first time. "You are only as good as what you sell, and we sell extremely high quality art," Michael Jeha said. "Throughout the region there are a large number of particularly strong artists. That's what shines through, and collectors

Auction house Christie's first came to Dubai in 2005, and has become a driving force in the promotion and selling of Middle Eastern art, both regionally and across the globe. Chris Anderson tells its story so far...



around the world are definitely seeing that.”

This last point highlights one of the significant developments with the type of collector these Dubai auctions are attracting. “When we first began our sales programme, around 90 per cent of the works of art were being sold here in the region to collectors in the region,” says Jussi Pykkänen, president of Christie’s Europe, Middle East & Russia. “That has changed radically. Now 50 per cent of the works we sell go to collectors in Asia, Europe and America.”

The attraction of international collectors to the work and artists of the Middle East can be attributed to the increasing focus the region receives from the world’s media. But developing the scope and potential buyers for the market is also good for its long-term stability. “With this incredible investment and development in the museums, so too will come many more collectors who are keen to acquire objects, and artists keen to work in the region,” Pykkänen continues. “There will be an enormous amount of change, development and growth here, and Christie’s will continue to play an integral part.”

The market can also be developed by widening

the potential age of the collectors. By introducing newer artists at its most recent auctions, with their works carrying a lower estimate, it is possible to interest new collectors keen to find a bargain. “The way to increase the depth of buying in any market is to not only focus on established collectors, but also on the collectors of tomorrow,” Michael Jeha confirms. “Like anything, buying art takes time to get adjusted to, and the people who spend US\$5,000 initially will often have no problem spending US\$100,000-plus on a work of art in five years’ time, so it’s important to encourage young collectors.”

One of the ways to entice new blood is to educate, and to help potential collectors understand regional art and what they might be investing in. For the Middle East, part of the Christie’s strategy has been to introduce an educational ethos, with exhibitions and activities in neighbouring countries, leading new people to the main auctions in Dubai. “The team have really made huge strides in holding exhibitions in Kuwait, Egypt, Doha and Abu Dhabi,” says Jussi Pykkänen. “They visit those regions regularly, getting to know the art dealers that are

based there, and creating around Christie’s a formidable community.”

It is no surprise that Abu Dhabi and Doha have been identified as key potential markets. The UAE capital already hosts its own major art events, with the promise of the world’s biggest Guggenheim museum and a branch of the Louvre among its future cultural offerings. Christie’s has already organised a series of exhibitions at Abu Dhabi’s Emirates Palace – including one featuring works on loan from royal collections. In Doha, the capital of Qatar whose rulers have acquired for their country a number of high profile paintings in recent years, including Paul Cézanne’s *The Card Players*, similar shows have been set up in the city’s Katara Cultural Village, showcasing Arab, Iranian and Turkish art.

The works to be sold in Dubai are often shown by Christie’s to the public before the auctions, and in working with private collectors the company arranges for other items to be displayed. In doing this, it is possible to see how Christie’s plays an important role in the wider community, in the same way as a gallery or museum. This is strengthened further when

*‘Throughout the Middle East there is a large
number of particularly strong artists’*



> Images: © Christie's Images Limited 2012



category continues to grow, we are also seeing our activities in the Middle East offer a gateway to the international art market," confirms Michael Jeha. "Clients from Dubai are participating in our global sales across many categories. For every US\$1 that our clients are spending in Dubai, we are seeing them go on to spend US\$15 in our salesrooms around the rest of the world."

But what about competition? With increased interest in Middle Eastern art and healthy sales, surely this will encourage other auction houses to set up in the region? In scheduling its most recent sales last October, other local galleries spotted an opportunity, leading to a week-long series of auctions across Dubai. But for Christie's, with a reputation that dates back to 1766, this is hardly a worry, and the auction house considers any competition to be healthy. "It's the same in London, New York and elsewhere in the art world," Jeha told journalists. "Having all the events condensed into one week creates more buzz, vibrancy and excitement for that particular region in that moment. And it not only generates more enthusiasm from collectors in that particular location, but internationally."

The regional art market has grown tremendously in recent years, and is understandably of great importance to Christie's, with the auction house considering it a long term investment. "Over the next three to five years, Christie's will continue to expand its presence throughout the Middle East," Jeha concludes. "There will be more activities, more education initiatives and more exhibitions." And more world records for Arab art, most likely.

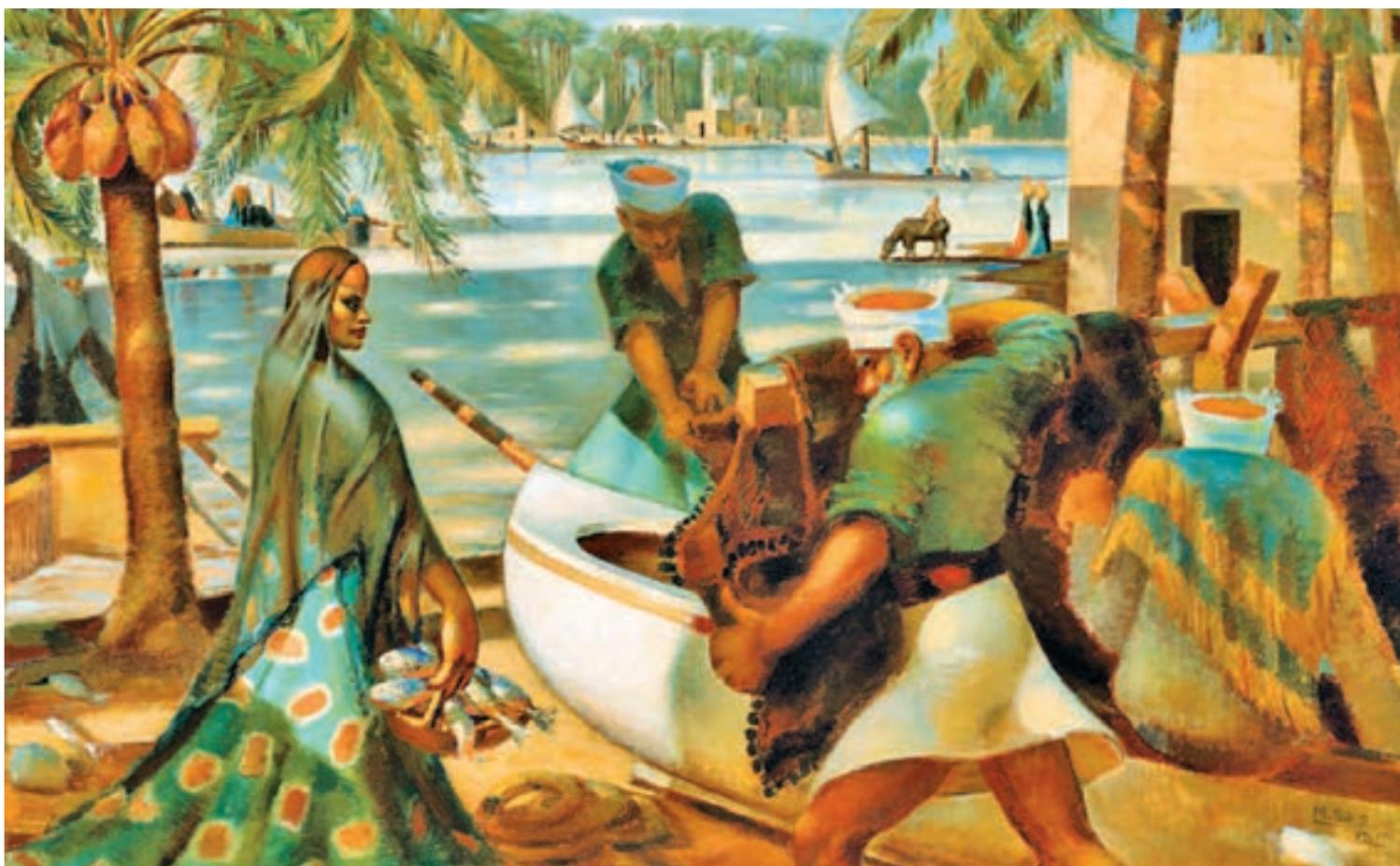
> The next Christie's Dubai auction is April 16-17, 2013.

its charitable initiatives are considered. "One thing that's true all over the world is that philanthropists are frequently art collectors, and art collectors are frequently philanthropists," says Pylkkänen, "so it came as no surprise to us that many of our collectors wanted help raising funds for the charities in which many of them were engaged."

According to Christie's, the auction house has now raised over US\$20 million in charitable donations since it was first established in the region. Many of its auctions carry a charitable element, with pieces often donated, and the money raised given to a specific cause. This has led to some prominent

works changing hands, such as Abdunnasser Gharem's three-metre-wide wood and copper dome – symbolising the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem – which raised close to US\$900,000 in 2011 for Edge of Arabia, of which the artist is a co-founder. The initiative organises education programmes and art workshops in schools and colleges throughout the whole of Saudi Arabia.

With this kind of support and awareness, Christie's is helping to develop Middle Eastern art, bringing it to the attention of global collectors, but also helping those in the region become buyers of works from outside. "While global interest in this



> Previous Page: Scenes from a Christie's Dubai auction. Left: The Fortune Teller, Camille Zakharia. This Page: Pêcheurs à Rosette, Mahmoud Saïd

MR CHOW

Why the man who changed the face of Chinese cuisine and made restaurants an art form is looking to Dubai for his next star-studded venture

Words: LAURA BINDER



At age 73, you would hope to have a few strings to your bow. But few of us are likely to reach those ripe years with quite so many as the dapper Michael Chow. Celebrity restaurateur, artist, architect, designer, collector, movie actor... it's an eclectic (not to mention glamorous) mix. But of his most valued accomplishments Chow credits one as his most prized: "to make the west understand and appreciate Chinese culture." Only, Chow's quest for cultural zen was achieved through the much

less orthodox means of a high-end, celebrity-filled restaurant: Mr Chow.

Opened mid-swing in the Swinging Sixties, Mr Chow London (an eatery that's equally as famous today; it reopened in January after a minor facelift) was considered not only the first high-end Chinese restaurant, but the first designer restaurant – a theatrical space, filled with balletic waiters and with walls adorned in works by some of the greatest artists of our time. Combined with eye-watering prices, it proved an irresistible blend for the cream of high society and celebrity (but more of the guest list later).

"I did this restaurant 44 years ago now and it's a kind of classic. Well, everything I do is a classic, I hope," Chow told me from Los Angeles, the setting of one of his latter-day Mr Chow restaurants (his current outposts span Miami and New York's Midtown and Tribeca). Chow has no plans to stop his gastronomic empire just yet, either, Dubai being next on his radar. "Is Hakkasan doing well? And Nobu?" he quizzed. "So, I should be there, right?"

The recipe for his first restaurant's success, maintained Chow, was to bring something altogether



> Andy Warhol's portrait of Michael Chow; Mr Chow restaurant, Miami



> Mr Chow London

different to his diners. “At that time, Chinese waiters were not very communicative, so I decided to use Italian waiters; to make sure the food was really authentic in the kitchen and the service and design completely contemporary.” It worked. On the matter of art and design, few restaurants still can lay claim to Chow’s museum-worthy displays – a fact that led him to be known not only as a restaurateur but as a world-class collector. Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Julian Schnabel all claimed a place – it’s any wonder art connoisseurs could keep eyes on plates. “I’ve always been an artist, so the restaurant is another medium to work in, you know?” he said. And is there any truth to the tales of Chow trading meals for works of art? “In the beginning the artists were my friends, they just happened to become famous. So, yes, it became a friendly thing to do.” The food-for-art trade-off amassed to a collection of Chow portraits; among them Keith Haring’s bold depiction of Chow as one of the restaurant’s signature dishes – the Green Prawn. So, how did the snappily-dressed socialite feel about such a portrayal? “There’s three of me in it, I have six arms – in Chinese culture six arms is very lucky. Anyway, I’m in a bowl of noodles, so it’s all very amusing. It’s a very strong picture he did. I have a great collection from various artists, like Andy Warhol, Julian Schanpel, everybody, you know?”


*“Lana Turner, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner...
 You name me anybody; they’ve all been to Mr Chow”*


When Michael Chow says “everybody” he really means ‘everybody’ – his famous patrons form an arm, no, leg-length list of supermodels, rock stars, prime ministers and screen icons, all of whom sauntered through Mr Chow’s doors (and saunter still – I’m told Lady Gaga is a fan). So, did he set out to create a ‘celebrity restaurant’? You bet. “I always had this fantasy that I live the life of the movie world, you know? I mean everyone lives in a bubble, right? For me movies have always been a reality [he’s starred in several, including Bond film *You Only Live Twice*], so I

make my life like a movie, so the restaurant was like a movie. Everything in the restaurant was glamorous and creative and poetic. So why not come to it, it has beauty, right?” When nudged to name names, Chow bubbled over with anecdotes. “Oooh, so many. Lana Turner, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner and all these... Sinatra. You name me anybody; they’ve all been to Mr Chow. One day Mae West walked in and everybody clapped, that was incredible.

“I don’t want to name too many from the past as the restaurant is so current right now,” he went on.

> *Michael Chow by his Green Prawn portraiture, by Keith Haring*

> *Mr Chow London's Beijing Duck; Ma Mignon Beef; Fresh Scallop on the Shell*

"Lady Gaga comes in, the modern stars – more stars than the sky, so to speak."

The drive for celebrity status and notoriety is something Chow attributes to his childhood. His father, Beijing Opera star Zhou Xinfang, was a household name in China and moved (along with Chow's beautiful Eurasian mother) through only the most glittering celeb circles. When Shanghai fell to the Communists in 1949, though, a sickly teenage Chow was sent to the safety of the UK – and never saw his father again. "My dad was so famous when I was young, I couldn't believe that no one had heard of him in England. I missed that fame. I guess I wanted to re-establish and recreate an identity and the restaurant was my identity you see. I was so alone and I feel that, although I assimilated myself into western culture, they knew nothing about me. So my job was to bridge the east and west – it sounds corny, but it's true."

Looking at Chow's portfolio of world-famous restaurants today, it's a role he appears to have fulfilled. "I was the first Chinese restaurant to go to the USA, so to speak. I decided 38 years ago and at that time no high-end restaurants travelled across boundaries of land." So, does he feel satisfied? "In a modest way we have successfully gained respect from the west, because it has become one of the most important restaurants in the world. It really promoted China, didn't it? China today is a different world, but even 20 years ago it was hardly mentioned in the press, like it was a forgotten land, like it was on the moon. Now you can't pick up the paper without a mention of it. The world has changed."

Head to the newly-renovated Mr Chow in Knightsbridge when you're next in London, and you can still get a taste of those heady Mae West days (60% of the classic dishes remain on the menu, "the rest is improvised"), albeit in contemporary surrounds. "The décor has not changed much, just a new coat of paint and in this case lacquer, which is very expensive and difficult to do," said Chow. So, 45 years on and as coveted as ever, what does Chow cite as his recipe for success? "I think life has changed, so you have to make changes. The trick is to change by not changing. I've only polished throughout the last 45 years. Most of the dishes are classics and, like the décor, if you start from a good foundation and that's very true it becomes a classic. Now we have three generations coming to eat."

Listening to accounts of an average night at Mr Chow, though, I feel sure it's his inherent flair for theatrics, for creativity, for glamour and cutting-edge design that have stirred up a recipe unlike any other. "I treat the restaurant like theatre," he told me. "So every night I have to entertain – it's like doing a musical with lots of waiters and the audience participates, so you use whatever is available to you in the restaurant world and make it into theatre. You walk in and it's a performance. The musical I wrote for Mr Chow is very specific, so when walk in you get this excitement." We can't wait for a Dubai debut...



> Images: Supplied/ed: Roxanne Lowit

SKI CHIC

Words: ANNA MURPHY



Snowy Colorado is a long way from sun-drenched Dubai, but the winter wonderland that awaits you at its most exclusive destination, Aspen, makes the trip well worthwhile. Seasoned skier Anna Murphy heads to its peaks...

S

kiing in the United States had always seemed beside the point. I love the US, but I don't love how long it takes to get there. And I don't like American towns. Cities, yes. Wilderness, yes. But those medium-sized American towns, the kind that visitors go to in places like New England and Napa Valley and in ski areas, always seem to me like something out of a rather dull theme park, a slightly synthetic version of their European equivalent.

But a friend kept telling me I was wrong, that whatever my reservations, the skiing was so much better than in Europe that I had to give it a go. So last season I relented – and in considerable style, booking myself into Aspen, Colorado, the summit of American ski chic.


*“Up on the mountain the food was excellent.
Off the mountain the eating options were remarkable”*


Well, I was right about the first thing. It is a long way. But wrong, I concede, about practically everything else. The skiing in Aspen is take-your-breath-away good. It is spread across three different ski areas, so there is a vast array of choice for skiers of all abilities. The snow – the much vaunted champagne powder – was perfect, light and dry, though the locals claimed it wasn't up to the usual standards. And the sheer picturesqueness of the skiing area – in which despite being at altitudes of up to 12,000ft, you remain below the tree line – was utterly sublime.

But most remarkable was how quiet it was. My sister and I went in early March, and the slopes were almost deserted. In the course of a week we skied only one run that could be described as busy, which meant the great liberation that comes with only having to worry about your own skiing – admittedly enough of a concern in my case – rather than the

> *Right: On the slopes above Aspen. Next Page, top to bottom: St. Regis Aspen Resort; Winter warming interiors at an Aspen log cabin*





“The skiing in Aspen is take-
your-breath-away good”



> Images: Corbis / Arabian Eye; Supplied

skiing of those around you. “Where is everyone?” we kept asking locals in joyous disbelief. “It is always like this in Aspen,” they replied, looking more than a little smug as they did so.

I had been worried about the food, too. I am the kind of girl who gets excited about tartiflette, less so about burgers. Up on the mountain the food was excellent, the cafeteria options at least as good as in Europe, the smarter choices not plentiful, but very, very good. Off the mountain the eating options were remarkable. This is, of course, where rich Americans come to burn off – then take on – calories, so extremely good restaurants are two-a-dime, and there are around a dozen different cuisines from which to choose.

But I was most surprised by the resort itself, which had far more charm and historic feel than many of its European counterparts. A former silver mining town dating back to the late 19th century, Aspen has streets lined with pretty, red-brick, flat-fronted buildings with wrought-iron verandas. It feels like a real place, though there is also the distortion that comes with wealth – designer boutiques, designer facelifts and lots and lots of fur.

Increasingly you find yourself thinking, “Why can’t they do this in Europe?” Why is it that however chic the European resort, you still have to contend with some discomforts that wouldn’t be out of place at your average music festival?

And what is more, everyone is so incredibly nice and friendly and jolly in Aspen. If you were to drop that glove you can bet your bottom dollar someone would pick it up for you before you could do it for yourself, and that somebody would be just as likely to be a billionaire CEO as a ski instructor.

The “Have-a-nice-day-ness” of the US is never more welcome than when skiing, I found, when lift-hands shout out hello, and nothing is too much trouble for anyone.

And when people do queue, on the very rare occasions when there are actually enough people to form what could be classed as a queue, it made me realise how many of my European sojourns had been slightly tarnished by the at best churlishness, at worst downright grumpiness, of my host nation.

So, to my surprise, I am the one now telling everyone who will listen that skiing in America is definitely the answer. Yes, it is a long way, but it really is well worth the wait to get there.

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GOURMET GREATS

Whether you're dining out close to home or overseas, DAMAC shows the hungry gourmand where best to savour some of the world's finest fare...



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



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8.



9.


“At Zuma you can raise your chopsticks to what is arguably the best sushi in town – not to mention melt-in-the-mouth sashimi...”


LE BRISTOL, PARIS

In a city famed for its elegant digs, Le Bristol is the crème de la crème – and the hotel’s two signature restaurants serve up the finest of fare too. At the sumptuous Epicure, a Baroque-inspired eatery which counts former President Sarkozy among its patrons, you’ll find imaginative twists on old favourites. Head chef Eric Frechon – the man behind Epicure’s three Michelin stars – transforms the somewhat tired Gallic dish, frog’s legs, with tandoori spices and Lautrec garlic, and the ‘mac and cheese’, with black truffle and foie gras, is the restaurant’s star attraction. Next door, 114 Faubourg offers more informal dining – although its a real favourite with lunching Parisians.

ZUMA, DUBAI

Nestled high amid the skyscrapers of DIFC – the epicentre of Dubai’s bustling restaurant scene – Zuma is arguably the city’s hottest dining spot in which to see and be seen. Floor-to-ceiling windows envelop diners, bestowing glittering city vistas, but it’s the sight of its spectacular bamboo sculpture that will really grab your attention – 350 bamboos transcend overhead. Raise your chopsticks to what is arguably the best sushi in town – plus melt-in-the-mouth sashimi – expertly created at a granite-topped sushi counter. Staff are as knowledgeable as they are stylish – ask their advice and we’ll wager they’ll recommend Zuma’s miso marinated black cod, wrapped in a parcel of hoba leaf which, put simply, tastes sublime.

COWORTH PARK, ASCOT

Executive chef Brian Hughson, former personal chef to Prince Charles, is at the helm of this country estate’s gastro offerings. You’ll find the best British dishes here, all locally-sourced and seasonal: right now, the Cornish mackerel and salt marsh lamb are the stars of the menu. It’s hearty, honest cuisine – but be sure to leave room for the cheeseboard, served with homemade bread and chutneys, or the tarte tatin for two. To sample a true

British institution, reserve a fireside table at The Barn for Sunday lunch. Polo-field views – the estate is home to the Guards Polo Club – are the perfect backdrop to a feast of roasted meat, honeyed parsnips and crispy potatoes.

BORGO EGNAZIA, PUGLIA

Fringed by olive groves and jasmine gardens, this clifftop hotel is no average European retreat. The turreted stone exterior belies the traditional Italian eating experience inside, with Chef Mario Musoni at the helm of a duo of Apulian à la carte restaurants. The menus, brimming with fare from the neighbouring farms and seafood hauled in at dawn, are renowned for their freshness and subtlety. Sup on lobster risotto and rich pasta dishes at Due Camini, the more formal of the pair, against a backdrop of the azure Adriatic waters. Those with families in tow should head to La Frasca, where the dizzying array of wood-fired pizzas will keep everyone happy.

PALAZZO VICTORIA, VERONA

This lavish Italian retreat is all about the spectacle: from the hotel suites’ Veronese marble Jacuzzis, to the Renaissance paintings and sculptures that adorn the ancient stone walls. Its prized eatery, Restaurant Borsari 36, is no different: the kitchen is in the centre of the dining space, an entertaining twist that reflects Chef Carmine Calo’s playful approach to cuisine. Billed as a fusion of Italian and American fare, creations include potato soup with locally-sourced truffles, and roasted courgette with herring eggs. Dining is a showy affair, but the theatre of the kitchen is Calo’s speciality; order a beautifully flavoured fresh pasta dish to see this uniquely Italian art in motion.

LA PETITE MAISON, DUBAI

Following rave reviews in London, La Petite Maison’s Dubai outlet has been received to equally high acclaim. Step inside its bistro-style environs and you’ll find it teeming with life (from the

suited and booted to the gorgeous and glamorous) each and every night, with foodies flocking for a taste of its French fare. Here, dishes are whisked to your table by waiters as and when they’re ready, making it cuisine that’s best shared. Delve into a smorgasbord of fishes, meats and light pastas, like beef carpaccio, marinated salmon with pink peppercorns and whole sea bream baked with lemon. Just save room for dessert – the vanilla crème brûlée is a sugar-coated triumph.

MEZLAI, ABU DHABI

Emirati cuisine is a well-guarded treasure: to date, Emirates Palace is home to the only National restaurant in Abu Dhabi. Under the expert hand of local gourmand Chef Ali at Mezlai, finely-spiced dishes of slow-roasted lamb, tomato-braised shark and saffron milk rice make for a decadent – and unique – feast. The opulent Emirates Palace, itself a gilded spectacle of luxurious Arabic design, makes for a spectacular setting to befit such fare. It’s no mean feat to capture the imagination of the UAE’s diners – after all, we have worldwide cuisine at our fingertips – but this is a truly enthralling experience and should be undertaken by all budding gourmands.

THE LOWELL, NYC

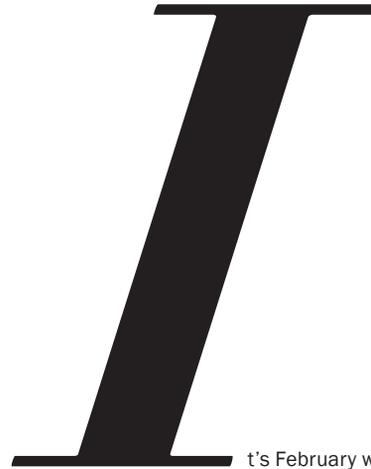
One of New York society’s favourite haunts, this elite pied-à-terre nestled on the Upper East Side is the most coveted spot to take tea. Book afternoon tea in the oh-so-refined Pembroke Room to sup amongst the city’s most famous faces – but only a true A-lister could eclipse the towering stands of gourmet sandwiches and fluffy scones. If you’d prefer to sink your teeth into something a little meatier, the Post House brasserie – bedecked with sink-in leather armoires and original portraiture – serves up juicy steaks and grills to great acclaim. And come wintertime, there’s no cosier spot in the whole of Manhattan than a table beside the brasserie’s atmospheric log-burning fireplace.

1. *Borgo Egnazia*
2. *Précieux nyangbo, Le Bristol, Paris*
3. *Cochon fermier de la tête aux pieds, Le Bristol*
4. *Borgo Egnazia*
5. *Sushi counter, Zuma*
6. *Mer en croûte de sel, La Petite Maison*
7. *Carpaccio, Le Bristol*
8. *Les figues pochées au jus de fraise, Le Bristol*
9. *Le Bristol*

From Russia With Love

Make for Moscow
this year for a
city break to write
home about

Words: LAURA BINDER



It's February when I set a boot-clad foot onto the stark ground of Domodedovo Airport, Moscow – outside, powder-soft sprinkles of snow float from the sky. Is it this biting chill that's behind the cold faces that greet me? Pulling a case fat with jumpers through the arrivals lounge I'm met by huddles of taxi drivers each vying for the crisp notes nestling in the wallets of glamour-seeking weekenders who are drawn to what's now known as the second most expensive city on the planet (trumped only by Tokyo, if you're interested).

Thankfully, our suited and booted driver isn't quite so forlorn – and his familiarity with the roads turned a potentially exasperating four hour drive from airport to city centre into a two hour stint – a triumph in Moscow traffic terms. He wasn't even put out by the catch-your-breath chill that draws a feeble gasp from me as we make for the blacked-out car. Despite the fact that spring is on the horizon, snow blankets grass banks, ice has cast a hand over car windscreens and I find the chill cruel. "This is nothing!" he laughs as my bottom lip protrudes like a child's, "in winter it is minus 35 and you watch men ski to work!"

Dodging the traffic on slush-drenched roads, Moscow's extremities (temperatures have been known to climb from minus 40 in winter to a merciless 40 degrees Celcius in summer) continue to unfold. An endless stream of sad tower blocks look loathe to withstand either the bitter winds or searing summers. But, in true Muscovite style (I've already

seen enough to realise Moscow is one tough cookie) their buckling forms manage to do just that. Hit the city centre, though, and luxurious apartment price tags are said to shoot from a 'modest' US\$350,000 to US\$20million – which would explain why only the mega rich can nestle in Moscow's bosom. So much so that – as I'm later told by my hotel's manager – staff working hours have to be changed to allow for the one or two hours it takes ordinary Joes to travel in from the outskirts.

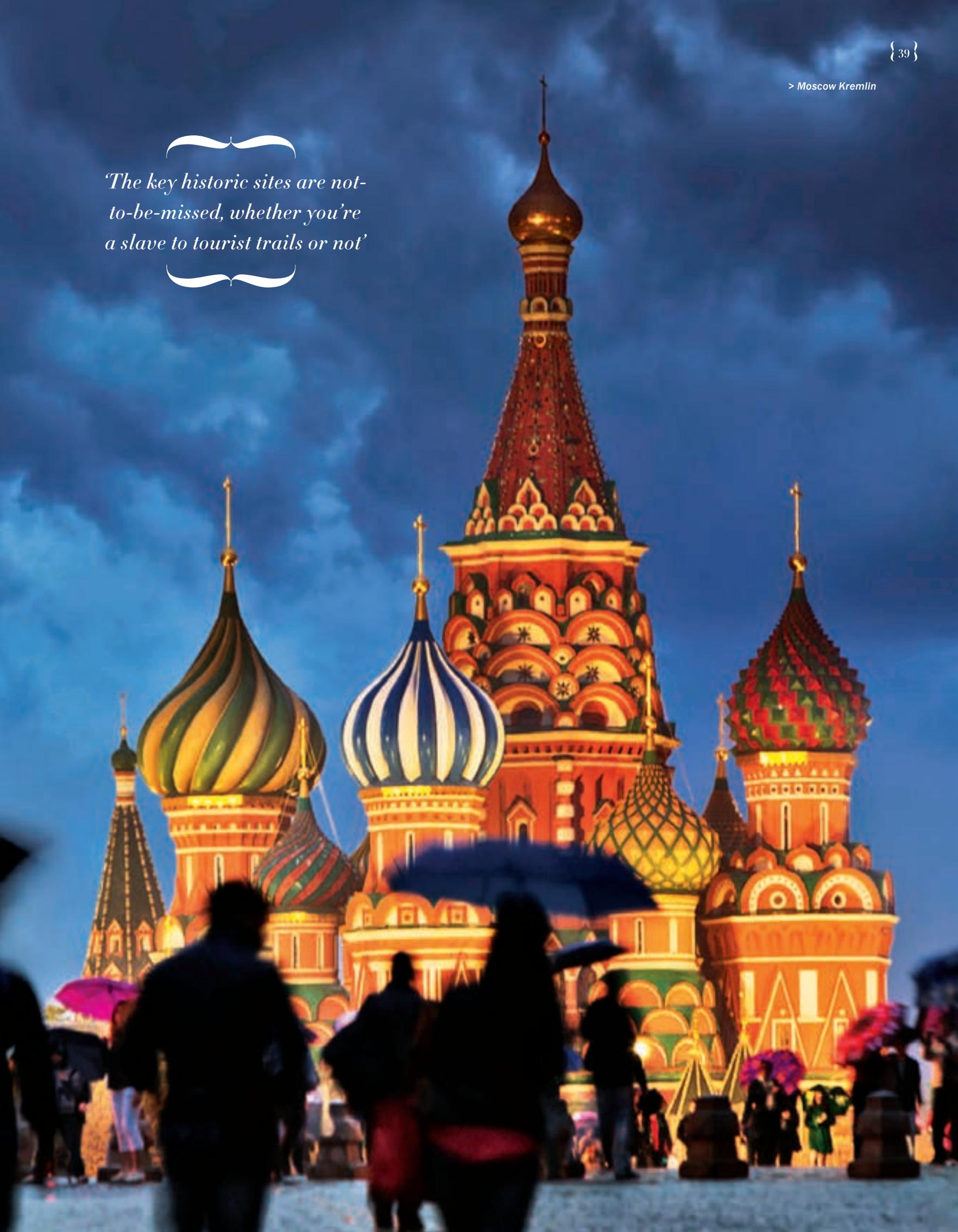
Little wonder, then, that those Russians who have hit the big time aren't afraid to show it. Scoop a suite, as we did, at the jaw-dropping Radisson Royal Hotel Moscow (it sets up residence inside one of Stalin's Seven Sisters, topped with a trademark star – prepare to stand agog) and you'll be in a princely place to admire a Muscovite celebration of wealth: a perfectly groomed blonde totters the vast marble lobby wrapped in white fur; Oscar-worthy gowns parade in lobby boutiques with price-tags to make your jaw drop; Lamborghinis purr in the car park and caviar dots restaurant tables with carefree abandon. Which is probably why I didn't flinch when passing the gloriously glamorous (and loud-as-ever) ex-supermodel Janice Dickinson beneath the foyer's metal detectors, sky-high heels on her feet and a male model on her arm: standard stuff. In fact, the newly-refurbished five-star hotel (formerly the Hotel Ukraina) is the epitome of Moscow done-good. I persuade the manager to take me for a glimpse of the presidential suite (bullet-proof, naturally) which he tells me is rented weekly in all its finery for a cool US\$10,000 a night.

Which, I find, gives you free rein to shimmy your way down an Old Hollywood-style marble staircase into the widest of living spaces, (size is everything here), tinkle on a Grand piano (though it can play itself) and recline in one of two truly decadent boudoirs. The parties would be phenomenal.

If that wasn't testament enough to the prevalence of big-spending Muscovites, the burly security guards certainly are (guards I manage to bump into more than once, only to recoil in alarm – these guys are like human rocks). There's said to be 700 in the hotel, manning everything from the lobby and restaurants to the Olympic-sized pool. Feeling like quite the show ponies, my guest and I didn't need asking twice when invited to Tatler – the hotel's hip hangout and the place to see and be seen in Moscow. Inside, model-types reclined coolly and – we're told in hushed tones – the odd celeb can be spied (Robert De Niro is a previous guest). On our watch though, Dickinson would have to suffice. However, after two hours of expertly whisked beverages (served by more surly model-types, something of a prerequisite it seems) supped amid a gentle wave of smoke and the myriad dialects of its patrons, I was equally ecstatic to return to my suite (where the interiors are more Italian glamour than Russian excess) and surrender to a silk-strewn bed.

Sipping coffee the next morning in Ritz-worthy environs – poured from gold pots by a waitress dressed in monochrome frills – I feel quite the frump in my oversized woolies against the slip of women dressed to the nines and nibbling morsels beside their well-stacked partners – don't they know it's snowing outside? But then, I was off on a less-than-glamorous sightseeing mission, headed by our tour guide, Ursula. Tapping her foot in the lobby below, I begrudgingly left my lavish breakfast to brave the Moscow chill. Needs must, I rationalised, passing on another cup of coffee: the key historic sites are

'The key historic sites are not-to-be-missed, whether you're a slave to tourist trails or not'





not-to-be-missed, whether you're a slave to tourist trails or not. Ursula insists on a visit to the Kremlin (a former royal citadel and now the residence of president Putin) and the adjacent Red Square, spectacles that share an insight into this sturdy city's past.

On arrival, I eat my frosty words: the sheer breadth and scale of the square is captivating and, thanks to its impossibly wide streets, not a bit overcrowded – doubtless why, as the country's central square, it's also Moscow's most-visited site. Standing there, the atmosphere is just what I'd hoped for – surly guards parade by foot and horseback with fur-lined hats; locals stroll determinedly cocooned in wool and furs; while market stalls flog multi-coloured Russian dolls. But, more than this, is the fact that the square's far-reaching history is still bizarrely

palpable. "This is where the rebel Stenka Razin was executed," points Ursula matter-of-factly. I'm not sure whether she wants me to feel spooked or just take a picture. I do both, just in case.

"What does the 'Red' mean?" asks Ursula like a true school mistress. "Er, blood?" I venture, present location considered. "No!" she scolds. "Red in Russia means 'beautiful'. No, it does not have Soviet connotations as many presume; it is simply 'beautiful'." With beauty high on the 21st century agenda, today's wealthy Muscovites now use the square for shopping. Ursula takes us to the city's famous department stores (TsUM and GUM) which reside in the beautiful 18th century buildings that flank the mighty square and present tantalising window displays of threads heavy with wealth. "Here you can spend your money on every designer name

under the sun," states Ursula. "Moscow's stores have products that have not come to fruition anywhere else in the world." Why? "Because no one anywhere else in the world will pay the prices." But while I marvel at women teetering over icy pavements on pencil-thin stilettos, I'm equally amused to see high-flying men dine in five-star surrounds in altogether comfier get-up: in Moscow sportswear is big.

With our bellies grumbling, Ursula whisks us to Boris Godunov, a traditional Russian restaurant where heavy wooden tables sit beneath painted, vaulted ceilings and solemn-faced girls (I would be too if I had to don a traditional folk dress and plaits for work) yielded steaming bowls of soup. "In this cold weather," Ursula proclaims, "Russians have to eat to keep warm." And it really is winter-warming stuff: Borsch comes first, a peasant-style soup with

*'I felt myself gradually falling into Moscow's wintry hold,
leaving me helpless to do anything but admire it'*





a beetroot base that gives it a rich red hue, broken by bobbing pieces of cabbage, carrots, onions and meats – it’s delicious. On reflection I should have saved room for the next course – a giant chicken kiev bursting at the seams with liquid butter and accompanied by a fat Russian pancake wrapped unforgivably around mashed potatoes – non-carb eaters should surrender now. In fact, pancakes are something of a must – head to the city in Maslenitsa (pancake week), I learn, and you can get your fill of the doughy treats while marking both a period of forgiveness and end of the harsh winter. And, if you really want to make like a local, it can all only be eaten with one thing: sour cream. “Dollop it!” instructed Ursula as I patted it with my spoon. “We eat it with everything.” Coming from this whippet of a woman, it can’t be that bad for you...

Rolling outside feeling much like a Russian dumpling, I took-in what looked like a palette of stony grey with concrete streets wide enough for military tanks and raindrops falling from a dismal sky: Moscow’s reputation for being ‘cold’ – in more ways than one – didn’t seem far off the mark. But, despite this, I felt myself gradually falling into its wintry hold, leaving me helpless to do anything but admire it. A chilly stroll confirmed it: grey was lifted by the prevalence of original 1930s architecture – each building a show of mint greens and primrose yellows, offset with grandiose carvings and pillars. A cruise on the ‘Dark River’ meanwhile – a wide, winding snake of water that penetrates the entire city – was illuminated by golden domes which pierced the skyline (earning Moscow the tag of ‘Golden-headed city’). Fit for a fairytale.

But the most surprising beauty of all is also the cheapest, quickest gal in town – the metro. As Ursula informed us, it’s the best way to navigate the mammoth city – one with a population of 11 million which rises to 15 million by day when workers flock from the suburbs. With nine million using the metro, it’s a trip best avoided in rush hour. So, we make a bid for it – during rush hour – with Ursula at our helm. Coming from London (where mice on the tracks is a sight to coo over), I was oblivious to the hoards that paced the platforms. For, inside, the 1935 station is a virtual treasure trove; a Soviet Union showpiece that sends you hurtling back to a bygone era: marble and semi-precious stone grace the floor and walls; chandeliers dangle from low-domed ceilings while art decorates tiled walls. It’s a sight to behold – as I did, camera in hand, ambling at a tortoise’s pace to a million hares, snapping away at the finest displays. And all without being pick-pocketed in the process. I emerged feeling smug – even if Ursula was tapping her foot again.

As I bid farewell to her I asked how long she had been in Moscow: “All my life,” she declared with a smile – the first of the day. “It’s one tough city, but I love it.” And as I looked at her regimented blond locks over a tiring face, I realised she’d hit the nail on the head: rich in bloody history; scarred but triumphant; bleak but drop-dead beautiful – it’s a city well worth braving the cold for.

> Previous Page: Red Square. This Page, top to bottom: Bedroom Suite; Master Bedroom; Living Room of Radisson Royal Hotel Moscow. Right: GUM department store



> Images: Getty Images; Corbis / Arabian Eye



SHE'S IN FASHION

Barkha Shewakramani's glamorous label Drama Queen has taken the city – and the wider fashion world – by storm with its A-list looks. DAMAC steals a word with the Dubai-based fashionista

Tell us what drew you to the fabulous world of fashion?

Ever since I was a child I was intrigued by the world of fashion, which often led me to cut and stitch the clothes my mum had bought for me. I went on to study garment construction at the American University in Dubai as, for me, fashion has always been a form of art, a way of expressing myself through the language of fabrics, embellishments and various silhouettes.

Which materials do you use to create Drama Queen's most glam garments?

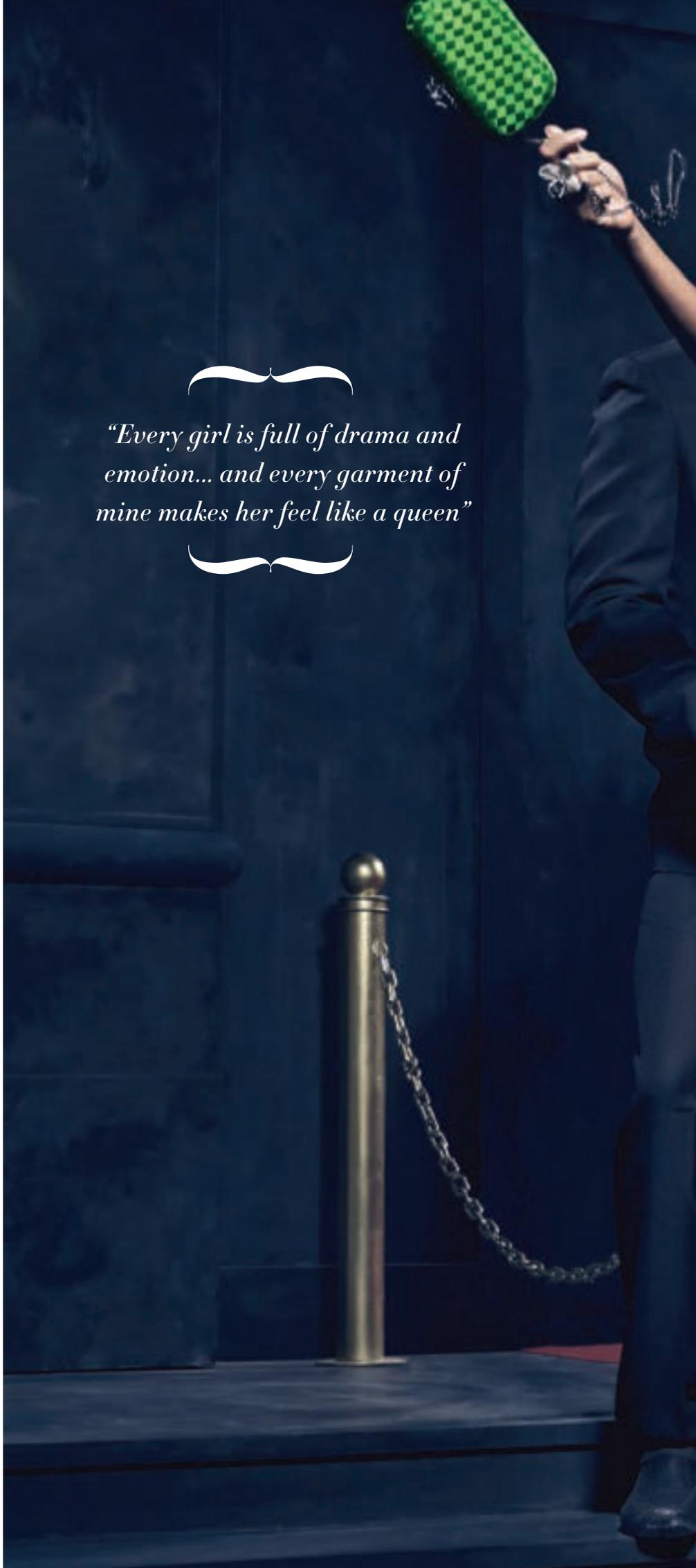
One of our strongest brand ethos is to never compromise on the quality of fabrics. Coming from a rich cultural background I was always surrounded by beautiful fabrics like brocade lace and raw silk which I now have replicated in my own designs. I'm also inspired by jewellery, hence most of my garments are in rich jewel tones and are made of ornate silk or velvet that reflect the sheen of natural gemstones.

How would you describe your buyers?

A quintessential Drama Queen is someone who is confident in her own skin and who loves fashion.



“Every girl is full of drama and emotion... and every garment of mine makes her feel like a queen”





She is not afraid to experiment. Every girl in her own way is full of drama and emotion. She has a longing to be treated like a princess, and every garment makes her feel like a queen.

Your creations have proved a hit with Dubai's socialites. Which part of the design process have you enjoyed the most?

My favourite part would have to be styling. I love putting together my creations along with an overall look, and taking in the image that I have the power of creating. Further, I love experimenting with new garment construction techniques, designs, and styles, and I gain a form of rewarding pleasure when I find an experimental technique that really works! It is a real joy to see someone appreciate the hard work that goes into the design process.

What next for the brand?

Currently, Drama Queen is retailed at Smitten in Dubai's Marina Mall. I am, however, also in the process of establishing a showroom for my products and have launched in the fashion hub of Mumbai, India, and the UK just this year.

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HOME

Take a sneak peek at a DAMAC resident's slick Park Towers home, be inspired by global living spaces and learn of interior trends for 2013



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Pride of Place

DAMAC Properties' Park Towers offers luxurious living in the heart of DIFC – the perfect combination for resident Joanna Bolding





‘The tower is so well-placed that I don’t need a car; that’s so rare in Dubai’

D

ubai may be brimming with landmark buildings, but few are as iconic as Park Towers. From its curvaceous glass exterior to the sleek interior design, this exclusive residence is the epitome of luxury – and you’ll find it right in the heart of DIFC. For resident Joanna Bolding, the great location and high-quality DAMAC finish proved an irresistible combination. “The tower is so well-placed that I don’t need a car,” she says while pointing out the DIFC Gate Building and Metro line from her sea-facing balcony. “It’s so easy to get to The Dubai Mall, and I can walk to and from work as well. That’s so rare in Dubai, and it’s one of the best things about living here.”

When we meet Joanna, it’s a relaxed Saturday afternoon, and the apartment is flooded with natural light. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer

uninterrupted vistas of DIFC, Sheikh Zayed Road and beyond to the Arabian Gulf – and it’s easy to see why Joanna fell in love with the apartment immediately. “The view from here is incredible – and at night it’s amazing.”

Park Towers was recently named ‘Best International Mixed-Use Development’ at the International Property Awards, thanks to the array of state-of-the-art facilities. “The amenities are brilliant,” says Joanna, “and very modern. I often use the swimming pool, gym and sauna – and there are other facilities planned too. Downstairs there’ll be a luxury shopping area, which I’m looking forward to. In the meantime, the building is so well-located that you can get groceries delivered to your door.”

It can be hard to find a unique rental property, but Joanna has tracked down the right blend of space and style. “I looked at lots of apartments, but the interior design here is a little different,” she says with a smile. “It was great to find somewhere with a bit of character, somewhere open-plan that suited my way of life.”

It may be in one of the busiest areas of Dubai, but the apartment feels tranquil – and none of the rooms are overlooked. “In some areas of the city, the buildings are so close together that the view is just the tower opposite.

*There's always something going on –
I love to look out at the city from here..'*





> Opening pages: Joanna relaxing on her balcony; Park Towers lobby area

> These pages: The view of DIFC and Sheikh Zayed Road from Joanna's apartment; Park Towers swimming pool; the building's exterior



Here, it's much better. I don't have curtains in my living room because there's no point, so it's great to sit on the sofa and see the lights at night."

A balcony brings in fresh air and a chance to admire the views up-close – a spectacular backdrop for parties, and a peaceful spot to watch the sun set over the sea. "There's always something going on – I love to look out at the city from here. And because I'm so high, I don't notice the road noise."

Inside, Joanna has made her mark on the property, despite having moved in only a few months ago. "I have an eclectic taste," she admits; arty silver ornaments are perched on the window sills, and the furniture is a quirky mix of old and new. A sleek dining table is Joanna's latest interiors purchase. "I love things that are a bit different, I'm always looking for something new. I really like ID Design for furniture – everything there has a distinct style."

When choosing where to live, space was Joanna's prime concern: having lived in Dubai for nine years, she has plenty of belongings to accommodate. "I was looking for somewhere that my huge four-poster bed would fit into. I had lots of things from the previous apartment, so the spacious two-bedroom layout was perfect."

The apartment's open-plan living area is great for entertaining, but Joanna admits that DIFC's nearby restaurants are her favourite nightspots. "I love Zuma and La Petite Maison for special occasions – and you can walk to them in five minutes. I wouldn't change that for the world."

BORN

UAE

*DAMAC meets some of the most promising home-grown talent
to have emerged on the Middle East art and design scene*



THE DESIGNER

Khalid Shafar



Khalid Shafar doesn't just have creative vision: with every piece of furniture he makes, every new idea he sketches, he's not only adding to his latest product range – he's forming the future of Emirati design. It's no mean feat for a man who's just releasing his second collection.

When we meet, it's the launch of both KASA, the designer's new showroom, and his first pieces for 2013 – and Shafar's verve for the future is palpable. "We need voices," he says between fielding air kisses and congratulations; "people who know design, and who care about it".

Born and raised in Dubai, Shafar has witnessed the city rise from its humble beginnings. Amidst the glittering new 'city of gold', it's perhaps no wonder that he's keen to carve out a niche for local design. "I feel some responsibility to draw upon local traditions and themes in my work," says Shafar. "We have a lot of cultural similarities with nearby countries, so it's important to incorporate elements from our culture that people can identify as our own." His creations fuse national identity with contemporary aesthetics, creating pieces that are distinctly Emirati yet accessible to the wider world. "I want to define the aesthetics of local design," says Shafar. "We should incorporate contemporary elements – in the international market, that is very important – but we must keep the identity of the Emirates."

Drawn from a childhood of many customs, events and traditions that are now long obsolete, Shafar's designs all come with a tale of their own. "Stories are very important to me; everything has a story. That's how I approach the pieces: they can be linked to a person, an incident, a place I've been to... Sometimes it's just about my relationship with a certain material." One such material is palm wood: used in almost every piece, its waxy golden hue a reminder of the UAE's former reliance on it for boats, furniture and household implements. Elsewhere, palm fronds are woven into mats, perched atop stubby, spiky trunks to create coffee tables.

Even KASA, the space where Shafar will display his latest creations, was chosen to reflect the importance of tradition. Located in Ras Al Khor, the showroom is part of his vision for the future: "It is my ambition to make this area a hub for design; it is one of the oldest areas in Dubai, with a real history of production. I find the energy inspirational. There is great potential here: it feels like Al Quoz [Dubai's newest art district] did a few years ago." Indeed, that buzz has already started – the crowd at the launch is begging for more events, more galleries – as well as receptions on the rooftop (which boasts views of Burj Khalifa) for this year's Design Days Dubai.

But in pioneering the Emirati design movement, what does the future hold for Shafar himself? "I am always asking myself, where next? I have been exploring the idea of having a signature fabric for my brand. I have the design ready, but I want to take the time to create a whole collection for it. The ethos of my philosophy is a blend of creativity, functionality and practicality: my pieces don't just sit there. I am a designer of functional products – I want to make something that you can use." khalidshafar.co.nz



THE ARTIST
Saeed Khalifa



A few years ago there wasn't much interest in work by Emirati artists," says Saeed Khalifa. "Basically because no one knew it was there in the first place, I think. Now things have changed."

You may have noticed that the Emirates' arts scene is hotting up: the past few months have witnessed the return of Abu Dhabi Art, high-profile auctions aplenty, and Picasso, Matisse and Dalí's two-month residencies at Emirates Palace. But what does the region hold for local artists? All-too-often eclipsed by their international counterparts, the region's creatives are now making their own mark on the local scene – and Saeed Khalifa is at their helm.

"The Emirati art scene is very young but growing faster than you can even begin to imagine," says Khalifa. "I'm surrounded by artists and individuals like myself who create art for art and want the world to interact with it. It's very dynamic."

Khalifa's calling card is augmented reality: photographs that are manipulated into bizarre forms and beautiful icons. "It's as realistic as your eyes can see," he says, "but your mind knows it's not the norm. I connect with digital photography because there are no rules or red lines to cross; it's a blank canvas for the mind to paint on."

Peaceful at times, disturbing at others, Khalifa's portfolio is haunting, eclectic – and certainly unique. "The pieces are dark but beautiful. When I work, I don't really plan. It just comes out. It's like having an intimate look at a wild creature."

With ongoing exhibitions at Dubai's Ara Gallery and three Christie's sales to date, this local talent is teetering on the brink of international renown – but it's passion, not celebrity, that drives Khalifa's work. "I was the child who picked a crayon rather than play with a toy car. I've always felt like I wanted to create. I grew up surrounded by an art-loving family; there has always been a visual element in front of me."

As an Emirati artist, Khalifa is inevitably influenced by his identity; you don't have to look far to find images of national dress, of the stark desert landscape. But it's not a theme that defines his work: "I'm inspired by the traditions and culture of the Emirates, but I don't feel any responsibility to represent them. I love the traditions and history of my country, and the Arab identity too, but I draw inspiration from all parts of life. I'm driven by emotion, and I'm madly in love with the European portraits from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries – I love how strong the paintings are, even in their most subtle moments. I'm a big fan of Caravaggio and Ingres."

As for the future, Khalifa is quietly optimistic: "I'm trying new things and experimenting with new types of mediums; I'd like to break some more personal barriers." Watch this space.

saeedkhalifa.com





W

hen I sit down with Emirati-born Meera Mohamed Al Bowardi she's just stepped off a flight from Paris, but you wouldn't know it: impeccably-groomed and ever the professional, she rushes to meet me at her newly-opened venture; the decadent Petit Palais interior and furniture concept store in Jumeirah, Dubai. As I step through its hefty doorway (you can't miss it, being flanked by two stone lions), I quickly see how the name for this 'little palace' came to be – each room is filled to the rafters with trinkets and treasures, crystal candelabras, bejewelled chandeliers and French furnishings.

We take a pew on a custom-made sofa (it looks fit for a queen) as I ask Meera how the vision for her fanciful furniture store came about. "Well, I'm an entrepreneur at heart," Meera says, taking a sip of tea from a vintage-esque tea cup. "So, whenever I see opportunities I like to explore them and I found an opportunity in interiors." It's a vision she admits came to mind after decorating her villa, prompting the concept for a boutique that would be decorated like a home, combining expert vision with only the most high-end, hand-crafted and European furniture; a taste she recognises is shared by other Emirati women. "I know Emirati women, they have style and when items are made in Europe – that just adds flair to it," she says. "I felt that concept was missing for Dubai, I wanted to take a fresh approach – the way we present the pieces, put them together, the quality, that is different."

"Anything to do with design is a passion of mine," Meera goes on. "Actually I studied business with a major in marketing, but always I had this pull towards design, so everything from interiors to fashion and art." Setting up Petit Palais from scratch can't have been easy, though? "This entire process has been like a kind of circus," she laughs.

At just 25, Meera represents a fresh new wave of creative talent born right here in the UAE. And, though it may seem an obvious assumption, being an Emirati in the Emirates has been something of a rarity in years gone by; a fact she now sees as a distinct advantage. ("Do I have more of an insight into what people here want? Yes, I do believe that.") Meera's experience of European décor isn't second-hand either, having spent time in Geneva and Paris. "Everywhere I go I like to research history, culture, go to museums, visit the fashion boutiques, see what every element of design is like," she tells me. "Geneva is so mysterious – the palaces, mansions... things there are so romantic. Paris is the centre of everything, I really think that." Did these cities influence the names now available to her buyers? (Among them, the lavish De Gournay wallpaper catches my eye, featured as Keira Knightley's backdrop in a Chanel advert.) "Definitely," she says. "What made me fall in love with these kind of pieces was a trip to the Louvre museum. There's a section that's basically antique furniture; things that have been in palaces, owned by kings, aristocrats... I fell in love with the craftsmanship, they're done with love and care and a lot of time and experience."

Such an approach was insisted upon for Petit Palais, where pieces come custom-made – with a three-month wait. Though, by the look of the wealth of interiors around me, it's well worth exercising a little patience... petitpalaisinteriors.com



THE INTERIORS ENTREPRENEUR

Meera Mohamed Al Bowardi





1.

LESS IS MORE, MEXICO

Architect Javier Senosiain had simplicity in mind when designing this unorthodox family abode. Its façade is shaped like a shark with an open mouth, while its living area – home to just a few freestanding furnishings – marks a return to minimalism with green garden vistas in place of a TV. Finished with a stucco of white cement, camel mortar and marble dust, you may prefer to take a pew on the built-in seating, which curves its way around the hideaway's all-beige walls.



***MAGNIFICENT
LIVING SPACES***

*Sink into some of the
most stylish lounges
the world has to offer...*



2.

COUNTRY CHARM, USA

Rustic-yet-luxe, this living room takes a design leaf from its surrounds: created by Centerbrook Architects, you'll find it nestled in an American pine forest, a chilly stroll from a glistening lake. Such nature continues to unfold inside, with the forest emerging through pine wood panels and a central fireplace (with real logs, naturally) taking shape from local soapstone and boulders. Is there a cosier space in which to lounge?



3.

SPARKLING CITY PAD, DUBAI

Those who place style at the top of their list will love this pristine pad, with high-end interiors by Aati boutique in Dubai. Its open plan living area and clutter-free style ensures maximum

space in which to entertain guests, while its slick surfaces (smooth, dark wood and stainless steel) create a minimum of fuss. But the shining star has to be its floor-to-ceiling windows through which the bright lights of Dubai form a dazzling backdrop to soirées.



4.

ARISTOCRATIC SPLENDOUR, PARIS

'Less is more' is clearly not a phrase uttered in this aristocratic family home, which belongs to Parisians Count and Countess Hubert d'Ornano. Their mint green, gold-clad Grand Salon is like

stepping into a treasure trove - there is a bit of everything everywhere: family photos congregate, water colours look on from walls; sculptures pose; hefty chandeliers descend; animal skins sprawl. Put simply, it has all the trappings of wealth.

5.

DELUXE DOWN UNDER, AUSTRALIA

Those lucky enough to live with breathtaking views would do well to make the most of them – as this rectangular space in Wolgan Valley demonstrates. Constructed from honey-hued wood and rugged stone, its sitting area drinks in the rolling vistas, while a wood-decked verandah and private pool allows inhabitants to continue the lounging outside. For a cosy finish, its warm, earthy interior tones are the perfect choice.



6.

SKI CHIC, SWITZERLAND

When international designer and developer Paul Bowyer created this winter warming space, his intention was to showcase its snow-dusted surrounds. Sink into one of its butter-soft leather sofas and you'll be among a room of contrasts; solid wood, clear glass and Italian marble blend harmoniously, creating the cosiest (yet chic) of lounges from which to drink in uninterrupted vistas of Zermatt.



7.

BIG APPLE LOFT, USA

David Rockwell is the designer behind this neck-craning New York penthouse, a loft-style design whose pièce de résistance has to be its 30-foot-high atelier windows. Despite its obvious wow factor, interiors exude a low-key homeliness thanks to neutral hues and masculine materials – sturdy wood floors and comfy Chesterfield sofas, not to mention a stunning stone centerpiece for when winter draws in.

“In luxury you always
have to reinvent...”



Look to the Future



UAE design guru and founder of La Galerie Nationale, Guillaume Cuiry created the first gallery in the UAE to pay homage to furniture as art. Here, he shares his top ten home style predictions for 2013 with DAMAC

1. PUT YOUR BEST FASHION FOOT FORWARDS

The fashion world will always have an influence on interiors. The vintage trend is one good example: this year you will see many designer brands promoting the look – you can see it in Chanel's new haute couture collection, in Levi's advertising campaigns, even IKEA is pushing vintage styles in its new catalogue. When you're in fashion décor you have to update your interiors. Look to designers, then, for inspiration at home.

2. ALL-WHITE IS DEAD

Natural, simple, white and grey schemes were the trend. But now all-white is over. For a long time, the luxury was to create a spirit that was pure and simple with no colour and now it is changing. You can use white and black as your base but in 2013 you have to put with it a positive design touch, that of colour. Be careful which you use though; there will be a total abandonment of pastel colours, of brown and of purple and a return of red, yellow and especially orange.

3. JUST A TOUCH OF CLASS

Gone are the days when colour is everywhere: to put colour in one room, on everything, in every item, there is no elegance. Now it is about adding just a touch of class – one wall in a colour; one masterpiece; one or two pieces, that is all you need.

4. ETHNIC IS BACK

In 2013 I feel ethnic will return – now it is very refreshing to have a unique and rare piece of carpet on your wall instead of a painting. My advice is to place just some touches with original pieces. If you want to be hip you have to go back to the roots with original items from Africa, from South America and sometimes the Middle East. Sometimes it is very difficult to find historic pieces, but we are in luxury!

5. NEW LUXURY IS AN INVESTMENT

The real feeling of 'new luxury' is using decoration as an investment. To make an investment you have to buy original pieces – it can be in a gallery or not – but it must be exclusive and rare. For a long time, people would only invest in a painting, but I have seen this change – now the movement has gone to furniture, to sofas, for example. For a long time people bought a sofa that was very reasonable; often big, white, leather – but that's all dead now. Why? Because luxury is changing. If you buy a very expensive piece of furniture now you will not change it in three years,





you will keep it, resurrect it. The original one is more expensive but you have one of 15 pieces in the world. The mass market will never be able to touch this market as it's too expensive, which is what also makes it true luxury. This is the new art of investment in the home for 2013 and beyond.

6. MIX AND MATCH ERAS

No longer is it on-trend to have one look from one era. Better for 2013 and 2014 to mix décor – you need to have some pieces from the '40s, the '50s, the '70s and a contemporary piece. Full contemporary is now obsolete. If you want to use a statement piece from an era it should be *the* piece.

7. VINTAGE LIVES ON

It will always be important to have historical pieces in the home, and that will not change with the change of year. To have a historic piece, you also buy a knowledge, a background, you buy the soul and emotions of that item. It is different to any contemporary piece you will acquire because it is not mass market and it is worth keeping with this trend in 2013.

8. THINK TEXTURES

Fabrics do not evolve much over the years – wood, cotton – there is no great revolution. What is new is the control of the fabric – for 2013 it is one colour, rather than mono-colour, this will always look strong when used as an accent in the home. Another material is wood. This has been used too much in years gone by but now if you want to use some wood in your home it is about having some good quality, coarse wood in its greatest possible raw state – not too manufactured.

9. BE ORIGINAL

When you begin to be influenced by the mass market you immediately have to change. In luxury you always have to reinvent. It can be difficult to find great pieces, but you must buy high quality. For luxury you have to have the original piece. So, if you have an Andy Warhol, you have a true one or you have nothing, there is no compromise.

10. SEEK OUT SOUL

Phillippe Starck recently sold one million transparent chairs and was very happy – but this is not the spirit of luxury. In luxury you have to be the leader, you have to be the first, when you're the second to have something it's already too late. When a new designer comes in, he always focuses on the mass market but you have to see past the item, to the original. That is an evolution of style for 2013, to see the soul of the piece.





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DAMAC MAISON
Luxury Hotel Apartments

PROPERTY

We look back on a year of growth for Dubai's real estate market and predict its continued success in 2013. Plus, we get the inside scoop on DAMAC Properties' hotly-anticipated partnership with FENDI Casa...





> Live a life of five-star luxury in Marina Terrace, amidst the yachts and fine dining destinations of Dubai Marina

DAMAC Properties

Delivers a Life of Luxury

F

or almost a decade now, the name DAMAC Properties has been at the forefront of the Middle East's luxury property market. With a relentless focus on design and quality, the company has built a well-founded reputation for creating some of the most iconic and desirable properties from Dubai to Beirut, from Abu Dhabi to Jeddah, and from Doha to Amman.

It's a reputation of which the company's Managing Director, Ziad Al Chaar, is rightfully proud. "Take each and any project that we have in the context of its area and location, and you will find in that project a very distinct design, with luxurious quality and a level of amenities over and above projects in any other masterplan," he says.

The pace of DAMAC's expansion has been extraordinary. It has completed no fewer than 37 buildings to date – a total of 7,817 units in all – and has a further 65 buildings at various stages of development across the Middle East. This year will see the opening of two of those, Burjside Boulevard

in Dubai and DAMAC Tower in Beirut; buildings which do much to enhance DAMAC's reputation as the creator of luxury dwellings.

The 28-storey DAMAC Tower has a design inspired by the ocean waves. It's undulating architecture looks set to make it into a local icon in Beirut, and helped it to win the Bloomberg Global Property Award for Best High Rise Architecture.

In Dubai, DAMAC's first serviced apartment project, Burjside Boulevard, is set to wow citizens of the city. It has been designed by high-flying German

providing services such as housekeeping, spa treatments, chauffeured limousines, concierge services, yacht and jet charters and more: in short, it will live up to its motto of 'Luxury at your service'.

Alongside groundbreaking architecture and bespoke personal services for residents, another major USP of DAMAC Properties is its exclusive Middle East partnership with the crème de la crème of the interior design world. Its projects include two exclusive developments in collaboration with FENDI Casa, and existing designs with Versace Home. This enables DAMAC to offer its customers exquisite interiors that are unmatched in the market.

But DAMAC Properties is not resting up. The company continues to innovate and bring new concepts to the market, with El Chaar determined to build on its powerful performance to date. "We have the vision and momentum to provide solid investment opportunities to our customers," he says.

Projects include two exclusive developments in collaboration with FENDI Casa'

starchitects Koschany+Zimmer, and will stand proud at a full 49 floors on completion, providing its occupants with quality-of-life that is second to none.

In order to cater to the residents of its five-star serviced apartments, DAMAC has launched a dedicated apartment management service. This service will take care of residents' every need,

> DAMAC Properties was established in 2002, as a private residential, leisure and commercial developer in Dubai and the Middle East. Since then, DAMAC Properties has expanded rapidly into North Africa, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

It has completed 37 buildings to date with 7,817 units and spanning 13,945,299.00 sq feet. DAMAC Properties also has a further 66 buildings at various stages of progress across the Middle East and North Africa region. These consist of 12,100 units spanning over 23,000,000.00 sq feet. www.damacproperties.com



A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN

*DAMAC Properties reveals
a stunning partnership
with FENDI Casa – a new
generation of luxurious living*

W

hen it comes to glamorous interiors, no one does it quite as elegantly as FENDI Casa, and for the ultimate in bespoke living there are few abodes in the Middle East more luxurious than those created by DAMAC Properties.

It is little wonder then, that when the two invited media to the Dubai International Financial Centre to announce a collaboration, a large and excited crowd gathered on time and ready to listen.

At Cuadro fine art gallery, a fitting location for what promises to be a successful artistic relationship, the Middle East's new power couple revealed plans to launch two highly exclusive luxury apartment towers: one in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and another in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.





Not even an injured back, obtained en route and causing much discomfort, could dampen the enthusiasm of the FENDI Group honorary president Carla Fendi, who flew in to deliver the news in person.

"I confess that it's a big emotion to be here in Dubai for this occasion," she told journalists. "FENDI Casa ties itself to Middle Eastern tradition through this project, which definitely marks one of the most significant moments in FENDI's rich history."

During the past few years there have been a spate of highly successful forays by leading fashion houses into the interior design of hotels. However, the state-of-the-art projects now under construction in Riyadh and Dubai for DAMAC Properties and FENDI, due to be completed in 2016, will take this concept to the next level.

*It is a synergy between two
visionary companies'*

"For me, the home is everything," Ms Fendi said. "Being Italian, of course the family is important too. This is how the vision of FENDI Casa was born."

This collaboration is not a case of simply kitting out these new abodes with FENDI Casa soft furnishings: the entire interior of these two towers is conceived by the Italian fashion house – from floors to walls and even ceilings.

"FENDI is a luxury house, which is based on the fearless exploration and experimentation with luxury handcraft, and a strong appreciation of sophisticated materials," said FENDI Chairman and CEO Pietro Beccari. "Both the Riyadh and Dubai projects are perfect examples of our poly-sensorial, three-dimensional approach to making beautiful things."



> Opening page: DAMAC Residence by night. Previous spread: The instantly-recognisable lobby of DAMAC Residence. Opposite page: FENDI Casa-designed living and dining areas in DAMAC Residence. This page: Arabic-Italian design fusion by FENDI Casa in DAMAC Residence bedrooms.





> This page: DAMAC Esclusiva, Riyadh. Opposite page: FENDI Casa-designed bedrooms, living areas and dining rooms in DAMAC Esclusiva. Overleaf: The bright, expansive lobby of DAMAC Esclusiva luxury serviced apartments.



Hussain Sajwani, Chairman of DAMAC Properties, also sees the partnership with FENDI as a natural progression: “Together, we can bring an experience to the market which the region is yet to see. It is a perfect synergy between two visionary companies looking to reach the pinnacle of luxury living.”

Developing iconic real estate begins with choosing the right location. DAMAC Esclusiva, in Riyadh, will be a 150-metre high tower overlooking the city’s Kingdom Tower on King Fahad Road, in the heart of the city’s downtown area. Its target residents? “Young, affluent Saudis in Riyadh looking for a new way of life: something different from their father and grandfather,” said Ziad Al Chaar, managing director of DAMAC Properties.

Available only to a limited number of VIPs, invited and pre-approved, approximately 100 luxury serviced apartments will reflect the Italian fashion house’s unique capacity to blend the modern with the best of traditional Roman craftsmanship. In the lobby, gilded metal blades suspend from the ceiling, creating Arabesque columns and arches. Residents will pass a FENDI Casa water feature to take a high-tech lift to their apartment, where they will be met with a palette of soft grey-blue and gold. The finest marble floors will be warmed with hand-knotted rugs, and silk and leather furnishings tease the senses. In the dining room, a spectacular chandelier serves as a functional art installation guaranteed to create a buzz among dinner guests.

In keeping with DAMAC Properties’ five-star hospitality service, owners will also be offered amenities usually enjoyed in only the finest of hotels, including a first-class concierge service: think chefs preparing meals for residents within their apartment and a personal shopping service.

In Dubai Marina, yacht owners can admire their pride and joy from DAMAC Residence, as the 200 apartments and penthouses nestled within floors 44 and 83 boast views of the Marina’s sparkling waters, as well as the waters of the Arabian Gulf or Palm Jumeirah. As in Riyadh, the touch of FENDI ensures its understated glamour also nods to the local culture and surroundings: geometric shapes reminiscent of the FENDI logo blend with curvaceous furnishings in soft shades of blue, out of respect for the waterfront location.

*'The vision of FENDI fashion
is all about craftsmanship'*





Finding inspiration in different sources is nothing new to the Roman fashion maestros. “Sometimes [FENDI] finds inspiration in new experiences, sometimes in the strength of memories, sometimes in media sensation and sometimes in new fascinations,” explained Ms Fendi. “And this is what is happening here today in Dubai and Riyadh with FENDI Casa. This is FENDI’s DNA: the past and the future, tradition and research. Rules combine with innovation and experimentation.”

Luxury living, she insists, is about much more than simply spending money. “It is about a life of

quality. Quality means creativity. Luxury can be costly but not very refined – inelegance is the worst form of luxury. The vision of FENDI fashion is all about craftsmanship.”

It is this Roman craftsmanship that sets FENDI apart from its rivals. It began in 1925 when Ms Fendi’s parents – Edoardo and Adele – opened a humble handbag and fur workshop in Via del Plebiscito, Rome. “This small workshop was like a small seed planted in a fertile terrain that was rich in culture and tradition,” she explained. “The young tree which was born from that seed,

developed, grew, initially by the commitment and love of three family generations. The tree became beautiful and fertile.”

Now, that tree is laying solid roots in the Middle East – and Ms Fendi is excited about it. “This is a fascinating adventure, which I am proud to share with you and honoured to witness,” she said, adding that she looked forward to “regular dialogue which is respectful of our reciprocal tradition and in creating a unique project, which speaks the universal language of beauty, elegance and style.”

BOULEVARD *of* DREAMS

*Why DAMAC Properties' Burj
side Boulevard sets
new standards for luxury*

A

s Dubai's property market heads on a path of steady growth, major developers in the emirate are placing their energy and resources into a relatively untapped sector: serviced hotel apartments.

At the last count there were 577 hotels in Dubai, according to the Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) department, but just 200 serviced apartments.

Tourists and businesses continue to arrive in their millions (the first half of 2012 was the busiest ever for Dubai International Airport and by the time you read this their target of 56.5 million passengers for the year should have been reached), and developers see this vertical as a way of attracting individual investors into the lucrative service industry.

This new sector also brings many opportunities and challenges for architects and designers as different layouts and designs are required to deliver a high-end, luxury product.

One of the first new serviced hotels to complete will be Burj side Boulevard in the Burj Area, boasting enviable views of the world's tallest tower and world's largest mall.

Developed by DAMAC Properties, the 50-storey tower is set to begin handover by mid-2013. The landmark development offers three, two and one bedroom, fully-furnished and serviced hotel apartments.

"The location is what distinguishes Burj side Boulevard from many other projects currently under construction in Dubai," said Niall McLoughlin, Senior Vice President, DAMAC Properties. "DAMAC Properties always chooses premium sites for our developments and currently the Burj Area is one of the most sought after locations in the world. In fact, there is no better site in that area that hasn't already been developed."





> The exterior and sublime interior of Burj Al Arab


DAMAC Properties always chooses premium sites for our developments and currently the Burj Area is one of the most sought after locations in the world


Designed by award-winning German architects Koschany+Zimmer, Burj Al Arab is DAMAC Properties' first hotel apartment project, and to succeed it was critical that it distinguished itself amongst its highly acclaimed peers in the Burj Area. Through acute attention to detail and the incorporation of luxurious materials including marble, hand-blown glass and European crystals, the project is one of the area's most iconic.

The design brief was to create the type of home that customers have always dreamed of, and so everything from the décor to superior quality linen and top of the range European appliances have been incorporated to create a sense of opulence and luxury living.

The colour palette used is a mixture of crisp white and warm beige, punctuated by splashes of black and metallics. The fusion of gold leaf and chrome features has been incorporated to propose a contrast between modern and classic design styles, with the stunning result seeing 1940s glamour meet contemporary sophistication.

"Burj Al Arab will offer the most luxurious services in hotel apartments and provide an attractive rental pool programme to allow our clients to enter the booming Dubai hotel sector," said McLoughlin. "We are taking a leading role in this area and the 4,000 units under development across the region will make DAMAC Properties one of the largest serviced hotel apartment companies in the region," he added.

The project will be managed through DAMAC Properties as per five-star international standards, which will provide a comprehensive list of services for residents spanning from state-of-the-art spa treatments, housekeeping, concierge services, chauffeur driven cars and even private jet and yacht charter.

"Many of our clients visit Dubai for just two or three months a year. A DAMAC Properties serviced hotel apartment provides clients the opportunity to rent their luxury home while they are away, earning revenue and without the stress and complication of finding a tenant," added McLoughlin.

Burj Al Arab was topped out earlier this year and the interior works are now well underway. The project will be one of the first serviced hotel apartments in the Burj Area, leading the way in the Dubai property market's resurgence.



> DAMAC Tower's suitably grand lobby

THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

We go inside Beirut's highly prestigious DAMAC Tower for a look at the Versace Home styled masterpiece

B

Beirut's exclusive downtown Solidere development is certainly becoming a favourite residential destination for the city's well heeled. And it's in this blossoming area of the capital that DAMAC Properties will open the stunning DAMAC Tower, with interior design by Versace Home.

The 28-storey tower is a magnificent blend of exquisite Versace interiors and unique architectural design, a fact that when coupled with its enviable location – on the shores of the Mediterranean – saw it recently receive the highly regarded International Property Award for 'Best High Rise Architecture.'

> For more information on DAMAC Tower with Interiors by Versace Home, contact your local DAMAC Properties sales office, or visit www.damacproperties.com



> Versace Home design and styling is evident throughout every aspect of DAMAC Tower



> The exquisite Versace Home styled dining room

Revered for its glamour and luxury, Versace's interiors ensure that style-conscious residents are in their element at home in DAMAC Tower. Founded in Milan in 1978 by Gianni Versace, it soon became one of the most glamorous Italian fashion brands to captivate consumers. The home collection, then, was a natural extension of his colourful clothing. Created in 1992, Versace Home extends to everything from furnishings and exquisite furniture to porcelain dinner sets, each piece celebrating the brand's famous emblems, from the medusa to the neo-classical Greek fret. A true style icon at home.



BOUNCING BACK

Following the correction in prices back in 2008, Dubai's property market has slowly improved, and 2012 saw the most impressive growth – around 10-12% in some of the more desirable areas according to recent reports. We look at the reasons for this powerful resurgence



> Image: Corbis / Arabian Eye

THE ESCROW LAW

As the market continues to show signs of strong revival and new clients look to make a purchase, either as their own home or as a sound investment, Escrow is playing a prominent role. Escrow is the process of an investor placing funding with a third-party, which is not then released until an agreed construction milestone has been reached. It is a vital component of a transparent real estate industry.

New clients are looking to capitalise on beneficial pricing and it is important they have a clear understanding of how their investment will be used to deliver a luxury property in Dubai.

The Escrow law ensures that all developers must be registered with the Dubai Land Department and must use the operating bank account solely for the particular development which a client is investing in.

Projects are funded through payments to Escrow so contractors and sub-contractors are paid directly from the Escrow fund which also ensures that the builders deliver on their obligations and buildings continue at pace.

In addition to the security of Escrow, there are further regulations in place to ensure security for an investor. Developers need to be able to provide a client with their trade licence, a contract in place with a master developer, the title deeds and also details of the account associated to the project the client is interested in.

MORE LIQUIDITY

The Dubai economy remains on a strong recovery path with figures expected to show that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.5% in 2012. This performance is being driven by the strong growth of key sectors such as tourism, commerce, retail, hospitality and logistics.

Banks are now providing funding again – not just for investors in the form of mortgages as low as 3.99% - but also to contractors and developers.

As developers receive funding, as well as deposits and further payments on projects, they will be able to continue building at pace. Liquidity is the key driver of Dubai's property market and the banks need to continue to make funding available at all levels to ensure that the current recovery remains on track, at a steady pace.

COMPREHENSIVE INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Dubai Government is again investing heavily in an infrastructure programme, with Dubai World Central spending US\$4.6 billion on infrastructure alone, and terminal two of Jebel Ali Port passed halfway and set for completion this year.

As road networks, schools, hospitals and shopping malls also complete in the new areas of Dubai, investment in the real estate projects will continue to come in. There are many good prices to

be achieved in the less developed areas of Dubai which are certain to grow in the coming years.

NEW JOB CREATION

Nearly one million new jobs are expected to be created before the end of 2020 according to the Dubai Government. As Dubai continues to grow and generate new opportunities, the demand for quality housing will remain. Jones Lang La Salle predicts that around 50,000 additional residential units are expected to be delivered by 2014.

With Europe and America still feeling the effects of a global recession, many expats are looking to Dubai as a place to extend their career opportunities.

INCREASED TRANSPARENCY AND REGULATION

The Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA) has recently launched a new service fees index which aims to regulate service fees, reduce disputes about service charges and increase transparency in the market.

Following the release of the draft investor protection law in Q2 2012, the Dubai Land Department has released a draft Code of Corporate Governance for Developers. The Code defines the responsibilities of developers and requires them to disclose to investors complete information about their properties, including alternatives in case of potential delays.

The Code's ultimate goal is ensuring more transparency and better regulation of the real estate market. Further regulations ensure that all lease contracts are registered through a government database and all transactions with the Land Department go through a centralised listing site for available property, all of which prompted DAMAC Properties to recently call Dubai's property market as one of the most regulated in the world.

"DAMAC Properties welcomes recent moves by the Dubai government to tighten regulation in the property market," said Niall McLoughlin, Senior Vice President, DAMAC Properties. "As the market in Dubai recovers strongly, it is important to have clear legislation which will instill confidence in overseas investors in particular."

GROWING CONFIDENCE

Investors believe in Dubai's property market again. Government, banks and developers have worked hard over the past few years to bring back the belief in the growth potential of the market. Cityscape Global in 2012 was a case in point, with companies talking confidently about the prospects for the future and bringing back projects which had been shelved.

All markets, both financial and real estate, are driven by consumer confidence, and a return to the belief that Dubai is a thriving international hub is sure to see clients returning in big numbers.

Is this the year of
**THE SAVVY REAL
ESTATE INVESTOR?**

If 2012 saw Dubai's real estate market on an upward curve, 2013 will see opportunities abound for investors, says DAMAC Properties



‘There has been no better time to invest in the Dubai property market in the past four years’



Dubai's property market will grow at a steadier and more stable pace over the next year, providing solid investment opportunities for the savvy investor, say leading executives in the industry.

Independent reports have put the growth in prices of real estate in Dubai through 2012 at anywhere from 7-19 percent, depending on location and the quality of the project.

DAMAC Properties says that growth is sustainable in the near future, if you know where to look. The company observed how 2012 had delivered on all of its predictions at the start of the year, with prices in the Dubai market steadily growing with each quarter outperforming the last. In 2013, DAMAC Properties predicts buyers will be able to benefit from this capital growth, but will also need to be very savvy about where they invest and in which projects in each area.

Here, DAMAC Properties looks ahead to 2013 with cautious optimism and provides an insight into the places to invest in this year:

COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW

Dubai is one of the most regulated real estate markets in the world, offering reassurance and protection for investors. It is a key element which will be the backbone of the steady growth throughout 2013. The more transparent the market becomes as it matures, the more trust clients can have in the system and the large companies which have been operating in Dubai for many years.

Clients looking to come into the Dubai market should, however, always undergo due diligence before stepping into any transaction and there are four documents which they should insist on seeing: the developer's trade licence, a contract in place with

a master developer, title deeds and details of the escrow account associated to the project they are interested in. Each of these documents is required by law and every reputable developer should be able to supply you with these very easily.

SERVICED HOTEL APARTMENTS

There is a reason why DAMAC Properties have announced more than 4,000 luxury serviced hotel apartments in development by the end of 2013. The Dubai market is currently underserved in this area – there are fewer than 200 serviced apartment projects currently operating in Dubai while there are nearly 600 hotels.

Luxury serviced hotel apartments also provide numerous benefits over a more traditional apartment. Owners can enjoy five-star hotel concierge services while they live in the property, or they can reap attractive rental returns while they are away. Most HNWIs lead a transient lifestyle and maybe only stay in their property in Dubai for three or four months a year. While they are away, DAMAC Properties' new hospitality management service will add the property to a rental pool and manage the whole process of finding a tenant and collecting rents. This flexibility of investment is proving very popular with clients, and with Dubai's tourism remaining on an upward path, clients can be confident that this sector will be the biggest driver in growth of the Dubai property market in the medium to long term.

Dubai Statistics Centre is predicting a 10% growth in visitors this year, while a Bank of America/ Merrill Lynch report is anticipating 15 million tourists to Dubai by 2020, up from eight million in 2011.

DAMAC Properties has been working towards the launch of its serviced apartment offering and is very excited to complete Burjside Boulevard in the

middle of next year, its first Hotel Apartment project. Overlooking some of the most attractive real estate in the world, it will provide one of the most luxurious living experiences in the country.

'NEW' LOCATIONS

Dubai continues to grow at a phenomenal pace. It is just 41 years old, but residential property development has really only been operating for 10 years or so – it is still an immature market. This means that prices will continue to fluctuate in the short term and buyers should be looking to the medium and long-term when deciding to buy in Dubai. It also means that locations which just 12 months ago were without any infrastructure and felt distant, will come to the fore and become another component of the 'New' Dubai in a few years. This is a real opportunity for the savvy investor to get into the market while prices remain low and benefit from substantial capital growth in the medium term when infrastructure is complete and the area is thriving. Areas such as IMPZ, Jumeirah Village and the Emirates/Al Khail Road area will start to grow in valuation across 2013. The Government of the UAE has recently approved an AED 44.6 billion deficit-free federal budget. Within that, 12 percent will be spent on water and electricity services, with a major focus on health and education. This is a clear indication that the required infrastructure to allow these areas to grow will be forthcoming.

LUXURY

Quality, location and services will always drive demand. Buying the very best you can within your budget is key to driving sustained capital growth. Look to invest in the most luxurious project in any given area. It is always the 'top' properties which sell first, earn a name and reputation and are the easiest to sell whenever you decide to cash in your investment.

Look closely at the experience and longevity of the developer. Visit their previous projects and talk to owners and tenants in projects they have built. It will provide a great insight into what you can expect as a new owner.

Also, look for the facilities that will be on offer in the project and to what standard they are being built. High quality pools, gardens, tennis courts and gymnasiums drive a much better overall price for the project. People hunt out these luxuries when they are considering buying or renting and it will give you a much better return on your investment.

OVERALL

DAMAC Properties believes there has been no better time to invest in the Dubai property market in the past four years. New regulations, the filtering of the market following the correction and the increases in business and tourism coming to Dubai will ensure it remains one of the most lucrative real estate markets in the whole world in 2013.

As more established economies struggle to break free of the global financial crisis, Dubai is young enough and nimble enough to react quickly, change, and come out on the other side in a much stronger position.



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VERSACE HOME



STANDING THE TEST OF TIME



S

even years after the handover of DAMAC Properties' luxury towers in Dubai Marina, apartments within these complexes are still selling for prices nearly 50% higher than the Dubai average. One of these, The Waves, looks like it was handed over only yesterday.

"This tower has a powerful reputation for being a quality development, and while older than some of the new towers coming on the market, people know that this development has stood the test of time," said Senior Vice President of DAMAC Properties, Niall McLoughlin.

DAMAC Properties attributes the strong ongoing demand for apartments within their towers to the quality of the build, as well as excellent maintenance

and facilities management. "DAMAC Properties is a luxury-focused developer, and while some competitors make the same claim, we believe luxury should mean that after six years your air conditioning still works, your bathroom doesn't leak and your paint isn't peeling off the walls.

"The proof of the quality of construction of DAMAC Properties' projects are standing tall in the Dubai Marina for all to see," said the head of DAMAC Properties' Facilities Management.

The Waves was launched in 2002, and handed over in 2006. It is a two-tower development with 269 units spread over 600,000 sq.ft, and is situated in a premium location on the waterfront at Dubai Marina. In addition to the sought after location and water views, it offers five-star amenities including temperature-controlled swimming pools, state-of-the-art gyms and children's play areas. "It doesn't matter whether you are renting or buying a property, you are still committing a lot of money, and you want to know that a year down the track your home will be in top condition. That's why I decided to live in a DAMAC property," said one resident from The Waves.

DAMAC Properties has a reputation for excellent facilities management (FM) across its portfolio of towers in Dubai. All DAMAC developments are well maintained, which has significantly eased the transfer of responsibility for making decisions about FM to the Home Owners Associations.

Maintenance should be a major consideration of any buyer or lessee as it can influence the capital appreciation of a property. If you have purchased an apartment in one of Dubai's luxury apartment developments, it's in your best interest to ensure that your building is well-maintained. You can be proactive in your approach to building maintenance by joining your property's Home Owners Association.

A property is a big investment, and while maintenance fees may seem burdensome on top of your mortgage repayments, they will ensure that the value of your property will continue to grow in the years to come.

Of course, if a building has not been constructed to high quality standards in the first instance, then maintenance fees may seem to disappear into a black hole. The well-worn proverb that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure applies to property ownership. A well constructed building is likely to require less maintenance as it ages.

DAMAC Properties has already proved that its buildings stand the test of time. The developer has a dedicated FM team working with project managers at the point of construction to ensure that potential issues are identified and rectified early to reduce the headaches for residents in the years to come.



DAMAC PROPERTIES SEES 'SIGNIFICANT INCREASE' IN INVESTMENT FROM EUROPE

The UAE is one of the top destinations for European expatriates looking for new opportunities and an improved quality of life, according to a new study





With the rigour of the recession still exerting its toll across the Eurozone, it's no wonder that more people than ever are seeking respite in more optimistic countries. A recent study by Eurostat, the statistical agency for the European Union, placed unemployment on the continent at a record 11.6%, and the economic forecast continues to look bleak.

Meanwhile, the economy in the UAE – home to one of the highest concentration of expats in the world – is growing from strength to strength. Tax-free salaries are high, business is booming, and the sun shines year-round – what's not to love? "As the global financial crisis continues to hang over the Eurozone, we have seen a significant increase in clients from Europe looking to improve

> Image: Emirates

their standard of living and benefit from the tax-free incomes that are on offer in Dubai," said Niall McLoughlin, Senior Vice President of DAMAC Properties. "The crisis and the high levels of unemployment have been the catalysts for many people to say 'enough is enough' and make the move to improve their family's way of life."

A recent study by Lloyds TSB International lists the UAE, New Zealand and Spain as the three most popular countries among British expatriates. The results showed that two thirds of expats reported that they are happier in their new countries than they were in the UK – and that their quality of life has improved greatly. The figures for the UAE also indicate that expats are significantly better off than they were in the UK – a staggering 95.1% of interviewees are reaping the financial rewards of relocating to the Middle East.

As a result, Dubai's property market is the strongest it has been in recent years, as the benefits of life in the emirates encourages European expats to invest in the buoyant market. They're not the only ones who're making the move, however: "It is not only our clients throughout Europe that are looking at Dubai as an appealing place to live and work,

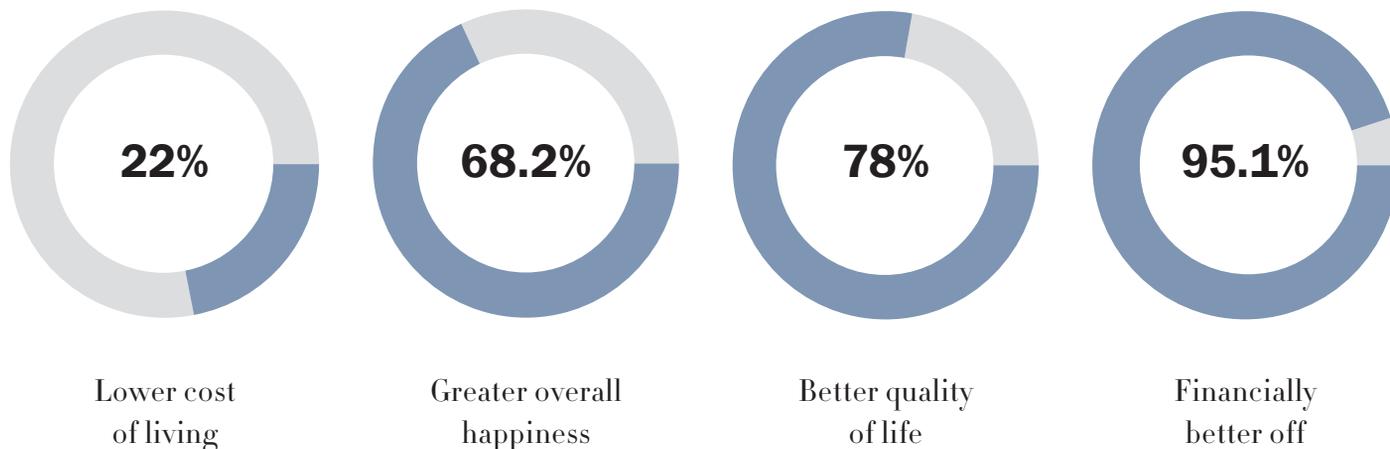
but also the many Arab expats who are looking to invest in Dubai as a safe haven in the Middle East," added McLoughlin. "We are seeing a strong rise in the number of people enquiring about the luxury serviced hotel apartments which are currently under construction and set for completion this year."

Meanwhile, many would-be expats continue to visit the emirates on holiday, potentially sizing-up the destination as a possible new home. According to TRI Hospitality Consulting, the gross operating profit per available room increased by 14.1% to US\$160.07 over the course of the first nine months of 2012, as more people spent more time – and money – in the city while experiencing its benefits.

The potential demand for property and employment is vast, but thanks to significant investment by the UAE government and forward-thinking developers in the expansion of the city, the future remains dazzlingly bright.

> Further information is available at damacproperties.com

'People are looking to improve their standard of living and benefit from the tax-free incomes on offer in Dubai'



> Data: Lloyds TSB

When questioned for a recent study by Lloyds TSB, UAE-based British expatriates gave their verdict on how life in the emirates compares with life in the UK. The results show a vast improvement in happiness, quality of life and financial gain.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

DAMAC Properties has won more than 30 awards across various industry categories. These awards include:

2012-2013 International Property Awards Arabia

- Best Residential High-Rise Development Saudi Arabia (*Al Jawharah*)
- Best Developer Website Dubai (*damacproperties.com*)
- Best Interior Design Apartment Saudi Arabia (*DAMAC Residences*)

2012 Big Project Award
Outstanding Development of the year (*Al Jawharah*)

2012 MEED Quality Awards for Projects
Emirates Steel GCC Building Project Of The Year (*Ocean Heights*)

2012 OPP Awards For Excellence
Best Developer Middle East

2011 International Property Award
Best International Mixed-use Development (*Park Towers*)

2011 Big Project BGreen Award
Developer of the Year

- 2011 Bloomberg Property Award**
- Best Commercial High-rise (*Park Towers*)
 - Best Developer Website (*damacproperties.com*)
 - Best High-rise Architecture Arabia (*Park Towers*)
 - Best High-rise Architecture (*Park Towers*)
 - Best High-rise Architecture (*Al Jawharah*)
 - Best Mixed-use Development Arabia (*Park Towers*)
 - Best Mixed-use Development (*Park Towers*)

- 2010 Bloomberg Property Award**
- Best Developer Website
 - Best High-rise Architecture (*DAMAC Tower*)
 - Best High-rise Architecture (*DAMAC Tower*)
 - Best Interior Design (*DAMAC Tower, Beirut*)

- 2009 CNBC Property Award**
- Best Developer Website
 - Best PR Company

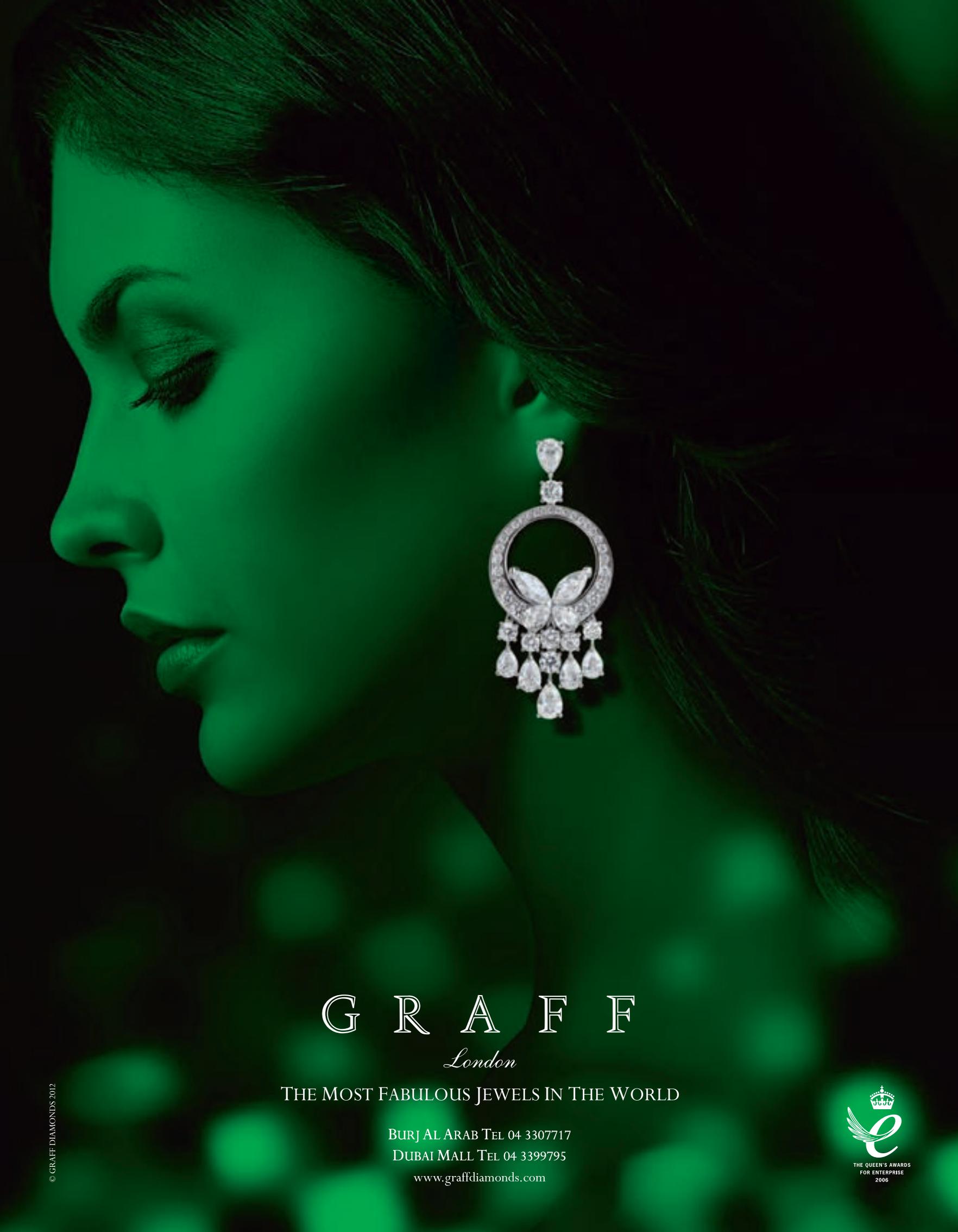
- 2008 CNBC Property Award**
- Best Developer Website
 - Best Development, Egypt
 - Best High-rise Architecture (*Marina Bay*)
 - Best Marina Development, Abu Dhabi (*Marina Bay*)
 - Best Property Marketing, Dubai

- 2007 CNBC Property Award**
- Best Developer Website
 - Best High-rise Development (*La Residence at The Lotus*)
 - Best International High-rise Development (*La Residence at The Lotus*)

- 2006 CNBC Property Award**
- Best Development Abu Dhabi (*Oceanscape*)
 - Best Developer Website
 - Best Single Unit Architecture (*Ocean Heights 2*)

- 2005 Bentley International Property Award**
- Best Architecture (*Ocean Heights*)
 - Best Developer Website
 - Best UAE Development (*Maria Terrace*)





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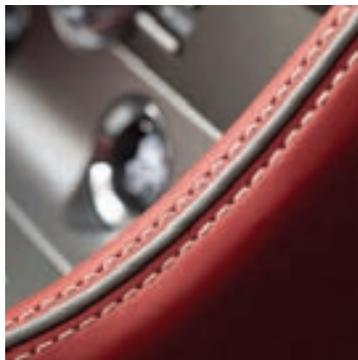
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