

# DECORATION

the ultimate in luxurious living ideas

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## Redefining Luxury

The Mandarin  
Oriental,  
Prague

## Moroccan Zen

A fusion of cultures  
& influences



# Escape to St. Tropez

A holiday home with character, style and magic

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technical tips

# ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR WATSON



**Marie-Noëlle Swiderski**, a design professional since 1993, set up Blanchard in Dubai in September 2006. Her aim "to comfort her soul with beauty". Blanchard FZ LLC, Tel: 04 3694532, [www.blanchard.ae](http://www.blanchard.ae)



When I arrived in Dubai, close to three years ago, I remember being struck by the abundance of themed interiors. It seemed that no design was worth its linear metre of silk wallpaper if it was not a pastiche of some foregone era, distant shore or art movement. Over the few years that I have spent here, managing the Blanchard studio in Dubai, we have observed a shift in trends. From themes, we moved on to ultra modern, cool

designs. Then lately, over the past year or so, I have noticed that new designs are beginning to be developed around the idea of a more intemporal glamour, a timeless elegance. Sure, there are twists here and there and why not indeed? Creating an interior that will stand the test of time does not necessarily entail that all its elements are steeped in classicism. Nor does it mean that neither of its individual characteristics will date eventu-

ally. What matters the most is that the sum of its parts capture the essence of a rich personality, whether relating to its owner, dweller, or clientele. The designer's personality is only there to interpret that of the client and translate it into lines, shades, styles. A space is, like an outfit, a meal, or a work of art, made by and for individuals. When we design an interior at Blanchard, we develop the recipe of that interior very much

with the individual in mind. With his or her ingredients, colours, textures, shapes, culture and history.

When you approach your own project or when you present specialists such as Blanchard with the parameters of your project, that is the priority: the focus of any interior is on the individuals it caters to. Have a good look at your space and ask yourself key questions. Who are you? How did you become who you are, what influenced you? What are defining moments and encounters in your life so far? If there was one impression you wished to take away from your life, what would it be? It may seem this is awfully deep stuff to delve into when really all we are talking about is selecting between 2 or 3 paint swatches, fabric samples and armchair silhouettes... That can be a fair point. If all you want is to create a space, any lovely space, then fine. If, on the other hand, you wish to conceive a soulful interior, that breathes and palpates with you, then it is worth a little introspection, a little soul searching exactly, isn't it?

If that kind of approach is 'not your tea bag, baby', as Austin Powers would say, you could do a more practical exercise I was introduced to by a clever coach I once met. Having in mind your query: "What defines me?" or "How can I create an interior that defines me?", ruffle through random magazines and indiscriminately select or tear out the pages that speak to you. They do not have to be specifically interior design-oriented, they simply need to resonate within you, to attract you. Once you feel you have gathered enough material, have a look at it all and categorise it. You may be surprised to see how there will eventually, naturally, be one, two, or even three main common threads that are revealed.

Once that has happened, whether you are doing this on your own or with some help from a friend or a specialist, it is time to interpret. That is the most fun part of our job, we feel at Blanchard. To hear what we are told or see what we are shown and to assemble it, much like a puzzle or some detective work, into a cohesive, harmonious and balanced interior, even in its contrasts, incongruities and quirkiness.

