

DECORATION

the ultimate in luxurious living ideas

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Intimate in Hong Kong

The Upper
House

Bice Mare

The Saga
continues

Piccadilly Designs
Classical European Style in L.A.

UAE - Dhs 15



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technical tips

Change is in the air

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



When we were little and the end of year was nearing, I remember the obvious weather change as the temperature dipped determinedly well under 0°C, or actually more like -10°C or -20°C. I remember reminiscing in that ambient thermal extreme, about the year's milestones and discoveries, anticipating the new year's and how it would turn out to be so much better, more exciting, more ..., more...

What has this year brought on? A higher level of awareness of environmental issues or rather avenues to tackle said issues. At Blanchard, we have been concretely challenging as many of our design approaches as possible. We have, wherever possible, incorporated energy saving light fittings, as well as indirect lighting to minimize heat generation.

We have taken a deeper look at material sustainability, and that proves to be more of a balancing act than simply choosing materials that are produced or sourced a certain way. Not only does one need to look at the production sequence or its consequences at the origin of the chain but at everything else that happens until the product or material reaches site to be installed. At times, simply privileging proximity or local sourcing makes sense, rather than importing materials at great cost and carbon footprint. Other times, locally produced or exploited materials can be done so in a manner that is neither sympathetic to their original environment, nor indeed sustainable in the long run. The purpose of saving on the damages done by long-haul transport is then defeated. So, given the chance,

please do your research or make sure the person you are seeking advice from has done theirs, so as to get the right answers but more importantly to ask the right questions!

This year seems to have also seen a natural shift, more often than not let's say, from extravagant and excessive, to more poised design and production. Funky or refined does not need to mean wasteful and inconsiderate. And yet sustainable does not either need to mean frugal or all hemp-based! We have seen beautiful new spaces emerge, some on fast and furious Yas Island hardly featuring an ounce of fabric within their interior, others in exotic restaurant destinations calmly relying on very muted monochromatic palettes of pure white, silver and platinum. Challenge your perceptions of

what a successful interior is and be surprised by the richness of "Less is more". That old chestnut...

So what have this year's revelations been for me? My loves-at-first-sight would be the following three. First of all, I have discovered the most amazing wood framed windows, by German manufacturer Korn – and they are now present in Dubai. If you are building a new house or refurbishing a recently purchased one that could use some improvement in its inherent fabric, this is an amazing product that oozes quiet confidence and utmost elegance. www.korn-windows.com (Sukaiyna Gokal on s.gokal@dwh.de or 050 551 9721). Second would have to be stretch ceilings, an extremely flexible and impeccably finished ceiling option, that resolves all access panel or remedial work issues with a variety of options for aesthetics... We spoke to StretchCeilings in further feeding our wonder at what this ceiling alternative can mean and were amazed. (Elliot Barron on elliottbarron@stretchceilings.ae or 050 989 1510). And finally, last but far from least is not a product, it is a place: Old Century on the Beach Road in Jumeira 3. I was delighted to witness the opening in Dubai of an authentic antiques dealer, offering rare and precious stamped pieces in their most pristine state of restoration and documentation. Another sign that times are changing and depth is yearned for rather than purely brand new flash. Turning the page on this year, I can safely say without regrets, it is great to look forward to a fresh year, full of resolve and great intentions. I attended the IFI (International Federation of Interior Designers/Architects) Conference earlier this month in Dubai. It was a privilege to meet so many inspired and inspiring individuals holding proud their designer heads and hearts. It seems that the sound and fury of the past several challenging months has brought out the best of many, as we gritted our teeth and huddled together, gathering our thoughts and our resolve to determinedly emerge on the other side, tried but not vanquished. The winter will let the spring in and with it will bloom all the wonderful projects, revised outlooks and renewed values we have found new passion to inject them with. As Camus so eloquently said: "Art is born out of constraints, lives on struggle and dies of freedom".

