

COMMERCIAL

# Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

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## Show review

DESIGN DAYS DUBAI  
ISH FRANKFURT



# Wild Child

FABIO NOVEMBRE ON WHY HE  
IS STILL A REBEL DESIGNER

+  
**SPECIAL  
REPORT  
LIGHTING  
DESIGN**





Two bedroom residence lounge, La Ville Hotel & Suites City Walk Dubai.

# Art & design

LOUISE DUGGAN, FF&E DESIGNER AND FOUNDER OF THE DUBAI-BASED OPHELIA ART CONSULTANCY, SHARES HER THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INCORPORATING ART WITHIN HOSPITALITY INTERIORS

Artwork is the finishing touch to design, often bringing the whole concept together, but it is often the last element added into a scheme, making it challenging for us to create and develop the perfect artworks for a project within the budget and practicalities of the property.

Previously, I worked as an FF&E designer for international design companies here and in the UK and spent years specifying artwork for hotels. Today, working as an art consultant, my job is not just supplying the artwork but making sure it functions in the space, keeping in mind the housekeeping requirements, safety standards and the overall aesthetics.

## LOBBIES AS FINE ART SPACES

Recently, the influence of Millennials has been widely discussed within the industry, particularly how their behaviour is influencing hotel design. Good service will remain the key criteria for all generations, but it is evident that these new guests are constantly attached to their smart phones and always on the search for new and more memorable Instagrammable moments.

This puts some pressure on designers. These “perfect backdrops” are now created all the way from the lobbies and public spaces to guest-rooms and even bathrooms. Yes, the #bathroom-selfie is more than a buzz word, it’s real.

Furthermore, we are now seeing that hotel lobbies are becoming and acting as fine art spaces. Sometimes artwork is used as a statement piece – a good example of this are the three murals in The St Regis Hotel, Al Habtoor City in Dubai. Three original large artworks where commissioned specifically for the main lobby, Polo Bar and the Champagne Bar.

## STANDING OUT WITH LOCAL ART

The misconception is that good artwork comes with a hefty price tag. Our aim as an art consultancy is to nurture and support locally based artists. We can order artwork internationally but our job is to encourage and nurture local talent, to work closely with the artists to really create the exact piece for the project. We can change colours and finishes to create that ideal and unique artwork for each individual project and client within the commercial world of hotels,



Roberto Raad painted the main mural behind the reception desks in the lobby area of St Regis Dubai.



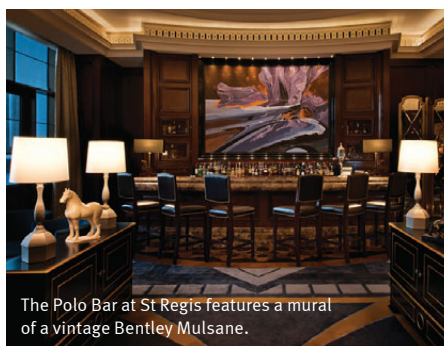
Louise Duggan.



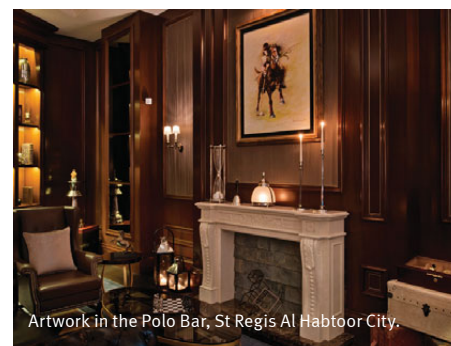
Imperial Suite, Palazzo Versace.



Business centre, Palazzo Versace.



The Polo Bar at St Regis features a mural of a vintage Bentley Mulsane.



Artwork in the Polo Bar, St Regis Al Habtoor City.



La Vita bar, Palazzo Versace.

offices and private clients.

While working on the St Regis project, we commissioned Roberto Raad, a well-known artist in the region for three very important pieces in the public areas of the hotel. With him being based in Dubai, we were able to regularly visit his studio to make changes to the artworks. We met a graphic designer who had never sold her work and she was able to develop some abstract polo images for the bar. Older residents of Dubai were able to provide vintage photos of the city that we used in a restaurant.

#### KEEPING WITHIN BUDGET

It is crucial to source and supply good quality artworks within a budget. When starting at the tender stage of a project, as we are often issued the specifications from the designers showing and illustrating their intent and direction. The challenge starts here, as we have to keep in mind that nature of a commercial project and

that a budget has been put in place.

We are always governed by cost, so our aim is to sit with the client and go through the specification where small changes can make a big impact on the budget.

#### LET'S IMAGINE NOT COPY

There is a distinct move to use more abstract artworks in hotels and quirky artefacts to create a lived in and home-away-from-home experience. Each project has its own merits and the artwork should strive to complement the space but be seen. One of the problems we face is the growing use of Pinterest. It is a fantastic site to get inspired, but if we are aiming to establish a sense of place through art, then it is essential to provide original and creative ideas. Our job is then to provide alternatives that meet the budget but create a similar feel to the original intention. We need to use our creativity to push the ideas presented to make something unique.

#### ART CREATES A FOCAL POINT

Hotel guests now have vastly different needs and are looking to be immersed in local culture. Another aspect of our role is to develop the specifications for the whole project, creating a story for the property that is interpreted through the artworks that we specify. We must take in the identity and nature of each project and reflect the international nature of the guests, but always keeping in mind cultural

sensitivities. Narrative is very important as the artwork provides the flow through a large hotel.

The Palazzo Versace showcases images from the Versace archives and all tell the narrative of the Versace legacy and philosophy of the brand.

In La Ville Hotel and Suites City Walk in Dubai, we developed original artworks that were then reproduced exclusively for the hotel and serviced apartments to portray the rich colours of the Dubai landscape, keeping the composition modern and abstract.

#### ART EVOKES AN EMOTION

The artwork may contrast the colour and feel of a room to add vibrancy to what may be a neutral palette. It can be used to introduce colour to a scheme and a textured artwork or sculpture on a wall can add another dimension to the space.

In our line of work, we want a reaction. I am happy if someone loves or hates what we have done because it has evoked an emotion. For us, the worse thing is when there is no emotion to the artworks and they have no impact on the viewer. Art is perceived by everyone in their own way. We all know what we don't like and do like, so our challenge is to use the artwork as a tool to breathe life and personality into a building and connect the guest to a personal experience.

We are often contacted by hotel guests and staff asking to purchase artwork they have seen in some of our projects, which is the highest compliment.