



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

BY EMMA DOO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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