

EG: Nakheel is such a famous name in the region, and it is only limited by its imagination. Nakheel is refreshingly visionary and with its exciting move into the world market I'm sure we have only just seen the tip of the iceberg. Its current projects are unique and being in Dubai at this fascinating time to watch and see its development is truly a designer's privilege

CID: How do budgets in Dubai compare to those in the UK, especially as the many countries in the GCC have reputations for lavish expenditure?

EG: Money and opportunities will always attract style icons and talented, fledgling designers – wherever that particular market is. Dubai has some of the most innovative projects for designers to be a part of, and some are unheard of elsewhere in the world. However, the market here is still finding its feet in terms of investment versus return. But it is getting more sophisticated, but then as a

Designers can never have a big enough budget, says Gower.



designer you have to say that budgets can never be big enough – even though it is about making a profit.

CID: Are the interior designs found in Dubai properties as ostentatious as many outsiders think?

EG: They dress things up well here – just look at some of the show homes. But people have to remember that it is also a very hot country. This means few carpets and more tiles, and materials like marble and porcelain will always be used. It is only really the hotels that are ostentatious, if you want to describe them that way.

CID: Does this mean Dubai lacks weird and wonderful interiors?

EG: The wacky and haute couture interiors tend to come when people refurbish their places. You tend not to get that on the commercial interiors side. Few developers are going to pay US \$15,000 for a glass bath, for example.

Having said that, there are opportunities for people to be creative, especially when it comes to tiles and ceramics. Because both Ras Al Khaima and Abu Dhabi are big manufacturers of ceramics there is some great stuff available locally – red toilets and so on. All this inventiveness has gone out of the UK market, for example, due to the costs involved.

CID: You mentioned that the heat in Dubai is a challenge for commercial interior professionals. In what way does the climate have an impact on your work?

EG: You have to factor in the air conditioning and all the MEP equipment. However, this is getting easier and there are some smart technologies coming out of Australia that help with this. For example, rather than just blowing cold air into a room they have floor-cooling systems. As Dubai always wants to lead the way, I can see things like that being used here soon.

CID: What other challenges do interior designers face in Dubai, and elsewhere in the region?

EG: The biggest challenge is probably to keep pushing the boundaries of interior design and keep the UAE and Dubai in particular at the forefront of the world stage. The foundations are set now and I look forward to seeing it develop in the coming years.

CID: How high would you say the standard of commercial interior design is in the Middle East today?

EG: Dubai has set its own mile high standards that are recognised and admired worldwide, it just gets better and better.

CID: So what are some of the key trends driving these 'mile high' standards?

EG: As the market place becomes more sophisticated, the market drives the trends. There is a slant towards crisp, modern feeling interiors with natural tones contrasting with darker accent materials as the moment, but the traditional Arabic and cool Mediterranean styles and flare have been retained.

Having said that, there is always a spectrum of trends in Dubai, especially when it comes to the hotels. There seems to be no boundaries to the colour, texture and style they use and if you look around Dubai's five star hotels you will see its varying styles, quality and attention to detail.

CID: How does all of this compare with trends in the global market?

EG: It's difficult to sum up the entire global market, but tonal colours and dark woods have been big for the past four years. There is a lot of retro styling and people are looking backwards. But this is not just in interior design – just look at music and all the remixing that is being done.

CID: Does this mean that the commercial design industry is in a lull while it looks for something new?

EG: People are always trying to find something new, and to do this they look backwards to see what has been done before. But I'm not sure it means there is a lull. ✱