

## A TOWERING DESIGN STATEMENT

*For Italian designer, Giampiero Peia, design is all about the right balance of function and creativity, and he has blended both in precise proportions for his latest creation, the Kempinski Residences & Suites.*

BY SINDHU NAIR

Imagine lying in a tub of bubbling bath, looking down at all the towers in West Bay and then gazing up to stare right into an approaching Qatar Airways plane. No, this is not a dream but if you are one of the guests residing on the topmost floor of Sky Villas of Kempinski Residences & Suites, this could be just part of your routine. You JUST can't get higher than this in Doha, because you are in the tallest tower in the city. Period. Sky Villas are enormous penthouses on the top two floors of the property, part of the 62-floor service apartment. For a tallest tower what would you expect the interiors to be? Flamboyant, for sure, going with the general trend of hospitality design (or over-design) in the Middle East (Think Atlantis and the horrendously decorated golden pillars in the lobby). But the interior of Kempinski takes you by surprise. A design that doesn't overpower the senses, created by Giampiero Peia, the man who us the sophisticated

elegance of The Oyster – Pearl-Qatar's marketing office.

For the Italian designer, the whole project started with a brief demanding 'a clean balanced approach, a design that straddles contemporary and classic, though avoiding the typical compromise'.

And it ended just as the designer envisaged, the towering Arab silhouette, leading to a lobby that gives a local flavor, shimmering columns with a geometric pattern and Islamic art on the walls. No compromise here, just straightforward Arab hospitality.

"The lobby had to represent the identity of the place, like the perfect balance between European and Arab culture, which hints at the fruitful deal between the property and the operator – Kempinski and Al Fardan Group."

The special patterns on the column and the many details that form a theme was part of an extensive

design brainstorming process. The detailing was brought to perfection through laser-cut machines, says Peia.

"The modern Mubarakia design is spread across in many details: the perforated column lamps, decorated ceiling at the lift lobby, inlay marble flooring, the pattern serigraphy on the glass partitions or backlit glass at the reception desks."

### INSIDE OUT

One moment you are in the lobby and the next, with a slide of a mirror you are in the restaurant side of the property – a surprise feature or an eerie one, difficult to decide.

"That feature," explains the designer, "is to maintain the privacy of those using the residences from those visiting the restaurants."

Move on to the restaurant area, only to be greeted



by the contemporary style, clean lines and cosy interiors. Minimal yet not understated. Countering that statement, the designer says that though basic in looks, the design procedure wasn't as effortless. "The plan was to persist and maintain the idea of unified yet differentiated space. We used the concept of random positioning and variation in sizes of square wooden frames and boxes. This helped to achieve privacy while it also gave the feeling of open space. The geometrical frames are a simple decoration on the ceiling, with indirect and direct dramatic dimmable lights. These decorations have another role to play, to reduce the noise waves in this small space. The golden meshes and lights behind the boxes give a dynamic mood to the room. The metal curtains and filtering layers provide privacy without obstructing the spatial perspective. This sensation is emphasized by high mirrors and LED lighting (specially designed by me and produced by Martini)."

The 'open kitchen' and backlit marble bar are the main 'stages' between tables and 'architectural boxes', almost like the setting of a modern 'opera' theatre.

The spa had to be relaxing, the gym young and energetic, the swimming pool dynamic and 'liquid', the restaurants cosy, grand and sophisticated, says the designer. And the design fitted each requirement to the hilt.

The public areas, feels the designer, must be strong in terms of identity and character while the interiors of the apartments and suites should have a more

'private' sense with a classic mood and a common modern sense of beauty.

"The richness is in the culture and the design, not just because of the materials or the brands."

A small detail that makes you feel good about this luxury giant was the environmentally conscious design detail, an energy saving technique, of dimming the lights when the visitor moves away from the space.

### THE DESIGNER IN PROFILE

The Italian designer is no stranger to both Doha and the Al Fardan Group. It wouldn't be far off the mark to call Giampiero, the Group's inhouse designer, as he has designed various projects for them, from the iconic Pearl marketing office with its awe-inspiring interiors to the earlier UDC office premises. But Giampiero's fascination with Arab culture and his association with this genre of design began long back.

"I have been fascinated with the Arabic culture since I was student. I even won a competition for the design of Alhambra extensions in Granada just after University. That was a turning point for me. I then started studying the richness of the Arabic architecture. Six years ago, Doha gave me opportunities to apply my practice in the region. My deep respect for the local roots is an essential part of my inspiration for the projects here."

Giampiero goes a step ahead to understand the end-user of his project and he narrates his designing process for Aida concept store – one of the fashion

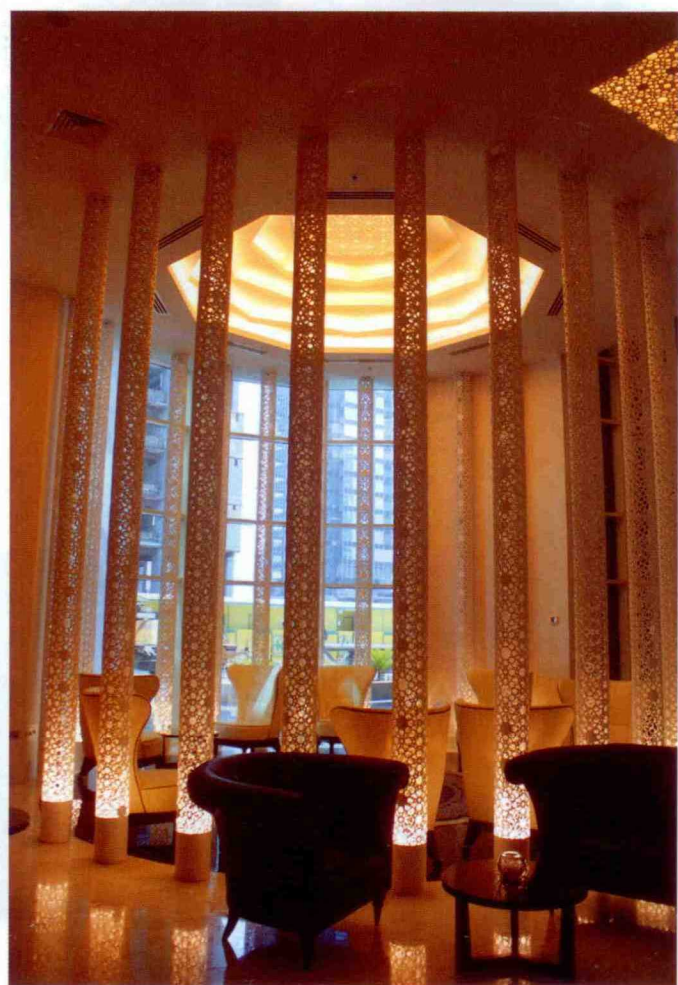
outlets for Al Mana in Al Fardan Towers, where he set out to first understand the youth of the region.

"The young must enjoy the new, but should always be conscious of their roots, wherever they might be. Here, learning from Dubai's mistakes, is still more necessary."

Though the designer doesn't elaborate, what he implies is explicit.

As a footnote, the designer compares the architect to a director.

Both direct a range of materials to form innovative patterns and designs that as a whole, tell the story of the space used, in as interesting a manner as possible. ■



### Designs Galore

The interiors of Kempinski Residences & Suites flaunt a classic and contemporary style.