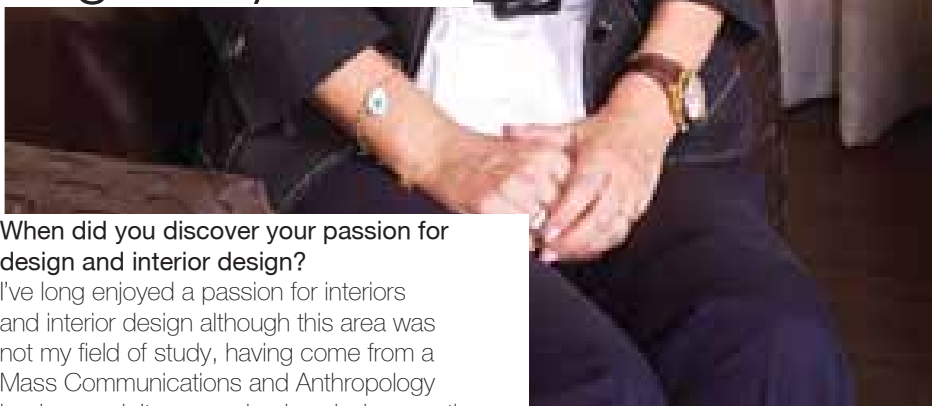




Dora El Chiaty

Designer by nature



When did you discover your passion for design and interior design?

I've long enjoyed a passion for interiors and interior design although this area was not my field of study, having come from a Mass Communications and Anthropology background. It was my husband who saw the passion I had for it and it was he who asked me to give it a go with Makadi Club ten years ago. My children were in school at the time, I found myself with lots of time on my hands so I thought why not. It was a great success and I'm pleased to say that the rest is history!

What are you working on at the moment?

I have several projects on the go right now working on five of the group's future projects including JAZ Omar El Khayyam, one of the group's luxury Nile Cruises, as well as four other projects in Hurghada, Almaza Bay, Madinat Makadi and Safaga. As you can see, I'm very much into working on a host of varied projects simultaneously. I do have a great team working with me comprising some very talented architects and young designers. I work very closely with them, ensuring that they become accustomed to my design vision. You designed and decorated the interiors of Travco's first two Nile Cruises, M/S Royale and M/S Regency. Can you describe their esthetics and design influences given the



She works hard and plays hard. Spending the best part of the last twelve years as sole designer of Travco group's successive developments including hotels, cruises, and restaurants, Dora El Chiaty adopts a hands-on creatively involved approach on all aspects of design, from inspiration to execution. Encouraged by her husband to pursue her passion for interiors, the social figure and self-confessed workaholic welcomes Lounge into her world of Moorish magnificence, Asian Fusion and long weekends...



limited space available on such floating hotels?

Neo-classical. They were my first projects over twelve years ago, and at that time neo-classical interiors were all the rage. However, even at that time I was keen to apply an existing trend but with my own touch, which meant that I adopted my own version of the theme. Years later when we refurbished, we kept the original theme but brought the whole opulent tone down, replacing rich colored materials with earthy hues, reflecting our changing tastes.

Which of your works best shows the importance of your surroundings in the design process?

All of my projects do. The Iberotel Coraya Beach Resort in Marsa Alam for example perfectly illustrates my Moorish influence; a trip to Morocco prior to design had inspired me and I think you can see it in the interiors' details; from the palette of reds, to the use of lanterns and the use of Moroccan marble.

What is it about Asian Fusion that you are particularly attracted to?

I'm drawn to the use of color and I like the geometrical design and you can see some excellent examples of this in several of my works including the Makadi Star bar area and Bliss Imperial boat. After having traveled to places such as Shanghai I was very taken by the calming effect of such design. With such busy lifestyles I think walking into a space with such Zen-like qualities makes for a very de-stressing effect, and I like that.

With so many simultaneous projects on the go, how hands-on are you in the design execution process?

Very much so. From the moment you step into one of our hotels, you'll see my work in it all from the floors, color schemes to absolutely everything. I'm not sure how I do it, but I do! I am constantly making on-site visits throughout the execution process and obviously my team including the engineers who help with making things happen upon my instruction. It's important for me to follow-up throughout the processes on each project and I have daily meetings to that effect. Even when I'm away I'm always online and always in touch to make sure I don't miss a thing. I'm very dedicated to my work and wouldn't have it any other way.

Which of your projects is closest to your heart?

I've done over twenty hotels, boats and other projects over the years and they are all special to me in their own way. Professionally speaking I think it would be difficult for me not to acknowledge the fondness I feel for our Iberotel Al Aqah Beach Resort in Fujairah, because it was a challenge of epic proportions. I remember wondering at the time how I was going to compete with the lavish buildings of the Emirates designed by big international names, but I did. It is oriental in theme but not too over the top and I'm very proud of the balance I was able to achieve. On a personal level I'd have to also cite our





house in Makadi Bay which I also designed since it was an equally big challenge for me. It usually takes me nine months to a year to complete a hotel, but getting our house done took me two years! I suppose the fact that our family would be using it on such a regular basis made me all the more keen on giving it 150%. The design has a Moroccan flavor; the house enjoying a kind of 'Riad' style, with Moorish influenced doors, ceilings, furniture and details such as trunks. The family loves what I've done with the house which of course adds to how special it is to me.

Who are some of the design names that you admire internationally?

There are many designers I admire on the international level but I suppose one name that stands out for me is the work of Alberto Pinto, one of the most celebrated decorators in the world; his signature designs to me are synonymous with opulence and style.

How do you balance what is presumably a very busy work schedule with home and family life?

Well my children are all grown up now, allowing me time and space to dedicate to my work. My husband and I travel a lot which also helps in balancing out my heavy work schedule. Together we decided to work hard during the week and give ourselves a three-day weekend, in which we like to get away, be it London, Paris or any other relatively close destination.

How has your cosmopolitan background and upbringing manifested itself in your projects?

I suppose it's given my work an element of simplicity. My boat in Mykonos I'd say is a great example of my Greek heritage and simple design.

How has your design style evolved since you started over ten years ago?

My style changes with every project to be honest but since most of my projects are Egypt based, it is fair to say that on any project I do, I add an oriental touch to. I am also very dedicated to going the extra mile when it comes to the lobbies and reception areas of our hotels since they are so key in making lasting impressions and this is one particular area I've worked extremely hard on over the years. The Mirabel Resort reception for example is exceptional and is a sure example of evolution style-wise for me. We also have projects underway in the Maldives, but there I prefer to leave the work to local design and influences.

What is your idea of a perfect weekend?

Being as far away from the city and everything in it as possible, preferably in a different time zone too!

As a strong successful working woman, what message do you hope to relay to young girls starting out in the design field?

I'd advise young girls interested in the field to read as much as possible and to observe and take in your surroundings. Our eyes are such an invaluable tool. Anywhere in the world I am, I look, take in, and see things in a different way. I open my eyes to everything around me and see ideas in many things that perhaps go unnoticed for many.

With so many successful projects behind you, what keeps you motivated?

The end result of my projects. Sometimes when I can't be there for a hotel opening my husband will call me from a ribbon-cutting event and say 'You did it again!' This means the world to me and serves as a one-of-kind motivation.

What are your dream projects?

That is a difficult question since after doing office buildings –I did our group's new headquarters in Sheikh Zayed City- in addition to the hotels, boats and our home, I'm not sure what there might be left for me to do! I suppose the opportunity to take an old Cairo villa somewhere and re-do it might be interesting; that's something I think I might like to do one day. But for now it feels like I have enough projects on the go to last a lifetime. In fact, very often I am asked by other companies to lend my skills to a design project, but the truth is I simply don't have the time.