

WA INTERNATIONAL

CLAIRE CRAIG

Originality combines with experience in the work of WA International. Design director Claire Craig speaks to Can Faik about the challenges and triumphs of creating some of the finest hotel interiors in the world...

Renowned for creating exquisite interiors for the hospitality market for over 20 years, WA International Dubai Interior Design Studio, has nurtured an award-winning reputation and established an enviable clientele with longstanding relationships reflecting its superlative performance and commitment to unique interiors. Abreast of the latest technology and trends in interior design, WA International provides a intelligent approach to each project, resulting in innovative and unique interior designs.

Their talented international interior design team brings a diversity of experience, fresh perspective and originality, combined with technical expertise and extraordinary attention to interior detail, the results speak for themselves.

Tell me about your role at WA International?

I am Design Director for WA International. I am involved in all our projects especially during planning and concept design however; I also work very closely with our Project Managers throughout the entire construction on site to final completion.

What five words would you use to describe WA International?

Avant-garde, Stylish, Passionate, Dynamic and Intuitive.

How long have you been involved with hotel design?

25 years

Have you noticed any particular trends in hotel design?

At the moment hotel interiors seem to be taking their lead from the latest fashion of mono chromatic colourschemes. Black and white with possibly an accent finish such as gold or silver is very popular right now. We're presently designing a hotel where our client has requested everything to be white, white fabrics, white woods, white marble etc.

How important are public spaces in hotels?

I believe public spaces like the reception and lobby lounge have become the heart of the hotel. Guests want to engage in all their activities from this space.. from meeting with friends to having a quick bite to eat, catching up on emails, to holding an important business meeting.

With so many hospitality designers in the industry, how does WA International stand out from the rest?

The success of WA International can be attributed to our originality. We begin all our projects with intensive research into the DNA of its location. As a result we produce a strong narrative which is the backbone of our design philosophy for the project. >





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How is the current economic climate affecting the hotel design market? And has WA International felt the effects?

The present economic climate has had a somewhat negative effect on the hotel design market, however we are fortunate in Dubai and the region to have some lovely projects that are keeping us busy.

Being based in Dubai which hotels are you currently working on?

We are currently working on the Westin in Business Bay, an impressive property with 1,700 guestrooms, a Renaissance Hotel also in Business Bay, the interiors of the Dubai Opera House, a Hyatt Regency in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, serviced apartments in London as well as further refurbishment work on the One & Only Royal Mirage Dubai.

What is the biggest thing the company has learnt over its years in the industry?

It is imperative that our team is kept up to date with the latest trends in all aspects of design, technology and renewability.



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What has been your favourite project to date?
I know this will sound clichéd but I really can't pick out one single project as a favourite. There are "too many favourites" in our portfolio.

What's next for you?
We've been shortlisted for a couple of new projects in countries we haven't worked in before which is always very exciting.

What would be your dream hotel project?
I love working on destination properties in exotic places. The Park Hyatt Zanzibar which we opened last year definitely fits into a dream hotel project.

Where currently ranks highest on your travel wish list?
We did a project in Argentina a couple of years ago, the Four Seasons in Buenos Aires and I fell in love with the country. It would be great to see more of South America.

Where do you see hotel design in the future?
It is interesting today how hotel operators are redefining their brands. Guests are now able to choose a brand which fits into their desired lifestyle. It is our job to keep abreast of the latest industry trends and at the same time create interiors which continue to inspire.

What would you say are the three best places you've ever stayed?
Four Seasons Safari Lodge, Serengeti Tanzania, Rimrock Resort Hotel, Banff Canada and of course one of ours One & Only the Palm, Dubai.

Let's finish with the issue of personal and work life balance. How do you aim to achieve a good balance and what do those closest to you think of your attempts?
I am extremely fortunate to have a job I love and a fantastic team around me. My personal and work life completely overlap as my work is so enjoyable.

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Refine, a neutral colour palette, a wide choice of co-ordinating sizes and intriguing mosaics allow for the creation of truly original design combinations.

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