

BAHRAIN Clientele

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Escape to a Higher Plane

The greatest opulence may lie in the smallest detail, just as austerity can be the most suggestive of design elements. In the exclusive niche that is the Capital Club Bahrain, *Eathar Al Aquel* finds a world unusually rich in comfort and design.



Capital Club Bahrain

Location: Bahrain
Area: 1,500 sqm
Project Began: January 2008
Completed: April 2009

This was not a hospitality project. Bahrain's Capital Club, designed by the Bahrain office of design worldwide partnership (dwp) on commission by Signature Clubs International, was to be a home away from home for the elite echelon of the kingdom's business community; a place to privately discuss business or entertain family and friends, where there are no restaurants but a number of dining rooms. Perched over the fifty-first and fifty-second floors of the iconic Bahrain Financial Harbour, the 1500 square-metre space is tastefully decorated with accessories, artworks and bespoke features better suited to a family retreat than a corporate venue or hotel. Unlike residential design, there is little continuity in materials between rooms. From the zen-like entrance lounge to the jewel-like Jade Room, eclectic library, plush Anan dining room and richly masculine Signature Grill dining, each of the individually designed spaces of the club is a statement of taste and comfort. "Each space is different and has its own characteristics which makes the club unique and gives its members an opportunity to have a different experience every time they are there." explains dwp Executive Director and Founder Kristina Zanic. According to those who know, the club is also able to convey a different experience at different times of the day. This is less because of what occurs inside the club so much as what happens outside its panoramic windows.

It may be that the view is best appreciated from the Anan Dining Room. In contrast to the powerful red and black of the Grill dining room, the white on white of the Anan dining room is soft. There is little that is stark about this consciously Arabic space in which a cleanliness of line recalls the geometric patterns of Islamic art even as it conveys an unmistakable contemporaneity of style. Mashribya patterns on >



sandstone finishing give the walls and privacy screens a three-dimensional texturing, adding depth to the simple tones. Mother-of-pearl furniture pieces from Damascus appear fractal in this light intensive environment. Specially designed carpets hand-made in India match the ceiling pattern whilst dwp-designed bronze lights and blown glass candle holders crafted in Istanbul provide function and decoration. During the day the room is light and white and seems to extend to the cream, white and taupe shades of Manama visible through the expansive windows. At night, the city below is a sea of lights. As Zanic describes the cohesion between interior and exterior views, "There is a fabulous array of light and a real sense of connectivity to the city". This spatial dialogue reflects Zanic's own design preoccupations even as it speaks to the nature of the Capital Club; this is not a falcon's nest atop an ivory tower, this is for the well connected.

Delightful Assortment

Dark woods and black, textured leather panels lining the walls combine with red leather lined booths and velvet curtain detailing so that the second of the Capital Club's dining areas, the Signature Grill, has a vibrancy that is almost succulent, which is apt for a well-heeled steak house. A ceiling of smoke bronze mirror and tan suede has an old school





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Kristina Zanic, dwp Executive Director and Founder

sumptuousness that is enticingly tactile. Recessed lighting and singular chandeliers make this an inky retreat. For Zanic, there is a beauty in the austerity of the red on black carpet. “It is just lines but the effect is very abstract, very organic, nearly floral.” Spinning out into the two private dining rooms off the Grill, the red changes to silver. This works particularly well in the silk clad Jade room, where special green onyx in a custom strata design adorns room and furniture in this Chinese influenced space.

For real cosmopolitanism, look no further than the library. “The library is very cosy, a perfect place to escape and read or meet with colleagues,” Zanic says. It is this room that has led to most of the requests for interior home design received by dwp since the club’s opening. Walnut woods and large, brightly patterned furniture have a charm that harmonises with the colourful abstract artwork from Thailand and America on the walls. The books filling the shelves were carefully selected by dwp as were the shells and cut stones from around the world. The idea was “to create something someone might pick up on their travels,” says Zanic, who personally sourced much of the art and design accessories. Two painted cockatoos in alcoves are a capricious touch confirming this as the most delightfully eclectic of the Capital Club spaces.



Luxury is in the Details

The Capital Club is not monumental in design. It creates instead an impression through attention to detail. The sheer range of materials seeming to include every type of wood, from bleached white timbers to dark ebony; the expertise involved in the array of specially treated surfaces and lacquers as well as the attention to the niceties, whether unique chandeliers or the captivating yoga figurines in the women’s bathroom; much

of the Capital Club is exclusive. “We wanted to make the space quite special and different to what Bahrain has. There is nothing like it here. I just thought it was nice to do something that you wouldn’t normally see and which you could not go out and buy,” says Zanic. The club is not entirely imported. Although there were difficulties sourcing materials and expertise, local craftsmen were used.

The Right Design

“An ultra-modern design concept would have been too cold and not what people want here,” Zanic says. “It is also not appropriate to the demographics of club members, which include some young executives as well as very experienced, mature and established members of community. At the end of the day it is nice to go to a place that is luxurious but not over the top.” Underlying the pleasing arrangement of artfully sourced products and the mosaic of intimate spaces, is a strategic blueprint. There is efficiency in the variegated rooms, which provide flexibility of space and longevity of design. Another clue is in the personal pictures beginning to line the walls. Currently, most are of those attending the opening of the club and each is the foundation for building the club’s sense of its history. In addition to an interior, this project was about designing a community. ■