

COMMERCIAL

Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

An ITP Business Publication

August Vol.8 Issue 8

CHILD'S PLAY

RED DOT WINNER DAY'S
RETAIL CONCEPT

ANIMAL MAGIC

ROBERT SHERWOOD ON SIR BANI
YAS ISLAND'S HOTEL DESIGN



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HELLO KITTY SPA IN DUBAI

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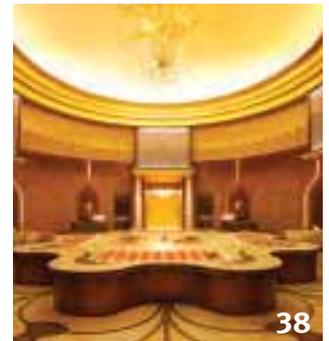
Michael Dehn, group exhibitions director, Epoc Messe Frankfurt, talks about Light Middle East and Light Insight Arabia, which is held from October 1-3, 2012, at Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre.



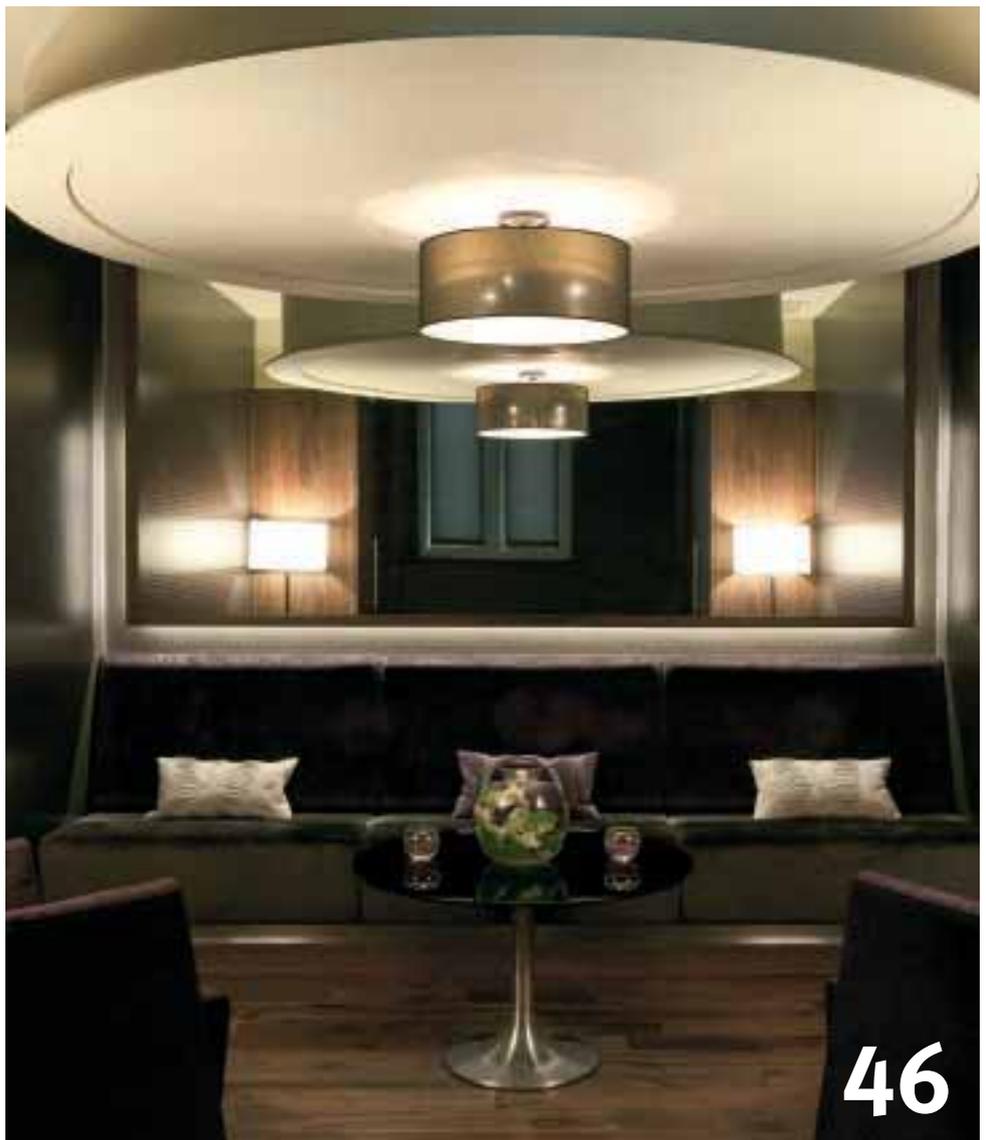
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Dwp creates ‘Stargazer Lounge’

SET OVER 800M², THE RESTAURANT OFFERS DRAMATIC VIEWS OF THE CITY BY THE SEA, WHERE GUESTS FEEL TRANSPORTED TO THEIR OWN EXCLUSIVE CLIFFTOP

ASIA: Dwp has created the interiors of a rooftop restaurant and bar for the newly launched ‘Horizon’ overlooking the ocean and Pattaya City at the Hilton Pattaya, Thailand.

The space is flexible for different functions and events either a casual meeting spot, somewhere to lounge by day, a fine dining and chill out place by night, with VIP rooms, which could be combined to one big room for private parties.

“The inspiration came from the location itself. When we visited the site, the breathtaking view and endless skyline of the Gulf of Thailand was a sight to behold. When we stood on top of the Hilton Pattaya, it took us deep into our imagination. That’s where the concept of twinkling waves derived from,” said Palach Painupong, creative director, dwp Thailand.

“We wanted customers to feel like they were being embraced by the sky and stars. We wanted to create a memorable backdrop to allow guests to feel on top of the world.”

Painupong said the main challenge was working within the existing conditions, as the original floor was designed to be a deck. However, once construction was finished, the client realised the view was too alluring to be ignored.

“Something more needed to be made of the space. This meant we had to arrange the design around the existing structure, including all the mechanical and electrical works that affected the internal volume of space,” he added.

“The new enclosure and the roof were designed to create both an indoor and outdoor lounge, which had to be a stand-out feature, yet

remain consistent with the building. We had to come up with a concept for the venue, with a fixed budget, and all the while ensure we gave it a distinctive experience and atmosphere from the other outlets in the hotel. At the same time, the architectural elements needed to be taken into account, as the rooftop design would affect the overall façade viewed by pedestrians.

“There might be some elements that were not exactly as we had originally planned, but it is the nature of the project, due to so many constraints during each phase. Under those circumstances, it is rarely possible to turn the imagination into reality. However, saying that, the client is proud of the result.”

Dwp recently completed the Chill Skybar & Restaurant in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which both received

design awards and is currently working on some residences in Bangkok, with its client ‘Sansiri’, the largest property developer in Thailand. The projects include both architecture and interior design and are set to create a new benchmark in residential projects in Thailand and across Asia, in general.

“Another interesting project is the Chatrium Hotel in Yangon, Myanmar, which has now become the hottest destination for tourism and investment in the region. This hotel is undergoing extensive renovations to increase the international standards of the property, and blend the expectations of a luxury hotel with the richness of the local culture. These and other elements have been incorporated into the design for a very distinguished look,” added Painupong.





Fergus Duncan

RoboDesigner?

INTERIOR DESIGNERS DON'T HAVE TO BE SCARED ABOUT ROBOTS TAKING THEIR JOBS YET. BUT MAYBE IT IS SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT IN THE FUTURE...



Meldren Rose Francia



Josh Billington



Chamaali Marasinghe

British designer, Gregory Epps, has created RoboFold, robotic arms that can bend metal into furniture, while New York Cornell University professor, Ashutosh Saxena, is teaching robots how to organise rooms.

Saxena's work might be the most threatening to designers because his team is teaching robots how to use their imagination to predict what humans would do.

Virtual humans help Saxena's robots (algorithms), figure out where people want certain things and why. For example, a human may want a remote control close by, not next to the TV, which is where a robot would place two related objects. The algorithms examine these human-object relationships and determine a "usability cost" based on how easy it is for a human to access the objects. A low usability cost is good, since it means a person can reach his remote, laptop, etc. without moving too much.

Interior designers don't have much to fear since robotic applications seem limited to fabrication and detail work, for now. But what about RoboFold, developed by Epps, as a set of robotic arms, normally used in car manufacturing that can bend metal into furniture? Another threat is Artaic, a company that uses robotic fabrication for custom artisan mosaics. The robot formed mosaics are more affordable than handmade images, but the actual mosaics are still installed by humans.

"This is a subject that fascinates me. Rodney Brooks, a roboticist, believes we will be surrounded by robots of all shapes and forms within 50 years.

It started with the advent of toys, such as 'Furbys', and developed into a much broader range of robots, to help with everyday life, including one of his own automatic vacuum cleaners," said Josh Billington, interior designer, dwp | design worldwide partnership.

"When I was growing up my father made his living as a sign writer. He completed high school, attended trade school and followed in his father's footsteps into the family business. My father had an artisan's skill when it came to steadily applying painted font and type, and was highly regarded in his field. Less than a decade later, he had to abandon the business. I remember attending a tradeshow a few years earlier, my father was stocking up on horse hair brushes and other tools of the trade. Over in the corner a 'robot' (a large flatbed printer) was printing out perfectly shaped letters ready for application, directly onto any surface. At that time, the printer cost half as much as our house, my father glanced over it, before moving on. Robots had already become the future of sign writing."

Billington added these robots were conceived to make life easier. As human kind has evolved, so too have the complexities of the tools we use in everyday life. "The question we now face, as designers, is whether or not these robots will take our profession away from us, just like the flatbed printer did to my father's".

"For me, Saxena's work with robots conjures up images of the humans depicted in Disney Pixar's animated release 'Wall-E', where we no longer walk but are instead whisked around in float-

ing vehicles, where everything is within arm's reach, maximising the 'usability cost', exploited by the US professor," he said.

"This scene may seem far-fetched, but cast your mind over to the 'Segway: the leader in personal, green transportation'... What? Greener than walking? However, the algorithms involved here are, again, tools, which as designers we could, and should, harness to improve designs the world over, from triangulation in the domestic kitchen, to circulation within shopping centres.

"Another arm of robotics, which is raising eyebrows is RoboFold, brainchild of British designer Gregory Epps. Normally used in car manufacturing, these robotic arms bend metal into furniture. The mind wonders to other infinite possibilities. This process of paper prototyping, 3D scanning, flattening of imagery into 2D form, CNC routing of metal, allowing robotic arms to apply the right pressure in the right places sounds complex, but ultimately offers up another tool to the designer. Having an array of useful tools can only be an advantage to the future of design. Like with the Eames' shaped plywood and Verner Pantan moulded plastic, machines and robots alike are only tools within an overall process, yet their application and results cannot be ignored or overlooked," he added.

Fergus Duncan, director, Aedas, said he likes the idea he could stand back and have a robot to do all his running round, like attending meetings on site, providing fee proposals and answering the phone. "I could spend more time considering new holiday destinations, building Lego castles with

my son or painting and drawing with my daughter’.

“I love automation and technology and at a glance there are many systems and devices around that should make our lives easier at home and in the office,” he said. “The idea of accessing your home automation system from anywhere using an iPhone or the iTouch interface is amazing. While on the bus in London I could close my curtains in Dubai, turn the AC off and have my home automation system feed the cat.”

He added, the integration of these products into homes, hotels and work spaces is where technology and interior design meet.

“I am sure many interior designers will have had experience of

original piece whether it be spray painting a brick wall behind your house, designing a coffee table or something else that is stunning.

“So yes, robots will probably take over a large part of the role of an interior designer in the future. Robots “predicting human behavior” coupled with sophisticated, standardised, modular, efficient interiors sounds like a nice way forward for mass housing, future hotels and offices, not to mention computerised and robotically assembled synthetic building materials. Robots could also be programmed to ensure the principles of ergonomics are followed in furniture design and manufacture and I do like the idea that furniture could be customised to suit

“Certainly robots can be programmed to find the correct solution to a problem but can they come up with a unique one? Creativity stems from many factors, knowledge, experience and intuition. We pour our emotions into a design to convert our imagination into a reality. We need to fulfill all our sensory requirements not just one, thus the spaces have to evoke many emotions in the user. To look beautiful is simply not enough. After all, beauty is only in the eye of the beholder.”

Marasinghe added as the world has shrunk, becoming more of a global village, our requirements have increased but responses have to be quick, sometimes forcing creativity to take a back seat.

Nowadays, each person owns two, if not three, mobile phones and some other type of gadget which we find we cannot function without. Why not have them integrated into our homes, said Meldren Francia, architect/project manager, Samuel Creations SA.

“It’s amazing to see in movies that once a character enters a room, subdued lights automatically turn on, a transparent panel pulls down from the ceiling, noting that the design compliments the overall interior design, with a series of menus that can be chosen by touch or the wave of a hand. A few years ago, this concept may seem far off and impossible. But because of today’s advanced technology, our society is increasingly moving in this direction,” she said

“Technology enhances our lifestyles and who wouldn’t want the convenience? With so many gadgets and appliances in the home or office why not have them all in one place in a single intelligent control system to eliminate the stress of figuring out which remote goes with which appliance.

“These simple luxuries can be achieved by interior designers working closely together with automation specialists in the field. We can safely say that technology now plays an integral part to the world of interior design.”

Billington added: “Of course, robots are not going to just enter the lives of interior designers, there will be robots for everyone. And we will buy them like in the Hollywood film ‘iRobot’. As technologies, progress, we have to acknowledge their existence. We have the ability to harness their potential, as tools, to better our designs and capabilities. I don’t believe robots will take over the future of design, but they will play an integral part in it. I strongly believe designers will remain the future of design. But then again, my father thought sign writers would always ‘write’ signs.”

“ Robots will take over a large part of the role of an interior designer... apart from one aspect of design that is difficult to computerise - creativity ”

integrating little boxes with receivers and transmitters into wall paneling and headboards. This really shows that these devices are the beginnings of a sector in technology that will ultimately see robotics expanding into the spaces we work and play and into their design,” he said.

“The subject here though is whether or not robots will take over the role of the interior designer and the answer has got to be a partial yes, apart from one aspect of design that would be difficult to computerise - creativity. Creativity is a result brought about by our intelligence, our morality, our culture and our emotions and thanks heavens these can’t be computerised. As an artist, a designer, an inventor, there is probably no greater pleasure than standing back looking at a blank canvas and creating an

individual body mass. We could have personal spaces designed specifically for us and all made to adapt to our habits.

“Having said this, I cannot imagine my rural get away in Italy being designed by robots, I rather like slightly un-kept rural surroundings - let’s keep these robots for the future.”

Robots will become an integral part of our day-to-day lives as we simplify our daily routines and interior design will not go untouched, agrees Chamaali Marasinghe, design manager, Herman Miller MENA.

“They have been part of the manufacturing process for some time now. They are even being introduced into the healthcare environment, to roam around taking vital signs of patients, so why should they not be a part of the creative process,” she said.

“This is where we need our metal machine friends. What we cannot humanly do can become a possibility through the use of machines. We are already experiencing this through the advances in technology and software which help us to design in 3D. Mundane tasks can be assigned to something else leaving the human brain to take on a wider scope of activities. Technology will develop to levels where robots will become more integrated into our professional and personal lives. They will become more human-like for sure as that is something the current generation is fascinated with. We are striving to create a device that will mimic human behaviour and intelligence. But I doubt we will be able to add that extra ingredient of the human emotion and sometimes empathy which is key to a work of art.”