Chances are you have been in an environment designed by David Collins. I met David years ago in London when I was working for Gucci and I would often see his designs enter my office to be presented to Creative Director. This month Signature Middle East is celebrating the best in design and who better than David Collins to celebrate in this issue! Big brands all over the world, including Gucci, The Berkeley Hotel, The Wolseley Restaurant, Claridges Hotel to name a few, have all trusted him to provide them with the luxurious surrounding that gives each of them that unique David Collins stamp. So, from eating and drinking to shopping and sleeping, you must have, at some point in your life, experienced the ‘David Collins Effect’ without even knowing it.

In a rare interview, we sit down with the master of interior design to chat about what inspires him.

When did your passion start for interiors and architecture?

“My father was an architect, and so in a way he was my mentor. I had toyed with the idea of becoming a musician, but both of my parents would have had a fit! I almost fell into Interior Architecture as a friend asked me to decorate a house and then off the back of this I was asked to design a restaurant.”

Do you prefer commercial or residential projects? How different is the process?

“The jobs that I choose to work on are the projects that interest me, whether they are commercial or residential in nature. I believe that my office is very streamlined and we are very good collaborators, whether working to develop a restaurant concept or a private home. Often within residential work we will develop details or ideas that can then be carried through into our commercial work, and I really love this aspect of the work.”

You have travelled around the world for projects...what are the challenges you face in overseas projects - please give an example?

“Overseas jobs can present challenges, but that said local projects can present them too! As I say, each project is unique and with that uniqueness come new challenges. My role as designer is to resolve the problems or challenges presented in each project. We are very organised and have a dedicated team with agents in other regions, so working in the Far East, Middle East or Americas does not present a problem to us. We are a global
Rosemin Manji is the founder of RR & Co. Bespoke Luxury Management that specialises in styling, media relations among other luxury services around the fashion industry. Manji is an authority on fashion in the region. Her weekly fashion segment on Dubai One TV’s Studio One has fashion followers throughout the region tuning in as she shares her tips. She has brought international designers to the region from Tom Ford, Alice Temperley to Christian Louboutin to the Middle East. She has contributed in Harpers Bazaar, Grazia and Esquire and has covered Atlantis Palm Dubai opening Red Carpet interviewing top international celebrities for MTV. Manji’s style has been celebrated in Best Dressed lists for Harpers Bazaar, Grazia, Passion, Mondanite, Ahlan Masala. Her contribution to the fashion industry has been recognised by Arab News as Top 20 Business women in the Gulf, Gr8 Women of the Year Middle East and Ahlan Hot 100 List 2010 and 2011 as Style Icon and Contribution to the Media Industry.

What is the process with a client... do they defined brief or do you ever face clashes in creative process?

Especially when working with other designers/brands “Each project is a collaboration and I have been lucky enough to work with some really amazing and visionary people. We are currently working with Sarah Burton on the new concepts for Alexander McQueen and McQ. With Sarah the starting point was to visit her at her office to see how she worked. She is very inspiring to work with and I hope that we have created a space for the amazing clothes that she designs.”

Does the Middle East inspire you? Have you travelled to the region? Any favourite cities...?

“We are working in the Middle East, but I cannot divulge too much on that at the moment. I have been to Doha a number of times and I find some of the architecture there very inspiring - the Museum of Islamic Art is really amazing.”

Are there any design tips or must haves you would suggest to the readers?

“Well, we all hold onto too much clutter, but I actually think that if something means something to you and you have a sentimental attachment then you should keep it!”

A project that you have been most proud of?

“I am very proud of the work of my office, and we are all so focussed on our current projects, it is difficult to stand back and pick one project out of all.”

Advice for Young interior designers and architects...

“We meet a lot of young designers and have an internship programme in our office. When reviewing CVs and applications I always feel that it is good to have a consistent point of view within a portfolio - it may not be to my taste but if it well thought through and logical, it will stand out.”

Your favourite spots in London (Restaurants, bars, cafés, hotels)

“I am very happy to say that The Delaunay has just won the Best New Restaurant in Time Out eating & Drinking Awards 2012. I do not drink so am the wrong person to ask about bars - but I love The Connaught Bar that I designed, as the colours were based on the landscape of Dublin and so the project is very personal to me.”

Essentials you can’t live without

“My home, my free time, books and a cashmere blanket!”

For more information you can log on to: www.davidcollins.com