



# Keeping you on your toes

CID GETS THE CHANCE TO UNCOVER THE QUIRKY INNER WORKINGS OF RENOWNED INTERIOR DESIGNER MATTEO BIANCHI'S HEADSPACE

For most of us, the usual case of figuring out what we want to do when we grow up is a gradual process that includes hard work, plenty of trial and error, and sometimes pure luck. Pointing your finger at a timeline and establishing exact dates isn't exactly the easiest thing to do. For Matteo Bianchi, becoming a reputable interior designer was a matter of confident, unexpected decision-making and the courage to never look back, a combination that set the concep-

tual foundation of the designer's future company and work ethic.

Born in Venice, the advertiser-turned-designer relocated to London nearly 10 years ago, as London was Europe's capital for advertising. Bianchi explains: "When I landed here I sort of felt at home and I really liked the professionalism. London gives you a lot of opportunity for different courses and one of them was interior design. That's when I realised that's what I want to do and it was very liberating.

"It was a pretty clear moment. It was in 2006, and I was in London doing something different, and I decided to take a 10 lesson course in interior design on a Saturday morning. [During] the first lesson I realised it was going to be my career. So I changed my career completely and I went to study at Chelsea College of Art and Design."

Upon completing his studies and driven by his new found passion, Bianchi opened up his studio in 2006, and has since built an impressive portfolio



that includes projects located around the world including: the UK, Italy, the Middle East and Nigeria.

From residential to commercial projects, the Bianchi Studio's design team masters the act of balancing different local tastes with classic sophistication. On their approach to design, Bianchi explains: "First of all, we don't have a house style, which is a conscious decision because we like to listen to the brief and to the client. Having said that, we always try to throw something unexpected and elegant right from the

starting point. When we're approached, it's very important to understand the local culture so you can deliver according to the local taste."

Having a natural knack for pairing high-end material with polished finishings to create stylish, yet refined interiors, one wonders how Bianchi meets clients with more flamboyant tastes at middle ground. The designer, though, is confident that local tastes, like those in such regions where there's a preference for ostentatious design, are adopting more minimal elements.



1  
Merchandise display  
from Harrods.

2  
Bathroom detail  
from Knightsbridge  
residence



"On a general level, local taste is growing up," Bianchi explains. "In Saudi, the taste is quite rich but there's a move to make things more minimal ... And there's always room to show how minimalism can be elegant and sophisticated."

"If you have a local person who understands [the] rules and regulations of design, you can deliver a project that the client wasn't expecting but is very excited about," claims the designer very enthusiastically.

And that's what it mostly comes down

AD  
Page

to for the Italian designer - providing unexpected results that incorporate the client's wishes, yet yield a sort of "Bianchi" charm.

The designer explains how there's always room for surprise and individuality, even in historical cities where the skyline, and spirit, has been long established. Citing the Boutique Hotel in Venice as an example, Bianchi notes: "I think that was a true expression of what we like and how we can push the boundaries. That project was really challenging because it's in a historical city and the brief wanted industrial baroque. So we wanted to make something very masculine like polished resin, upholstered seats and red velvet. The bathrooms are very cosy while also being industrial with hard surfaces."

Matteo Bianchi has a sharp vision that confidently wavers between commercial and residential projects. It's a matter of being flexible, he explains, something all designers should be.

"We like to do residential projects because it's quite creative and there's a lot of interaction with the clients. At the same time there's a lot of drama and a lot of emotions. So we don't only do residential because it would drive us insane. Commercial is very professional and you've got the quick timing and the brief. But if you only stick with commercial you become a bit stagnate. It becomes a bit of copy and paste, so we do both and we like to do both. In my opinion, interior designers should be flexible enough to do both."

From bold and bright refurbishments in Chelsea that highlight an eclectic source of inspirations, to creative and feminine corners of London's shopping Mecca, Harrods, to an edgier and magnetic restaurant and bar lounge in Lagos, the designer is determined to always experiment with his limits, never repeating himself while always leaving his artistic touch.

Scheduled to speak at Dubai's INDEX

International Design Exhibition 2013, Bianchi has a few topics up his sleeve at which he was happy to give us a peek. Having recently been at Milan's Salone Internazionale del Mobile, the designer is looking to give some insight into upcoming trends.

"I was [at Salone] sort of zipping through and I realised there are some very real trends coming out for next season in terms of colours and features. Think lots of blues ... If you think of a peacock, that's what you're going to have - lots of deep blues, reds, yellows and greens.

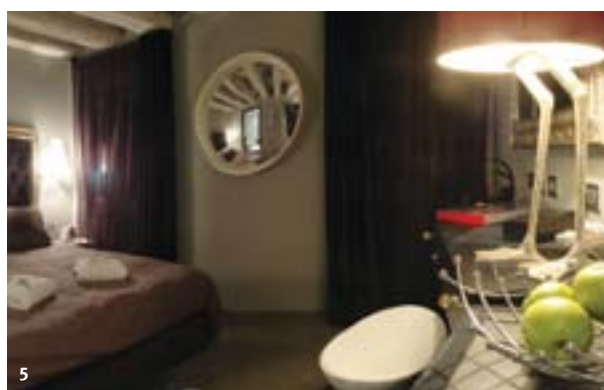
"Also, wardrobes are changing. Rather than keeping it nice and tidy, you're wardrobe is open and enjoyed as it should be - very scattered, very messy and very real. 10 years ago you had big sliding doors, those are gone now," Bianchi points out.

At the moment, Bianchi is flying around the globe, yet he's scheduled to visit Dubai three times this year to tutor

3  
Bedroom design  
from Venice Boutique  
Hotel.



AD  
Page



**4** Textures and finishings set the mood for the Chelsea residence.

**5** Details combine for bedroom design in Venice Boutique Hotel.

**6** From Bianchi's tutoring session, "How to decorate your villa or apartment."

local design students through Chelsea School of Art and Design's Dubai program. From principles of interior design, to introductory courses on furniture, lighting, materials and decoration, the intense week-long courses are meant to help emerging designers realise their vision.

"First and foremost, I love teaching and coming over there to deliver the same courses that we have in London. So for me, it's a very inspiring place to be," the designer explains. He continues: "The students are much more enthusiastic and eager to learn and

they're really hungry to understand what happens in Europe. It's interesting to be in front of people who have lots of work and experience, but at the same time they need extended support and a new point of view. I'm always impressed by the knowledge, professionalism and enthusiasm of students in Dubai."

Aside from INDEX and the design courses, Bianchi is keeping busy with a number of projects coming up and a few relationships he's looking to build. "I'm associating myself in Jeddah and we're going to start working in that region and Dubai. We're doing a big restaurant in

Lagos, also. We're also keeping an eye on Morocco, there's a lot going on there. We love travelling and in the studio, we're very international and we like to explore different countries," he notes.

Moreover, Matteo Bianchi Studio is unveiling the team's first product collection by the end of the year, entitled "Unexpected Elegance," which will feature a number of original decorative pieces.

"Unexpected Elegance" says it all. It signifies Bianchi's desire to pleasantly surprise, while providing timeless pieces of art that will be appreciated for years to come.