

# HEIDI GUBBINS

## AND THE ALCHEMY OF DESIGN

Those who design beautiful things for the eye, the soul, and the senses to enjoy are like alchemists, forging something out of nothing – but instead of chemical elements they work with inspiration, creativity, and a desire to make the world a more beautiful place. They may come from countless fields, but those blessed with this elusive skill share a common name: creative spirits.

WORDS MICHEL CRUZ PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF HEIDI GUBBINS

Ashiana interior at the Boho Wellness Centre



The Banyan Table sculpture design by Heidi Gubbins

“I ALWAYS WANT TO BE HONEST THROUGH MY WORK AND WITH MY CREATIVE MIND, EVEN AS I SEEK NEW IDEAS AND FORMS TO EXPRESS MY THOUGHTS AND MAKE A STATEMENT. I HAVE A LOT OF FUN DOING THAT, AND WITH A BIT OF TONGUE IN CHEEK WE SHOWCASE OUR WORK. IT’S OUR WAY OF HIGHLIGHTING THE CONCEPTS, TEXTURES, TONES, MATERIALS, THE DETAILS BEHIND EACH DESIGN WE’VE PRODUCED, AND HOW WE OURSELVES CAN BECOME PART OF THE ART”

Interior designers, like architects, artists, film producers, and composers, fall into this category, each adding to a known body of work with their own ideas and creations that help their field to evolve further. The extent to which the knowing touch and seeing eye are innate or can be taught is a question for debate, but life is certainly easier and the result more authentic when the talent comes from within. Heidi Gubbins can relate to this, as she has been fascinated by all things creative from a young age.

“Mine is a world dominated by the visual and the sensory,” says the founder of one of the leading interior design studios in Marbella. Hailing from an international background, she has lived in various countries and continents, including South America, Africa, the USA, Portugal, and Spain. “Designers often cite travel as an important source of inspiration because it surrounds you with new sights, sounds, scents, and experiences, and if you’re a creative person this stimulates the senses. It can come in the form of a direct reaction, but more often adds to a collection of impressions that suddenly spark into ideas. I experience this every day – a natural pull toward whatever captures my attention, those fleeting moments that stir feeling and ignite imagination effortlessly.” >



Earth, stone and water come together in this part of the wellness centre

Heidi creates unique designs and living experiences for each and every one of her projects



Uniquely sensory designs rich in textural effect

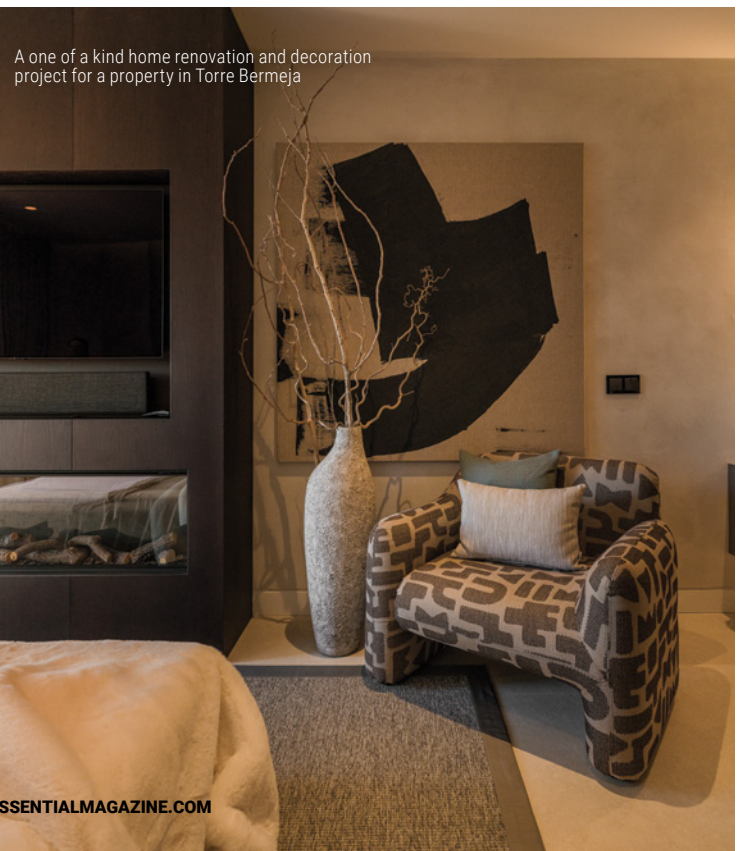


Since creativity is above all an inner process where the mind conjures up images and ideas from stimuli accumulated over time, personal life experiences and even small everyday things can be the source of something new. "Not long ago, my attention was caught by a beautiful setting of seaweed on a beach. The unusual shape captured my imagination and has become the source of inspiration for one of my upcoming designs, so it can come from all things, big and small. This is why I seek to be sensorially present in my daily life, it's what makes me a better and more authentic designer." Many focus more on producing according to the dictates of the latest trend or fashion, but Heidi believes a true designer, regardless of their field, will always want to evolve, not repeat. In other words, treat each project as a new opportunity to create something truly bespoke – designed just for it.

"I naturally run a business and being professional, efficient, and delivering on time are key points for me, but I wouldn't categorise myself as primarily commercial. I don't design to replicate to a brief but

work with my clients to ensure that I can add value to their vision and make it everything it can be, whether it is a large project or smaller, commercial or residential one." For this reason, she focuses on creating something truly unique and personal each time, as the 'alchemy' is in the distinct elements of each project, and they help to give it an identity of its own.

If the alchemy (read: magic) of design is in the unique combination of elements, then Heidi certainly is an artist. "I guess I have a recognisable touch, but for the rest my work is characterised by a desire to add value, to infuse projects with lasting resonance and meaning through my creative work." This means that she doesn't take on all projects and will tell a client if she feels there is little she can add – a form of professional integrity that has stood Heidi in good stead, as she now has a loyal clientele of kindred spirits that is growing both locally and abroad. "If you're true to yourself and your work, you don't have to be all things to all people. I believe in it being a self-selecting market." >



A one of a kind home renovation and decoration project for a property in Torre Bermeja



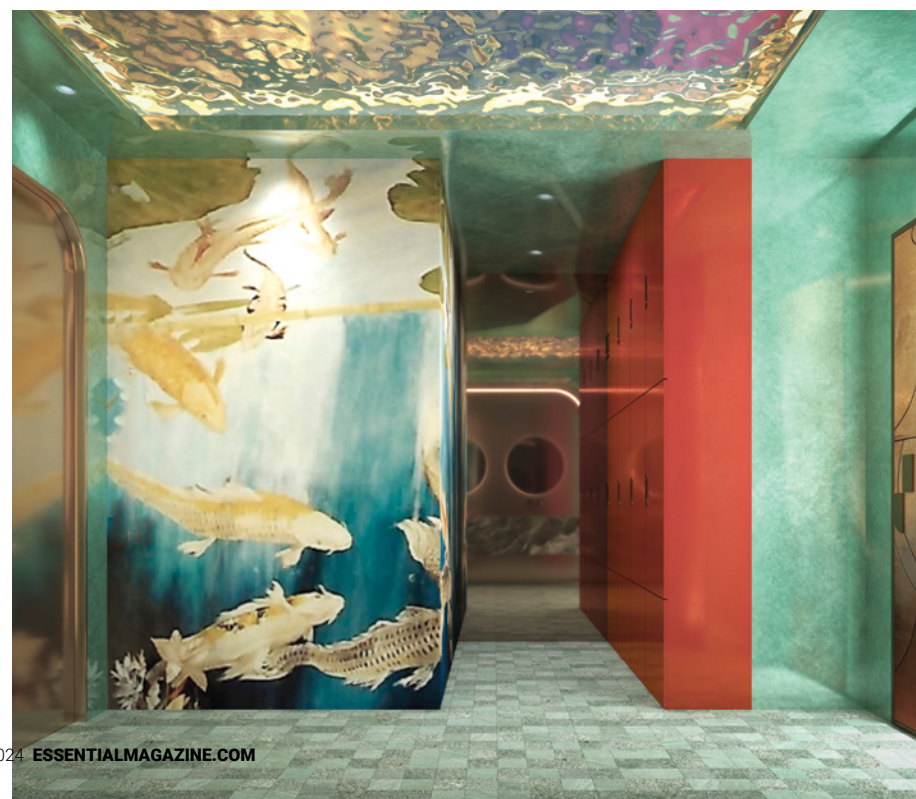
**QUALITY OVER QUANTITY**

Instead of wanting to become the biggest, Heidi forsakes the battle for market share in favour of a conscious desire to remain boutique in size and style. "I have a great team of people around me, but you can only guarantee quality and that very important personal touch to clients and projects if you stay within a certain scale, and even though I'm expanding my business, maintaining balance in growth is important for me."

This shows itself to be true in every one of her design projects, where Heidi's eye for detail is valuable both in quality control terms and in the creative process itself. "I love the latter especially, as it is a bit like alchemy – a somewhat mystical relationship between the eye, the brain that processes the visual impressions and stimuli, and the hand that begins to develop those ideas in the form of sketches. In the end, it is my instinct that guides me to create designs the way I do, and that helps to make them different."

Rather than play it safe, Heidi is not afraid to take some brave steps in the process – the very characteristics required to escape mediocrity and be truly innovative and creative. Just as she allows herself to be inspired by design trends but doesn't follow them, so she also uses top luxury brands but is not 'married' to them. "We collaborate with renowned brands and artists, while also showcasing a selection of emerging talents and unique furnishings in our boutique section on our website. Soon, we'll be unveiling our first exclusive collection of original designs. From dinnerware and accessories, to furniture pieces and homeware."

The Watergarden at the Ashiana Spa



Hana no Mori, bespoke rug designed by Heidi Gubbins



A sense of calm and serenity descends upon you as you enter the spa's reception

Heidi and the team draw from a very rich palette of colours, tones and materials for their designs

Another home design created by Heidi Gubbins Interior Design



For all this, the affable designer with the spirit of an artist is down to earth and approachable, even if she lets her alter ego loose on social media. "I love the art of expression – not only through interior design but through various outlets like photography, film, composition, and storytelling. For me, it's all connected; you can't pull things apart because it limits creativity. I always want to be

honest through my work and with my creative mind, even as I seek new ideas and forms to express my thoughts and make a statement. I have a lot of fun doing that, and with a bit of tongue in cheek we showcase our work. It's our way of highlighting the concepts, textures, tones, materials, the details behind each design we've produced, and how we ourselves can become part of the art." >



## PRIVATE AND COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Heidi and her team work on both private homes and commercial projects. "Each has its own charms and challenges, but one of my recent favourites was creating the concept and design of the interiors as well as the branding for the spa and wellness centre of the Boho Club on the Golden Mile - Ashiana."

Here she took on board the Boho eclectic philosophy of the brand, as well as their desire to give the wellness centre a look and feel of its own while maintaining a visual continuity with the rest of the complex. "We drew inspiration from the spa's two main areas, the 'Water House' and the 'Dry House', and wove this theme throughout a series of designs inspired by natural elements like water and rock. Each room was crafted with its own story and deeper meaning, aligning beautifully with the treatments offered by our client, creating a harmonious and artistic experience."

To this the soft, almost pastel yet highly impactful colours with a distinct touch of Japanese inspiration and nature-inspired elements, all working together with textures and effects, expand the available spaces and create a sense of intimacy and wonderment within a relaxing and cossetting environment. The result is a project that is truly inspired and also a faithful reflection of Heidi's boundary-free approach to transforming spaces. "I loved working this project for its unique essence. We crafted it to immerse people in artistic beauty and a sensory-rich environment, creating an experience that evokes a natural, positive feeling," says Heidi, whose new scented candle collection recalls a very personal source of inspiration and forms the beginning of an ambition to create a broader range of decorative and lifestyle items of her own design. "The intention is to collaborate with kindred spirits from around the world to expand it further and give expression to a very personalised vision of design." 🍷



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