

Ann Marie Hess

Interior Designer

By Simon Copeland

The London office of AMH Interiors is a hive of activity following the announcement that Ann Marie Hess has been shortlisted as one of the finalists of the upcoming Society of British Interior Design Awards, one of the most prestigious events for the Interior Design world. She is taking this all in her stride, preferring to focus on the intricate details of the lighting plan of a media suite currently being built in one of her latest projects. We are meeting to discuss the awards which will be held at The Dorchester Hotel later this month, and to get an insight into how this design visionary with offices in London and The USA views such an accolade.

Ann Marie Hess is a statuesque brunette with piercing green eyes; she



is however quite reserved and talks quietly as all around her is going into meltdown. It is a rather off-putting trait, but of course draws you in to really listen to the point she is making. I begin by asking how this elegant woman before me squares up to the harsh and noisy world of a construction site, and I am immediately cut down to size. "Walking onto a project is key for me," she says "it is that point where I start to understand what the space is, and what it could be; it is where the creativity begins. I am never happier than when walls are coming down, and the transformation begins; connecting with the space is paramount."

Hess always had a wanderlust, an acute need to explore the world soaking up different cultures, and following her studies in New York, she took off around the world. Her schedule of travelling is challenging, but she clearly manages to keep her workload flowing wherever she happens to be, which typically is more likely to be in a departure lounge than anywhere else. "Even if I am working on a client's brief, I will take in the immediate surroundings, and as she says this she whips out her laptop to illustrate the point, bringing up a fabulous selection of tiles from Italy (www.projectitaliasrl.com) which could be used alongside a selection of exquisite wallpapers (www.cole-and-son.com) for our meeting room's bathroom. "When you are in that zone of creativity, of improving a work or home space, there is nothing to beat it, and the process simply takes on a life of its own."

Hess's extensive travels have clearly helped to shape a design philosophy which is now intrinsic in each commission. She has a particular love of The East, and talks with great authority of the ideals behind many of features which are apparent

in her work, as represented by the juxtaposition of elements like fire and water "I love bringing the purity of nature into a cutting edge contemporary scheme, not necessarily to soften it, but to highlight the marriage of the two entities. Mother Nature surely has to be the best designer of us all?"

On the subject of the approaching awards, Ann Marie is very more reticent, "Of course I am incredibly proud to be considered, but also rather humbled to be placed alongside an exceptional group of talented people within the SBID. What Vanessa Brady has achieved within that organisation is amazing. However the one thing we all share in common, is an end goal of creativity, which is why I enjoy the chance to come together and celebrate our work across the board. For all of us though, I think the ultimate result is knowing that we have brought about the very best design scheme for our client; being given the opportunity to enhance their world is what fires me up."

Having worked extensively around the world, I ask Ann Marie for a particular highlight "Dubai was pretty fun. We had an amazing team out there, and the energy was infectious; everything came together perfectly, and as a designer, whatever I needed was at my fingertips. But if you are asking where I get inspired every day, nowhere beats London; I relish the formality and the diversity there. I always hate leaving."

And on that note, Ann Marie's driver calls to whisk her away. As she goes, I cannot erase the mental picture of this incredibly elegant lady navigating her way around dusty concrete and scaffolding in her exquisite Jimmy Choos, leaving a calm serenity in her wake.

Best of luck at the awards!

