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mayfair times

*Middle East special: Why the region is on our radar this month
PLUS: Naomi Campbell, Marylebone focus and Property: Brexit's impact*

Interior design and architecture firm Shalini Misra Ltd have transformed a 230 sq m Victorian corner apartment at 70 South Audley Street into a high-concept design space. The Squat project, a collaboration with Nilufar Gallery, explores a new concept of exhibition that combines design, art and architecture, and includes historic works by Gio Ponti and Ico Parisi and more contemporary works by Patricia Urquiola, Martino Gamper and Bethan Laura Wood. Everything is for sale, including the stunning lateral apartment. We talk to Shalini Misra and Mehves Ariburnu, director and creative advisor at Shalini Misra Ltd respectively, about Squat, Mayfair and interiors trends.

How did you get involved in the South Audley Street project?

SHALINI: I have worked with Nina [Yashar, founder of Nilufar Gallery] on previous projects and I met her last year at the Nilufar Gallery and she wanted to do something in London. I do interiors, architecture and real estate and I was just in the process of acquiring this property in Mayfair, so I thought, "Why don't we do this in a residential setting?" This is quite a rare and special property – high ceilings, corner property, very highly residential in character and has the commercial on the ground floor – I think it suited everybody.

What role does art work play in your interior design projects?

MEHVES: We always believe that art speaks very strongly in an interiors setting. [For Squat] we have brought in an art collection which highlights the architecture and design pieces and all this diversity. We collaborated with two main galleries on this, including Gio Marconi, bringing in some contemporary work and some modern masters, which reflects the selection of the Squat furniture which has both contemporary and vintage design.

What other projects do you have in Mayfair?

SHALINI: Mayfair is a very important area for us. I have a love story with Mayfair; I think it still has a lovely village quality to it. We're currently working on an intriguing design concept for a large flat in the Luxlo development, which is one block away. It's due for completion in October, which I'm very excited about. We're also working on a bachelor pad in Charles Street which is really beautiful – it's a Grade II-listed property. I work very actively with the agents there – Chestertons, Savills, Knight Frank and Wetherell – I'm always looking for properties there. I'm negotiating one for development now.

MEHVES: Being in London is really important because it keeps changing, the trends keep changing, there's a huge multicultural identity, but also the discipline and



SQUAT PARTY

Meet the interiors duo taking architecture, design and art exhibition in a whole new direction

BY LORNA DAVIES



TOP FROM LEFT: Nina Yashar, Mehves Ariburnu and Shalini Misra
BOTTOM: The stunning South Audley Street apartment, which is on the market

the history which London offers us, we should never forget.

SHALINI: We also love the shopping in Mayfair; we love Mount Street now. If you go into Céline, the flooring in Céline is amazing. In terms of furniture stores, there's Holly Hunt on Dover Street, we go there a lot; I like Baxter a lot; Carpenter's Workshop has some good work. I often do a walk in Mayfair, so starting at the Assouline bookstore, which I think is so beautiful, and then go into the Royal Academy of Art; and White Cube, which is fantastic.

You've been in the industry for 15 years and have a team of 17. Are you still hands-on with the design?

SHALINI: Very much, every last detail! We have a lot of fun.

You trained in architecture and then went into interior design. What made you make that decision?

SHALINI: It was just by chance. I was finishing my Masters Degree at the Bartlett in virtual realty and architecture and a friend of a friend was moving to London and wanted her four-bedroom flat in Kensington done up, so they asked me to help and I had really no clue! At that time, 20 years ago, it was all Louis XVI style, curtains, lots of fringes. It was very fun and a really good learning process and that is how the love story with interiors started.

Tell us about your global projects

SHALINI: In New York, we won the Best Apartment Design award for one of our projects. In Dubai, we're finishing a 25,000 square feet villa. In New Dehli, we are building a 25,000 square feet villa. Our clients are global.

How do designs change from one country to the next?

SHALINI: We try to use local materials, local artists, promote the regional influences of each area. All our designs are very different. We also try to promote British craftsmanship, so we'll have things made and sent to places like Dubai. Everywhere there is a huge following of British design and craftsmanship, particularly in places like India and Dubai.

What are your clients asking for now?

SHALINI: There's a definite change in mood now. There was a lot of minimalist and modern design, but I find now there is a shift. People are going back to vintage design, they do want a mix of both. I think that's what an Englishman's home always was. They would travel, pick pieces, it was quite eclectic.



FROM TOP: The entrance to Squat; master bedroom; dining room

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