

# Superyacht

INTERIOR DESIGN    EXTERIOR SPACE    CREATIVITY AND ARCHITECTURE



# DESIGN

#### DOMUS DESIGN

Kamini Ezralow brings a fresh perspective to interior design with *Celestial Hope*.  
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**DOMUS DESIGN**





KAMINI MADE SCATTER CUSHIONS USING INDOOR FABRIC FOR THE EXTERIOR ON CELESTIAL HOPE



THE OWNERS OF CELESTIAL HOPE WANTED THE INTERIOR TO FEEL LIKE A HAMPTONS BEACH HOUSE

EDINA VAN DER WYCK

**K**amini Ezralow is a true designer of the world. Now residing in London, she has lived in Hong Kong and LA and is a fifth generation South African of Indian descent. In a café opposite a showroom that has just started selling her new Bronze furniture collection, she starts by telling us how she first discovered her love of design and beautiful things on buying trips to India with her mother to source items for their home accessories store in Hong Kong. A trip to a textile factory in Delhi left Kamini overwhelmed and she has been a slave to design ever since.

by a property company to head up their interior lifestyle division. "It was a challenge," she says. "Taking over a struggling firm, restructuring it, turning it around and putting it on the map."

And put it on the map she did. As well as working on some incredible residential projects, Intarya—as Kamini renamed the company—was the studio behind the award-winning interior of Heesen's 47m M/Y *Celestial Hope*, launched in 2008. "This was our very first yacht project as well as my first yacht project," she says. "The owners initially had another designer working on it but they weren't quite happy. They saw one of my projects in a magazine, liked it and gave me a call."

**“When you go on holiday you want an environment that supports and cocoons you because spaces like these feel like home.”**



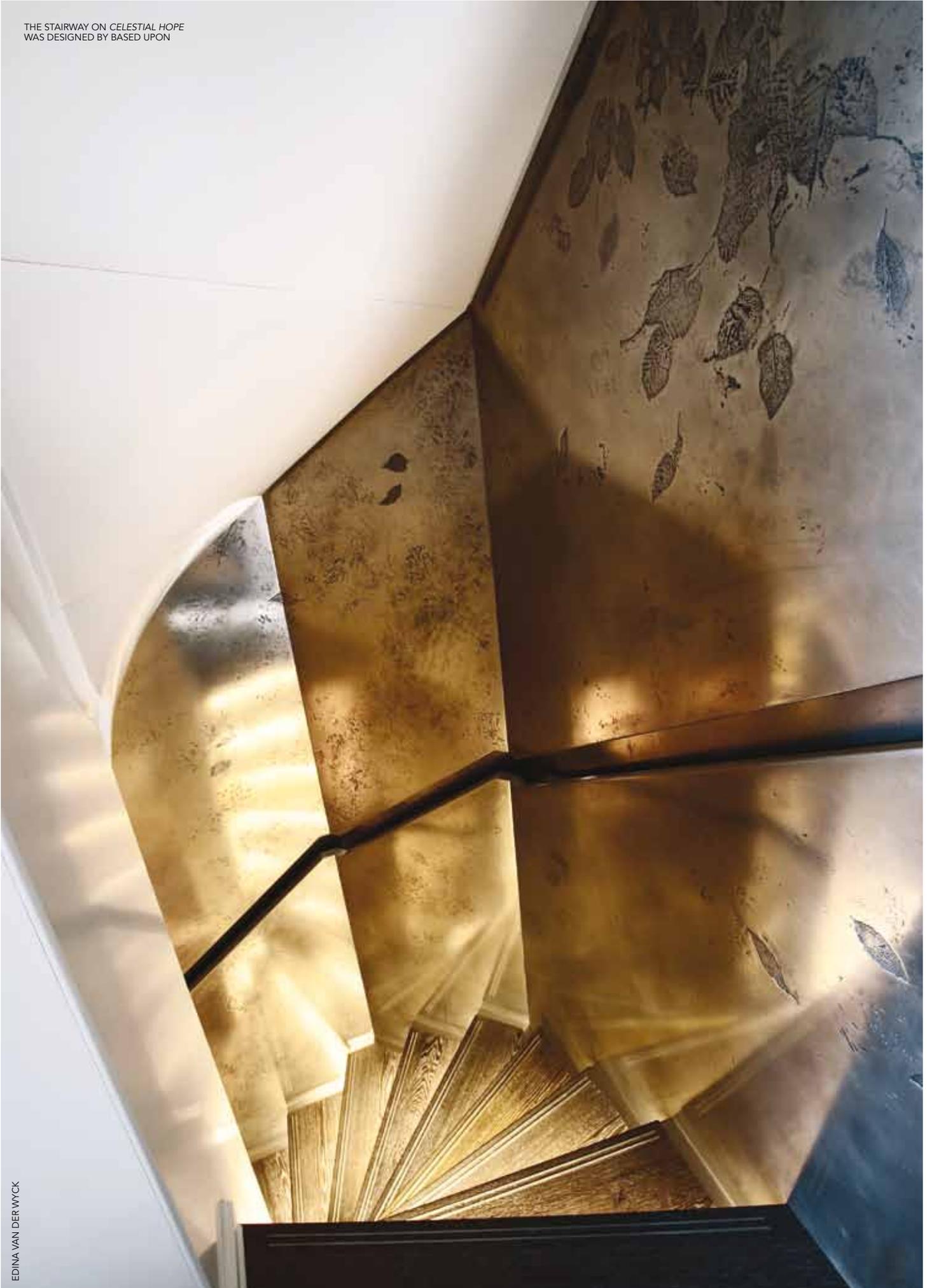
KAMINI EZRALOW

After university in London, Kamini worked for an architectural practice in Hong Kong before starting her own studio in LA. Working with UHNWs and celebrities on beautiful projects, it wasn't long before she was headhunted

There has always been a tendency among the superyacht industry to be wary of land-based designers being brought in on yacht projects. While it is true that some may need a bit of handholding through the process, or, in more extreme cases, may hinder a project due to their nautical inexperience (Dickie Bannenberg described one experience working with a client's interior designer as a 'disaster' at the SuperyachtDESIGN Summit last year), it can't be denied that many bring a refreshing outside perspective to the typically unvarying 'yachty' interiors. It was this approach to yacht design that was exactly what the owners of *Celestial Hope* wanted.

"The owners wanted a boat that felt more ▶

THE STAIRWAY ON CELESTIAL HOPE  
WAS DESIGNED BY BASED UPON



EDINA VAN DER WYCK

THE MARBELLA CLUB HOTEL HAS ALWAYS EMBODIED AN UNFUSSY, RELAXED 'BAREFOOT' LUXURY



JESUS ALONSO

A SENSITIVITY TO THE ENVIRONMENT WAS ESSENTIAL WHEN DESIGNING THE MARBELLA CLUB HOTEL INTERIOR



KAMINI DESIGNED EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF FURNITURE IN THE HOTEL





## “I think that life is so busy in this age of technology where everything is instant and you are constantly connected that there is a need to feel comfortable.”

like a home not a yacht,” Kamini tells us. “This was a bit controversial because it is a boat at the end of the day, but they were clear: they wanted it to feel like a Hamptons beach house. In fact, the wife was inspired by a beach house on the movie *Something’s Gotta Give*.” From small details such as using materials that she would use on residential projects to bigger ones like ensuring the beds were not the traditional rounded cabin beds but proper residential-style beds with valances, Kamini certainly put a



residential stamp on *Celestial Hope*. “We did try to carve out our own path on the space as much as possible,” she says. “We squared off a lot of things, we added a lot of storage and even the furniture was all made by our residential upholsterers. It was all in the detail.”

Yachts have traditionally fallen into the same design aesthetic as luxury hotels—minimalist, neutral, fairly formal and rather impersonal—but a desire for a more comfortable, residential aesthetic is something that seems to be growing in popularity, not just for yachts but in hospitality design in general.

Having departed Intarya after six years to start her own studio again, Kamini was approached by a client to work on a major refurbishment project in Spain for the iconic Marbella Club hotel, where the brief was exactly this ‘home away from home’ idea. Starting with three blocks of 42 rooms, of which 18 are suites and all of which are all now completed, as well as outdoor furnishings, Kamini is now working her way through the rest of the hotel and has been tasked with giving it all a comfortable, barefoot luxury feel with a twist of Hollywood glamour.

Opened by Prince Alfonso von Hohenlohe almost 60 years ago as an escape for his royal friends and Hollywood stars, it has always

embodied an unfussy, relaxed luxury. Having fallen in love with the casual Californian motels in Santa Barbara, Prince Alfonso wanted to recreate this essence in a luxury setting. “When he built it there was no electricity, it was lit by candlelight and your luggage was brought to your room on the back of donkeys,” says Kamini. “A large emphasis was put on the landscaping and today the gardens remain spectacular. The environment is truly serene and natural. The current owners had a very clear vision, keeping true to the essence of the original concept and enhancing it even more.”

This refurbishment has really required sensitivity to the original soul of the building, the lush surroundings and the intent of Prince Alfonso. “An understanding of what the space was born from was essential but so was bringing it into today’s lifestyle,” Kamini explains. “For me and the owner, it was about old Hollywood glamour and Hollywood regency deco, incorporating local culture elements.” Hollywood glamour aside, the client crucially wanted the hotel to feel like a home away from home.

Kamini reflects that most of her clients want an extension of their home and lifestyle no matter what she is designing the interior for. But what does she think has triggered this need for homely comfort on holiday in particular? “I think that life is so busy in this age of technology where everything is instant and you are constantly connected, that there is a need to feel comfortable,” she muses. “When you go on holiday you want an environment that supports and cocoons you because spaces like these feel like home.”

In an attempt to take this idea of comfortable luxury to the next level, most of the furnishings in the refurbished Marbella Club are bespoke, something that is extremely rare in hospitality design. “Usually if you are designing 42 rooms you are ordering 42 of the same thing,” she says. “We didn’t do that. We have six or seven very definitive themes and we have designed every single piece of furniture right down to the lighting and the Italian wrought iron beds that we included in certain rooms.”

Throughout our conversation, Kamini is keen to emphasise the importance of flow between spaces. For her, central to making an interior feel welcomingly informal and comfortable is this idea of flow between the inside and outside ▶



JESUS ALONSO

AS WELL AS THE INTERIOR, KAMINI DESIGNED ALL EXTERIOR FURNITURE.

and vice versa. “With the hotel, as with all my projects, it is really about looking at the environment,” she says. “I look at how the environment is used and interacts with a space, and then bring that essence inside. It creates this gentle flow of energy between the inside and outside that is so crucial.” The hotel is located in Andalucía and the design takes a lot from the local culture and environment, such as plates from the local market and natural oaks rather than high-gloss lacquer.

“I have often said that the difference when designing a land-based project is that the place is static, the environment doesn’t shift; the weather may change but the environment is always the same,” says Kamini. “But on a yacht you could be anywhere so your design needs to be able to relate to many environments.” On board *Celestial Hope* this came down to making sure that the inside was brought outside so that enjoying any environment the yacht explores is a seamlessly natural process. “We always bring the inside out and outside in by the types of materials we use,” Kamini tells us. “A gentle flow of energy between the inside and outside is so crucial. We made special scatter cushions in outdoor fabric for on deck and inside.”

Kamini and her team are also working on a restaurant project called OLiban in Monaco now, where owing to the layout, getting the flow between inside and outside spaces is essential to achieving the right ambience. “It is one of the only listed buildings in Monaco,” reveals Kamini. “We can’t change the exterior at all, including the

colour of the building, but there is a certain amount of charm to this.” In contrast to the architectural restrictions outside, inside they have been given a free hand. Formerly an office space, it has been opened up completely with the restaurant set up in three parts: a casual brasserie-style deli, a lounge and bar area and a restaurant for fine dining. Kamini explains that the client placed a lot of emphasis on outdoor living and eating and the flow between spaces: much like on a yacht. As a result, in the deli and restaurant there is an interior, a terrace

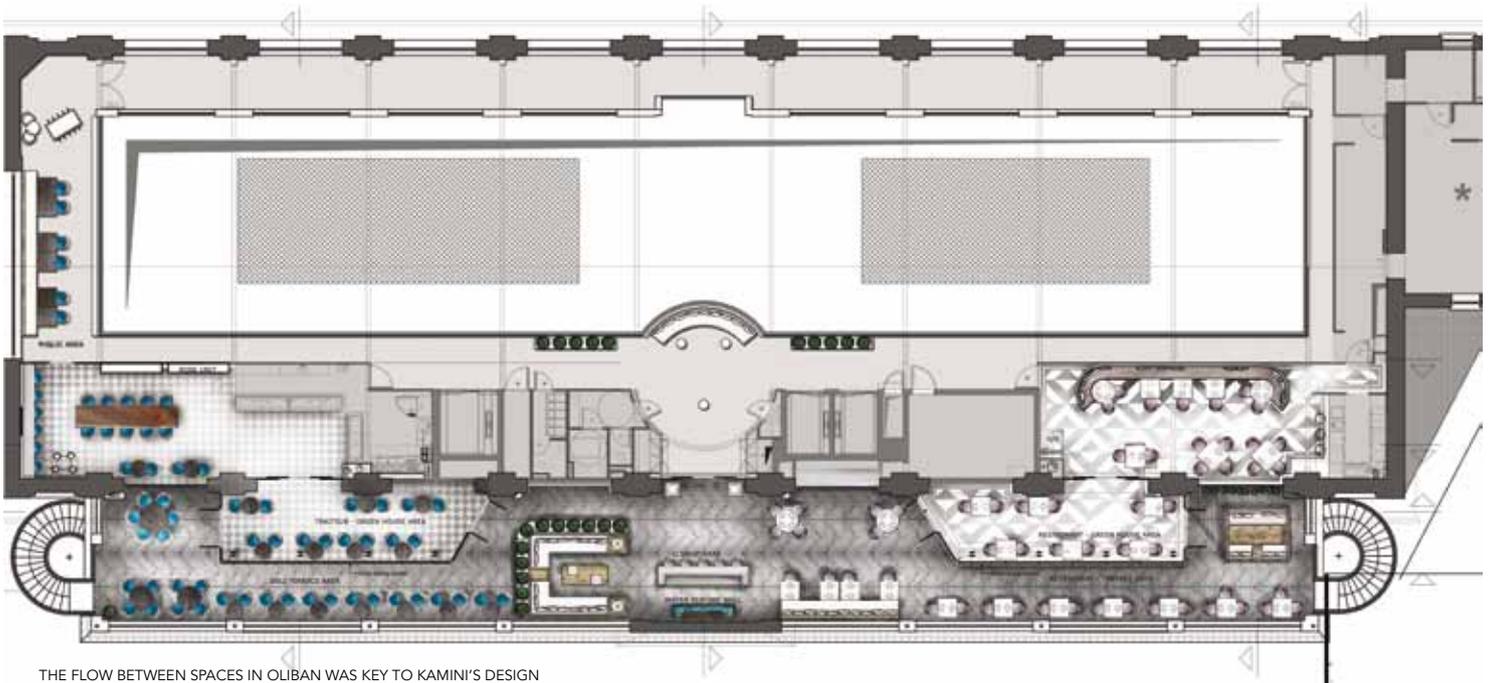
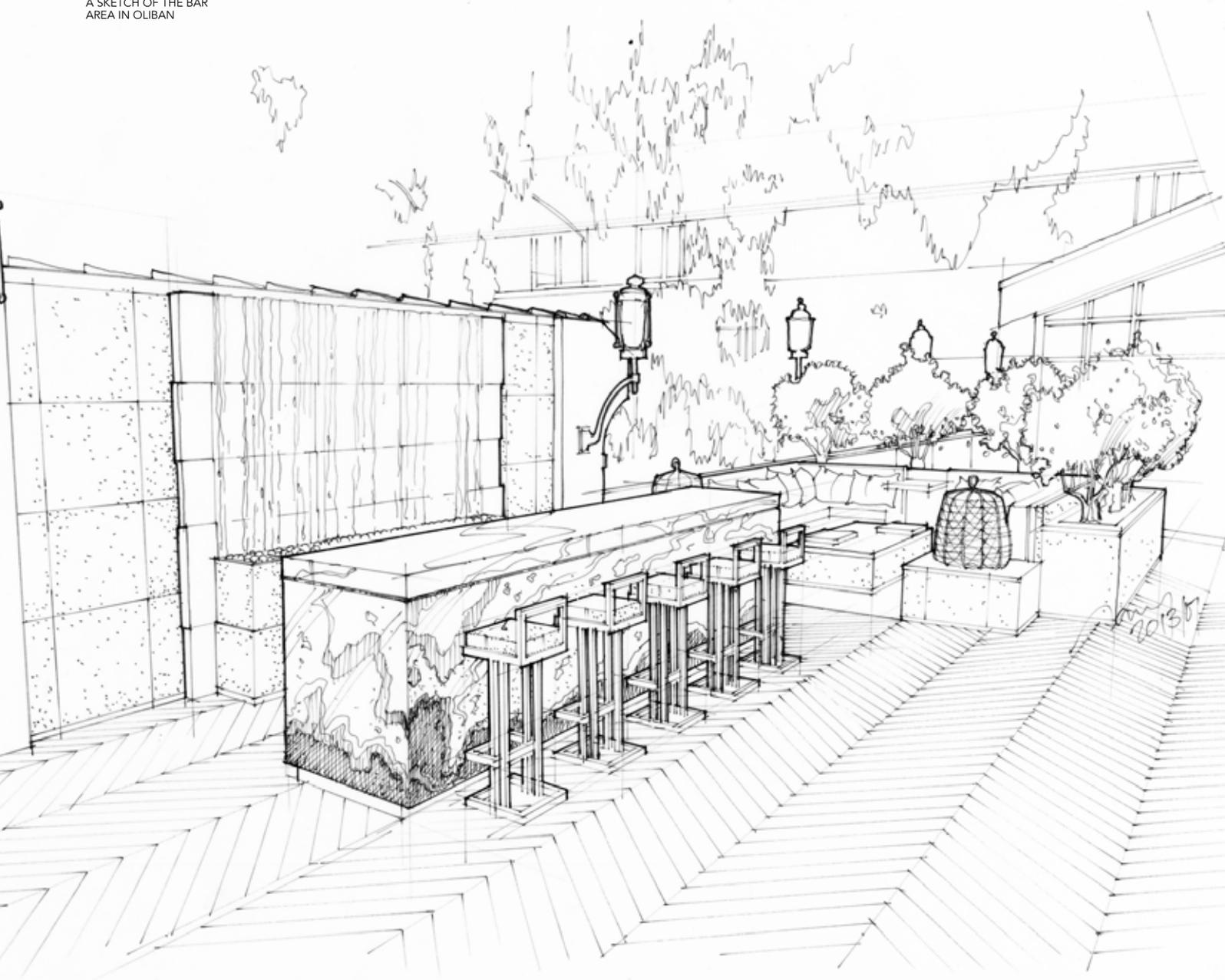
great but I prefer it smaller. I think we’ll probably end up with about six maximum. I am somewhat controlling in that way! I even get involved in the unpacking and placing. At the end of the day it is a very personal thing designing someone’s space and not everybody is going to love what you do. You feel very personally connected to your design as a lot of yourself goes into it. It’s always a challenge, and stimulating, but I love it.” ■

**“At the end of the day it is a very personal thing designing someone’s space and not everybody is going to love what you do.”**

and an intermediate area that is almost like a greenhouse—half in, half out.

With her tight-knit team of four working at full capacity and various interesting projects in the pipeline (“We are talking to a few people about yacht projects but it is obviously very preliminary”), it sounds as if it might be time to expand. “I don’t know, I like [having a small team] because I am hands-on and this way I know we can all work on projects together,” she says. “At Intarya I had a team of 16, which was

A SKETCH OF THE BAR  
AREA IN OLIBAN



THE FLOW BETWEEN SPACES IN OLIBAN WAS KEY TO KAMINI'S DESIGN