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top drawer DESIGN FALL 2008

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FOR THE NOMADIC DESIGNER INDIA MAHDAVI, IT'S ALL ABOUT GLOBAL CHIC. BY SANDRA BALLENTINE

1. India Mahdavi isn't afraid to use her feminine wiles. The Paris-based architect/designer's sexy, chic interiors and furniture combine and contrast round, sensual shapes with masculine materials and warm colors with cold ones. Her signature lighthearted tables and stools — in shapes like chess pieces and flowers — act as playful punctuation marks. She's shown here in her Left Bank showroom next to the Superstarr table, which is also available at ralphpucci.net. Or go to india-mahdavi.com for more details.

2. The accessories-obsessed designer combs flea markets and home shows for unusual bijoux like this molded plastic ring by Gaetano Pesce, which she found at last year's Maison & Objet exposition.

3. Mahdavi frequents Chez Julien — Thierry Costes's red-hot restaurant — because "it captures the essence of what Paris is about: a cool crowd and a fabulous terrace with classic views of trees and the river." 1, rue du Pont-Louis-Philippe; 011-33-62-636-7082.

4. She's all for smoke and mirrors, especially when they're Lobmeyr's black, orchid-shaped ones. This version is \$11,450 at Moss, 150 Greene Street.

5. For Mahdavi, the ultimate luxury is sipping a Campari and orange at Adrère Amellal Oasis, a high-end eco-lodge in Siwa, Egypt. "It's the most exquisite site I've ever seen," she says. "There's no electricity, only candles, and everything is made with salt blocks



and mud. The desert sky is amazing — at night you can drive by the light of the moon and stars." Go to adreremellal.net.

6. Her glam transformation of the Coburg Bar in London's Connaught Hotel turned a fusty watering hole into a trendy one. To preserve the space's intimate, clubby feel, she re-upholstered the original armchairs in jewel-toned velvet and painted



the paneled walls a rich taupe. Go to the-connaught.co.uk.

7. Installations by the Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto strike a personal chord. "The scale of his work is incredible, but it relates to you in a very intimate way," she says. "You feel like you are walking into the human body, almost like you are going back into your mother's womb."

8. She used Vladimir Kagan's 1958 Sculptura dining chair (\$5,635) in her design scheme for the Connaught's new French restaurant, Héliène Darroze. Go to vladimirkagan.com.

9. Mahdavi's own furniture reflects her predilection for voluminous shapes and highly lacquered surfaces. "I don't like flat pieces," she says. "My favorites are graphic, whimsical and colorful." The marble and ceramic Joker table, shown here, is a prototype for the Monte-Carlo Beach Hotel in Monaco.

10. In her opinion, Herzog & de Meuron's Schaulager, in Munchenstein, Switzerland, "is one of the best places to see contemporary art in the world. It's a very sharp building, with straightforward spatial

proportions, and it serves its function — part museum, part warehouse — perfectly."

11. Like many a fashion-loving femme, she's a fan of Lanvin's Alber Elbaz. (The admiration is mutual: he asked her to design his Paris apartment.) Mahdavi supplements her cache of his clothing with pieces from La Belle Époque, a tiny vintage store near the Marais (10, rue de Poitou; 011-33-68-077-7132). ■

india mahdavi

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