

DESIGN FOR LIVING

ALTO



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DESIGN

Paris-based India Mahdavi designs spaces and objects with a playfulness that never veers into the saccharine. Her new collection celebrates the "heat, light and colours of summer", and every piece has a story behind it / By Tomo Toku

Radiating style

There's a playful touch to designer India Mahdavi's creations: colour, elegance and pattern define her projects. Past clients include Louis Vuitton, Miami's Townhouse Hotel and London's Coburg Bar at the Connaught, and she has more recently designed interiors for luxury ski hotel L'Apogée Courchevel in the French Alps and Parisian patisserie Gâteaux Thoumieux. But Mahdavi brings the same joyful mix of shape and colour to the products she designs, including her new range, 'Summer Wardrobe'.

The collection features vases, baskets and cushions that celebrate the warmer months (realistically, there's also an umbrella). For example, the 'Bikini' printed satin cushions come in several cheerful schemes - "I wanted to express the heat, light and colours of summer," she says - and the name reflects that. "Bikinis are cute, sexy and colourful, like the cushions," she adds.

"This collection is about breaking down indoor-outdoor barriers. The umbrella, cushions and baskets can be used in town, in the countryside or on the beach," Mahdavi continues. "My products can style any kind of place, anywhere in the world." Lively wordplay accompanies many product names, some easier to comprehend than others for non-French-speakers. While the >

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"MY SIGNATURE MIX AND MATCH OF PATTERNS PROBABLY COMES FROM PERIODS OF CHILDHOOD SPENT IN IRAN AND EGYPT"



PAUL ADAMSON

OPPOSITE, TOP: L'Apogée Courchevel, a luxury ski lodge in the French Alps, is a blend of local craftsmanship, such as the bespoke studded chests, and Mahdavi's bold mix of colour and pattern

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: Mahdavi shunned a traditional rustic look for the hotel in favour of a more homely style inspired by local mansion houses



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'Rain Beau' umbrella might be an easy one, 'Un Raspail, Deux Raspaux', a set of wicker baskets, plays on French grammar: Paris's Boulevard Raspail, home to a well-known organic street market, lies in the 7th arrondissement near Mahdavi's studio, and all French words ending in -ail take -aux in the plural.

The glass 'Don Giovanni' lamp refers to the fictional libertine of European literature (it's 'Don Giovanni', the later Italian incarnation of the character, and not the original 'Don Juan', as a tribute to the glassblowers in Murano who made the prototype). "The lamp's silhouette is almost human and very sensual," says Mahdavi. "It was originally designed with another lamp called 'Casanova' - it's the comeback of the seducers!"

All this storytelling might stem from Mahdavi's early aspirations to become a filmmaker, despite her design-oriented education. She studied architecture at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and then went to art school in New York to learn about graphic, furniture and industrial design. Gradually, the desire to tell stories through film had transferred to spaces and objects.

There's a ubiquity to Mahdavi's new collection that reflects her childhood and style. She was born in Iran to a Persian father and Egyptian-English mother before spending time in a further 10 countries. "My fascination >

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"THIS COLLECTION IS ABOUT BREAKING DOWN INDOOR-OUTDOOR BARRIERS. IT CAN BE USED IN TOWN, IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OR ON THE BEACH"

ABOVE: 'Bikini' cushions in printed silk sum up a carefree summer day

ABOVE LEFT: The sensual shape of this glass lamp inspired its name - 'Don Giovanni', after the fictional libertine

DESIGN



REGGION BRUNDTU

for colour comes from childhood memories when we lived for a time in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where everything seemed to be in Technicolor," she says. "My signature mix and match of patterns probably comes from my family background and periods of childhood spent in Iran and Egypt; and my love of elegance comes from the many years I have been living in France, the country of *art de vivre*."

The designer's glazed ceramic 'Landscapes' vases embody the international flavour of her work: they are the result of a collaboration with Beirut's Carwan Gallery, the first Middle Eastern gallery to show at Design Miami's Swiss show in Basel. The project uses techniques from both East and West to produce something fun and relaxed. Vases of varying size, shape and colour can stand alone or fit together like an irregular jigsaw. It's like child's play for homeware – and that sits fine with Mahdavi. "We should always be serious about what we do, but not take ourselves too seriously," she says. ■

www.india-mahdavi.com

*"WE SHOULD ALWAYS BE
SERIOUS ABOUT WHAT
WE DO, BUT NOT TAKE
OURSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY"*

*ABOVE: 'Landscapes' is a series
of interlocking vases, each one a
different size, shape and colour*

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