



From London to Beirut

ANNABEL KARIM KASSAR AND HER TEAM HAS DESIGNED THE INTERIORS OF MOMO AT THE SOUKS TO MATCH UP TO THE LEGENDARY MOMO'S IN LONDON

The second outlet to open outside of London, following the award winning African restaurant, Almaz by Momo in Dubai, is Momo at the Souks in Beirut.

In his latest venture, Algerian-born restaurateur, Mourad Mazouz has collaborated with Annabel Karim Kassar, and Violaine Jeantet, to create a restaurant using vintage furniture, designer pieces and custom-made fixtures.

The preliminary phase implementing ideas and sketches started six months before signing the contract. Work then continued for six more months, with the restaurant opening in March 2011.

During the construction phase, the office building was converted into a house, stretching onto four levels including a terrace and hanging gardens.

Kassar said the architectural and interior design work tried to link the spaces on all levels together.

A local and international team of craftsmen and suppliers worked on the spaces, architecture, interior design, detailing, landscaping and lighting. A vintage patterned carpet created for the restaurant, leads the way from the ground floor and up the stairs.

From the carpet, visitors move into a corridor lined by somber fume-tinted mirrored walls, where they can catch a glimpse of the kitchen before exiting into the main restaurant. With a seating capacity of 85 persons, it has vibrant colours, rendered by hand-painted Cordoue embossed wallpaper and colourful fabrics, which were printed in Italy using Moroccan embroidered textiles.

“The restaurant opens up to the private gardens through wide-open unfolding glass bays,” said Kassar. The café, which also seats 85 people, has a sloping tilted entrance door, which opens onto an out-of-scale bar. The walls and ceiling are clad with wood veneers.

The copper bar is an island within the café, occupying half the area. It’s set below an over-blown single diamond encrusted in the vaulted wooden ceiling.

CAI light, the lighting design company installed Le Diamant Jalila, a one metre diameter diamond, from its new collection, Cristal. In the bathroom, CAI Light created the Visuels Changeants installation. “Changing colour projectors play on a geometrical patterned board within the small cubicles of the toilets,” said Kassar. The design of the bathroom is refined, with concrete walls and Sapelli varnished doors with little gold details on door handles and bag hooks.

The exterior terraces have hanging gardens, providing intimate hideaways wrapped in leaf-enclosures.

The design challenge, according to Kassar, was to create a new, popular and edgy venue rising to the fame of Momo’s in London.

“Momo at the Souks is designed as a place embracing the city 360 degrees, but the city embracing it as well, right in the heart of it,” she added. CID

- 1 The restaurant opens out onto private gardens.
- 2 Outdoor Diwan café.
- 3 Hand-painted wallpaper.

