

# A LIFE IN DESIGN

DISCOVER THE WORK AND INFLUENCE OF LEADING EXPERTS



## *Kamelia Bin Zaal*

The landscape designer of Al Barari explains how nature inspires her



**G**rowing up in the UAE, landscape designer Kamelia Bin Zaal has a love for the desert ingrained in her soul.

As part of the family that created the luxurious community of Al Barari, she rose to the challenge of creating a green oasis on the sand.

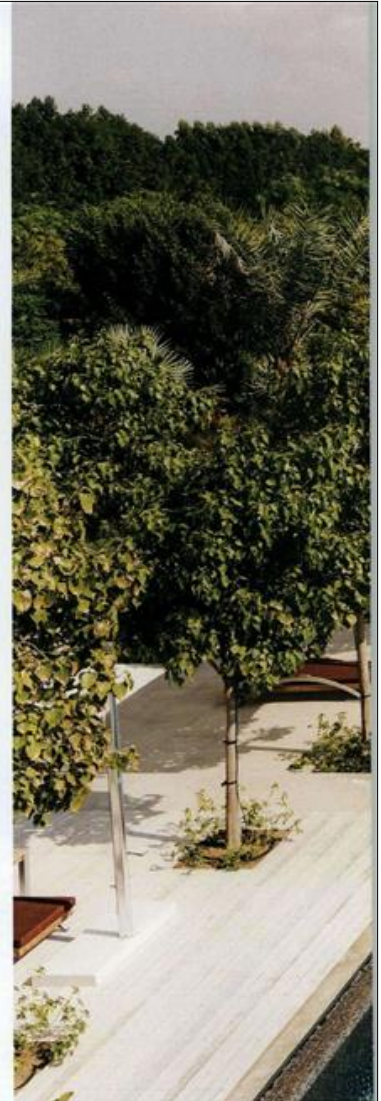
**What is it about working within nature that you find so compelling?**

To me, nature signifies my childhood growing up in the countryside or camping in the desert,

and represents peace and harmony. I still love exploring and discovering different types of fauna, growing various plants, and absorbing the landscape around me. I have always found beautiful landscapes – whether it's the top of a mountain or a tropical forest – to be completely captivating.

**When did you decide to make landscape design a career?**

I worked for the government for four years and while I enjoyed it, I felt something was missing. At the time my father was planning the concept of Al Barari to incorporate a plant nursery, and it was this conversation that made me think of landscape design. Within one month I had enrolled at the Inchbald School of Design in London, studying garden design. After I qualified, I went on to establish my own landscape architectural practice, Second Nature, in 2006, and a year later, I formed an association with my family's property development company, Al Barari, where Second Nature – now part of Green Works – created the lush botanical surrounds and themed gardens that the community has become recognised for. ▶





Just some of the beautiful garden designs at Al Barari. 'My father created this community because he wanted to leave something here in Dubai for future generations,' says Kamella. 'His vision was to create a masterpiece where the country's rich heritage is tastefully integrated with contemporary culture and nature's beauty is woven into the urban fabric.'



*'Garden design is always evolving – much like fashion, art or interior design'*







**Obviously your design for Al Barari was on a large scale – so how did you break it down into more manageable areas?**

The overall concept was to create a lush and sustainable landscape, around the main themes of Mediterranean, Contemporary, Water, Renaissance and Balinese. All these gardens are connected by walkways and waterways. That's the beauty of Al Barari – you walk around the whole community through the gardens, away from the streets and villas.

**At Al Barari you also have the nursery – why is it such an important component of the business?**

Green Works was established before we began the Al Barari project because we knew the requirement to turn it into a true desert oasis. Over one million plants have been used in Phase 1 of Al Barari, and we have just launched part of Phase 2 so plant production was – and is – still key to our whole development.

**What are the challenges when designing landscaping schemes in the UAE?**

All landscape designers, architects and contractors have to be aware of the climate and environment they are working in wherever they work in the world. We have an extreme climate in the summer months along with salty, sandy soil conditions, and winds that

change direction depending on the season. All these factors need to be considered when designing a garden.

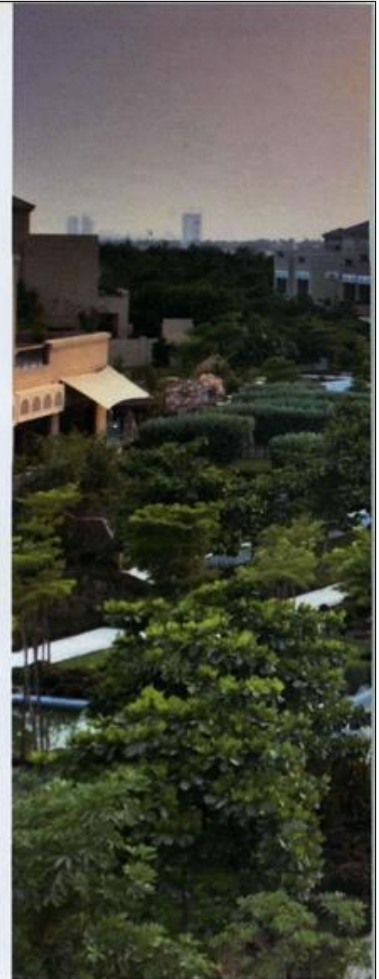
**What are some of your fail-safe ways to transform an arid patch of sand into a beautiful garden?**

A beautiful desert garden would be one of the most economical and environmentally achievable gardens. It's much better to work with the landscape that surrounds you, especially as we don't all have access to recycled water, and water is such a scarce resource. I would always advise that the starting point should be about how you want to use the garden – functionality has to come first.

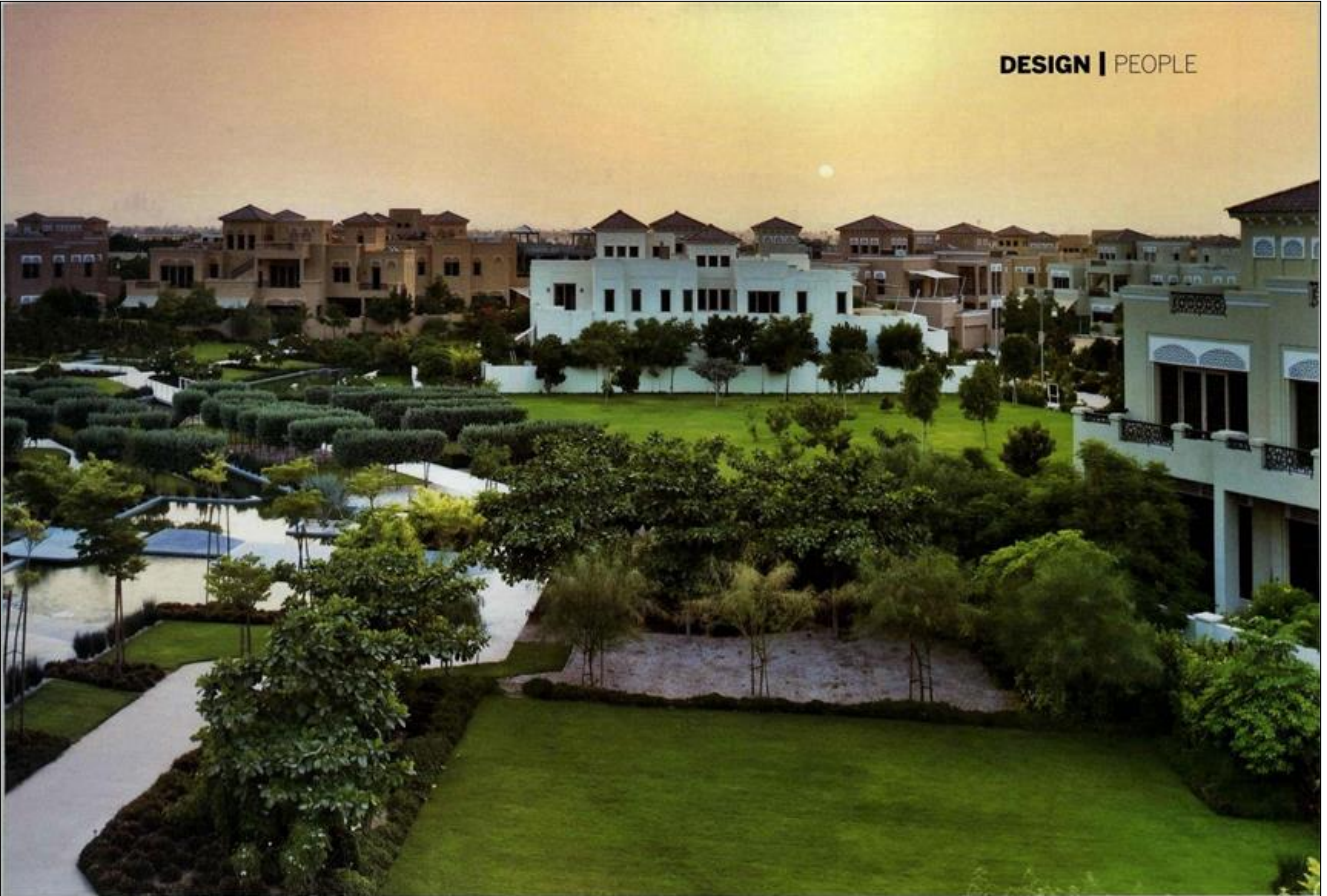
**What projects are you especially looking forward to for 2015?**

I have been selected to exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show in London in May. It's difficult to explain to people who don't know much about this annual event, but Chelsea is like the Oscars for landscape design. Being accepted as one of the 15 main show gardens to compete for Chelsea's ultimate prize, the Best Show Garden award, is truly an honour. It's the Royal Horticultural Society and the people involved are my mentors: I am very humbled.

● [www.secondnature.ae](http://www.secondnature.ae); [www.albarari.com](http://www.albarari.com)







Along with the gardens at Al Barari, Kamelia also recently completed projects at Nurai Island (top left) and Body Language Health and Fitness Spa (left).

TEXT BY CHARLOTTE BUTTERFIELD