



Kamelia Bin Zaal

# Landscape meets Kamelia Bin Zaal

*Creative Director of Al Barari residences*

**How would you describe the new Seventh Heaven and Ashjar developments in Al Barari?**

Seventh Heaven homes are among the most spacious available in Dubai, ranging from 2,000 to 6,600 square feet. There are 157 elegant homes including sky villas, penthouses, and garden homes and home will have one to four aspects, overlooking the iconic Dubai skyline, lakes, forest, desert wilderness or tranquil gardens of Al Barari, yet maintain the

privacy of the residents. Exclusive homes will have a private pool located on the terrace and access to beautifully manicured gardens if located on the ground floor. Eighty percent of exclusive homes will have private elevators. Residents will have access to shared facilities including an indoor and outdoor pool, gym, and community facilities.

A natural colour palette and materials such as stone and wood help to integrate

the homes into their surrounding environment. The architectural design of Seventh Heaven features stepped layers and trims down as it increases in height. The distinctive design allows increased airflow across the development, capitalising on Al Barari's existing microclimate to ensure the continuation of temperatures 2-5 degrees cooler than other areas in Dubai.

Following on from Seventh Heaven,

Ashjar is a collection of spacious residences that integrates high-end living with the natural environment in every last detail. The new Ashjar collection totals 300 elegant homes spread amongst 21 low-rise buildings arranged in small clusters of 3-5, sprawled over an impressive 107,870m<sup>2</sup>. Sheltered by lush forests, the private community is segmented into three distinct categories, each crafted differently, allowing buyers to choose a home that ideally suits their personality and lifestyle. Each category will benefit





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from shared sporting and social facilities including pools, play areas, gardens, and underground parking.

At six levels in an ultra-modern style, category A presents an iconic step-layered design with cascading terraces. Category B incorporates a greater degree of Arabesque design, offering greater intimacy and privacy throughout its five levels. The category C is a hybrid of the two other formats, blending their architectural features and design over five floors. From ground level to the third floor, buyers can opt for residences that seamlessly blend the built environment into the surrounding green landscape, with floors four and five offering vistas across the city including the landmark Burj Khalifa.

### What was the inspiration for the landscape design in these new projects?

Both developments were envisioned with lush landscapes while staying true to the Zaal family vision by fusing extraordinary living with nature.

### Seventh Heaven

The aim of Seventh Heaven's landscape design is three-fold: (1) maximize outdoor comfort and vibrancy to promote a seamless indoor and outdoor connection; (2) create an intimate and memorable landscape to complement the unique architectural design; (3) create a green, rich, and lush environment that exemplifies the Al Barari philosophy.

The landscape design of Seventh Heaven is characterized by its rich mix of vegetation and contrast of colors, forms and texture designed for an exceptional living experience. The design is inspired by the fluid form of Arabic calligraphy art as well as the dynamism of desert bloom. Colorful vegetation and paving strips are interwoven in unique geometric forms to form the main design language. A dense and rich mix of shrubs and groundcovers will be carefully selected to create a joyful color palette at the eye-level, with large mature tree canopies providing sufficient natural shading to encourage outdoor activities.

### Ashjar

The inspiration behind the design and concept of Ashjar was canopy living, hence the name 'Ashjar', which means 'trees' in Arabic. The idea of living within and amongst the tree canopy builds upon the highly successful landscape-led developments at the Al Barari villas and The Farm.

A rich mix of plant species including wide variations of shrubs and mature trees form a naturalistic 'forest floor' that stretches over the 10 hectare development, creating a green, serene and tranquil living environment unique to Dubai. A variety of amenities including leisure paths, outdoor seating, recreation pools, lazy rivers, active lawns and adventure play areas, take on fluid and organic forms that 'bend' through the forest floor, enriching the green forest layers within the heart of the residential clusters. While the amenity spaces occupy the base of the forest layers, the dense green and tree canopy not only define and screen views, but provide adequate shade and a natural breeze to encourage outdoor activities.

### How has the original blueprint for Al Barari (built nine years ago) influenced the new designs?

While we have worked on several designs since then, we have always remained true to the Zaal family vision. Our work has evolved and adapted to the various developments. Over the years, we have

learned what works and what doesn't, and we have taken that knowledge forward. We are constantly improving and looking for new ways to integrate nature with luxuriant, ecological living.

Although we have maintained our overall landscape philosophy throughout Al Barari, we have ensured that individual identities and characters of the architecture are highlighted through the landscape.

Seventh Heaven landscape is a more linear contemporary design in structure but soft in textures and vibrancy, where as Ashjar is soft and organic in contrast.

### What challenges did you face in the design process of both developments?

One of the challenges has been to create intimate, unique communities and identities that complement those within the existing Al Barari portfolio. Together with our design team, 10 Design, we have worked hard to explore this at a scale and density able to foster these communities that complements the existing phases. Optimizing block planning and master planning configurations, we have been able to achieve the required density whilst protecting the quality of public and private amenity space integral within the Al Barari development. Apartment layouts and

façade design have been thoroughly tested and evaluated with our sustainability team.

Another challenge has been maintaining a lush, oasis like, forest environment whilst still having a functioning, contemporary and unique landscape design. Through careful consideration of the planting arrangement and close coordination with the architectural and engineering teams, we were able to maximize planting areas and shade cover without compromising on the functionality of either scheme, as well as employing the same design language to integrate structural provisions within the landscape.



## Kamelia Bin Zaal

Creative Director, Al Barari

Kamelia Zaal is the Creative Director of the prestigious UAE eco-pioneering property development Al Barari, a unique residential development in the protected Royal Reserve of Nad Al Sheba, moments from the city centre of Dubai.

Having spent her formative years split between Dubai and the United Kingdom, Kamelia Bin Zaal returned to the UAE once her education was completed. Kamelia spent four prosperous years within Dubai's government, where she held a number of high profile positions within the Dubai Economic Department, working on projects such as Dubai Summer Surprises and Dubai Shopping Festival, as well as Dubai Internet City and Dubai Development and Investment Authority.

Passionate about the environment and landscape design, just like her father, Kamelia Bin Zaal decided to return to academia to study Garden Design at the Inghald School of Design, London.

Upon receiving her diploma in London, Kamelia once again returned to the UAE where she started her own landscape design consultancy, Second Nature, applying her creative vision for a greener sustainable Dubai at Al Barari. Second Nature worked on projects all over the region, eventually becoming the landscape consultant for Al Barari.

More recently, Second Nature, was integrated into Green Works as the landscape design arm, continuing to work on outside projects as well as the exciting new projects within Al Barari. Having worked alongside her family at Al Barari since 2006, Kamelia Bin Zaal has been pivotal in the design and creation of Al Barari's luxurious botanic gardens.

Kamelia's distinctive landscape designs have gained attention from the press, she has been on the front covers of both The Journal for the Garden and Landscape Designers Association (GLDA) in 2012 and the UK Garden Design Journal, in March 2013. Kamelia will also be featured in a garden design book, Garden Designs Up Close by Emma Reuss, due to be published later this year.

