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Checking in with Missoni: the Italian design legend unveils her 'proudest achievement', a stunning new hotel in Kuwait [hh4](#)



the company

Rosita (left) and her husband began Missoni in a small knitwear workshop. It has expanded to include fragrances and Missoni Home



the colours

Hotel Missoni Kuwait's dominant shades of turquoise, green and gold were inspired by the surrounding sea and sunshine



the patterns

From florals to stripes, spots to zigzags, prints are a hallmark of the Missoni look. "I can't resist things with patterns," Rosita says

Mission Missoni

Clashing colours and a patchwork of styles are set to make the new Hotel Missoni Kuwait a talking point across the region. **Penny McCormick** talks to Rosita Missoni about what the designer calls her 'proudest achievement'

"The way I have done the hotel," says Rosita Missoni, "is the way I've done things at home: by mixing things up and using design pieces with comfort at the fore."

This sense of a home-from-home extends to the hotel's Cucina restaurant, where her own hot chocolate recipe appears on the menu. It is one of many details personally overseen by the 79-year-old design legend and creative director of Missoni, who calls the newly opened hotel her proudest achievement.

"I love the fact that I wake up each morning and have something to do," she says. The "to do" list is, in fact, extensive (additional hotels in Oman, Brazil and Turkey are in the pipeline for 2012) but for now she is checking the finishing touches on the Kuwait project.

"The idea was for a resort hotel. Inspiration came from the local colour, the sea and sunshine. It was a good opportunity to do something different," she says. The property is in a relatively new area on Arabian Gulf Street and is juxtaposed with the fashionable but as yet empty Symphony Centre.

"It's different to our first hotel in Edinburgh, where the city's history inspired the design. I wanted the Edinburgh hotel to have a secure feel; black and white was a strong theme. This allowed us to be free with colour on the walls, tables and upholstery," says Rosita.

There's a world of difference between the golden mile in Edinburgh and Arabian Gulf Street in Kuwait. In the Kuwait property, the dominant shades are turquoise, frog greens and gold.

Rosita used her own experiences at resorts to mould the feel of the hotel. "One of my favourite hotel experiences is in Jamaica, where I've spent many family holidays with [my daughter] Angela and her children. It's a 40-bedroom hotel in a beautiful bay and Winston Churchill was a regular guest."

Statesmen and royalty have already visited Hotel Missoni Kuwait (notably during the country's recent 40th anniversary), and it's destined to be a talking point in a region where hotel chains use a vocabulary of architectural accents rather than colour to provide the wow factor. "Rezidor [Hotel Group] gave me carte blanche to do what I liked but I don't ask for the impossible or believe in doing something for the sake of it," she says.

This would be out of sync with the Missoni heritage. The fashion empire grew out of a ready-to-wear collection inspired by the desire to create clothes that people would collect and conserve for years rather than simply purchase as objects to wear. The look was first christened "put together" and endorsed by the legendary Diana Vreeland after the Autumn/Winter 1970 collection took the catwalks by storm.

While fashion has turned full circle and is embracing the folksy once more, Missoni Home, which was launched in 1983, manages to dress walls, sofas, beds and bathrooms with the same festival of colour and creativity, balancing fantasy, realism and research. Likewise, the rooms of the hotel – 169 in all, including 63 suites – boldly mix design with technology. Bang & Olufsen televisions and Magic Mirrors in the bathrooms are two of the lifestyle elements the hotel is keen to promote, as is the Six Senses Spa.

A short stay reinforces what many design enthusiasts already know:

that no home is complete without a touch of Missoni, be it a towel to offset a plain bathroom, some striped bedlinen for the boudoir or a playful polka dot pouffe for the study. At the recent Maison et Objet exhibition in Paris, Missoni's new collection, featuring huge, brightly coloured anemone flowers, tapped in to the mood of happy chic and on-trend florals.

Above all else, Missoni Home has always appealed to feelings rather than status symbols. Its furniture is to the home what the Dorothea wrap

dress or the classic twinset is to the wardrobe: the zigzag prints instantly transform anyone into a citizen of the world. If you're in any doubt, the uber stylist Rachel Zoe endorses the brand, as does the former governor of California. "Having a Missoni in the closet means being ready for any situation," Arnold Schwarzenegger has said. "A Missoni is the best calling card wherever you go."

Rosita's personal style combines character and comfort. "I love necklaces, pearls, beads and huge rings.

I can't resist things with patterns." In fact, each of her homes (she has seven in all) houses a different collection. "My home by the sea has a cacti garden and a collection of seashells and paintings. In London, I'm a huge fan of Alfies Antique Market and go there often, while in Paris, I've got a collection of kitsch Eiffel towers that I've sourced in flea markets. My home there overlooks the landmark."

This is not to say that she doesn't appreciate high design. In the hotel you'll find a number of modern



The aim to make guests feel comfortable rather than intimidated has been achieved

classics and the same appreciation of other designers so graciously acknowledged by Rosita. "I grew up with the fantastic architecture of the 1930s and 1940s, and the northern designers such as Gio Ponti. I love attending design fairs and keep adding to my own interior design. I've recently redone the flooring in our main home and it may be hard to believe but I have plain walls so I can hang up lots of art. When I'm at home I like to stay home and spend time in the orchard or in our vegetable plot."

In Hotel Missoni Kuwait, the patterns and colours are given room to breathe. There are spaces in the juxtaposition of stripes, zigzags, spots, flowers and block colours that allow the eye and mind to digest the assault on the senses. Rosita is especially proud of the hotel's cacti and palm gardens. They reflect, she says, "the precious local nature". The overriding aim to make guests feel comfortable and welcome rather than intimidated has been achieved.

While Rosita admits to making

mistakes in her career, she adds, "I'm very sure of what I like at any particular moment, such as my husband, Tai. When I first saw him, I knew he was the one. When I don't like something people either know from my silence or my eyes." Fortunately for Kuwait, her eyes are smiling.

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Colour takes centre stage in one of the hotel's suites. In a region where hotel chains typically use architectural elements to provide the wow factor, Hotel Missoni Kuwait is bound to turn heads. On the cover, the hotel lobby exudes Missoni style. Photos Courtesy Missoni Hotel



From top, happy, on-trend florals stand out in the hotel's events entrance; the Cucina restaurant, where Rosita's hot chocolate recipe is featured, contributes to an overall welcoming, homey feel; warm colours and details create character and comfort in one of the hotel suites; a striped bathroom towel provides a signature Missoni accent.