

VOGUE

JUNE
£3.99

Sunset
dressing
*The evening
edit*

**ROCK THE
KASBAH**

Kate Moss
and Freja do
Marrakesh

BUTTER
THE SURPRISING
SUPERFOOD

MODERN
BEAUTY
SPECIAL

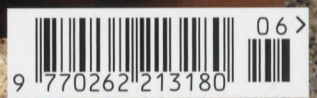
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PAGES OF
INNOVATION AND
INSPIRATION

**UPGRADE
YOUR
HOLIDAY
WARDROBE**

The Muslim
feminist
taking on the
extremists

ESSENCE OF
**SUMMER
STYLE**





BOTANICAL *building blocks*

Claire Pilton speaks with Kamelia Zaal about her family's extraordinarily verdant £2 billion development in Dubai ... and making horticultural headlines at this year's Chelsea Flower Show

Kamelia Zaal is the first Emirati designer to exhibit at the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show. She is also one of only two women with show gardens this year. The other, Jo Thompson, is partly responsible for Kamelia's entry. "The idea of exhibiting came about last spring when I was judging the Dubai International Garden Competition with David Dodd of The Outdoor Room and Best in Show winner Jo Thompson. We got on well so I showed them some of my villa work and the gardens at our family's development, Al Barari, and they asked if I'd ever thought of doing Chelsea? David said if I designed a garden, he would build it. Jo invited me to help on her entry last year for developer London Square which won a gold medal. Chelsea newcomers usually start with an artisan garden and work their way up. I was rather cheeky to propose an all-out show garden, but I talked myself into it on the pretext that this is what I do... I know how to do it."

Kamelia's garden, The Beauty of Islam, is sponsored by Al Barari where more than 400 acres of Dubai desert are being transformed into a spectacularly verdant oasis. Contrary to what the translation 'desert wilderness' suggests, it is within a 20-minute drive of the city and two airports. Al Barari lies in front of the Sheikh's palace and his protected nature reserve, beyond which lies the skyline of downtown Dubai. Fifty years ago, this was just a small seaside community.

"The Emirates culture is based on community, hospitality and harmony. Our development revives our heritage by providing attractive open spaces where people can talk or eat with one another and have the opportunity to be at one with the environment; spaces that historically have brought people together but which are lacking in urban high-rise schemes." Gardens and green spaces are integral to Al Barari and account for 80% of the site, making this the lowest-density development in the UAE.

Al Barari, the first eco-conscious scheme in the region, has its own restaurant, The Farm, a health club, spa and the region's largest privately owned plant nursery; Green Works nudges 92 acres and has introduced more than 700 plant species to the Middle East. "High-density planting that creates a natural shade canopy is teamed with 10 miles of landscaped lakes, freshwater streams and cascades, while the cluster arrangement of villas and apartments is designed to direct the wind flow from the desert or the sea through the community. This has created a microclimate at Al Barari where

temperatures are typically 2-5°C cooler than downtown Dubai," explains Kamelia, who learned how to garden in England and trained at the Inchbald School of Design. After two years of designing turnkey projects in Dubai, she established her own landscape architectural practice, Second Nature, which subsequently became part of Green Works and has, in just 10 years, created the lush botanical grounds that now envelope the estate.

Six gardens designed around Balinese, Mediterranean, Renaissance, Water, Woodland and Contemporary themes, surround and screen the first phase of residential property, where work started in 2005. Despite Dubai's catastrophic crash in 2008, all of the 189 Al Barari Residences were completed, sold and largely occupied by 2011. Today they change hands for at least £2.7 million. The Reserve was subsequently released in response to purchasers' requests for larger plots on which to build bespoke villas. Priced from £6.25 million, they range from a third of an acre to 1.7 acres with gross floor areas of 13,000sq ft to 25,000sq ft. Half of the 28 plots are sold.

Last year saw the launch of Al Barari's second phase, Seven Heaven, "which introduced the estate to a wider audience". With prices starting from £535,000 for a 1,980sq ft apartment and completion not scheduled until the end of 2016, 95% of the 157 apartments were snapped up within 48 hours. Sharing Seventh Heaven's location next to the nature reserve, Ashjar, will provide a further 300 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. Around 80% of the initial phase has sold with prices starting from £607,000. Arranged in clusters of low-rise, low-density buildings that are constructed into the landscape, the concept of "canopy living" offers differing benefits at forest-floor level, tree-line or above the tree tops, from where you can see the desert and central Dubai."

The city skyline will also provide a panoramic backdrop for the latest release of 99 villas, known as The Nest, with their own retail area, supermarket and café. Offering some 6,000sq ft of living space in quarter-acre gardens, prices start from £1.25 million; investor purchasers can anticipate annual net rental returns in the region of 5%.

Dubai has no capital gains tax, no income tax and no restriction on repatriation of funds. It is one of the world's safest places and currently home to 100,000 British residents. "For people who have lived and worked globally, and who value the quality of their environment as highly as the internal specification of their home, Al Barari is a sanctuary." Like it, Kamelia hopes her Chelsea garden will, "evoke tranquillity and inspiration". www.albarari.com

