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JENNIFER SKAIFE  
DILEONARDO

4 Rich red and turquoise accents in the Lapita Dubai Parks Hotel offer a restrained take on the brights of a typical tiki bar.

## LAPITA DUBAI PARKS HOTEL UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

**SOMETIMES THEMING** needs to come back to earth. The next generation of hotels takes “immersive” from the realm of counterculture cool and sci-fi and makes a place for more grounded inspirations, as Lapita Dubai Parks Hotel (a member of Marriott Intl.’s Autograph Collection that’s slated to open in October) proves.

For the architects at CallisonRTKL and the DiLeonardo team led by design director Jennifer Skaife, the vision board for this project started much closer to home. Airy spaces defined by warm wood details and glossy natural textures wouldn’t even whisper their secret identity as a themed hotel—until guests leave the rich wood tones, intricate carvings and architectural details of Polynesian style and step out into Dubai.

Re-imagining a tropical paradise wasn’t just a question of finding and sourcing authentic elements. Yes, just like a great movie script, research counts. But at the end of the day, designers need to be able to adapt the screenplay to fit the needs of their locale.

For Skaife and her team, the first challenge was that materials had to be sourced locally to comply with United Arab Emirates

safety and fire regulations and meet Dubai Green Building Regulations. So, she reached out to the contractor, who found a local artist to recreate the look of Polynesian carvings in a more durable material. “We had close coordination with them on-site regarding using color, texture and dimensions as well as the feel of the carvings to make them as authentic as possible,” says Skaife.

And, no matter how exotic the inspiration, the execution still needs to work, period, for both guests and staff. “Lapita is a large and complex hotel. We immersed ourselves in the operational aspects, worked on zoning, circulation, guest rooms and suites, BOH coordination and all the scope of work required in hospitality design,” Skaife says. “There were additional challenges in areas such as MEP and how to accommodate the engineering requirements in our ceilings.”

That done, though, where does she see design trending for similar projects? “Only our imagination will limit where theming is headed,” Skaife says. “The movies obviously are a notable driver in direction of the themed experience. As technology advances, materials develop and guest demands continue to grow. The sky is the limit – literally!” ●

### PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

**CLIENT**

Marriott Intl.

**DESIGN FIRMS**

DiLeonardo: Giana DiLeonardo, partner; Jennifer Skaife, design director; Hung Le and Virgilio Lucas, project managers; Joan Argos-Gumabao, designer/project coordinator  
Marriott Intl.  
Meraas Holding  
Samsung C & T

**ARCHITECTS**

CallisonRTKL (lead/design architect)  
Dewan Architects (architect of record)

**PURCHASING COMPANY**

Parker Company

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**

Brookfield Multiplex

**DESIGN CONSULTANTS**

Cracknell (landscape architect); MDLB (lighting); Wellness (spa); WME Consultant (MEP and structural engineering)

**AUDIO/VISUAL**

ALMOE

**CEILING AND DRYWALL PARTITIONS**

Plafond

**FIXTURES**

Sanipex

**FLOORING**

Al Ain Marble  
Ceramic City

**JOINERY**

S&T Interiors

**LIGHTING**

Newline

**PAINT AND GLAZING**

Al Rawaa  
Glass Technic  
Kansai  
Zebian

**OPERABLE WALL PARTITION**

Glbca Furniture Industries

**SURFACING**

ALLAMEE Sculptures

**WALLCOVERINGS/CARPETS**

S&T Interiors  
Walltracts

COURTESY OF DILEONARDO (LAPITA AND SKAIFE)