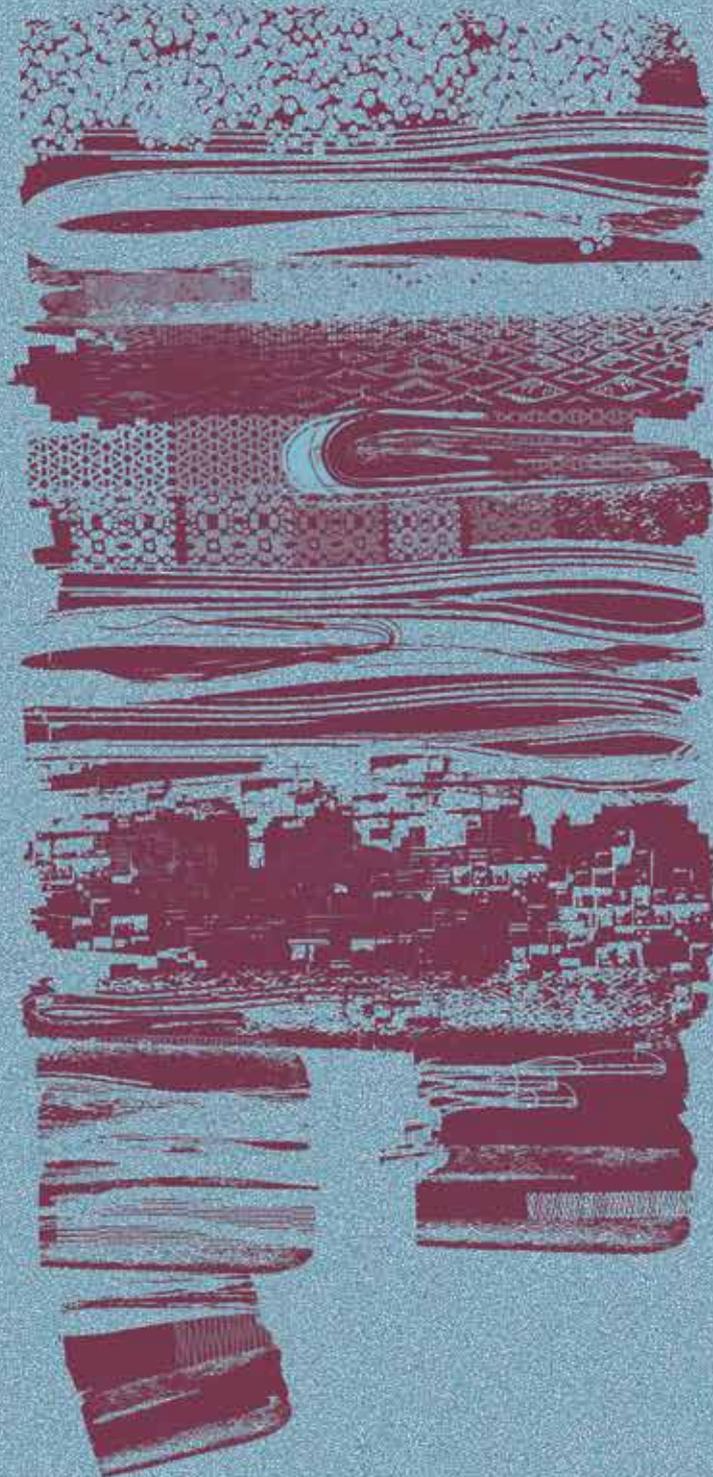


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Pic: Ken Schluchtmann

## EXCLUSIVE RETAIL THERAPY

*The newly opened **Robinsons Store** in Dubai, UAE, conceived by **HMKM** along with **dpa lighting consultants**, conveys the benefits of integrating the lighting scheme into the process of the design. An intelligently resolved space with specifically derived strategies for its numerous sections, **Meghna Mehta** and **Mrinalini Ghadiok** of **mondo\*arc india** probe into its ideas, methods and implementation techniques.*

Dubai, for tourists, is synonymous with shopping. The malls of Dubai have an avid rush of people every year for the brands it brings forth from all over the world. Similarly, the *souks* or bazaars derived from the traditional Arabic culture hold an eminent place as well in Dubai's shopping experience. These engagements are rather contrasting; one is within a singular massive building with thousands of shops laid out across lakhs of square feet of area, such that it guarantees a day in a controlled environment, devoid of heat or cold or dust, albeit a foot ache; while the other, offers an experience of street shopping, negotiating the elements as much as crowds to get their hands on desired objects, foot ache nonetheless, much like the Indian bazaar. Tourists are largely attracted to the former option, often for the elevated

involvement of an international quality and range of products with which a global audience immediately connects. The newly opened Robinsons Store at the Dubai Festival City Mall falls well within this category, replete with deluxe interiors and top-notch services, and acts as a one-stop-high-end-shop for all things (luxuriously) essential. The Robinsons company was founded in Singapore in 1858 and holds most of its stores in Asia and South East Asia. Further wishing to expand into the retail space in the UAE, they recently opened their first store in Dubai. The designers at HMKM wished to keenly bring about the originality of the store into the design of the project. "HMKM's vision draws its inspiration from Robinsons' heritage – in particular, from Singapore's blend of green landscapes and edgy contemporary

architecture, to produce a scheme founded on the notion of a future landscape," explains Christian Papa, Creative Director at HMKM. This conceptual premise can be clearly seen through the use of multiple green elements in its exterior façade, aptly placed in its interiors as well. Sculpted pillars that run through the three-floor atrium of the store have been treated with vertical gardening and the occasional planters create a fresh atmosphere within the large space, connecting the interiors with nature. The use of these elements is evidently justified, as Singapore is known for the amalgam of natural and modern beauty. The façade entrance to the store is a unique design of a blend of large-scale animated screens with sinuous, interlacing lines of timber, bronze anodised aluminium, polished



Pic: Courtesy of Robinsons Middle East



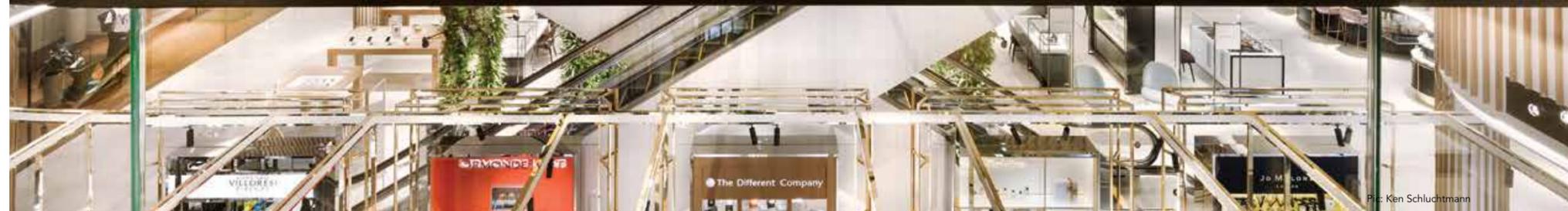
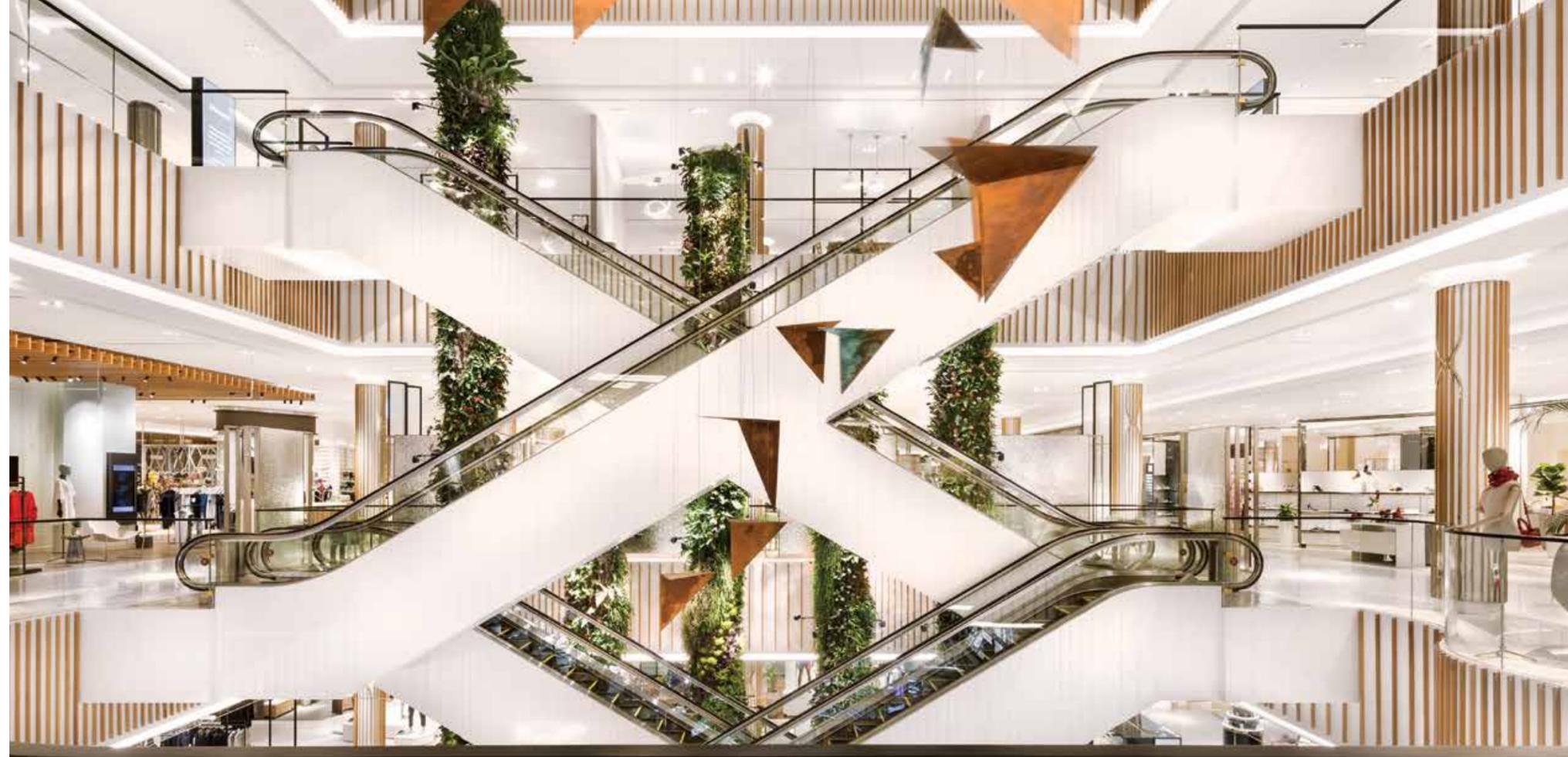
Pic: Courtesy of Robinsons Middle East



Pic: Ken Schluchtmann



Pic: Courtesy of Robinsons Middle East



Pic: Ken Schluchtmann

brass, large scale vertical garden walls and columns by world renowned botanist designer, Patrick Blanc. Robinsons offers a plethora of contemporary and designer fashion experiences with 600 local, regional and international brands. The beauty and menswear department on the ground floor is where most customers enter. Huddled around a central pavilion, the menswear section is defined by a slatted oak ceiling raft, herringbone leather panelled walls, end-grain oak flooring, warm lacquers and dark metal frames. A refined black line framing various architectural elements is a continuous element throughout the store that expresses a prominent facet of Singapore heritage. This not only creates a contemporary atmosphere but also a striking first impression. Sleek black cylindrical spotlights peek out of the striated ceiling to cast subtle pools of light on the merchandise below. Draped in refined Palissandro Classico and

Kalliston marbles, this level also houses a destination urban zone as well as a large area devoted to the beauty department, with a studio-style make-up zone framed in shimmering metal and centred under a bespoke geometric light installation. The mood is immediately uplifted to feel sleek and fashionable. The metal grid overhead dips to form an upended pyramid with sporadic lighting elements contained within. Elsewhere, the familiar black cylindrical spots twist and turn to angle themselves onto vibrant palettes of eager make-up trials. This zone is intentionally bright, not overwhelmingly though, to cater to the intricacies of colour selections and detailed swatches. "The lighting here, was derived after a long process of designing the right elements that would complement the sophisticated nature of space and decorate it with the required warmth of the light," says Ingo Kalecinski, senior designer from dpa lighting consultants.

"With many distinct departments and their unique features, light played a key role in creating the correct ambience and display the right balance for each area, and with further enhancement of the interior design, provided a visually interesting journey through the store for the customer," explains Gary Campbell, partner at dpa lighting consultants. The ideology followed for the lighting design can be seen as an expert incorporation of the luminaires fused with the interior design. The atrium that forms the locus for the store, paints an alluring picture with its verdant columns, crisscrossing escalators, and the edges of each floor-plate neatly lined with a luminescent band. The soaring volume holds all the elements together in its undulating shape, capped with a glass ceiling to facilitate a column of natural light. A curious installation of metallic bird-like forms is suspended from a grid that floats mid-air. The biggest challenge here was to illuminate

*"One of the keys to the success of the lighting scheme is the attention to detail and time spent ensuring the lighting was appropriately integrated with the concepts of interior design and furniture."*  
 – Gary Campbell, dpa lighting consultants



this artwork from the sides since the ceiling could not carry any fixtures. This was cleverly achieved by using the thickness of each floor slab to embed a series of adjustable luminaires, directed upwards to light the objects, yet craftily avoiding glare for onlookers across the atrium.

The upper levels are as intriguing as the one below, the first floor composing of women's wear and accessories. These departments are articulated by a series of internal rotundas, each of which is focused around a sweeping tree-like timber frame, designed to filter daylight and create a memorable sculptural statement. One of the most striking of the lot is a white column encircled with delicate timber fins that reach up and branch outward into a series of timber members arching to envelope the womens accessories department. A crisp black ring studded with down lights emanates a soft glow while the circular periphery gets dotted with fixtures that highlight the wall displays.

It is easy to observe that the lighting design has been meticulously structured for each of the spaces in accordance with the products on the shelves, and their corresponding required illumination levels. The scheme is conceived in layers, generating an overall even tone punctuated with accents and highlights to create points of focus.

"One of the keys to the success of the lighting scheme is the attention to detail and time spent ensuring the lighting was appropriately integrated with the concepts of interior design and furniture. In addition, we made sure the lighting solutions were also flexible to allow for changing displays," explains Campbell.

This is evident in the lingerie department section, which again receives its own distinct ambience, separated from the main floor with layered, rose gold-framed screens and subtle grey hues complemented with an elegant selection of light fixtures.

By contrast, eveningwear ramps up the glamour factor with a palette, which surrounds the customer with soft gold, bronze and champagne tones harmonised by softer light to extend a sense of intimacy. The children's wear and home décor section on the third floor are a long departure from here. The young minds are offered a space that is rendered in brighter colours, vibrant tones and vivid graphics. On the other hand, the British brand, John Lewis gets natural hues and pale neutrals with honeycomb-tiled stone to showcase its products.

With over one hundred different lighting details installed across the whole store, the design caters to both ambient as well as display purposes, customising its design aesthetic to adapt to varying moods,

Pic: Ken Schluchtmann



Pic: Ken Schluchtmann



Pic: Courtesy of Robinsons Middle East



Pic: Courtesy of Robinsons Middle East

shopping styles and consumer groups. The project expresses an image of an international brand aptly fulfilling the clients' requirements and qualitative aspects rightfully fitting into Dubai's sophisticated shopping experience. Robinsons is an example of a project executed with a vision, where the lighting system catalyzes the design process, amalgamating into the cohesive design methodology right from its conception until its realisation.

[www.dpalighting.com](http://www.dpalighting.com)  
[www.hmkm.com](http://www.hmkm.com)

#### PROJECT DETAILS

**Robinsons Store, Dubai, UAE**  
Client: Al-Futtaim Retail Group  
Interior Designer: HMKM  
Design Team: Christian Papa (Creative Director), Marta Sarandeses (Design Team Leader), Bettina Borchers (Design Team Leader)  
Lighting Designer: dpa lighting consultants  
Design Team: Gary Campbell (Partner), Ingo Kalecinski (Senior Designer), Johanna Medina (Senior Designer), Nicholas Harrison (Senior Designer)

#### LIGHTING SPECIFICATIONS

EcoSense: TROV Interior L50  
FLOS: UT PRO 150 LED Spotlight  
GE (General Electrics): New 3 LED Accent String Module  
GE (General Electrics): Terta miniMAX  
KKDC: Flexible FX-S line KKDC: P-FX8 Flexible  
KKDC: TIMI 208 - LED Mix  
LED Linear: VarioLED Flex SKYLLA  
Linea Light: Ice Cut  
Lucent Lighting: Prospex Gimbal Twin/ Triple Midi Trimless (LED70)  
Lucent Lighting: Prospex Pinhole Edge 90 Accent (LED57)  
Meyer: Superlight Nano LED  
Meyer: Nightspot A&B (CMH)  
RCL (Remote Controlled Lighting): DR10  
SGM: R-2 RGBW Rail Light