

# *InFocus*

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*Nicola Sigl*





## Nicola Sigl

### Title

Head of Interior Design

### Company

Hadi Teherani Architects GmbH

### Graduation

Graduate Interior Designer, Ostwestfalen-Lippe University of Applied Sciences, Detmold

### Growing up with a Copic marker 100 set

Some people are lucky enough to grow up in a stimulating environment. As a little girl, Nicola Sigl received inspiration, space and material in abundance for creative development at the drawing table of her father, an architect. "As a child, I created flat layouts and built models. Interior design just became the logical next step later on," says Nicola Sigl, explaining her career choice. As a young woman, she then took the next step from the exterior to the interior with her studies: "Dealing with the interior and handling materials, surfaces and colours appeals to me even more."

This is where she feels in her element to this day. "I'm a very visual person," says Nicola Sigl. She filters her daily impressions, gathered on everyday trips, on journeys or at the industry's major shows, condenses them and allows them to flow into her work with colours, surfaces and materials. In this way, Nicola Sigl also brings nature into the interior, because the interior designer appreciates the grounding power of natural materials such as wool, stone or wood, which connects the space with people. "Materials and surfaces touch me, especially when they feel good."

### Formative professional experience in Abu Dhabi

Hadi Tehrani Architects designed and built Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, named after the first president of the United Arab Emirates, between 2009 and 2011. It was conceived as the first university in the UAE to be shared by young women and men. Although the rooms are currently still segregated by gender, they can be joined at any time in the future. This project was a highlight for Nicola Sigl in many respects in terms of the architectural and interior design as well as the implementation and work on site.

### Colours and materials connect the interior to the exterior

"Colours intoxicate me, even though I only use them sparingly and rarely intensively in my work," confesses Nicola Sigl. However, when the interior designer uses colour, it becomes a stylistic device, for example as a colour accent serving as a quotation and reference point. A powerful example of this is the Courtyard by Marriott in Freiburg, which opened in 2021. The interior design concept is based on the overall design of the Volksbank area surrounding the hotel and continues its external design idea inside. For example, the lamella structure, which abstracts the surroundings of the nearby Black Forest, appears again and again in a wide variety of interpretations. The colours and surfaces - grey beige, anthracite, natural oak, dark grey powdered steel and furniture elements, accents in water blue and mustard yellow - right down to the carpet also quote and refer to the natural surroundings.

It is also a kind of naturalness that, in Nicola Sigl's opinion, characterises rooms in which one immediately feels at ease. Interior spaces must be self-evident to people, both in their functionality and in their routes. "Guests should feel comfortable and almost be able to find their way around blindly, so to speak," is how Nicola Sigl formulates her expectations of hospitality spaces. "People usually perceive the quality of a room unconsciously, without knowing exactly what creates this effect."

But the interior designer knows exactly how to create a space that is perceived as pleasant: With aesthetic and harmonious interior design, comfortable furniture and functional design, Nicola Sigl specifically achieves the interaction between people and their surroundings that makes guests feel comfortable and in the right place. The prerequisite for this is, of course, - apart from the design - a high-quality interior with fine details and the use of natural materials whenever the application area and budget allow.



Courtyard by Marriott Freiburg. Photo: Courtyard Freiburg

### A haven of inspiration

As much as a diverse exchange is important to Nicola Sigl, her office in Hamburg is a place of condensed inspiration for her: "This is where we experience the most thought-provoking ideas in dialogue with Hadi Teherani and team colleagues." Here, internal dialogue meets the exchange with industry partners, fed by the pool of experience from projects and research. It's also here that collages are developed from the materials for sampling the design concepts.

Every project begins with an open brainstorming session in which the basic principles, requirements and goals are formulated. Sketches, materials and mood boards are discussed and developed into a room concept or furniture design, which is then translated into initial plans and developed further. Particular importance is attached to contact with the client and the companies and suppliers carrying out the work, in order to be able to ensure high quality from the design to the execution.





*Courtyard by Marriott Freiburg. Photo: Jochen Stüber*

naturalness play an important role for Nicola Sigl, because they can enhance the individual guest experience with the feeling of a higher quality of life.

In their hotel projects, Hadi Teherani Architects work according to analogue design principles in line with the particular location and the specifications of the hotel brand. The lobbies in the hotels currently under construction, such as the new premium hotel NH Collection in Frankfurt's 128-metre Spin Tower in the European quarter with 428 rooms or the 4 star Scandic Hotel with a 2,000 square metre conference zone in the new Hafenpark quarter in Frankfurt, meet these criteria, as does the Courtyard by Marriott hotel opened last summer in Freiburg.



*Courtyard by Marriott Freiburg. Photo: Courtyard Freiburg*

### **Sustainability of natural materials and good design**

Whenever possible, natural materials are given preference in the interior designs of Hadi Teherani Architects: "We prefer to work with real materials, if the nature and the demands of the project allow it. Real and natural materials make ecologically sense and are valuable for health. They contribute to a healthier indoor atmosphere and have a positive and calming effect on people. In addition, we also associate a form of luxury with real materials, which can be perceived through all the senses - through the feel of the skin, the touch, the look, the smell."

If, in addition to the material, the design is still experienced and felt as functional and beautiful years later, then a project is successful in Nicola Sigl's eyes. This is the case when the design is both contemporary and timeless. And of course, the space must be suitable for its intended use - and be accepted by its users, the residents, guests, customers or visitors.

### **Feeling at home in the hotel**

In the future, Nicola Sigl is certain that design trends in the hospitality industry will revolve even more around the luxury of feeling good, relaxing and refuelling guests. All interior spaces, even openly accessible entrance areas such as the hotel lobby, will have to be designed in such a comfortable and accessible way that guests immediately feel relaxed, safe and at home. An inviting atmosphere and cosy furnishings increase the value of the stay and entice guests to stay and come back. At the same time, hotel lobbies should facilitate a range of encounters - between tourists, business travellers, staff and locals. In addition to the traditional functions of receiving guests, space for communication and work should also be offered. With the help of themed concepts, lobbies must also offer a particular experience value. This can succeed if entrance areas are designed multifunctionally on the one hand, while offering users a high quality of living on the other.

Functional areas are therefore intermingled, which has an impact on the fixed fixtures and the choice of furniture. Comfortable chairs and sofas, special plants and artwork as well as appealing carpets and furniture are the perfect complement to ensure an inviting, relaxing atmosphere and create a special mood. And here, too, sustainability and

### **Multifunctional entrance area**

The Marriott Courtyard hotel in Freiburg is a good example of the intention to smoothly link all the necessary functional areas. For example, a bar functions as the centre of the room. In the evenings in particular, it serves as a meeting point, but it is equally inviting as a pleasant place to work during the day. The round seating niches at the sides also offer a retreat for reading or lingering, but can be used just as excellently for small meetings. The mix of lounge and café furnishings provides the necessary comfort and gives guests the opportunity to choose the appropriate lounge situation according to their needs.

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