



A festive and exuberant atmosphere pervades the pavilion's VIP lounge.
Photos: Courtesy of Cloud-9

► The Expo pavilion with a room for that special occasion

LOUNGELIFE

By Liu Mengyue

As a country steeped in a culture of architectural achievement, it's little wonder that the Netherlands Pavilion has become one of the most visited attractions at the Shanghai Expo 2010.

Located at the top end of the fittingly-titled Kuai Le Jie – or Happy Street – the pavilion's VIP lounge has combined the best of both Chinese and Western influences.

"I took the flower-shaped crown (the building's peak) as the original source of inspiration because it's festive and exuberant and I wanted to create a very special space with this idea," the lounge designer Karin An Rijlaarsdam, told the Global Times. "It reminds me of a dream world, almost like a place for princes and princesses." The pavilion's VIP lounge hall is predominantly yellow, echoing both the favored color of European royalty of old, as well as that of the imperial court of ancient China.

In the center of the lounge floor lies a Chinese five-pointed star, embedded with 4,500 crystals, and illuminated by a spotlight suspended from the ceiling. "This light is meant to suggest an old Shanghai ballroom," said An Rijlaarsdam.

Around the surface of the ceiling

are diamond-shaped porcelain lights, made in Jingdezhen, China's famed center for porcelain goods.

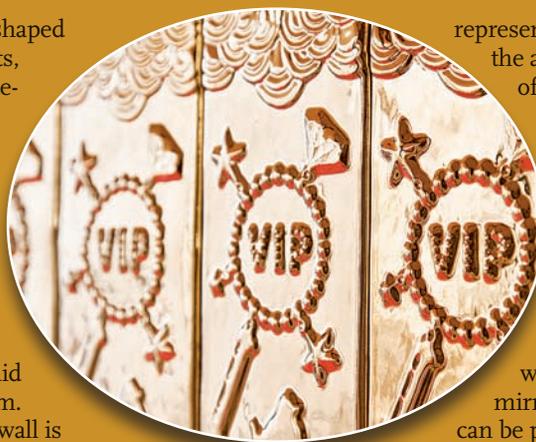
"Diamonds are probably the most universal symbol of VIP living," said An Rijlaarsdam.

Part of the wall is also paved in porcelain tiles, and is inscribed with the Chinese character for "happy".

Other intimations of luxury include a limousine, a well-kept poodle and diamonds.

"It's meant to be a playful idea," said An Rijlaarsdam. "Through the poodle and the diamond, I'm conveying the idea that nothing should be taken too seriously. You could say it's a little dig at society's obsession with consumerism. The poodle may not be exactly an iconic figure in Chinese culture and history, but it's a very prevalent sight in today's society and this has made a big impression on me."

Another of the walls is festooned with 3,000 hand-made silk bows,



An ambience that rises to the occasion.

representative of the adornments of a fairy-tale princess. An outsized hand mirror finishes the image off.

The pink pillars are another feminine touch, while framed, mirrored partitions can be placed between tables to ensure an extra element of privacy, if the occasion demands it.

"The inspiration for this is derived from the type of screens that were commonly found in the Tang Dynasty," said An Rijlaarsdam. "It has the feeling of a doll's house. This is an intentional addition because I wanted to add some girlish, feminine touches."

The walls of the second floor lounge are dominated by hand-painted multi-colored squares, painstakingly created by 10 craftsmen over the course of two weeks.

To foreign observers they are redolent of the outfit of Harlequin figures who were often employed to entertain

European royalty.

"He represents everything that is fun," said An Rijlaarsdam. "And that is the impression I want to create with this lounge."

Bright Neon lights also feature prominently in An Rijlaarsdam's work. In the bathrooms she has used neon lights to create the Chinese characters for "male" and "female".

Each of the Expo pavilions have at least one lounge, such as the 6 Sense restaurant located in the French pavilion and the Schanigarten Restaurant in the Austrian Pavilion. The Holland VIP pavilion lounge can seat up to 150 people. And although, the space isn't open to regular visitors

Karin is happy to show people around when she is at the site.

I've noticed that guests always walk directly to the room's large hand mirror to take a photo; kids especially love it," An Rijlaarsdam said. Having lived and worked in Shanghai for over five years, Karin said she is inspired by the people around her. "I like the way that a family can live in a little shop, eat there and sleep there, and there's no sense of any boundary between private and public spaces."

