

HOMES | DECORATING | SHOPPING | DESIGN | GARDENS | PROPERTY

INSIDEOUT

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Lounging around

Expert styling
tips to refresh
your living room

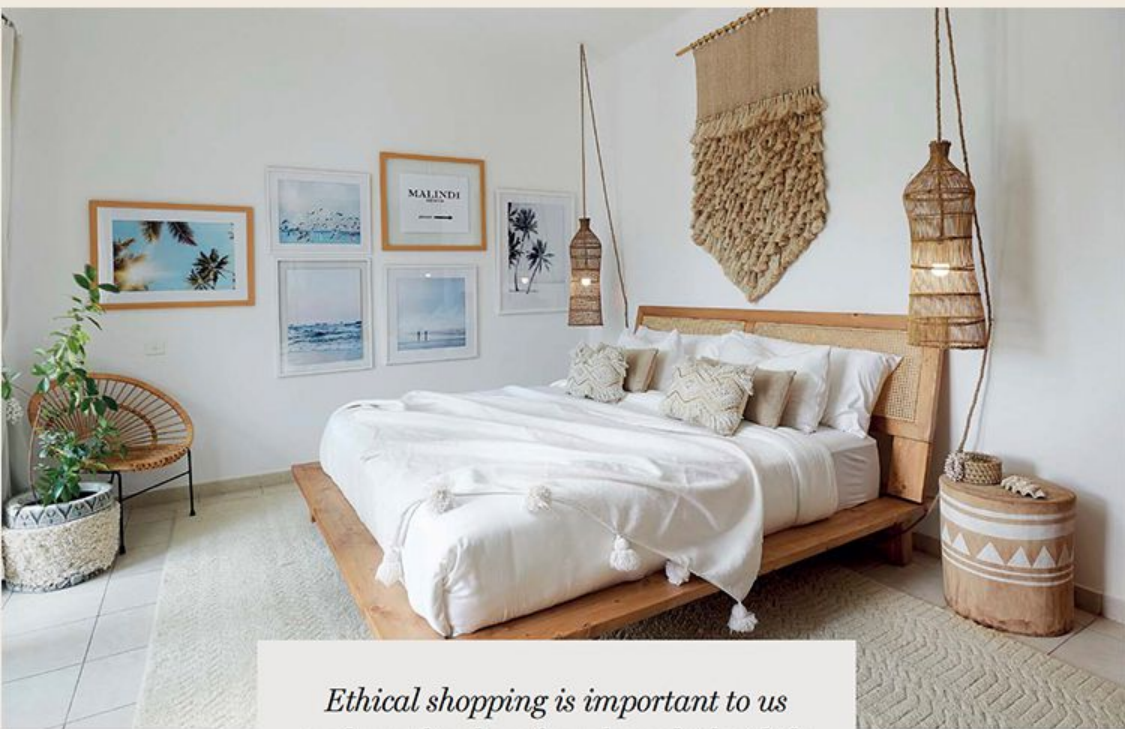
TABLE TALK

*Ramadan
settings to
impress*

**BAUHAUS
REBORN**
100 YEARS OF
BOLD DESIGN

HOME OF THE YEAR
DISCOVER THE WINNING VILLA AND ITS STORY





*Ethical shopping is important to us
and we often buy from brands that help
support under-privileged communities*



home to London, especially because we had just moved in together and the flat was unfurnished. I was happy to have furniture that I had a connection to, otherwise a home can be very impersonal.'

Four years ago, the couple married and decided to uproot themselves to sunnier climes, choosing Dubai for its central geographical location and relatively short travel time for Valentina's 13-year-old dog Schumi, who shares her expatriate adventures.

'Because of my time in Kenya at the beach house, I am used to being outside a lot and I don't like to look out of the window and see tall buildings, so Arabian Ranches is the perfect community for me,' says the Italian. 'This is the kind of house I grew up in and it's my idea of home.'

The couple brought along her heritage-rich furniture, which includes the panther, the daybed, the wood cabinet in the guest bedroom, vintage lamps, wooden chests, and various ornaments and accessories. 'The daybed is quite deep and I have memories of all my family sitting on the daybed and our five dogs,' she adds. 'I would never be able to have a regular, boring sofa now.'

She met her British husband Michael during a conservation trip in Namibia 10 years ago, and their shared love of the continent has filled their home with tactile textures, vintage artefacts and striking photographs and artwork. Michael is a keen artist and photographer, and ▶



Clockwise from left With white painted walls and tasselled fabrics, the master bedroom balcony matches the interior décor; the couple designed the wood and cane bed while the lights, wall hanging and rug are from Tribe. Shell accessories on the balcony; tribal woodwork from Kenya; Schumi's bed in the master bedroom, with a painted accent; this cane cabinet matches the bed's headboard.



Clockwise from above The guest bedroom has a romantic holiday vibe, thanks to the custom four poster from London, sisal rugs from Pottery Barn and IKEA and wood side tables from White Moss; the cabinet is from Kenya. The home office features a bespoke desk inspired by an airplane wing, while the easel is from Valentina's childhood. She made these shelves from leather and wood, and the light shade using yarn. Bamboo hangers are an unusual accent, adding to the tactility of the room.



I love the story behind handcrafted pieces and I enjoy working closely with carpenters as I admire their skills so much



his sketches of animal skulls and framed photos of wild animals create striking gallery walls in the living room and entrance hall.

The couple have also designed several key pieces of furniture in their home, including the wooden beds, the contemporary office desk and the rustic dining furniture.

'The master bedroom is my favourite room of the house,' says Valentina, who has dressed their custom-made, low-level wood and cane bed with whitewashed, tribal-patterned bedside tables from Kenya, rustic rattan bedside lights suspended with twine, a large, heavily tasselled wall hanging made from jute and raffia, and fringed white cushions. 'We moved from a smaller villa so we needed another bedroom set, but we couldn't find something that we loved in the shops. So we started with the idea of making a cane headboard and cabinet and designing it together was really fun.'

Like the rest of the house, the colour palette in the master bedroom and the balcony of earthy tones against white is simple and fresh, with layers of natural materials

and plants adding texture, warmth and vitality. 'I really like how calming white is. Michael and I want to come home from work and relax in a space that is tranquil and calm. We have recently started meditating on the daybed on the bedroom balcony, so we are not the type of people that would have a "loud" house.'

The dining table and matching cabinet were designed and made for their London apartment and used to have a vintage, Indian-style patina of distressed teal and red with tin door fronts tacked onto the cabinet. For their Dubai home, Valentina whitewashed and sanded the wood to reveal its natural tones, removed the tin and added quirky pineapple drawer knobs to match their new scheme.

'After university, shabby chic was the style that I liked, but it's not something I would go for now so I worked on it, upcycled it and changed the knobs so its more beachy and more relevant to my current style. I love that I wasn't scared to work on it with a sander and hack it myself.

'I see these things that move with you from place to place as value pieces, and if you are into DIY you can ▶

I love natural textures and the qualities that artisanal pieces can add to a home



Above Previously terraced, the couple grass seeded the garden and added pampas grass borders for a greener outlook. **Opposite** The veranda off the living room is a peaceful spot for morning coffee, with a Byron Bay daybed and tribal cushions; Valentina updated the white plant pots with painted details.

adapt them and change them. Then the lifespan of the furniture you commission can be really long compared to anything store bought.

'I love designing furniture and I have always seen the huge value that you bring to something that's been custom-made, not only to fit your space nicely but in the exact style that you want. I also love the story behind handcrafted pieces and I love to work closely with carpenters as I admire their skills so much.'

Add to this Valentina's background as the general manager of the ethical home furnishing boutique Tribe, where she worked for four years, their home is a haven of artisanal, handmade pieces that are sustainably sourced from across the globe. Wall hangings from Mexico, handwoven rugs from India, handmade ceramics from Australia, all from Tribe, add to the artisanal flair in their home.

'Even though they are store bought they come from all over the world, and many are made by people in under-privileged communities who are paid Fair Trade wages or are supported by charitable foundations,' she adds. 'There is sustainability behind the shopping of this furniture, which I think is really relevant today. To know where your things come from is really important for me.' ■

STYLE FILE How to get the look

Hojet rug
IKEA, Dh289

Linen seat cushion
H&M Home, Dh110

Bamboo display cabinet
HK Living, Dh2,834

Princess peacock chair
Tribe, Dh1,850

Fenomatic My Home Rich Matt paint in Calm Jotun, Dh14.36 per litre

Way outdoor mat (made from recycled plastic bottles) ferm LIVING, Dh227

Woodstock tasselled pouf
Amara, Dh822