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# Creating balance

Interior designer **Leema Ajith** has ensured this new Villa Lantana home offers personalised spaces for each family member

Words: Lucy Land





“Modern in their outlook yet traditional at heart,” is how interior designer Leema Ajith describes her clients, a husband and wife from south India who moved to Dubai in 2002. Their first home in the emirate was an apartment in Jumeirah Lake Towers, which was styled by Leema, but the couple soon needed more space for their growing family. With its community facilities, proximity to Dubai’s arterial roads and spacious homes, new development, Villa Lantana, located in south Barsha, became the couple’s top choice in which to buy. They asked Leema to work with them again to transform their property into their dream home, which they moved into five months ago.

The family’s new villa includes a foyer, living and dining area, kitchen and a bedroom on the ground floor, while the first floor comprises of master bedroom, a bedroom for each child and a family room, which has been transformed into a room for the husband to retreat to.

“The wife wanted a grand entrance, a warm and earthy aesthetic and to use the property’s nooks for her Indian curios. She craved an easy to maintain,

contemporary design combined with tradition, and for her home to be Vastu Shastra compliant,” Leema says. Meaning ‘science of architecture’ in Hindu, Vastu Shastra incorporates Hindu and often Buddhist beliefs. Its designs attempt to integrate architecture with nature, using geometric patterns, symmetry and directional alignments. The husband, meanwhile, wanted a cosy space in which to unwind after a stressful day at work.

“My mantra for the ground floor was to strike a balance between modern and ethnic styles,” Leema reveals. “The main door opens onto the foyer, with a collection of brass lamps that the couple has collected over the years. I combined a clean, off-white wall with floor-to-ceiling rich walnut cabinets and a warm stone-clad wall to create a space that is both regal and welcoming.”

A gypsum wall, with a door, was built along the stairway to create a sense of enclosure to the living area. Combining a mix of tactile materials and a palette of green, brown and taupe, the linear living space is divided into two smaller seating areas, with the large window emphasising a connection with the



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outside. The side of the gypsum wall facing the living area was clad in a full-sized mirror. The natural light from the windows is reflected in the mirrored wall, creating a beautifully bright space that seems bigger than it really is. Furnished with striking Indian and customised pieces, the living space includes a long, polished maple and rich walnut wall, which supports the TV; solid seating lacquered with wax; brass lamps; antiques; and a curio corner shelf, showcasing mementos that the family have picked up on their travels. There is also a handcrafted statue of a meditating Buddha seated on a wooden stool located close to the mirrored wall to welcome guests into the living space.

On one side of the living space is a dining area, in which the elegant dining table, from Al Huzafa Furniture, seats eight people. Leaning against the muted wall is a stunning eight-foot solid wooden door boasting intricate carvings and brass inlays, while plants add freshness to the décor.

Upstairs, an off-white wall provides the backdrop for a vibrant six-foot by four-foot mural, which was custom-made in Kerala for the couple. As the landing area offers the connecting space to the three distinct bedrooms, the den and the art-furnished wall, it was crucial to make the opposing wall and the space interesting. This was achieved

with a rich, textured metallic green paint (called Alba from Mas Paints) and an oversized chandelier.

The master bedroom features a four-poster bed, from Marina Home, with white georgette draping, complemented by an earthy bedspread and a coloured throw. A lounge chair and reading lamp from Pottery Barn completes the elegant and classic look.

Pretty but fun, the daughter's bedroom features a graffiti wallpaper from Mr Perswall and a grey tufted headboard. On the opposite wall, the study area flows gently into the dressing area. With the son currently in boarding school, and visiting Dubai every three months, his room also has a study and sleeping zone, but has a minimal yet warm look, while a beautiful city wallpaper complements the summer blue colour of the room.

The husband's industrial-style room features an exposed brick effect wallpaper by Mr Perswall; a chesterfield sofa; a custom-built bar, which continues as a TV unit and book shelving; dark flooring; and rich walnut-finished cabinets.

The space is further personalised with Mapiful, a customised map poster of the couple's favourite countries that they have visited. "The room may have been created for the husband, but it has become the entire family's favourite room," Leema reveals.



**HOME COMFORTS**

Lighting creates energy, drama and greatly affects your emotions. I usually break lighting up into accent, task and ambient. Colour is also very important. I used Mas Paints throughout this home: Maya, a soothing shade of green, on the ground floor and an elegant metallic green called Alba in the master bedroom and for the upstairs foyer wall. Do not clutter your space. Cluttering your physical space will clutter your mind, too. Home is... A place to reflect your taste and mood.