



AN INSPIRED COMBINATION

The Dabaghis achieved their Dubai idyll through creative remodelling and classic design choices in their Motor City home

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When different cultures come together, the result is an intriguing mix of global influences and styles. Simona and Chukri Dabaghi's light-filled home in Motor City is a beautiful blend of European elegance and Arabic hospitality, thanks to an extensive and rather ambitious remodelling project.

Moving from Dublin to Dubai five years ago was not an easy decision. The couple loved the small-town feel of the Irish capital where they'd initially met and lived for a number of years. They expected Dubai to be a fast-paced cosmopolitan hub; instead, it came as a pleasant surprise when they discovered that as well as boasting a diverse, multicultural society, it was also a fantastic place to raise a family. 'We immediately loved the fact that Dubai is a melting pot of different nationalities, and when we found Motor City we knew that this was where we wanted to live,' says Simona, who was drawn to the area's community feel with its many playgrounds, pools and tree-lined streets.

The family moved in to a rental property while they searched for the right house to buy in the neighbourhood. 'It took us nearly

three years to find the right villa, but as soon as we walked in to this one I was struck by the potential of it,' Simona recalls.

However, what started off as a relatively small to-do list – adding a narrow extension with skylights to the kitchen along the side wall – rapidly turned into an ever-growing catalogue of changes. These ranged from the aesthetic, such as swapping the ceramic floor tiles for natural oak flooring and repainting all the dark wood door and window frames white, to more ambitious architectural renovations. The latter involved transforming the attic into a spacious fourth bedroom with an en suite shower room, adding a dressing area to the master bedroom and changing the dark-wood bannister on the stairs and landing for stunning glass panels that allow light to flood the whole stairwell. 'Just when we thought the inventory of changes was complete, we'd have another idea to make the house even better,' Simona smiles.

The dark old-fashioned kitchen units were among the first items to be consigned to the skip, and in their place now stand sleek two-tone units from Hacker. 'I'm drawn to classic contemporary styles and in the kitchen, especially, I knew I ▶

Clockwise from top left The wallpaper in the hallway is an Osborne & Little design from Aati. The oversized Maskros pendant from Ikea brightens up the boys' bedroom. A trio of pendants hang over the kitchen island. The couple have collected many ornaments and artefacts from their travels. The Eiffel chairs are from Top Chairs in Al Quoz. A painted dresser in the kitchen adds a shabby-chic feel. Muted beige is a good partner for the light aqua Osborne & Little paper. Cushions from Zara Home add a splash of colour. **Centre** The dressing table is paired with a Louis Ghost chair from Kartell and wallpaper from Aati.



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PROFILE

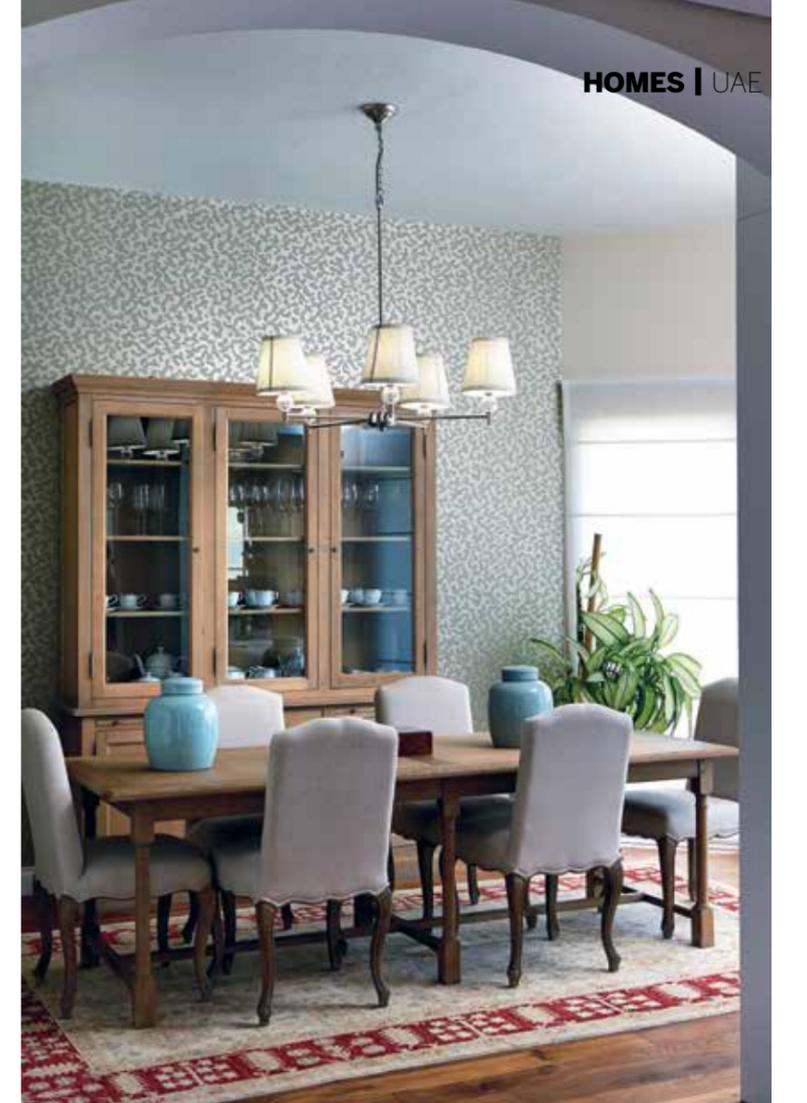
THE OWNERS Half-Spanish, half-Italian Simona Dabaghi, and her Lebanese husband Chukri, general manager of a software company, moved to Dubai five years ago. They have two sons, Alexander, four, and Daniel, 16 months.

THE HOME This detached villa in Motor City has been extensively reconfigured, with a downstairs extension added to the kitchen as well as an attic conversion, all of which now make the property a spacious four-bedroom family home. On the ground floor there is a playroom, cloakroom, living room, dining room, kitchen and laundry room. Upstairs are two large bedrooms, a family bathroom and a master bedroom with en suite shower room and walk-in wardrobe. The attic has been converted to accommodate a spacious en suite guest room. ▶

Left In the living room, Simona chose sofas from the Spanish brand Ka International at Al Wasl Square and teamed them with vibrant cushions from Zara Home. A Flamant coffee table perfectly matches the oak floorboards from Nordic Homeworx. The living room walls are filled with Spanish art from Simona’s family collection. ‘My mother is an artist, and my father always collected art, so it’s important to me to have these paintings around,’ she explains.

DESIGN INSIGHT

This take on a classic island cleverly features a neat end counter in place of a standard kitchen table, saving much space while also being perfect for informal family meals.



needed a design that was practical, always looked clean and helped to reflect the light.' Simona goes on to explain that although the couple share similar tastes in decor choices, the difference in their cultures resulted in one or two compromises along the way. 'My husband drew the line at opening up the kitchen to the dining room: open-plan living is so much more popular in Europe than in the Middle East, but actually now I'm glad we kept the two rooms separate,' she admits.

Once the remodelling of the house was complete, Simona looked to high-end European brands to decorate. Striking

wallpaper adorns most of the rooms: a Roberto Cavalli print has been chosen for the living room, with Osborne & Little and Sanderson mainly used elsewhere. Always on the look-out for classic styles that are neither too modern, nor too old-fashioned, stores like Flamant, Zara Home and Spanish brand Ka International have become firm favourites. 'When I walk in somewhere it has to say something to me. I think our house reflects all the cultures that are important to us, but most importantly, it's a family-oriented space for the boys to grow up in and for all of us to relax in together.' ▶

Above The kitchen is the heart of the family home: the Hacker kitchen units create a contemporary feel, while two Miele ovens make catering for parties easy. **Above right** Simona chose a subtle aqua wallpaper from Warde for the dining room and teamed it with an elegant dresser and dining set from Flamant. **Right** By replacing the dark wood bannister with glass panels, the hallway feels open and light.



Above left The headboard in the master bedroom is covered with a botanical print fabric from Ka International. **Top right** By moving the door of the master en suite, Simona was able to create a stunning walk-in wardrobe. **Below right** Simona fell in love with the bird pattern wallpaper from Sanderson straightaway and knew it would be the perfect print for baby Daniel's nursery.

STYLE FILE How to get the look



Adelaide chair
BoConcept,
Dh790



Checked blanket
Zara Home,
Dh329



Kenny vase
THE One,
Dh699



Arienne mirror
Laura Ashley
Home, Dh1,300



Nathaniel cabinet
Flamant, Dh10,940



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