

F R O M T H E

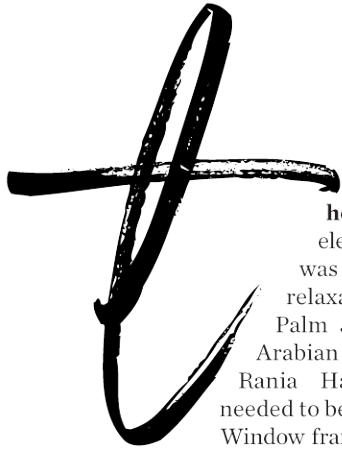


O U T S I D E
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At a seaside retreat in Dubai, VSHD Design brings beach elegance to life, while subtly redefining tradition

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he brief from the client was short: elegant, calm, functional, cosy. This was to be a secondary home, a place of relaxation. And so, when she visited the Palm Jumeirah villa with views of the Arabian Gulf, VSHD's interior architect Rania Hamed immediately knew what needed to be done: bring the outdoors indoor.

Window frames in sheer glass were enlarged to make the most of the natural light while internal walls were brought down to create bigger, breathable spaces. Tinted glass panes were replaced by blinds and curtains made of natural fabrics, redefining the idea of privacy. Revealed, the garden gained a natural sheltering role, encasing the home in its serene protection.

Drawing inspiration from American neoclassical style, Hamed set out to design her very own modernised interpretation. Many elements were created in-house, such as wall panellings in the living room and dining rooms and the 3D panelling of the *majlis*. In the spirit of the brief, "elegant yet functional", the firm also employed noble materials such as 28-cm-wide smoked oak flooring and marble—an unconventional marriage for this part of the world. "Interiors that make use of raw and least treated materials are less used in this region as they often contain what are perceived to be imperfections. But mentalities are changing. There is now more of an acceptance of say, streaks in the stone. This is being recognised as proof of origin, adding more fun to our work," says Hamed.

The *majlis* is a beautiful illustration of this paradigm shift that relies strongly on the ability of firms such as VSHD to think outside the box. "We wanted all parts of this beach house to take on that laid-back-yet-functional quality, including the *majlis*—typically the most austere space of any local home," Hamed explains. Here, the firm opted for an informal décor, mixing earthy elements such as the wall covering by Elitis—reminiscent of a quarry—with playful notes, such as the landscape cushions by Elitis Accessories and upcycled tree-trunk side tables, for a quasi-indoor zen garden result that breaks with tradition. Clad entirely in customised banana leaf wall panels by Barrisol Normalu, the powder room echoes the surrounding garden. In the formal dining room, an artwork by Sherin Guirguis and in the family dining area, calligraphic works by Hassan Massoudy bring a subtle modern Arabic touch to the sleek ambience.

"Cosy" finds its utmost expression in the bedroom where a rich golden wall covering is paired with a honey-coloured slatted timber screen which again, seems to extend a protective backdrop to the master bed.

When asked if her vision was well received, Hamed smiles: "Bit by bit, you convince the client." And when it came to revealing the finished project, she says: "They always supported us throughout the proofs. Then, the minute they came in, they said 'this is our home!'"

