

THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

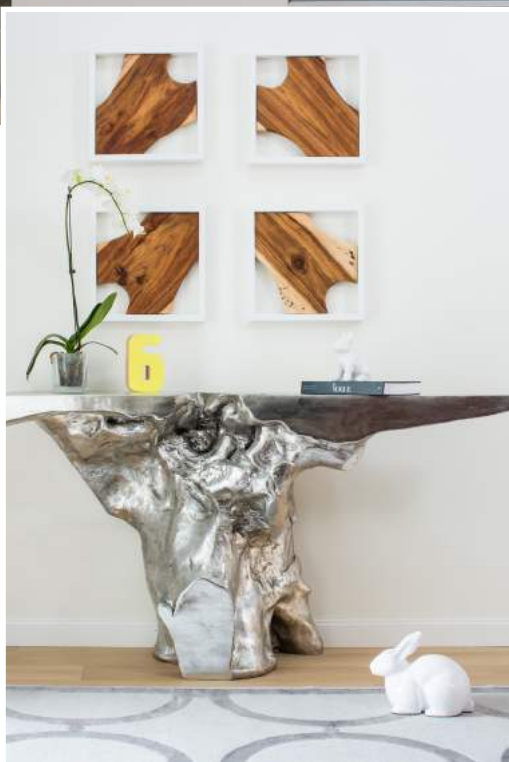
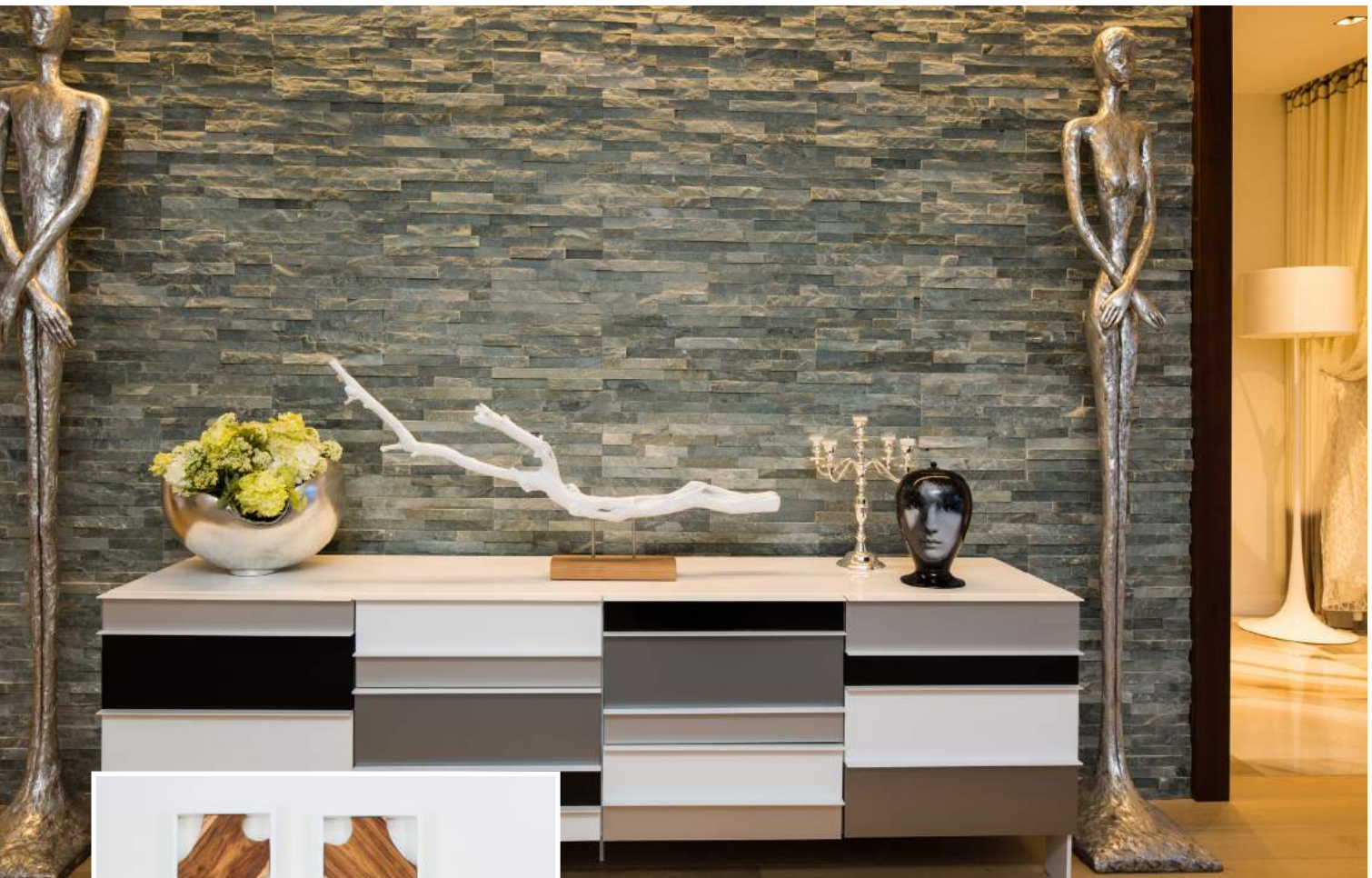
Bhupi and Robert moved the swimming pool from the side to the back of the house, to soak up the stunning view of The Palm and Dubai's mainland



*How emerging
interior designer
**Bhupinder
Matharu** found her
design guru and a
heavenly family home*

Words by ELEANOR JOSLIN

*Photography by
AASIYA JAGADEESH*



Above: Decorative rabbits hop around the house, a playful addition to Bhupi's clean aesthetic; shown here in the entrance hall. Top: Stone feature wall in the dining room

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hupinder Matharu's passion for her new home on Palm Jumeirah goes beyond that of a proud interior designer; she's finally found her career calling and can't quite believe her dream has become a reality.

In the space of just two years, she's created her family's perfect home on The Palm and become one half of interior design practice MOD Studio Interiors, which operates in Dubai and Los Angeles. When her business partner Robert Elliot's company four1five took on her Palm Jumeirah project in 2014, he soon saw great potential in her and helped transform her from client to co-founder of their transatlantic venture a year later.

"Meeting Robert was a real turning point for me," she says of the American, who moved back to LA last year and encouraged Bhupinder to become a partner of his new company MOD Studio Interiors. "When I approached him to work on the villa, I was keen to learn more about design so I interned for him. He was a fantastic mentor every step of the way."

"After my first meeting with Bhupinder I could tell we were on the same page," recalls Robert. "We both share an affinity for warm, contemporary design and have the same liking for certain colours. It was like we were designing as one person. I knew right away her project was going to be special. Her willingness to learn about architecture and design made this project more enjoyable and also helped make our ideas possible. She already had a good understanding of quality and wanted the best. Working with clients that have this mindset allow us to use a more aggressive architectural design for the home and opens us up to a huge market of materials, because we are not limited by a smaller budget."

They transformed the property from a traditional Arabian-style villa with arched windows and low ceilings to a contemporary home with more open space and natural light. They created a triple-height domed ceiling entrance hall and galleried landing, added skylights, enlarged windows, and incorporated sliding glass doors that open onto the garden from two sides of the house. ➤

STYLING BY ELEANOR JOSLIN, LAYLA HASHEMI AND BEBE LEONE. ART CURATED BY BEBE LEONE. HAIR AND MAKEUP: JETSET



“YOU CAN'T GIVE UP ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS. I CAN'T BELIEVE THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY HERE, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY BEEN WORTH THE WAIT”

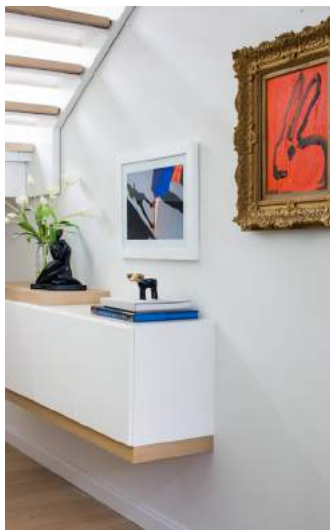
Bhupinder Matharu, interior designer



Bhupi in the lounge area of her home office. Furniture from Ligne Roset. Triptych posters quote Steve Jobs, in reference to her love of Apple devices. Wears undone shirt, Fatema Farden



Above: Blue and orange vases from Olivier Gagnère and blue Ralph Lauren cushions pick out these shades in the artwork. Below: Bhupi relates to Hunt Slonem's signature subject, *Bunnies*, from Cuadro Gallery; *Cannes Confidential*, Jonatha Borzicchi. Right: Painting by Emirati artist Khalid AlBanna, Cuadro Gallery



However, all these structural changes and additions took time to be approved by Nakheel. "I lived, slept and drank The Palm while working on this house," laughs Bhupi, as her friends call her. "It could get quite overwhelming, and it really was a waiting game at times, but you can't give up on something like this. I can't believe the incredible journey here, and it's been worth the wait."

The Palm was her dream destination for 14 years. When she moved to Dubai with her husband Sanjeev, COO of Landmark Group, she looked to The Palm as a place of paradise. "We are both from Mumbai and Sanjeev grew up near the beach, so he loves being near the water," explains the forty-two-year-old. The couple first lived in Karama before taking their first step towards their castle in the sand, when they moved to Marina Residences in 2010 with their daughter Meher, now six years old. At this time Bhupi was working on the interior design



The Matharu family in their open-plan dining room and kitchen. Orange abstract painting by Chris Trueman. Kitchen custom-made by Bhupi and Robert, using Silestone work surfaces from Cosentino. Bhupi wears Vince blouse, Diane von Fürstenberg trousers and Christian Louboutin shoes. Meher wears Tadashi Shoji dress and Mini Melissa shoes, both from S'uce. Sanjeev wears Hugo Boss suit

"I KNEW HER DESIGN INTUITION WAS THERE RIGHT AWAY. CONFIDENCE IN HER OWN DECISIONS HAS MADE HER A TALENTED DESIGNER"
Robert Elliot, interior designer



of their home in Mumbai. Even without any formal training she created a beautifully appointed house, and realised she had a natural eye for interiors. "I knew her design intuition was there right away," adds Robert. "After we completed her project, she fine-tuned these skills. A positive attitude and willingness to try new ideas, and confidence in her own decisions has made her a talented designer."

While Robert oversees the projects in America, they're on the phone every day. They have worked on a number of properties in the UAE together, including a 6,200-square-foot family home in The Meadows and a couple's two-bedroom apartment in Cayan Tower, Dubai Marina. Both were designed with MOD Studio Interior's signature contemporary and minimalistic aesthetic, also evident in Bhupi's three-bedroom home. "I learnt so much about restructuring in The Meadows project, and that has become key for me, as well as details and finishes, which I'm very particular about."

From the brushed nickel handles on the doors to the oak hardwood flooring, cladding and restructured windows and doorways, she paid close attention to every detail. "We had three contractors working with us on the project, which was a tough aspect to handle, and – although I'm usually modest – I managed it very well," she says proudly. They utilised Robert's reliable contacts from his seven years in the UAE with four1five, and new ones made in America. Local contractors installed the wood flooring, wall cladding and the stone that forms the striking feature walls in the dining area and living room, and concealed the electrics and plumbing, to uphold the clean aesthetic Bhupi wanted. A third was handpicked from Miami to manufacture the mahogany doors, including the impressive pivoting front door. "Getting such a unique type of door implemented here was no easy task, and I did so much research into it," recalls Bhupi. "It was a big risk for me, having little experience of this, yet Robert gave me the confidence and I thoroughly enjoyed the process."

They worked with experts at every stage, and even for the finishing touches, such as artwork, Bhupi took professional advice. She turned to friend and art curator Bebe Leone, founder of The Heritage Studio. "All the paintings I picked for her house are interesting both from a decorative and artistic standpoint. We wanted something beautiful and valuable," says Bebe. "Blue and orange are dominant in all the art and accessories downstairs as they pick out these colours from Bhupi's first purchase, the stunning *Film #29* painting in the hall from Roberto Coda Zabetta. It's important to have cohesion."

Upstairs, the artwork ranges from a floating Buddha to humorous typographic prints in Bhupi's home office, which quote the late Steve Jobs. This is her favourite room. She oversaw the whole redesign of this space, from moving the guest toilet to the landing, implementing a skylight, designing the custom-made work station, and choosing the Ligne Roset furniture. She kept Nakheel's arched window by the seating area, showing she has an eye for what works from the original plans. She took a "risk" in this room, she admits, referring to the bold statement wall of dark grey Benjamin Moore paint and geometric artwork. "I love this room," she sighs, reflecting the hard yet ultimately rewarding work that went into transforming it. "What you see here is completely my own design. I like the clean lines of French and German designers, square and straight lines, and nothing that will date."

"Now the villa is complete it is so relaxing and so quiet. I actually get goosebumps from the memories of how it all came together. When Meher told me she loved her bedroom that was the best thing, because a lot of six-year-old girls wouldn't like the idea of grey and pink, but to me that was better than a typically girly palette. I wanted to think outside of the box and play with colour. For us, as designers, final touches like this can make or break any design. As we say, "the details make the design". ■