

A welcoming, light-filled living room features the library Alessandra always wanted. Paint by Jotun, sofas, coffee table and wood framed chairs from Ebarza. Armchairs from THE One Fusion, reupholstered in yellow fabric.

# ITALIAN BY DESIGN

This vibrant home in Al Furjan embraces colour, character and comfort, creating an inviting ambience to enjoy with family and friends

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The open plan of the main floor allows great flow for entertaining. The wood bar extension is the same wood as the dining table, sourced from Indonesia



**PROFILE**

**THE OWNER AND DESIGNER** Marialessandra (pictured left) and Davide Fabbri live here with their daughter Francesca, 14, and their four dogs, Bullo, Gale, Cocoa and Lola. They collaborated with Marco & Cinzia Tedeschi (right) of Smart Renovation on the renovation and interior design.

**THE HOME** The two-storey, three-bedroom villa in Al Furjan has an open plan flow with vibrant personality and contemporary design.

**M**arialessandra and Davide Fabbri met in Abu Dhabi 15 years ago and, coincidentally, were not only from the same region in Italy, but towns only a few kilometres apart. But when they moved to Dubai and bought their three-bedroom villa in Al Furjan in 2014, Alessandra felt something was missing from home.

‘I grew up in a big house in Italy, where there were libraries everywhere, so I’ve always felt that my home in Dubai was missing a library but in this house the space wasn’t really available,’ she says. Or so she thought. However, she and her husband decided to wait to consider renovating until they were more settled.

‘We had become friends with Marco and Cinzia Tedeschi from Smart Renovation many years before we thought about the renovation. So, when it was time, we began to discuss how to develop this idea of transforming our home. We wanted an open space where we could receive people and entertain guests, have parties and big dinners. We love to stay in the house and welcome friends to our home. We really like to live in the house. And, of course, there was my wish for a library. These were the ideas that inspired the concept.’

They talked about it in various stages from the technical possibilities – knocking down walls, removing doors and completely replacing the original kitchen to the overall interior aesthetic and working with one of Alessandra’s favourite colours – green.

‘I had initially thought we would go with a darker green for our ▶



**Clockwise from left** Beautiful textural and colour surprise on the alcove ceiling with a peacock feather wallpaper sourced from Dragon Mart. HighLife vintage poster satirises living in the UAE, which Alessandra has for 25 years. A collection of black-and-whites in gold frames in the foyer. A glass and gold ornament shimmers on the dining room sideboard. The live-edge detail of the dining table.





**Above** The pendant light structure is from Ebarza, Philippe Starke Louis Ghost chairs from Kartell, Kubuki floor lamp from Kartell and the colourful artwork by American Pop Art painter Peter Max was picked up by the couple while travelling in the US.



**Above** The kitchen was conceived by Smart Renovation's Marco Tedeschi and made in Italy. The dark quartz countertop is top-tier quality from Dekton.

living room, like a Hunter green, and we reviewed many shades, but this was the one that created the most character and light. For me, it had the best energy and effect.'

With a lot of natural light flooding in to the living room, it is a vibrant façade to come home to. Strategic lighting over the wall shelving highlights the couples' interests displayed in volumes, while the arch acts as a frame around the olive tree planted outside in the garden. In the alcove between the arch and the window, your eyes are drawn up to a surprise design element with stunning peacock wallpaper on the ceiling – a fantastic find at Dragon Mart. 'We fell in love with that wallpaper immediately, and just bought it without even know where we were going to use it,' laughs Alessandra.

A much simpler décor in the dining area focuses on the centrepiece – a live-edge wooden table selected by Davide from Indonesia, with iron legs ordered and made to measure in Turkey. All the dining chairs and high chairs at the kitchen bar are Philippe Starke Louis Ghost chairs from Kartell. Alessandra is a big fan of Kartell, as evident by the Kabuki Kartell floor lamp in the dining room and a few Bourgie table lamps around the home.

'We like to keep the space and flow open,' explains Alessandra. 'For us, the kitchen is the place where people meet, so we wanted

this open and connected to the dining area and to have this small bar standing in front of the kitchen to cook and entertain at the same time.'

The bar extension is from the same wood as the table and this was given to Smart Renovation to work into the design of the kitchen. 'We started this kitchen concept around the bar, keeping in mind their interest in open space and knowing that Davide is an amazing chef who likes to cook a lot,' explains Cinzia. 'This kitchen was completely made in Italy. It's a new concept of ours called Smart Kitchen, where the kitchen goes directly from the factory to the home of the client.'

'For this design, we used a special dark quartz countertop by Dekton that we recommended based on the client's requirements.'

'We asked for the absolute best, top quality countertop that exists on the market, regardless of price,' adds Alessandra, 'because my husband is cooking continuously, and this quartz counter is very durable, reliable and looks great.'

'Of course, the quality of the kitchen is judged by the quality of the countertop and cabinetry, specifically the thickness of the doors and the mechanism – this one is soft closing – and the look of the surface,' explains Cinzia.

She also describes the role of flooring as a key element of the ▶



Opposite page Davide's domain, the television room showcases some references to their Italian roots and his passion for all things automotive with a Perspex case covering a Honda Monkey motorbike to serve as a side table.

Below The centrepiece of the powder room is this colourful basin from Arte Casa, which set the tone for the small space, complemented by a vivid, modern interpretation of the Italian masterpiece Mona Lisa.



home aesthetic. 'We believe the quality and richness of the floor comes with large tiles, so we always try to use 90x90 or 90x120. You see more of the tile texture at this size. This one looks like travertine in this shade, yet it's neutral and allows for the bold green in the living room to be more prominent.'

Cinzia also describes the importance of the guest bathroom in this scheme. 'For me, the powder room is an important space in the house. I know Alessandra is a stylish lady who loves Italian high fashion – Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, Versace – so when I saw the basin at Arte Casa I thought it looked like Dolce & Gabbana style. We styled the room around this, built a light coloured marble structure for it and painted the room and lower shelf a shade of green that didn't overpower.'

'I can't believe people renovate a house but don't redesign the powder room. If you entertain, this is where your guests go,' says Cinzia. 'It's like wearing a Chanel dress and then slipping on some flip flops!'

A departure from the green, a dramatic but neutral shade of brown is used in the front reception hall and the television room, yet it has a different effect in each room.

'I had all these original black-and-white paintings to hang and this was a neutral option to enhance them,' explains Alessandra, who also thought it worked well with her love of gold frames. 'Touches of gold make me happy,' she smiles.

However, in the television room – Davide's domain, this shade acts as a soothing backdrop with a moulding on the wall that adds a smart finish to the space and serves as a virtual frame for the personalised, bespoke painting.

'My husband enjoys television and so this room is his space and we've put many of our memorabilia and reminders of Italy here too,' she adds. A Smeg mini drinks fridge features the tricolour of the Italian flag, a large-scale historical map of Italy hangs on the wall and a side table in the famous 'boot' shape of the Mediterranean country sits beside a reclining lounge chair. A motoring enthusiast and collector, Davide showcases a Honda Monkey motorbike covered by a Perspex structure between the two reclining chairs to confirm the masculine den ambience.

A diverse art collection peppers the home as well – works by Italian postmodernist painter Mario Schifano sit alongside Davide's favourite, American Pop Art painter Peter Max.

'Our style as eclectic, original. I'm not a follower, so I like to express myself differently. I don't want the dress that everyone else has,' says Alessandra. 'I guess I would say elegant but simple.'

Cinzia adds, 'I really enjoyed working with her because she likes to take a risk. She makes bold choices.'

'We decided everything together,' adds Alessandra. 'We gave them our ideas, told them what we wanted and they created exactly what we had hoped for. It was a great collaboration.' ■

## STYLE FILE

How to get the look



**Tassled cushion**  
H&M Home, Dh99

**Bourgie metallic lamp**  
Kartell, Dh1,865

**Bello Sette floor lamp**  
Kare, Dh1,511

**Eames lounge chair**  
Vitra, Dh21,280

**Coffee table**  
Life Interiors, Dh2,040

**Adrus horse ornament**  
THE One, Dh849

**Philippe Starck Louis Ghost chair**  
Kartell, Dh1,045

**Fashion sofa**  
Ebarza, Dh18,225