

# LET THERE BE LIGHT

Marco and Cinzia Tedeschi walk us through a one-of-a-kind Victory Heights villa

**A** gently undulating pond brimming with distinctive koi carp gives me zen vibes the second I step through the gate of this Calida neighbourhood villa in the popular Victory Heights development. The Spanish hacienda-inspired architecture points me in a deceptively different design direction, but as soon as the main door swings open I am propelled into a gloriously light and bright space that immediately draws the eye to the stunning greens of the golf course beyond.

“We are obsessed by light,” is the welcoming statement from Marco and Cinzia Tedeschi, the power duo at the helm of Smart Renovation, and design team behind this 9,000-square-foot six-bedroom villa makeover. And the wealth of natural light that is suffused throughout the property was the primary reason that the current homeowner made an on-the-spot decision to invest.

“We knew this was it the second we walked into the house, despite being adamant that we wanted to buy in The Meadows,” she tells me, with a wry smile, and adds: “The house is full of light, from the bright morning rays of sun that follow us through the day before disappearing into a golden sunset; and I wanted to capture this in every room of the house.”

It's not difficult to be visually seduced by the supersized picture windows that extend up to the first floor, beautifully landscaped golf course views and grounding sense of calm, but as an extended family home to three generations (aged from 20 to 90 years old), the owner also wanted to design a home where “everyone was welcome.”

“When I first saw the property I knew that we had to bring the outdoors indoors, and we decided to play with the idea of ‘transparency’ throughout in order to optimise the natural light, floor space, and desire for seamless flow,” explains Marco.

This translated into a ground floor layout that follows the principle of bisymmetry with the eye following a single line from the front gate through to the golf greens beyond the garden. “To ensure this remained unbroken, we chose to install large picture windows featuring a single fixed pane of glass, without any unnecessary frames that would interrupt this perfect line,” he says. To further enhance the feeling of openness and unrestricted movement, each intentionally doorless door frame



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is a minimum of 1.5 metres wide, and high gloss flooring was chosen to reflect the abundant natural light.

The third, and most challenging, project factor was a massive structural undertaking with no less than seven extensions added, increasing the footprint from 6,800 to 9,000 square feet. “There was a lot of wasted open patio areas that we wouldn’t use as a family and so we literally built on the idea of bringing the outside in by using the two-storey glass picture windows to ensure that light flooded through everywhere,” says the owner.

With a large extended family who love socialising and a busy roster of corporate entertaining, an upsized living room and

separate dining room were must-haves.

On the ground floor, this meant a kitchen expansion and addition of a morning room, dining room and extended living room, while upstairs a grand master bedroom took shape with a billiards room replacing an unused balcony.

The finished result was a blank canvas of re-engineered space and light, and this carried through into the interiors aesthetic. “Our previous home had a very ethnic feel with heirloom pieces and artworks that reflected both our Indian roots as well as our time in Ethiopia, Ghana and world travels,” explains the owner.

“Our children were keen for us to move into a more contemporary





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styled home, and this is where Cinzia’s unique approach really resonated. She visited our old house to get an in-depth perspective of our personal taste and aesthetic. From that, we jointly decided to adopt a neutral palette for the Calida villa, which would allow our treasured collection of artworks to be the focal pop of colour,” she continues. An “evolving” aesthetic, the mutual trust factor was critical in bringing the space to life. Says Cinzia: “It’s very important for us to embrace the client’s mindset and mood to ensure that the end result reality matches the original vision. I took inspiration from the potential of being able to mix two cultures and use clean, light European lines as the design

foundation, layered with the family’s heritage and reflecting their roots.” Like in many family homes, the kitchen is the heart of the house and this sleek contemporary space is marked apart by an almost five metre-long black Dekton silestone countertop that doubles as a workspace and breakfast bar. “High quality imported Italian Record Cucina cabinetry is paired with smart kitchen technology throughout, with the countertop an immediate talking point, as well as being incredibly heat and stain resistant,” remarks Marco. To the right of the kitchen is a dream dining room fronted by wall-to-ceiling windows and graced with one of the owner’s prized finds, a nine-foot-

long white dining table from Casanova, matched with customised chairs. The only overt nod to current interior design trends is the use of fluting to panel the downstairs lobby, a super contemporary touch that is now trending worldwide. The often thorny issue of budget is raised but it’s a lighthearted moment of jocular banter as Cinzia teases that her job is always to get clients to spend in a smart way. “We didn’t go overboard and really played around with the budget, sourcing pieces from bespoke high-end brands right through to working with companies like Just Restore to refresh existing furniture,” she says. And, as we walk through the villa the visual juxtaposition between the family’s exquisite heirloom



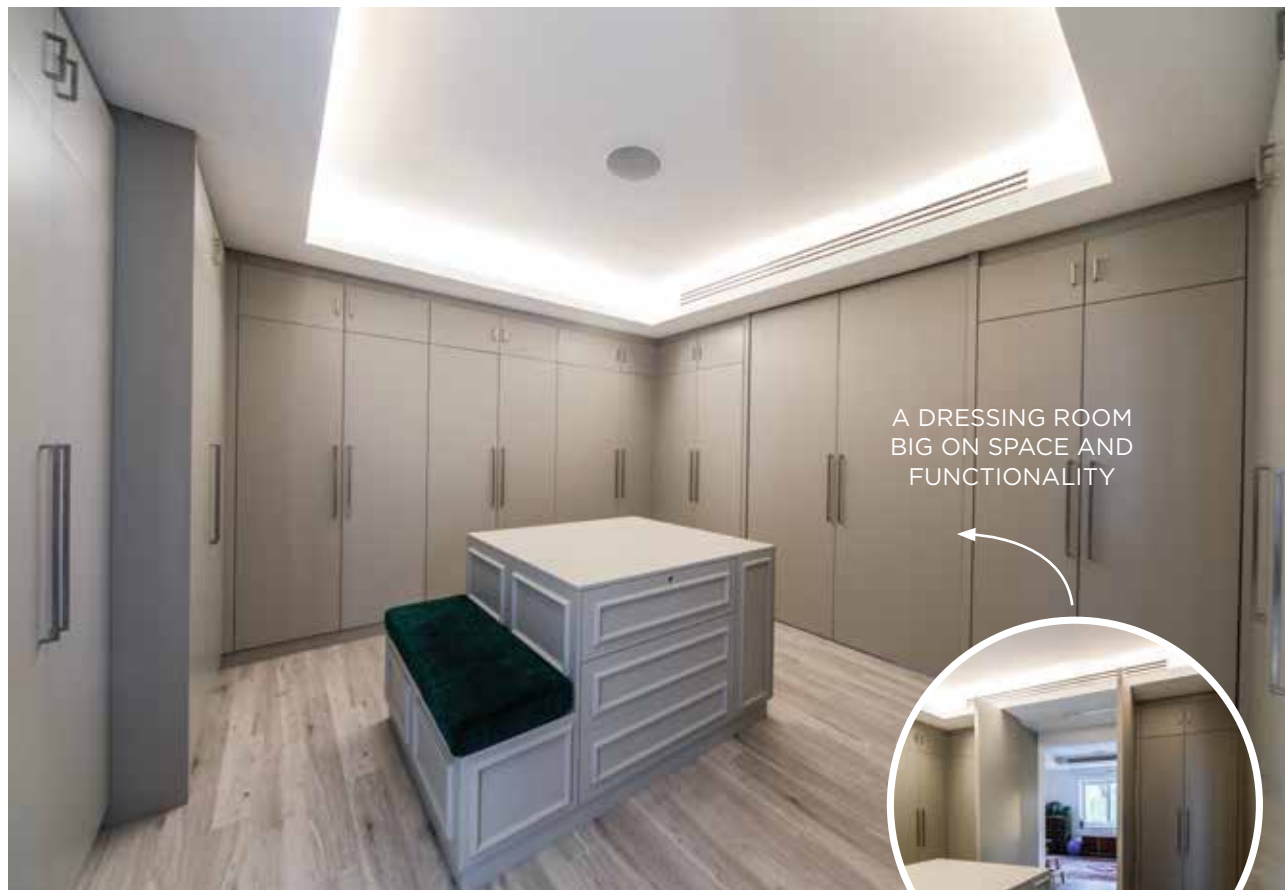
furniture, vibrant ethnic art and the unashamedly contemporary aesthetic blends seamlessly, with each room distinctly individual but wholly cohesive.

For a home that is essentially open plan, there are unique spaces suited to every age group and mood. From a peaceful yoga room and well thought-out dressing room, to dedicated en suite bedrooms for visiting grandparents – one with a relaxing balcony and the other opening up onto the koi pond – and a man cave, aka the media room, it's a fantastic multi-generational home. Says Cinzia: "The media room is a particularly successful space as, previously, this was a windowless open-plan dining room that really served no pleasurable purpose."

Another not-so hidden first floor gem is the stunning rotunda reading room. Neo-classical accents are merged with the contemporary palette to create a one-of-a-kind retreat that wouldn't be out of place in a corner of the White House. "This was originally an atrium but there was no natural light, so it was effectively a soulless two-storey void. Another problem was that it carried sound between floors, and you don't want to be listening to someone's



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A DRESSING ROOM BIG ON SPACE AND FUNCTIONALITY



conversation in the dining room if you're trying to sleep," elaborates Marco.

The owners are beyond delighted with the end result and, despite a flood of generous offers to buy thanks to an extremely buoyant real estate market, have their feet firmly rooted under the table with every intention to enjoy the house from every angle. "We love to live as a joint family, where everyone can co-exist peacefully and have their own intimate sanctuaries but come together whenever we want. We came to this house with an open mind and an evolving brief and really just went with the flow, guided by Marco and Cinzia; and now we have a wonderful home that is 100 per cent 'us'."

Marco sips his masala tea and reflects on the project. "It's not often we start with a backdrop as priceless as this. With views that are 50 per cent blue sky and 50 per cent greenery, from day one we knew that the design had to diffuse natural light into every available corner to create a warm, welcoming family villa with its own exceptional signature. Completed in just eight months, the home you see now is probably one of the most unique properties in Dubai."