



A SENSE FOR STYLE

With some smart groundwork, entrepreneur
Hiba Balfaqih created her dream home

Words: Lucy Land Photographs: Muthu Kumar



There's no doubt that serial entrepreneur Hiba Balfaqih's villa, which she shares with her husband Shafiq in The Springs reflects her personality. With her corporate background, friends and colleagues know the organised side of her character, which is reflected in her smartly furnished home, with its neutrals and a pop of pink (she describes herself as a 'sometime feminist'). A skull motif acts as a counterpoint to the feminine touch. "I can't explain why I love skulls, but I adore black because it can be both classic and edgy," she beams. Her pet peeve is messiness. "My husband and I tidy up all the time – it's one of my favourite things about our relationship." Just two years ago, she swapped her career in HR to launch her consultancy

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business, The Startup Factory, and most recently, started a stress-relieving concept called The Smash Room. She also regularly gets booked to deliver motivational talks. Peek inside her fridge and you'll find it crammed with Tupperware boxes of freshly made meals (the couple spend two hours each Saturday preparing their food for the week). "It's the most efficient way to ensure we eat healthily while on the move," she explains. She also





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spends half an hour per day exercising on her rebounder, and uses Bluetooth connectivity to listen to audio books at home and during her commute to maximise her reading time. “I can’t go a day without reading,” she admits. The property was originally a three-bedroom villa but Hiba had one of the rooms transformed into a walk-in closet. “My husband has one wardrobe and the rest are mine,” she smiles. Their bed was custom-made by King Koil. “We invested in a good quality mattress,” she

says. There’s a stack of business books on her bedside table and a motivational ‘purpose board’ above her desk. “It offers a good way to stay focused because I read it every day,” she says. The other side of Hiba is creative and fun, which is reflected in the corner seating in the living room, decorated with colourful pop art accessories, framed album covers, a customised games table, signed sports memorabilia and a collection of snow globes, picked up on her travels.





HOME COMFORTS

My top décor tip is...
 Ensure your home represents you and make it functional.
 I'm currently reading...
 Man's Search for Himself by Rollo May.
 Home is...
 A place where you can be comfortable with the people you love.

Having grown up in Montreal, Canada, where the family's garden overlooked the neighbour's, Hiba's non-negotiable was having a home with a view. "In Montreal, they don't have fences, whereas Dubai has walls between neighbours." A villa in The Springs with a lake view provided the answer. However, Hiba needed some persuading. "These houses aren't new and I didn't like the original colour scheme, so we needed to check the approvals for renovations and set aside a budget." Once given the green light, Hiba transformed the entrance, bringing it forward and tearing down interior walls to open up the space. "The agents sometimes show people our home to give them ideas for their own."

Hiba checked out Pinterest for inspiration, measured her spaces and made repeat visits to the malls in preparation for her savvy furniture buys. "It's all about mixing and matching rather than buying expensive pieces only," she reveals. "There's a lot from IKEA, Home Centre, IDdesign and some things are from Dragon Mart, while the really special pieces, such as the dining table and chandeliers, are from the likes of Marina Home." She found a carpenter from Dragon Mart, who custom-built the walk-in closet and seating in the pop art-decorated space. "You don't have to spend a lot - it's about doing your groundwork, shopping around and having an eye for style."

Did Shafiq have a say in their home décor? "He picked the kitchen and the outdoor furniture because he likes to cook," Hiba says. "Other than that, he supported my choices. Now, he says that when he envisioned his dream home, this is what it looked like."



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Kong nesting tables, Dhs1,595 for a set of two, **THE ONE**



Pop armoire, Dhs3,500, **MARIA IQBAL**



Skold sheepskin rug, Dhs395, **IKEA**



Pop cushion, Dhs450, **MARIA IQBAL**



Zikra planter, Dhs699 for a set of two, **MARINA HOME INTERIORS**