



## Lights, Colours, Accessories: The Art of Home Design

*When your living space demands a confluence of lighting elements that reflect your outlook, colours that project your temperament, and furniture and accessories that express your creative orientation, turn to interior designers/decorators to find the right balance*

**H**ome is, indeed, where the heart is, but with stress taking the blame for a host of physical and emotional problems, the heart of the matter is in designing living spaces that create an instinctive 'feel-at-home' sentiment, one that is boosted by trendy interiors and décor/design elements. In the following feature we present the perspectives of experts in the market, who talk about global trends and the elements of modernisation and facets of traditional décor that are important even today, alongside tips and guidelines for new homeowners and those seeking a change in their living spaces.



## of spaces and designs

*Hassan Khamis Al Zedjali, CEO of IDC, shares his knowledge on architectural changes and interior design values that have sustained over time*



"With modernisation and the emergence of young home owners, the trend in interiors have shifted to more modern designs with open spaces, lighter materials, environmental friendly homes and green buildings, where light and shade and integration of interiors and exteriors are the main criteria," states Hassan Khamis Al Zedjali, CEO of Image Design Consultants (IDC) LLC.

Contrasting these modern houses with the traditional ones, he explains that the traditional designs were inward looking, but were successful, as they completely blended with the local setting, landscape and the environment.

"Traditional houses functioned as multi-tasked units. For example, the family lived, ate and entertained, and sometimes slept, in the same space, thus minimising the requirement for large units. Physical communication was limited to the *Majlis*, which was totally isolated from the



main house. Being compact, these houses provided for all the necessary functions of the family's daily requirements. The internal terraces (*Liwan*) provided the family both the space to socialise, as well as the privacy they needed. The houses had ample sunlight, ventilation and, most importantly, security.

"Starkly opposite to these are the modern houses, which are outward looking. The shape has been totally changed, spare for the decorative elements. The houses are too large and expensive to construct and maintain; but they are more specialised, as family activities are performed in special spaces within the units. However, the *Majlis* is still isolated in the modern houses, as Oman, as a whole, is a conservative society," he explains.



With over 32 years experience in the field of Architecture, Interior Design, City Planning, Urban Design and Project Management, Al Zedjali has witnessed the changes from close quarters. According to him, Oman interior is dominated by fit-out and furniture contractors who provide turn key projects. In the last 16 years, IDC have developed many prestigious landmark projects with Omani Islamic elements that are specific to Oman; they have also designed and supervised many large homes with both traditional and modern interiors.

### Oman Architectural and Interior Design

Remarking that the design and architecture has greatly developed in the last 45 years, Al Zedjali points out that it has even earned international recognition. "There are architectural and interior elements that are very specific to Oman. However, a blend of design elements from GCC and other countries in the region, like Iran and India, in addition to East Africa, has been integrated into Omani architecture and interior design.

"Extensive use of locally available material was always the main source for design. For example, in the Batina Region, *Saaf* and *Dana* (date palm leave) was traditionally the common materials in house construction, in addition to standard clay houses and *sarooj*. It is still being used in our designs, but with modern construction methods. Due to the high maintenance of clay, this material is no longer used; *sarooj* plaster is still being used in many projects, but availability of the material in recent years has been very limited. GRC (GLASS Reinforced Concrete) is another material that is commonly used for external features, in addition to Gypsum for Interiors," he states.

### Design/décor trends in modern homes, as noted by Al Zedjali

- Large windows, with semi-shaded exteriors, normally provide ample lighting, while keeping hot summer heat away from the interiors of a room. However, orientation plays the most important role by which light intensity can be controlled.
- Verandas in modern homes have almost disappeared, except in commercial apartments. These now

are replaced with large terraces opening towards gardens, instead.

- However, gardens are limited to potting plants that need constant care. Herbs and flowering plants can be grown during the specific seasons, but cactus plants can grow in all seasons and do not need extra attention.

- Flexible, durable, lightweight, multi-functional and smart furniture is the way forward for modern furniture. Advancements in technology have led to the introduction of materials that are more durable and can resist wear and tear, in addition to integrated technologies that help create multi-task furniture.

Commenting that he would like to see more research in construction material to balance the increase in the costs, he states: "With young architects and interior designers being exposed to more modern ideas, I am noticing a slow and steady shift in the industry. Simple functional designs and durable materials that are stable and can be sustained in the local environment, while being cost effective, is the way forward for 2016 and beyond."



Picture supplied by MAF+Partners



The modern home is always evolving, states Buthaina AlFarsi, interior designer at MAF + Partners Company for interior design and architecture, pointing out that the design elements, however, are dependent on the space, available materials and the budget. "We design the space according to the requirement of the client and the functionality of the space," she maintains.

Design innovation is in creating things that are 'pretty and enjoyable', she states, adding that the design process is based on the designer's ability to innovate and skills for fine art.

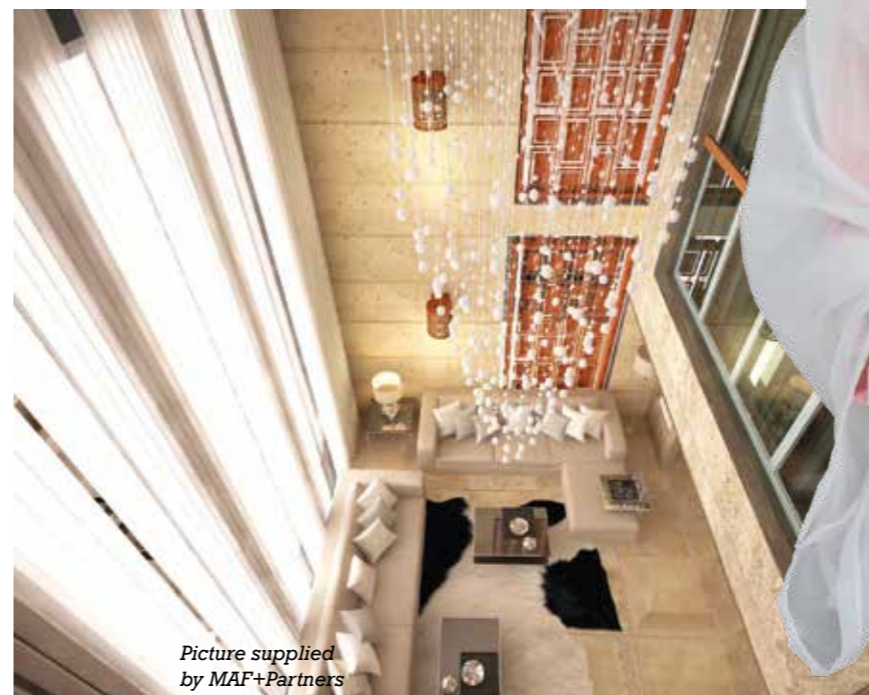
Having grown in a family of art, Buthaina, who got a bachelor's degree in interior design from Scientific College of Design, describes interior design as an art to fill in the blanks and spaces inside buildings, which "starts from the division of the spaces - the bathroom, the office or work room, dressing room to furnishing space; choosing a particular style of furniture, colours, lighting, ceiling and floor."

With Omani market gearing up to the changes and trends in the global design market, local interior designers have risen to the challenge by catering to the demands, be it consultation on the use of materials and colours or actual implementation of the work. Often, however, clients set unrealistic budgets or are in a hurry, leading to grave design mistakes, she notes.

### Buthaina's tips and guidelines on interior design/décor

#### For small spaces

Living in a small home can make you creative in a hurry. Organising your space in an efficient way, one that still makes you feel at home, can be quite a challenge. There are several unique furniture pieces that make



Picture supplied by MAF+Partners

# Homes by design

Buthaina AlFarsi, interior designer at MAF + Partners Company, talks about design innovations to create spaces that are enjoyable



living in small spaces more of a joy than a chore. Things like lightweight objects that are easy to move, a decorative item that can turn into a table, furniture that has multiple functions, and storage that is a snap to assemble and disassemble, make it fun to do more with less.

**Furniture**

Mismatching furniture is going to be the way to go this year; just make sure they are covered

in heavily textured fabrics that give substance to your scheme. The best way to achieve this look is to combine antiques with mid-century and contemporary pieces.

**Colours to watch out**

Using a mood board will give you a direction for your creativity, somewhere to crystallise your thoughts and a way to share your ideas with others. Colour is a powerful design tool that can make the rooms in your home feel more calm, cheerful,

comfortable or dramatic. Colour makes a tiny room feel larger, or a spacious one feel more intimate, without the time and expense of actually moving walls. The colour mood for a room you choose is really about what you want the room to feel like. If it's a big room, paint it a brighter warmer colour to bring the walls in. Paint a smaller room a cooler colour to push the walls out. Colour also establishes visual weight and balance. Sometimes, people are scared of colour, especially dark colours. Ultimately, people should really follow their heart: if they love a colour, they should not be afraid to choose it.



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Picture supplied by Kaiser - Studio of Design

**Tips & guidelines from Kaiser-Studio of Design to create a wholesome home:**

**To personalise homes**

- The place should reflect the personality and tell a story of the surroundings and the 'story of the person/s' living in it (not our story as interior designers, but yours), with consideration to the members' personal history, background, likes, interests and hobbies.
- The chosen colours should reflect the moods, not necessarily what is 'in'.
- The exhibit mementos should reveal their dreams and past (or current) experiences.
- The displayed artworks should be less about flawless techniques or artistic disciplines, and more about how it reflects inner self and inner world of the members.
- Beauty in homes isn't about perfect symmetry or perfectly matching decorative pillows, but is more about expressing the unique individuality of the members.

**To modernise the living spaces**

- Daring to use glass divider walls in homes could be surprisingly helpful and visually attractive; it works for some, but might not work for all, as many other factors play a role.
- Under a wooden ceiling, a sunken living room rich in colourful details warms up the concrete connection to the outdoors.
- After choosing the right living room layout, colours, patterns, textures and light make all the difference. Keep it lively with natural wood and bright daylight; add details that speak about life.
- Figure out what works best for your lifestyle and practicality. If budget allows, hire a professional interior designer to pull it all together for you and help you achieve what you are looking for.

**Home design/decor trends in the market**

- Graphic tiles
- Sectional sofas
- Reclaimed materials
- Black window frames
- Statement light fixtures
- Stairs as a focal point
- No formal dining room
- Minimal design
- Mismatched materials
- Mexican Mid-century Modernism
- Scandinavian flat weaves
- The industrial look
- Sisal (strong white fiber made from a tropical plant) and jute

**Creative concepts to enhance/ maximise spaces**

- Tunnel rack & Rack over docks
- Light colours enhance the feeling of space, while darker hues tend to close in; lighten up the walls and furnishings
- Visually expand the room by using mirrors
- Ditch the king-size (or even queen) bed and use space-saving furniture
- Keep the window-to-wall ratio high
- Utilise the space under the stairs
- Replace doors with sliding walls to let the space breathe.
- Use glass walls to separate spaces without visually dividing a room.
- Create the illusion of vertical space by selecting low-sitting furniture

**Interior design/décor do's**

- Do spend time with your potential colours by creating sample poster boards so that you can see what the colour looks like in various parts of the room at different times of day.
- Test your fabrics for potential pilling or staining issues and get fabric samples whenever possible.
- Do remember that the arms of your furniture can potentially take up crucial circulation space.

- Create 'zones' that will help keep your life organised in your small room.

**Interior design/décor**

**Don'ts**

- Don't stick to a design idea that you saw somewhere that might not be suitable for your space.
- Don't feel that you have to use something in the room just because you got it for free.
- Don't feel that you have to get the matching set.
- Don't Over purchase

**A look at 21st Century Advancements in Interior Design**

- Cabinetry Upgrades
- Water Saving Features
- Techno-Savvy Hardware
- Outdoor Entertaining
- Hands Free Faucets
- Lighting Fixtures
- The I POD Era

Footnote: A home is where the heart is - if done up well! It is more than a physical structure of wood or concrete; it is a place where your true self, your inner beauty & soul reflects and expresses.

**Personalising Homes**

Interior designers in Oman are striking a balance between Oman's heritage/ culture, while adapting to latest trends to create personalised spaces

"Interior Design is a very personal subject, but to create a good living space, one needs to start with the basics: the location of the property/ room and a sense of space one wants to turn it," suggests Salim Mohammed Tirmizi, General Manager, Kaiser - Studio of Design. Oman is seeing a positive and steady growth in the field of interior design, he notes, pointing out that people are taking it to another level as the realisation of how important doing up personal spaces has kicked in.



Pictures supplied by Kaiser - Studio of Design

