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California





C'est ici looked
to sunny
Palo Alto for
inspiration
when designing
this art-filled
villa in Dubai

Words by Aidan Imanova
Photography by Natelee Cooks

dreaming

The Colombian duo, Monica Durou and Tatiana Jaramillo, behind Dubai-based interior design studio C'est ici have breathed new life to a recently renovated villa in Dubai's Acacia Gardens in Al Sufouh, bringing in the bright energy and real-estate finesse of California's Palo Alto, which serves as the main inspiration for the styling of the home.

"We name our projects after cities around the world and this specific project was named Palo Alto," Durou shares. "As one of the principal cities of Silicon Valley, the city has not only the most reputable high-tech company but some serious real estate gems. Palo Alto and its surroundings were definitively a great inspiration. A blend between contemporary design with old treasures and creative minds, we wanted the interiors to be thoughtfully put together, yet have an effortless feel."

The renovated residence features a carefully curated list of designer furniture that is balanced by the owners' extensive art collection which, in itself, adds vibrancy to the large, three-storey villa that includes a main hall, four master bedrooms and bathrooms, dressing rooms, a lounge area, family room, living room, kitchen, family sitting area, play area, a dining room and lounge.

"During the design process, we were set on creating elegant and sophisticated spaces with unique and unusual elements that gives it an avant-garde feel. Our clients own an incredible art collection so our main goal was for the interiors to enhance and complement the beauty of each piece," Durou explains. "We wanted the spaces to embrace the feeling of being in a modern art gallery so we took inspiration from the look and feel of Atelier Brancusi at the Pompidou Centre to achieve this.

"Design and art are so personal and so is beauty. The things that get collected over time express our most intimate memories and that is something we wanted to reflect in our design."

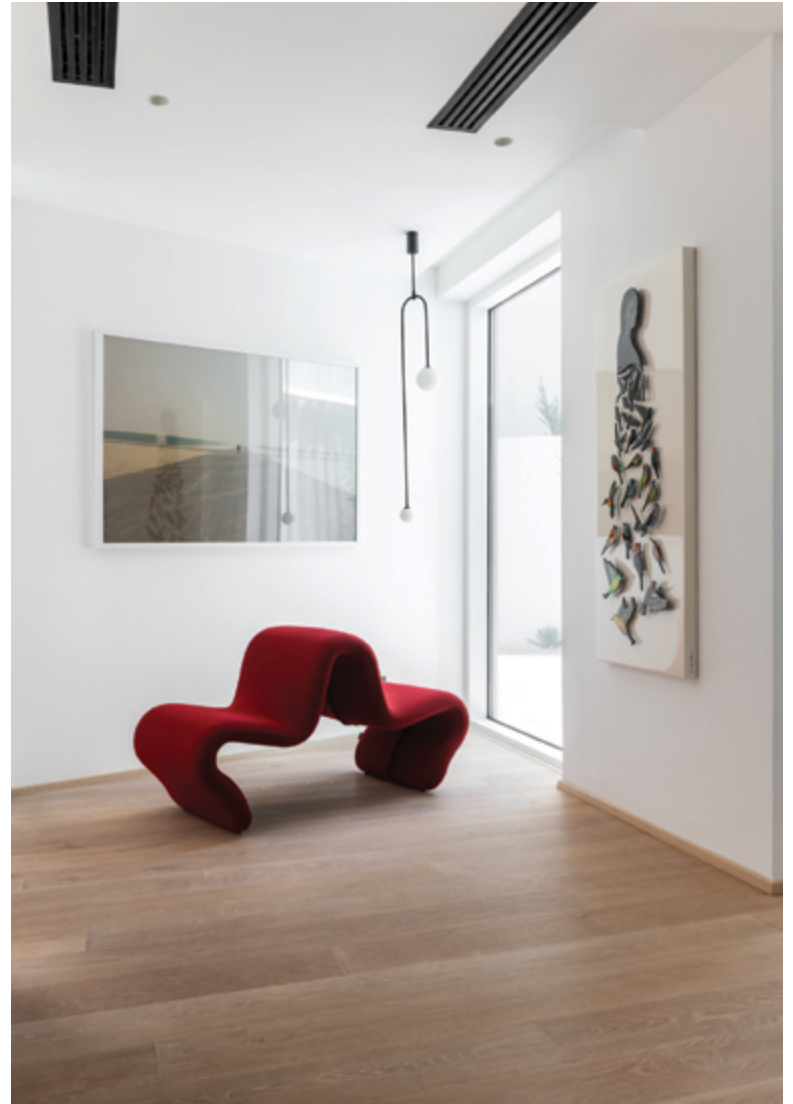
Other influences such as a modern-Scandinavian sensibility offers warm touches to the space, contrasted with nods to Greek history that is accentuated in the décor. Nevertheless, the interiors remain true to a refined and contemporary aesthetic featuring clean-lines with natural and organic materiality. >>







Monica Durou



Geometric and linear shapes are offset by bulky and monochromatic objects, an eclectic composition which gave rise to the furniture selection including the likes of Patrica Urquiola in collaboration with Cassina, armchairs by Carl Hansen and bespoke pieces by Line Concept. The informal dining area features a charcoal black Clay dining table paired with a masterpiece light by Vibia. These designer pieces are contrasted with hidden gems that have been sourced the world over.

“We emphasised the clash of cultures in the décor, from lighting to furniture. This was an essential approach for this home where we mixed Cycladic and neoclassical influences with contemporary and modern design pieces. Along with a neutral but textural palette in the upholstery and wood tones to the plaster wall finishes, it became our template,” Durou says.

The most outstanding architectural elements of the project are its double-height ceilings and windows in the formal living and dining rooms, allowing natural light to fill the space. Vital

elements that complement the architectural features of the modern villa are the clean lines, a minimal approach to open spaces and the use of natural materials, with a show-stopping staircase at the entrance.

In the living room, a statement sofa was sourced from La Cividina, offset by the whimsical spaghetti chairs made in Sherpa – one of the most trending textiles of the year. Massproductions supplied the armchairs that have been contrasted by a black marble table, while the elegant, sculptural objects from Faina are showcased across the room, created by a multidisciplinary design studio in Kiev, Ukraine by designer Victoria Yukusha.

The Palo Alto aesthetic comes alive most prominently in the outdoor lounge area, where the designers layered white-on-white elements with touches of wood and terracotta accent pieces, dotted with furniture pieces by the likes of Paolo Lenti, MDF Italia, Tribu, Sand and Vondom. This bright, minimal and cosy atmosphere allows for a perfectly relaxing space within an overall sophisticated environment. 