



Designed for Life

Interior designer **Noni Anand's** villa in Arabian Ranches showcases her lifelong passion for art, travel and design

Words: **Lucy Land** Photographs: **Muthu Kumar**

“Most of our friends like to be outdoors as much as possible. They’ll bring their own chatais [Indian daybeds/mats] to our garden and we’ll all sit down on a blanket and look at the night’s sky,” reveals interior designer Nondita (Noni) Anand, as she shows me her garden with its built-in seating area, pretty water feature and beautiful tiling. “I have plans for an air conditioned conservatory on the section where the tiling is different so we can use the space all year round,” she continues, indicating the black-and-white patterned area at the back of the garden.

Noni shares her home with her husband, JS, their dog, Chica, and adopted cats, Cane and Candy. The welcoming couple clearly like to entertain, and as their dining table seats a maximum of four, the garden provides the perfect alternative space for get-togethers.

The contemporary kitchen is also a popular gathering spot. Originally an L-shape, Noni remodelled it so that it now offers a central breakfast bar area. “The bar offers an easy space for people to help themselves to food placed there. Plus, the area opens up onto the backyard.”

The maid’s room was also transformed, first into a spare bedroom before becoming the TV room. The most challenging area was the living room, which has lots of natural light yet is narrow.

“I like odd-shaped rooms because they encourage me, as a designer, to think more creatively about how to make them work,” she enthuses. So she did away with a TV, and customised and reupholstered furniture to fit the space, while her mother bought an oversized rocking chair, which has Chica’s bed placed next to it. “Everyone creates a space for themselves in the house,” Noni says. “My mum stays with us for 90 days when she visits. She loves to sit in the rocking chair while crocheting and the dog lies next to her.”

The bathrooms were also remodelled. “We included an economical version of a tile mosaic: large tiles that look like mosaics,” she reveals. The ensuite to the master bedroom was reserved for a more premium upgrade, however. Marble, mosaic and glass were used for a luxurious look. What’s more, bar the shower area where water reaches the tiles, the mosaic was inlaid without grout so that the natural tile shines through for a glossy look.

Noni’s passion for the natural world is most obvious in the stunning master bedroom – its walls feature a large mural of a countryside scene, including a cherry tree in blossom, painted by Austrian artist Philippe Barrow. Two small windows were sealed from the inside so that they continue to look like glass windows from the outside. A mural of a countryside setting with the sky beyond is framed by the windows, creating the effect of space. Noni also added rustic character to the domed ceiling, by painting it copper.

Her home is furnished with her art, which she has been collecting for 18 years, while her own artistic streak is revealed in a colourful painting decorating the largest wall in her living room. She first discovered the piece on the floor of a gallery, leaning against the wall. “The light at the gallery was very different to the light at home, so I didn’t



“
Like music, colour can
really lift your mood
”

notice the blackness in the bottom right-hand corner,” she says. “If you sat long enough and became engrossed in the painting, it would look like someone was drowning.” Ever solution focused, Noni popped down to Al Barsha-based craft store Creative Minds, and bought some colourful paper flowerheads and butterflies to fill in the black area. “The remaining dark patches now look like black poppies,” she says. Indeed, the customised artwork works beautifully and adds a pop of colour to the room’s neutral colour scheme. “In general, I think people should use colour more. Like music, it can really lift your mood.”

Noni’s success as an interior designer is perhaps derived as much by her savviness as by her sense of aesthetics. She didn’t cast aside any furniture from





“
People keep reinventing things here in Dubai, which is part of its beauty
 ”

her previous home, choosing instead to customise what she already had for the new space. Indeed, her background is in wealth management, though her passion for design started early in life. Born in India, she moved to Canada with her husband in her early 20s, and friends began asking for her interior design advice after seeing her home.

Noni believes her travels and her experience staying in hotels have influenced her sense of design. “Traditionally, India has a colourful palette. Jewellery, artwork and furniture at home is often rich and colourful,” she says. “Simultaneously, you see a more neutral colour palette developing – hotels with sandy, cream and black hues or with luxurious marble and silk – so it’s a great mix.” When she moved to north America, she discovered a variety of resorts, from budget and business hotels to spa retreats. However, her move to Dubai led to her focusing on her lifelong passion: “It was only when we bought this villa two-and-a-half years ago that I realised that I’ve been doing interior design for so long, but as life takes over – bills have to be paid, for example – you don’t necessarily follow that path.”

Noni clearly made the right decision to move into interior design full time. With a number of residential projects under her belt, she is currently busy working on hotel projects, the first of which – D’Zign by Leva – will open in Deira at the end of this year. “I haven’t seen another modern hotel in the UAE that focuses on colour, clean lines, design, art and technology,” she enthuses. “People keep reinventing things here in Dubai, which is part of its beauty.”

spacezdesign.com



HOME COMFORTS

If you’re decorating a house by yourself...

Make a checklist of what you like, such as certain colours and materials. It will help you stay focused. Always bear in mind what you enjoy and why it is you’re doing what you’re doing.

My top décor tip is...

Include one feature wall in your home to add a pop of colour to your space.

My other tip is...

Incorporate plants into your home, whether real or fake. They make a home feel more natural, comfortable, friendly and lived-in.

On my bedside table, you’ll find...

Water, candles and a good book.

Home is...

My family.