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Living
with Style

Georgina Trigg's
personality-infused
home in Dubai

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Spatial CLARITY

Designing through atmosphere
rather than form, interior architect

Marie Claire Mrad creates a
powerful yet understated home
in Arabian Ranches

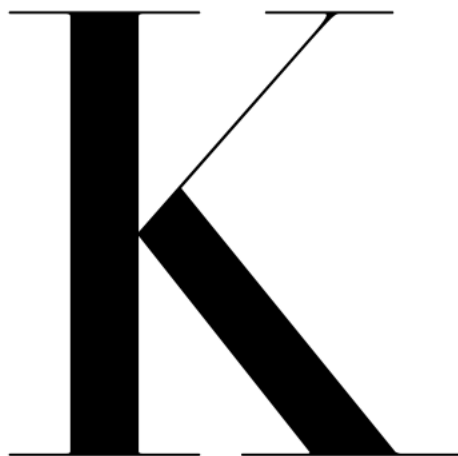
Photography by NATELEE COCKS

Words by EMILY BAXTER-PRIEST





This page: Vertical wooden screens in walnut create layered thresholds in the living room. Opposite page: Interior architect Marie Claire Mriad



known for their Spanish-style design, defined by terracotta roof tiles and arched openings, Savannah villas in Arabian Ranches are synonymous with a Dubai of yesteryear. More classic than contemporary. But, in the hands of Lebanese interior architect Marie Claire Mrad, new life is being breathed into old aesthetics.

Charged with reinterpreting a three-bedroom villa into a modern home for a family who recently moved from Zurich to Dubai, Marie Claire turned to warm minimalism, with raw materials, light and spatial clarity shaping the experience. "The client was drawn to interiors that feel immersive and atmospheric," she explains, "with a strong emphasis on materiality, depth and subtle contrasts rather than decorative elements."

Taking around six months from concept to completion, the most challenging element, Marie Claire says, was transforming a pre-existing villa "with a defined architectural language into a more contemporary and cohesive environment without extensive structural intervention."

This meant a careful reworking of proportions, openings and material transitions to create a sense of flow and continuity. "Maintaining consistency across all spaces, while allowing each to retain its own character, was also key," she adds.

Mediterranean details made way for a more restrained, almost monolithic approach to space. "Rather than relying on decoration, the project is shaped through contrast, tactility and the dialogue between light and material." Spaces are intentionally understated, utilising textured surfaces and carefully placed lighting to create both warmth and depth.

Organised over two levels, the ground floor follows an open-plan layout, featuring main living, dining and kitchen areas that naturally flow from one into one another. Upstairs, with a master-suite with walk-in wardrobe, en-suite children's room, office and a flexible office-guest room, a similar materiality and spatial language apply, resulting in an aesthetic cohesion from top to bottom.

**"IT'S A HOME DEFINED BY
WARM MINIMALISM IN A
CALM, GROUNDED AND
IMMERSIVE ATMOSPHERE"**

Marie Claire Mrad

To create an extension of the living area, Marie Claire blurred the boundary between indoor and outdoor bringing the garden into focus. The terrace, featuring a pool, lounge and dining area, with a sunken seating space and fire pit overlooking the water, is designed as a gathering place with a similar sense of atmosphere.

Looking to Japanese interiors and modernist architecture as reference points, in particular "their emphasis on rhythm, proportion and the absence of excess," Marie Claire introduced architectural vertical wooden screens in walnut and blackened wood to create "layered thresholds and filtered views across the house."

The use of stone – particularly Ceppo di Gré – alongside concrete-effect surfaces established a continuous, grounded base that created fluidity between spaces. "Subtle variations within the stone and concrete finishes added depth without introducing noise," the architect adds.

This restrained approach commanded an understated colour palette too, one that would allow the materials to take precedence. "We used warm, earthy tones, soft off-whites, mineral greys and deep charcoals layered with the richness of walnut and blackened wood." The result, a timeless, cohesive aesthetic that feels upscale yet unshowy.

A defining aspect of the villa's renovation was the fully bespoke approach to design, from built-in cupboards and vanities to the furniture, which was entirely custom-made. "The sofas, coffee tables and the dining table were crafted in Beirut by local artisans," explains Marie Claire.

Additional furniture had similar impact, with existing pieces brought by the owners. An Eames lounge chair, Eileen Gray side table, Togo sofa and an Occhio floor lamp were all carefully integrated throughout the home, "adding layers of character and personal narrative."

In the dining room, a Patagonia stone top was chosen for the table, drawing the eye inwards, and "introducing a more expressive, organic pattern within the otherwise restrained palette," states Marie Claire.

Materials were sourced through a mix of local suppliers and international manufacturers, in particular Italy and Lebanon – each piece meticulously selected for their "durability, natural character and ability to age gracefully over time."

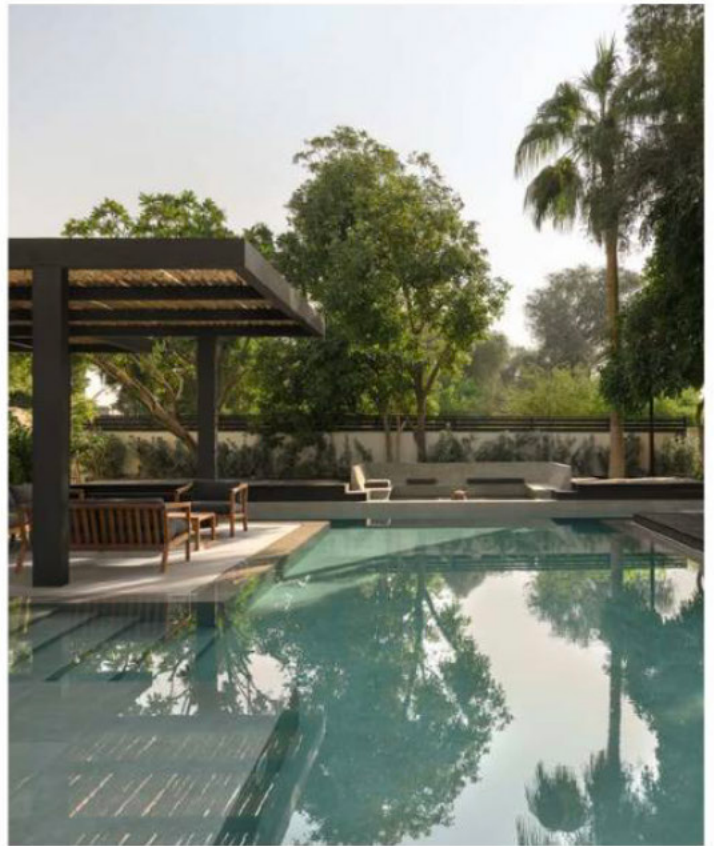
Now finished, Marie Claire describes the house as "calm, introspective and grounded with a quiet intensity, where every element is intentional." A place where dark meets light, minimalism becomes quiet expression and space feels both serene and immersive, it's a striking example of a shared narrative between contrast and cohesion. ■



*Subtle variations within
the stone and concrete
finishes add depth without
introducing visual noise*



The dining table, which was crafted in Beirut specifically for the project, sits under a Sahara onyx ceiling light



*Clockwise from top left:
A bath with a view;
The garden is a natural
extension of the home;
Curios styled with a well-
honed eye; Colours blend
earthy tones layered
with the richness of
walnut wood*

“THE PROJECT IS SHAPED
THROUGH CONTRAST,
TACTILITY AND THE
DIALOGUE BETWEEN LIGHT
AND MATERIAL”

Marie Claire Mrad

