



Shining bright

Lighting is key in any interior – and there's no shortage of choice when it comes to this season's lamps

1 Very Now

Nada Debs's latest collection, Now & Zen, is now available at Comptoir 102. It features a range of lamps, cushions, furniture and handbags in Debs's signature East-meets-West style, but we have our eye on this piece, which offers a minimalist twist on traditional Arabesque motifs.

● Now & Zen lamp, price on request, Comptoir 102, Jumeirah Beach Road, Dubai

2 Woodn't it be nice

For a more organic, nature-inspired choice, look no further than this wooden lamp from Zara Home. We love how you can see the natural grain of the wood and how it appears to be carved from a single tree trunk.

● Lamp, Dh649, Zara Home stores across the UAE

3 Grand designs

If you're looking for something a little grander, this metal, three-shade lamp from Al Huzafa Furniture will make quite the design statement, wherever you choose to put it.

● Lamp, Dh665, Al Huzafa Furniture, Abu Dhabi Plaza and Zabeel Road, Dubai

4 Like a lava lamp

The Nyx lamp from La Maison Verte gives off an almost otherworldly glow. Crafted from glass, it reminds us of those lava lamps of old, but in a slicker, more appealing form.

● Nyx lamp, Dh995 (small version), La Maison Verte, Mushrif Mall, Abu Dhabi and Oasis Mall, Dubai

5 Simply does it

The combination of a simple white shade and elaborate gold detailing on this lamp from Al Huzafa Furniture makes for an interesting contrast. This would be the perfect choice for a corner that needs sprucing up or a hallway that's looking a little underwhelming.

● 3D Gold Lamp, Dh2,800, Al Huzafa Furniture



on the market

Dh60,000

Annual rent for a studio apartment in Motor City, Dubai

Features This 611-square-foot apartment is in Motor City's Barton House 1. It offers built-in wardrobes, a good-sized balcony and a fully equipped kitchen.

Pros Communal facilities include a gym and swimming pool. You are within walking distance of Uptown Motor City, a belt of retail units that includes coffee shops, a supermarket, restaurants, pet shops and beauty salons.

Cons Noise from the Dubai Autodrome may disturb you on certain occasions.

They say Pay Dh60,000 for 12 months' rent and you will get one month extra thrown in.

We say This is a nice leafy community with all the facilities you need. You could do a whole lot worse for this price.

Contact Better Homes, 600 522233, www.bhomes.com



home improvements

Look at your blind spots

Practicality is key in kitchens and bathrooms, where there's a constant battle with steam, condensation, food spills and humidity. Here's how to select the right blinds for these environments.

Real wood is best avoided in damp or humid environments because it can stain, warp and even twist. There are some very realistic-looking faux wood blinds available.

When choosing a fabric blind, avoid cotton, linen and silk, which can also rot, fade or shrink in moist environments. More-suitable materials are polyester, glass fibre and viscose.

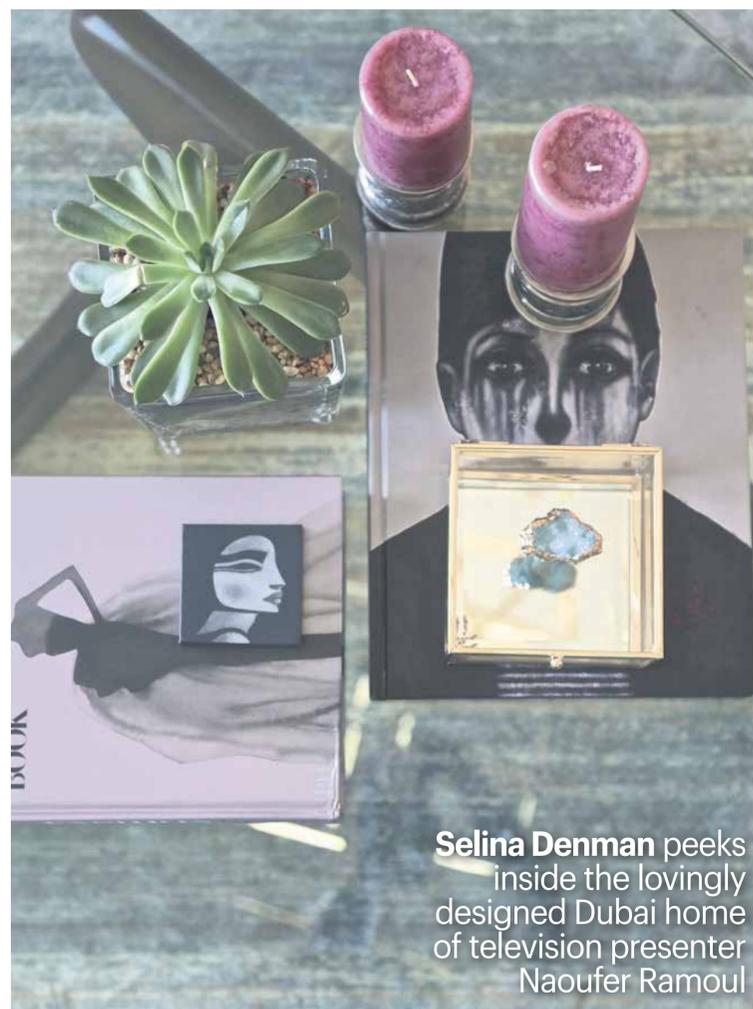
Blinds are a more practical choice than curtains because they can generally be cleaned with a damp cloth without having to be taken down.

Roller blinds are popular because they can be pulled up, out of the way of splashes, while still providing shade and privacy. Being colourful, they will also add an accent colour or pattern to a generally plain environment.

Venetian or vertical blinds are excellent at directing away bright sunlight yet still allowing light into the room.

★ Courtesy of Blinds 2 Go, www.blinds-2go.co.uk

advantage of discounts at Ace Hardware in Dubai Festival City, which is celebrating its 11th anniversary this weekend. There are also kids' activities, free car washes and product demonstrations



Selina Denman peeks inside the lovingly designed Dubai home of television presenter Naofer Ramoul



Views around the JLT apartment of Naofer Ramoul, top right. The design was all conceived by Nisrine El Lababidi. Courtesy Nisrine El Lababidi; courtesy Pierre Karam

the tips

Nisrine El Lababidi's top design tips:

● Always add greenery and plants to liven up the space.

● Group things in threes – this creates dialogue and is pleasing for the eye. And always introduce different heights to help the eye travel through the space. This also connects the different elements together.

● Always have something that's personal in your space, whether it's a game, something relating to one of your hobbies, or a piece of artwork that speaks to you.

● Accessorise with coffee-table books. These are the cheapest, easiest accessories to include in your home.



Off-screen dreams

Long before TV presenter Naofer Ramoul had an apartment to decorate, she had chosen an interior designer. Ramoul, who is the presenter of weekly political debate show *Qabil li Niqash*, had come across Harf Noon Design Studio on Instagram, and immediately got in touch with the company's founder, Nisrine El Lababidi.

"Naofer messaged me and said: 'Nisrine, I don't own a house at the moment, but when I do, I want you to decorate it,'" El Lababidi recalls.

Months later, Ramoul started looking at apartments to buy and took El Lababidi along to some of the viewings. They eventually found the ideal space – a two-bedroom apartment on the 42nd floor of a building in Jumeirah Lakes Towers in Dubai. The apartment's previous owners had already upgraded the kitchen and bathrooms, so El Lababidi set to work on the rest of the rooms. She wanted to create a calm, relaxed space that was the direct antithesis of Ramoul's previous apartment.

"Naofer had been living in a three-bedroom apartment in JLT, but it was too big and didn't have a great view. What she had in her previous apartment was a lot of red and black and other very harsh colours, so I knew I wanted to tone it down."

El Lababidi settled on a muted palette of blues, greens and pastels, interspersed with pops of terracotta. She took her cues from the apartment's expansive views, which included JLT's man-made lake and the greens of the Emirates Golf Club. "I wanted to bring those elements in, to help create a sense of serenity."

Ramoul's new home represented a clean slate, so she decided to get rid of all her existing furniture and start from scratch. "She only took her clothes and shoes," El Lababidi notes. "She had an extra room and she decided to turn it into a wardrobe. She said: 'I have a lot of shoes and clothes, and I want them all in one room.' That was a requirement from the beginning."

Beyond that, Ramoul was happy to leave her chosen designer to do her thing. "She gave me her keys," says El Lababidi. "She had a very important business trip to the US while Trump was being elected. So for two weeks, the apartment was mine. I had shown her a few mood boards before she left, and we had agreed on the basic style and colours. I knew that she loved horses and I had also shown her a picture of an Egg chair, which she liked. She doesn't have children, so I knew we could include any kind of accessories we wanted."

Because the space isn't huge, El Lababidi placed an L-shaped sofa from Indigo Living in the living room, and paired it with an Egg chair in a jaunty shade of blue. Naturally, Ramoul is a huge TV fan, so the space is anchored by an enormous 72-inch screen. A glass coffee table from MQ Furniture also contributes to a sense of spaciousness, while two grey linen stools from The One add an element of flexibility to the design, and can be moved around at will. As a finishing touch, El Lababidi introduced tasteful metallic accents into the space, including a golden, three-dimensional chandelier from 2XL and a piece of abstract metal artwork from Al Huzafa, which hangs over the sofa.

El Lababidi visited numerous homeware stores to source exactly the right pieces. There are Pottery Barn side tables, Ikea lighting and wardrobes, accessories from Blanc D'Ivoire, The One and Zara Home, bedside tables from Marina Home, and rugs from the Carpet Centre.

"I think I got something from every single shop in Dubai," she jokes. "But everything was within the budget. Naofer didn't want to overspend, because she had just bought a whole apartment."

When pushed to pick a part of the design that works particularly well, El Lababidi points to the apartment's entrance area, where an oversized painting of a white horse hangs over a slim, custom-made console from Luz de Luna. Together, they set the tone for the rest of the space, and given Ramoul's love of horses, introduce a personal touch from the outset.

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hangs over the bed in Ramoul's room, and its gentle colour palette informed the design of the rest of the room. Walls are painted in a soothing shade of grey, while the bed – a sumptuous affair with a padded headboard – and studded leather side tables are also in grey. An orange-hued throw from The One has been slung over the end of the bed to introduce a warm pop of colour.

As per Ramoul's initial request, an entire bedroom has been transformed into her own personal dressing room. Ikea wardrobes line the walls and are brimming with clothes, shoes and handbags. In the centre of the room, two sets of Ikea drawers were placed back-to-back to form an island, and then topped with a custom-made glass top. A nook in the back of the room was converted into a mini work area, with a small desk, and El Lababidi even managed to squeeze in a sofa bed for when Ramoul has guests staying over. Decorative features were kept simple and include Ikea's popular Maskros pendant lamp, white orchids and perfume bottles sitting on a mirrored tray.

For El Lababidi, getting to know her clients, and understanding their likes, dislikes and lifestyles, is key to her job, and she and Ramoul have become close friends since working together.

"The most important part of my job is listening to the client and understanding what they really want," she says. "Sometimes I feel like I'm a psychologist – particularly when it comes to couples. I've worked with some couples and genuinely feel like their life, as a couple, has been enhanced after the space they share has been fixed. It's the little things – the energy in a space, or a lack of light. There are things that make you stop wanting to spend time in your own home."

That's not so in Ramoul's apartment, El Lababidi says. "There's a lot of light in the apartment and a good flow of energy – we put in mirrors to reflect light into the darker areas. It feels like there is good energy in the space. And it's not about spending a lot; it's about being tasteful and picking the right elements and getting the size of your furniture right."

Ramoul, who shares her new apartment with her cat, Radisson – so named because she rescued it on the streets near the Radisson hotel – could not be happier with her new home.

"When I first met Nisrine, I told her I wanted an elegant, comfortable, warm interior," she says. "From there on, the journey has been full of excitement and joy. Nisrine kept a simple classy touch, and translated my life and style into my dream home."

"Going back to my apartment is like being in love. I'm excited to use my new bed; happy to sit on my pristine new sofa. And even though the project ended four months ago, I'm still living my honeymoon. I want to cherish my beautiful nest every night."

✉ sdenman@thenational.ae