

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

NISRINE EL LABABIDI MOGHRABY, FOUNDER OF HARF NOON DESIGN STUDIO OFFERS HER TIPS AND TRICKS FOR RENOVATING YOUR HOME IN 2021

BY LINDSAY JUDGE

Interior designer and Founder of Harf Noon Design Studio Nisrine El Lababidi Moghraby has redesigned homes of all shapes and sizes in the UAE and beyond. But this year has been somewhat different, as the home has taken on a new role in all of our lives. Becoming not just a living space, but also a workplace, a school for kids or an escape from the outside world. The global pandemic has seen us all appreciate our homes in ways we may never have thought of before. Throughout this past year, customer needs have changed drastically and as a result, our home environments have become more important than ever. Here we discuss some of the ways you can update your home to adapt to your lifestyle as well as an outlook on the upcoming home and interiors trends for 2021.

When it comes to a new year what are some of the ways we can easily update or freshen up our home?

The past year has been like no other, we have seen a shift in how people utilise their homes and spaces and connect even more with their surroundings. Colour is a key part of that. Pantone has announced “Ultimate Gray” and “Illuminating” to be the colours of the year due to their warmth and dependability, however, I think many will be shifting towards rich browns, jewel tones and a range of greens, that will bring the outside in at a time where we are all spending more time at home. Paint has the power to transform a space on a tiny budget.

What are some of the interiors trends you are looking forward to in 2021?

I think we will see an increase in sustainable furniture and accessories. Antique, repurposed, salvaged and retro pieces all have their place in 2021. The key is to go with a ‘less-is-more’ approach for a cohesive aesthetic – collecting items over time that mean something to you and contrasting them with a few luxe pieces to create a modern take on it.

I also think earthy colours and warm natural textures will prevail. Be it through accessories or finishes, it’s nice to show the influence of nature, the nostalgia of travel and the desire for a getaway through the home. Maximalism is another trend I foresee increasing in popularity. This is where one would curate a home packed full of personality. Think highly decorated layers that tell a story, from bold

wallpaper overlaid with furniture and souvenirs that have been collected. You can read more about trends in my book; “HOMES: We Make Them, They Make Us”.

For those who like their home to be more of a blank canvas – how can we use accessories to brighten up the home?

For the colour shy or those who get bored quickly, I would suggest purchasing larger pieces of furniture in neutral tones such as beige, white, grey or even black, then layering with colour through cushions, throws and accessories. Warm golds and terracotta tones look great together or you can opt for jewelled tones of ruby and emerald green. The trick is to follow the 60-30-10 rule: 60% neutral, 30% one colour, 10% contrasting or complementing colour. Vases, flowers, interesting objects, trinket boxes and art all provide opportunities to inject colour onto a blank canvas.

As many are now working from home – what are some of the ways you would recommend designing your living and workspaces so that we can ensure a clear separation between the two?

First and foremost, if possible, find a quiet spot that can be dedicated purely to work. This way you can have a clear division between work responsibilities and home responsibilities. If your home doesn’t have space for a home office, set up in your kitchen, living room, bedroom or even walk-in closet. But take extra care to make these areas work-focused by day and home by night. Clear enough space for technology, office supplies, coffee and anything else your job may require so you can access and use things comfortably. Lighting is very important too. Brighten your workspace by setting up near a window or using a desk/floor lamp. Keep your space decluttered and tidy as this will increase productivity and improve your mood.

How have some of the requests you have from clients adapted since the beginning of the COVID-19 period?

Of course, we are receiving more requirements for office spaces that can cater up to two people, often in a guest room. We are also seeing an increase in requests for home gyms, as well as more and more parents requesting desk setups for their children in their bedrooms. And finally, there’s an increase of requests for fully-kitted-out spa and hair salons inside villas that have the space for this!





Can you share with us some tips and tricks for maximising the size of your home?

- The first trick is to keep it clutter-free and designate areas for storage that are easy for everyone to use.
- Having your storage units hanging off the floor also clears floor space and maximises the use of your walls. Think hanging sideboards, tv units, etc.
- Using mirrors will multiply the feeling of space and they bounce off the light to make rooms feel larger and brighter.

How important is it to have a home environment that you love?

It is extremely important. Our homes are reflections of us and they are our sanctuaries, so if we do not love them they can become toxic and you may not want to spend time there. If you are the type of person that dines out every day or would prefer staying in hotels over the weekend, then make some changes to your home and see how that all changes!

What are some tips and tricks for those with kids to ensure a balanced living environment?

Having a home with kids does not mean losing style. I often advise my clients to go for baby and toddler safe options when it comes to tables, for example, choosing round tables, or upholstered ottomans and then layering them with accessories that won't break like coffee table books, a small metal tray with a trinket box, some wooden vases and perhaps even an X&O set. You can even decorate with shells collected from a beach trip or some interesting sticks from a walk in the park! Candles are also very safe to style with, but be careful when lighting them with kids around.



Another important thing is to include their toys in your living space but dedicate an area for their play. That could be a small corner with big baskets for toys that they can tidy up on their own - it also means the space looks tidy. Having a soft rug is also nice for them to sit and play on. You can carve up a small reading nook for example under the stairs or create a boho-style tent that is cute and stylish at the same time. They will love you even more for that!

What is the one thing we should invest in the home for 2021?

Elevate your home with dramatic touches of luxury and bring the ultra-glamorous trend to your living environment. Consider how playful opulence and patterns lift an interior's moods, redefining the home with all the comforts and refinements of boutique hotels. This can be incorporated by adding geometric shapes, luxury velvets, monochrome prints and cashmere throws.





How would you define your style as an interior designer?

An aesthetic vocabulary that references both classicism and modernity with a layered narrative.

What advice would you give to anyone who is confused about where to start with the renovation of their home?

First and foremost think of the function of every space and if it is serving the home dwellers as needed. Is there, for example, a need for a closed office space? A gym? A guest room? Is an open plan living room working to its best or is it better to have a closed kitchen to stop cooking scents from escaping? Asking these questions allows one to get creative and really dissect the home when approaching a renovation. Perhaps the house lacks architectural detail or it is not naturally lit – so these issues are the first to be targeted. Next is to properly set a budget – this is sometimes overseen and often results in disappointment. Committing to a budget allows one to realistically focus on the necessities and often means that decisions can be made more quickly. Thirdly I would say decide on the mood and style intended from the renovation – this will again very much depend on your budget.

What is the professional motto that you live by?

It always seems impossible until it's done.

What would you say to anyone who is thinking about changing their home in 2021?

Your home is the most important safety haven – find one that truly reflects your identity. It could be a high-rise overlooking our beautiful city landscape. Or you might be someone who rolls out of bed onto the running track or someone who longs for a quiet life surrounded by lush gardens. Whatever it may be, find a house, an apartment, a condo or a bungalow that adds to your soul and energizes your daily living – then make that a home. 🍷