



THE ART OF REINVENTION

A family home in the Meadows has been transformed using a palette of soothing neutrals and Afro-chic furnishings

WORDS AND STYLING CHARLOTTE BUTTERFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY STEFAN LINDEQUE



This page and previous The living room was painted in a soft khaki grey. The jute rug is from Ikea, and the papier mâché stag's head is from West Elm. An African Bamileke stool is used as a side table, and has been spray-painted white to complement the light scheme.



PROFILE

THE OWNERS Kathryn Hawkes and her accountant husband Mark hail from Durban, in South Africa. They moved to Dubai 10 years ago from London, and share their home with son Ethan, six, and daughter Kaitlyn, five.

THE HOME The family were drawn to the Meadows for its community feel, and have been renting this detached home for three years. On the ground floor it has a kitchen/ breakfast room, open-plan dining and living room, cloakroom and home office. Upstairs, there is a spacious hallway, four double bedrooms and a family bathroom.

Interiors blogger Kathryn Hawkes is no stranger to the art of reinvention. Leaving her successful marketing and business development career behind after the birth of her daughter Kaitlyn, her passion for interior design has now become a way of life.

'I became an interiors blogger a little bit by accident, not really by design,' she explains. 'In my previous marketing job, I was always very involved in sourcing new premises for stores, and working with designers for the fit-outs, and I loved doing that.'

'After the birth of my daughter, I started helping out friends with graphic work and a bit of styling, and became known amongst them as the person who knew where to get everything for the home. Then one friend joked that I should set up a Facebook page with all this information on it, and that's where

the idea for my blog [www.houseofhawkes.net] came about.' Starting off as a directory of Dubai suppliers and quirky interiors stores, the site has now evolved into a veritable treasure trove of inspirational images and in-the-know local finds. A popular element of her blog is Kathryn's own DIY projects, evidence of which are scattered liberally throughout her Meadows home.

'I can see the potential in most things,' Kathryn admits. 'Most of the furniture we own has been modified in some way over the years, whether by reupholstering, spray painting, or, in some extreme cases, taking apart and reassembling!' In the light and airy living room, pure white fitted slip covers have been added to sofas, providing an instant update that's also a functional must-have in a home with young children. Fabric in soothing tones of powder blue – brought back from Kathryn's native South Africa

– has been used for the cushions where paisley prints and delicate ticking stripes sit happily side by side.

'My style is very muted and understated, with lots of neutrals, and light colours,' she explains. 'Our African heritage definitely comes out in the choice of earthy textures, jute rugs, baskets and wood.' An African Bamileke stool, carved directly out of the tree trunk, makes a unique side table, while tribal artefacts and animal-inspired decor items add interest to walls and shelves.

In the dining room, Kathryn stripped the dark varnish off a table to reveal its extraordinary natural grain, and added a thick marble top to a bespoke white wood buffet counter from a workshop in Al Quoz. One of Kathryn's upcycling triumphs has to be the gold display unit that started its life as a black and glass bookcase, which she spray-painted matte gold, before ▶

'MOST OF THE FURNITURE WE OWN HAS BEEN MODIFIED IN SOME WAY OVER THE YEARS'

A dhurrie-style rug from West Elm sits underneath the stripped dining table and Marina Home dining chairs. The matte gold display unit was once a black bookcase that has been artfully modified. Nods to the family's African heritage are evident in the accessories – bone ornaments, small African stools and an abundance of plants add to the 'Afro-chic' feel.

'WHITE OR GREY IS THE PERFECT BACKDROP, AS YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR LOOK WHENEVER YOU WANT, JUST BY ADDING ACCESSORIES'

The home office enjoys day-long sunshine and is an inspirational space for Kathryn to update her design blog. The hide rug from Ikea matches the spray-painted carved skull brought back from Africa, while a reproduction Eames Eiffel chair and customised desk complete the look.



'I LOVE THE EARTHY TONES AND TEXTURES IN AFRICAN HANDICRAFTS, AND HAVE TRIED TO BRING THESE INTO MY HOME'

using marble-effect contact paper to line the top and bottom shelves to match the real stone of the buffet.

Similarly, Kathryn's desk had humble origins as two kitchen cabinets that were given a new lease of life when topped with a sheet of PDF clad in the same marble-patterned contact paper.

'I love looking at things, wondering how I can make use of them in a different way. Almost anything can be repurposed or adapted to suit your needs or style.'

Upstairs in the master bedroom, an ottoman and studded headboard from Sense in Satwa are the latest additions, using soft grey and stone tones that complement Kathryn's penchant for neutrals. Above the bed, a line of traditional South African baskets make an interesting wall detail, which Kathryn spray-painted white to match the scheme.

Her son Ethan's room has recently been transformed using Jotun's new kids' paint collection. 'He went to school with a blue bedroom and came home to find a grey and white super-hero room! But he loves the more grown-up feel.' Meanwhile, daughter Kaitlyn's room is pink and pretty with dainty white furniture, a sweep of bunting and a lively wall motif adding interest.

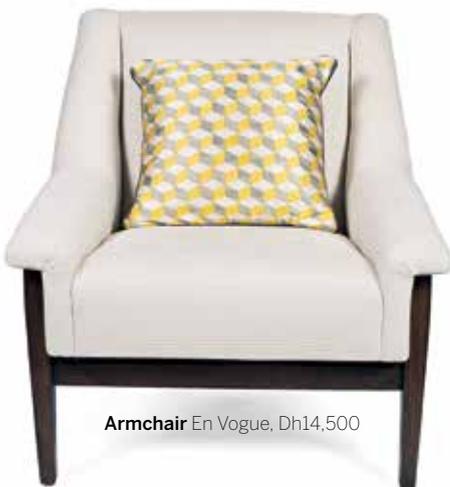
'I can't really understand people who don't personalise a home, just because it's rented,' says Kathryn. 'Of course you don't want to make expensive alterations to a home that's not yours, but you can make incredibly effective transformations just by painting and changing your soft furnishings. I must admit to having a slight cushion addiction, as they can change the look of a room in an instant. I have a cupboard full of fabric I've collected from my travels, just waiting to be used somewhere – our home is constantly evolving, and I would never say it's finished. I've always got a new project on the go!'

Many of the artefacts and accessories around the home are African-inspired. **From top left** The baskets are South African, although Tribe in Dubai do similar versions. The small untreated wooden stool is a traditional African design. The artwork, ornaments and striped fabric are all from Kathryn's home country. The feathered wall decor is from Tribe and is based on the traditional African feathered hat. Horns make an interesting table decoration.



Clockwise from above The master bedroom has a tufted headboard upholstered by Sense in Satwa, who Kathryn describes as 'my go-to guys for curtains, cushions, any type of upholstery.' Ethan's bedroom has a distinctive Bowery Company rug, with decorative touches from Typo. Kaitlyn's sugar-pink room is enlivened with a tree motif from Pottery Barn and bunting from Laura Ashley.

STYLE FILE How to get the look

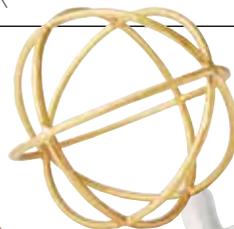


Armchair En Vogue, Dh14,500

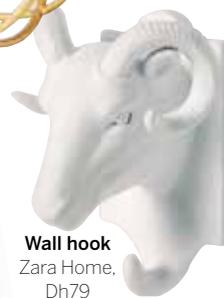
Pendant light
Ikea, Dh275



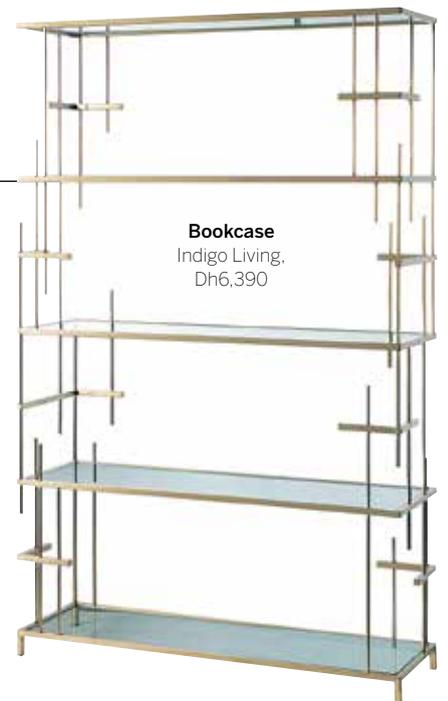
Cushion
Designers Guild
at Maison D'art,
Dh520



Sculpture
West Elm,
Dh415



Wall hook
Zara Home,
Dh79



Bookcase
Indigo Living,
Dh6,390