



# FEATHERING THE NEST

FEATURE: NINA LISTER. PHOTOGRAPHY: GENIA MAALOUF

A newlywed Beirut couple turned to Habib Wehbe to transform their apartment into the perfect place to embark on their marriage.

**T**o get married is to embark on a new adventure, and a new phase in your life. And what better way to start than in a beautiful new home? So, when newly-married couple Diana and Nidal El Khalil, who live in Beirut, saw how designer Habib Wehbe had transformed the home of one of their relatives with his signature style mix of elegance and pragmatism, they commissioned him to remodel their 500 sqm apartment in the Lebanese capital.

The couple decided to create an entirely new living space, so the apartment was completed gutted. "The first thing I did was remove all the partition walls and start from scratch," says Habib.

The objective was to transform the entrance, reception and dining areas into an open space. "A new lounge area, which we called the *Diwan* was also created with a bar to accommodate guests and friends in a very chilled mood," he explains. Meanwhile, the private area of the apartment now comprises a family TV room, a master bedroom with en-suite bathroom and a children's bedroom and bathroom. Overall, the couple wanted to create a space, which would be pure, serene and minimal in its style and ambience.

To achieve this mood, and working on the clients' preference for an off-white colour palette, Habib used beige linen fabric in



***This page and opposite:*** The Diwan area of the apartment with its mosaic table centrepiece, from Habib's own furniture line

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various designs to cover the custom-made furniture in the reception, *Diwan* and the bar and dining area.

The centrepiece in the *Diwan* area is the mosaic table, which has become a signature item in Habib's new furniture line.

Various wood finishes, including glossy walnut brown, matt walnut and maple, were selected to add a bit of a contrast and the same colour palette was used in the private areas, such as the master bedroom. Habib added a table and floor lamps by Artemide, while the ceiling lights enhance the calm feel of the residence with their white and champagne tones.

Habib's design philosophy is one of harmonisation with pops of colour and design – frequently through carefully placed works of art or design. He works on the basis that the neutrality of a carefully planned, open space actively enhances the work of art.



**Above:** The chandelier in the dining room area has the air of a piece of sculpture

**Left:** A view towards the dining area from the bar



"The chandelier in the dining area acts as a piece of modern sculpture with a beautiful light effect," says Habib. Meanwhile, the guest bathroom was tiled in pearl white Bisazza mosaic stone in line with the colours used in the reception and dining area.

Silk carpets were used to decorate and add comfort to the *Diwan* and main reception area, adding richness and elegance. The colours complement the Travertine Marble and light beige colour scheme running throughout the apartment.

The couple have added a personal touch to the theme of their home with art works such as the three Japanese calligraphy pieces they chose. "For the bar area, we collaborated with Fadi Daoud as the clients saw his work and fell in love with the Asmahan painting," says Habib. "This piece adds a great deal of charm and character to the bar area.

"I am very much of the "Less is More" philosophy. I keep things simple and neutral so all the artwork and special pieces in the apartment stand out."



**Above:** A painting by the couple's favourite artist, Fadi Daoud, adds charm and depth to the neutral tones of the bar area  
**Left:** A view of the bar from the Diwan area

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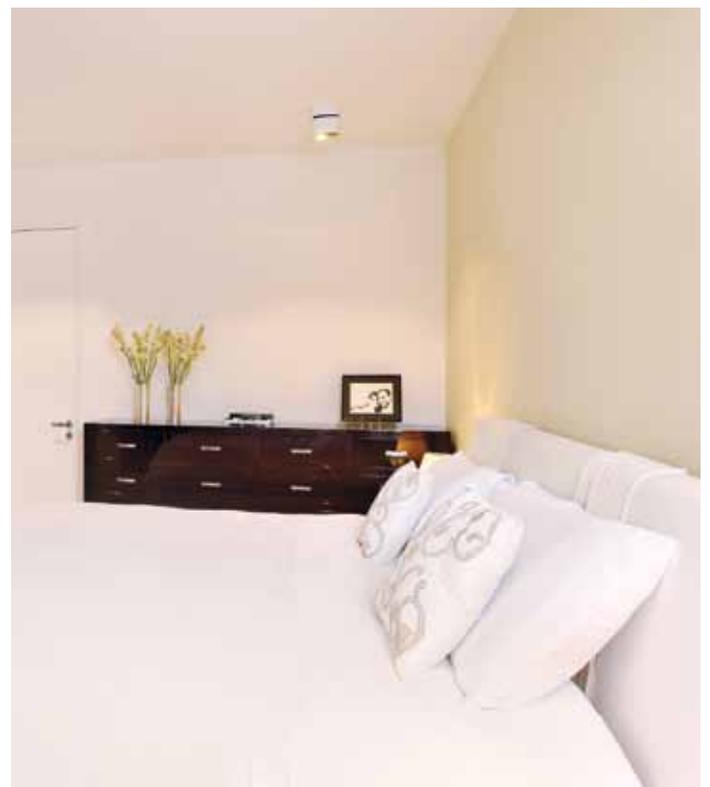
*Personal touches, such as these three Japanese calligraphy pieces in the smaller lounge, add character to the apartment, while silk carpets add warmth and colour to the Travertine marble which features throughout*



*Various wood finishes were used in the private, family areas of the apartment, along with table and floor lamps by Artemide*



*The colour palette featured white, champagne and wood tones*



*The master bedroom*