

A home away from home



Photo: Uriel Messa

By GLORIA DEUTSCH

04/14/2015 After having designed a number of Jerusalem homes, architect and interior designer Amy Cohn is much in demand. Architect and interior designer Amy Cohn left a promising career in New York behind when she made aliya in 1998. She had landed a job at the prestigious firm of I.M. Pei, Cobb, Freed and Partners, a dream position for any aspiring architect. Among its other achievements, the firm had built the Kennedy Library and the Louvre Pyramid.

But Cohn, who had gained a BA, then a master's in architecture, worked there for only three years. During that time she met her husband and the couple decided to leave the New York scene behind and fulfill a long-held dream – to move to Israel and forge a career here just as glamorous as the one she left behind.

In the 17 years she has been here, Cohn has worked on many prestigious projects including the Prime Minister's Office. She has been involved in creating many public buildings, and in 2000 opened up her own office, greatly encouraged by the man she describes as her mentor, James Freed.

After having designed a number of Jerusalem homes, she is much in demand, and among her clients are people from abroad who buy holiday homes with the possible hope that one day they will live permanently in Jerusalem.

This is one such home, belonging to a young Orthodox couple, the parents of six children. It's a duplex in the German Colony with five bedrooms, four upstairs and one on the ground floor which has access to a private garden.

The sweeping staircase makes an immediate visual impact on entering the apartment and is an important decorative feature as well as a practical one giving access to the upper floor.

Both on the stairs and in the dining room, a very striking wall has been built consisting of two kinds of local stone in shades of gray and pale yellow.

"We had the tiles cut to different sizes and put them together like a puzzle," says Cohn.

The dining-room is separated from the kitchen by a half wall which can be accessed from either side.

"It was planned for easy circulation," explains Cohn.

The four-meter oakwood table is surrounded by matching oak chairs with cream shaded upholstery which has been specially treated to withstand stains.

"In fact, all the textiles in the apartment were chosen for their ability to withstand stains. And if they do get dirty they can be cleaned with a wet wipe," explains Cohn.

The light fitting over the dining-room table consists of long rectangular bars of light.

"We looked for a long time to find the perfect light fitting," she says, "and we were very happy to find this one which is the perfect shape and size. All the lights in the apartment are fitted with LED lightbulbs."

Next to the dining room is a marble niche holding a small sink for netilat yadayim – ritual hand-washing before bread.

The "den" is a long narrow room furnished with seating made from eucalyptus wood. The seats are covered in camel-shade leather while underneath is plenty of storage for toys, shoes and anything else the children want to discard.

"We really aimed for a clear uncluttered look in this room, and the under-seat storage seemed the best way to achieve this," says Cohn.

The living room has a brown/camel fitted rug and includes a love seat as part of the furniture.

"It's a fun place for the children to sit and they usually fight over it," she says.

Two leather tub chairs in toning light brown give extra seating for the large family.

The unusual coffee table is high-gloss white painted wood and looks like two rectangles joined together at one end.

“We got it in Kastiel in Tel Aviv,” says Cohn. “We really tried to acquire furniture made in Israel,” she adds.

An archway marks the entrance to the kitchen which was carved into a supporting wall. All the cabinets are covered in white glass for an especially clean look.

Because not too much light comes into the kitchen the architect designed a skylight in the ceiling to give an illusion of daylight.

Gray and white are the dominant colors of the master bedroom.

“That’s because the oak parquet gives a slightly gray tinge to the floor and the bed linens and large mirror pick up this shade,” says Cohn.

The headboard is leather and on the window a Roman shade adds a light touch.

The main bathroom is all white marble and glass and a seat in the shower is an unusual feature.

Ceiling lights play an important part in the décor.

“I like to give a lot of options for lights,” says Cohn.

It’s a holiday home that offers every possible comfort – and can become a permanent home as soon as the owners decide to take the plunge.