

Peaceful in Rehavia



By GLORIA DEUTSCH

05/23/2013 'The emphasis,' says the architect, was on 'quiet decor with a view to accentuate the feeling of space'. One of architect Amy Cohn's most interesting jobs after arriving in Israel in 1998 was working on the interior of the Prime Minister's Office in the Knesset. "He [Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu] told me he cared a lot about design, as he had studied architecture himself at MIT," says Cohn, who comes from Riverdale, New York. "In fact, he was in the same program as a previous associate of mine from the Pei Cobb Freed company." She got the job through a carpenter she was working with at the time, who was also working there and recommended her.

From that exalted beginning she now works at creating comfortable spaces for her clients, who present her with many different demands. For instance, in this holiday home in Rehavia, she needed to produce as many bedrooms as possible since the owners visit often, bringing children and grandchildren with them. Eventually they hope to make aliya.

"I gear the space to the client," she says. "And I feel I have a good grasp of space, especially for families with children, as I have four of my own and I'm in touch with their needs."

It was important for Cohn to create a foyer or entrance hall in this home, which in general is rare in a Jerusalem apartment. "I like the whole concept of walking in and seeing how the apartment unfolds, a little like reading a novel. You don't walk straight into the lounge, for instance, but you slowly see it."

This is what she has done in the duplex pictured here. The visitor comes through the front door and stands in the hall, looking towards the living areas on the right through two archways. The foyer is circular, for a more fluid and gracious look, with a skylight overhead set into an onyx ceiling, to flood the place with light. Between the two arches she has inserted a niche, lit softly from above. The whole area is painted in a rich, textured cream paint.

Through the arches, which are thick enough to contain closets on both sides, one looks to the right into the kitchen and to the left into the lounge-dining room.

On closer inspection, the kitchen is made of brown mahogany with glass upper cabinets and a backsplash. The granite work top of the island is strong green marble. Like all the rooms in the apartment, the colors are pale and pastels are favored in the master bedroom, the living areas and several bathrooms to maximize the space.

“We didn’t want ‘loud,’” says the architect. “The emphasis was on peaceful, quiet decor with a view to accentuate the feeling of space.”

Windows are especially interesting in this apartment. In the dining room she worked with an engineer to create the corner window and replace the two small windows that had been there.

“The view was so beautiful we wanted to open it up,” she says.

By contrast, the kitchen windows are arched, while the small window behind the sink has a hidden roller blind that can be lowered to filter the harsh light if necessary.

The master bedroom has a small window behind the beds that has been made to look as though it extends the whole width of the beds, through a trompe l’oeil effect of a wide window. Thick, creamy, textured curtains hang on the side windows.

Niches by the sides of the beds contain orchids – as does almost every room in the apartment.

“The lighting is very important,” emphasizes Cohn. “It can create different moods, whether it’s ambient lighting or cove lighting just peeping out of the cornices I created.

The embedded lights give off a nice warm glow.”

The bathrooms have some interesting features. In one, the sink looks completely flat with an inset LED light delineating the edges of the actual sink, which slopes gently to allow water to drain. An egg-shaped tub, pale green marble tiles, an orchid niche and wide mirror complete the room.

In another, a long silver strip that looks and acts like a shelf is actually the faucet.

Connecting the two floors of the duplex is a staircase whose banisters are made of elaborate wrought iron. A wooden handrail was added to warm up the look and make it more user-friendly. It was also the perfect spot to place one more orchid.