

OCTOBER 2020

# Design

## Middle East

Interiors and Architecture from the Gulf,  
Levant and Beyond

design-middleeast.com

# Challenge accepted

**UNESCO** launches  
an international competition to  
rebuild a global icon in Iraq

**Architects and  
designers invited  
to reimagine**

**Mosul's historic  
Al-Nouri Complex**





# A seamless blend

Dubai-based VSHD Design shares the glimpses of their first U.S. residential project

Photographer: Koen Van Damme

VSHD Design unveils a luxurious residential design within the Four Seasons Orlando Resort in Florida, United States. "From the onset, we realised that we were facing numerous challenges with this project," says Rania Hamed, interior architect and founder of VSHD Design. "In addition to strict regional building and environmental codes, there were requirements imposed by Four Seasons Resorts to ensure that the residence blended stylistically with its neighbouring properties."

In approaching the external Tuscan theme exhibited by homes within the exclusive development, the challenge was to maintain some existing structural elements, while delivering on the client's vision of a modern home that would be luxurious, yet warm, comfortable, and ideal for entertaining guests. The client envisioned a sort of boutique-style hotel environment that would provide family and friends with privacy and luxurious amenities, even in the absence of its owners. To achieve that challenging balance, Hamed embarked on a mission to modernise the external Tuscan façade, while infusing contemporary luxury

into the home's interior to align with the client's vision. While Tuscan architecture in its purest form embraces natural, rustic elements, VSHD Design avoided abundant use of materials such as brick and wrought iron in lieu of a modern interpretation. Grey brick overhangs positioned above the external façade's windows and passages pay homage to Tuscan influences. Black frames of expansive French windows, certified to hurricane standards, provide contemporary contrasts to the façade's white walls, culminating in a modern Mediterranean style that adheres to the Four Seasons aesthetic requirements. »



Rania Hamed, interior architect and founder of VSHD Design

To complement the structural design, the design firm developed all of the home's outdoor spaces, beginning with its swimming pool. European limestone tiles, stylistic planters, and luxurious sunbeds provide the exterior spaces with an authentic Mediterranean look and feel.

While the exterior exudes modern interpretations of mandated styles and standards, VSHD Design approached the interior of the house as somewhat of a blank canvas. Working with a timber structure, as opposed to concrete columns and beams, was a new experience, however, Hamed found inspiration in the challenge.

"I saw beauty in some of the original structural elements and I wanted to maintain as many of them as possible," Hamed explains. "I decided to leave some of the exposed beams intact, as opposed to hiding them behind a layer of gypsum."

Exposed wooden beams reflecting the original structure's integrity were maintained, with layers of dark stain and black metal trim added to provide a more industrial feel. Hamed also focussed on ensuring seamless continuity between the home's interior and exterior spaces. Upon entering the house, Carrara marble flooring carries the influences inward, where Tuscan-style arches define the separation of the home's interior spaces, reinforced by clean, modern, and slightly protruding architraves.

The main floor houses the master bedroom, highlighted by a luxurious contemporary décor and direct access to the adjacent pool area and outdoor shower, designed as part of VSHD's vision of an indoor/outdoor lifestyle. The master bedroom's spa-inspired adjoining spaces include a freestanding bathtub as the centrepiece of a spacious bathroom that also features an individual toilet and shower cubicles.

"The client's brief focused on a concept where each room should have a completely different, yet thoroughly modern theme," shares Hamed. "We incorporated Chinese, Spanish, and multiple other influences to provide each suite with its own distinct character and mood."

To tie the interior spaces together, the design team embarked on an ambitious plan to develop a new patio space at the centre of the house to create stimulating visual links between multiple areas of the house. To separate the pool area from the patio, and to connect the master bedroom to the living spaces, the design team built an enclosed lanai with four expansive French windows on each side, which infuse the passage with natural light.

"By blending traditional elements with a modern contemporary mix, we succeeded in achieving a contrast that works well," tells Hamed. "We didn't want that contrast to be too soft, so the use of black and white, with Carrara marble flooring, provides the home with a strong modern-vintage look."



Exposed wooden beams reflecting the original structure's integrity were maintained, with layers of dark stain and black metal trim added to provide a more industrial feel.