

Vibrant

VILLA

*Swedish artist Cecilia Setterdahl's home
reflects character through modern
furnishings with rustic touches*

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Purple chairs by Patricia Urquiola in Cecilia's living room; Original carpet by Cecilia



estled within Dubai's hidden gem, Jumeirah Islands, is Cecilia Setterdahl's elegant villa. Bursting with creative flair and chic interiors, the classy abode is filled with colourful décor amid large white walls and glossy flooring. The inside brims with natural light through floor-to-ceiling windows, imbuing a state of calm. Upon entering, on the left is a beautiful staircase with a zebra-like black and white striped pattern wallpapered along the curve of the wall – a testament to the artist's love of stripes – and on the right hangs a stunning painting of British designer Matthew Williamson wearing a vivid red sweater that Cecilia created several years ago after she saw an image of him in a newspaper.

Down the hallway are pristine white two-seater sofas, purple Patricia Urquiola chairs, and an elegant glass coffee table. Two of Cecilia's original carpets are laid on the floor of the living room, designed with bold blues and pinks, sharp lines and geometrical shapes. Adjacent to the sofas is a rare chair with a vibrant yellow seat cushion in a unique shape akin to a large bell. Placed at the far left corner of the room is an impressive, wood piano that Cecilia inherited, adding a rustic touch to the modern furnishings. Before the semi-open kitchen sits a magnificent, block-like sculpture called *Temps séparé* by Swiss artist Etienne Krähenbühl, which creates the illusory effect of a still life form, but springs back and forth when touched.

A unique console table that the artist won at an auction house in Denmark, reminiscent of designs from the 1950s, and beautiful antique chairs further enliven the living room. Mannequin structures from Neuchâtel, Switzerland, are placed by the windows, adding to the eclectic ambience. The kitchen, Cecilia's personal favourite space in the house, is white with touches of silver. "White is like heaven," Cecilia says.

Based in Switzerland for over two decades, the artist has always had a passion for painting. When her two sons moved away from home to the US and Spain, Cecilia and her husband, Michael, decided to pack up and move to Dubai. Prior to the move, Cecilia was focused on teaching. "I was fairly quick to understand that you can't live on painting, so I became a teacher," she says, pensively. "But then I went to art school in Stockholm and I thought I should paint full time, so that's what I've been doing." The couple settled in Dubai Design District in January 2016, surprised to find that they were one of the first residents in the area. "There was nobody there, you couldn't buy a cup of coffee," she says, surprised.

Shortly after the move, Cecilia set up a studio inside the house and established her very own showroom called Carpets, Canvas, and Cushions by Cecilia Setterdahl. The unique concept transforms paintings from a canvas onto a carpet that is hand-knotted in India. Cecilia and her husband worked together from scratch to turn this idea into a reality, facing many challenges along the way. "We didn't know anything about carpets – I knew what I wanted to have, what the carpet should look like but I didn't know so much about knotting of carpets and quality of wool," she says. "To sell the carpets was even more challenging because down here when we came, we knew nobody, so it was tough." Cecilia is immensely grateful for her husband's ongoing support. "Without Michael, I never ever would have started up this company of my own."

The artist felt something indescribable when she designed her very first carpet, which is now in Sweden, admiring the ability for art to become "something you can touch." Appreciative of the composition seen in paintings, Cecilia sought to add this quality to carpet designs. "Normally, a carpet has a repetition of patterns," she says. "I like when you can see ►



From left: Cecilia's in-house studio; eclectic designs in one of Cecilia Setterdahl's carpets; Mannequin structures from Neuchâtel, Switzerland



that there's a composition in the carpet, as you see in a painting."

Downstairs is Michael's office, adorned with pottery that was bought in Sweden. "I had put a lot of 50s pottery and 60s glassware from Sweden because they had a lot of bright yellow and bright orange," she says. Over in the guest bathroom is a framed painting of a blue lemon created in gouache. "I did a lot of work in gouache and oil," she says. "When we had kids, I changed to acrylics."

Cecilia believes in being bold, daring and expressing personality through art without the constraints of conforming to a standard design. "I think taste destroys a lot of homes," she sighs. "People are so afraid that they might not have good taste, so instead of taking something they might like, they take something that is just tasteful and it means less personality in the home." The artist encourages experimentation with designs and different techniques to produce styles that are reflective of identities. "Sometimes homes look like a hotel foyer because people are afraid of not having good taste, but if you buy things you like, it becomes you in a way," she adds.

Cecilia and Michael renovated their villa entirely to match their unique taste. "We put up more lights, painted the walls white – maybe it's a Scandinavian way of thinking, I don't know," she laughs. "Up there, we have a lot of white walls and white houses." Upstairs are three bedrooms with pastel-coloured furnishings, Cecilia's original paintings and carpets. The beds are embellished with beautiful pillows designed in Dubai, and the dressing tables with exquisite decoration pieces bought from an antique market in Switzerland. Cecilia re-painted the bedroom walls to create an elegant look. "It was all pink with flowers on the walls and the bathroom was white with pink all around – we changed it all to white," she says, smiling. The bedroom down the hallway belonging to Cecilia's son has an original carpet made in Nepal. "It's a very nice carpet, it took about three months to make," she says. The picturesque view from the large windows adds to the tranquil atmosphere of the room. "Sometimes it's like living in a big park in New York," she says, staring through the windows. "Especially at night time when you see the skyline, it's beautiful."

A striking blend bold design, Cecilia's home speaks volumes. Working on her thriving showroom Carpets CC by Cecilia, she is optimistic about the future. With lush landscapes and serene surroundings, Jumeirah Islands is a perfect match for this charming abode.

From top: striking black and white striped wallpapered enlivens the villa;

Below: one of Cecilia
Setterdahl's gorgeous hand-
knotted carpets complements
the dining table

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