

# Your LIFE



## INSIDE OUT

With a career in landscape design, **Kamelia Bin Zaal's** grand Al Barari home expertly embraces the beauty of its surroundings

Styling by CHARLOTTE BLAIR  
Photography by VICRAM GAWDE

Kamelia wears: Top, J.Crew, her own. Trousers (sold with top), Dhs4,540, The Kayys. Bracelet, Dhs2,150; ring, Dhs1,800; both Vita Fede at Harvey Nichols

Kamelia's bedroom is filled with personal touches: a parasol bought in Thailand by her parents, a mannequin from Achica.com and a stunning mirror from Marina Home



The Kudu head Kamelia bought in Stellenbosch sits alongside photos of her and son Za'al



**T**he first thing you notice upon entering Kamelia Bin Zaal's palatial Al Barari home is how light and welcoming the space is. "This was a deliberate choice. When we designed our houses with the architects, my father made sure we put skylights into the main hallways, walk-in wardrobes, bathrooms and even the basements where possible, because light makes such a difference as to how you feel in a space. It's positive and more vibrant," the mother-of-one tells *Bazaar*.

Kamelia, 39, is the creative director of Al Barari, the lush wilderness development (established by her father Zaal Mohammed Zaal in 2006), holding the post for seven years and counting. "My role involves everything from landscape design to architecture and advertising campaigns. It's also now developed further into managing the marketing and communications for the Zaal Group. It's non-stop and always a challenge but I'm still able to work on my real passion, which is private villa design," she says, as we step out into her extensive backyard. Given her career, this is an incredibly important >



Top: Words are a common design feature in Kamelia's home, appearing on ornaments, tables and walls

Above: This horse was bought from Etcetera to "bring a delicate colour into our dining space"

Kamelia wears: Top, Ayesha Depala; charm bracelet, both her own. Trousers, Dhs2,175, 3.1 Phillip Lim at Boutique 1. Bangle, Dhs2,150; ring, Dhs1,150, both Vita Fede at Harvey Nichols

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aspect of the house. "For me, a garden is an extension of your home, like an outdoor room. It's invaluable. I love that this house opens up onto the gardens and all the windows leading to it are bi-fold so we get the very best of indoor/outdoor living."

From the vibrant sunken seating area and the vegetable gardens growing "everything from broccoli to kale, lettuce, tomatoes, chillies and cucumbers", to the vibrant floral displays, the yard outside is an incredibly welcoming area. The skills she uses to create such a space have now been recognised in perhaps the most prestigious of ways, as she will be the first Emirati landscape designer to participate at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. "It's been my dream for years and I'm still in awe of the idea. It feels surreal," she admits.

Inside, where the scent of Diptyque's Verveine candles mix beautifully with Jo Malone's Peony and Blush Suede fill the house, Kamelia tells us that the three-bedroom property originally had four. "I converted one of them into a sitting room and connected it to my bedroom, which is great because I now have two walk-in wardrobes all to myself!" she laughs. Those wardrobes play home to Kamelia's designer purchases, many of which are by Bottega Veneta. "It's the simplicity and elegance of the brand that I love," she explains. "It's also such good quality and each item is finished beautifully." And her favourite, can't-live-without items? "Chloé slip-ons and Seven For All Mankind jeans."

The house is also filled with animal references, from stuffed toys, to ornaments and statues, which, it turns out, is no coincidence. "I'm very conscious of the fact that we are guests on this planet and weren't the first ones here. I want my son to know how important it is to protect those animals, and humans, that can't defend or fight for themselves." One particularly sweet motif is the Kudu head that sits on the mantelpiece. "I got it in Stellenbosch, South Africa," Kamelia explains. "I had just been to see the cheetah outreach program and there was a little market stall selling trinkets and things made out of recyclable material. I loved it as soon as I saw it."

Travel is a big part of Kamelia's life and heavily influences her interiors. On the day *Bazaar* visits, she



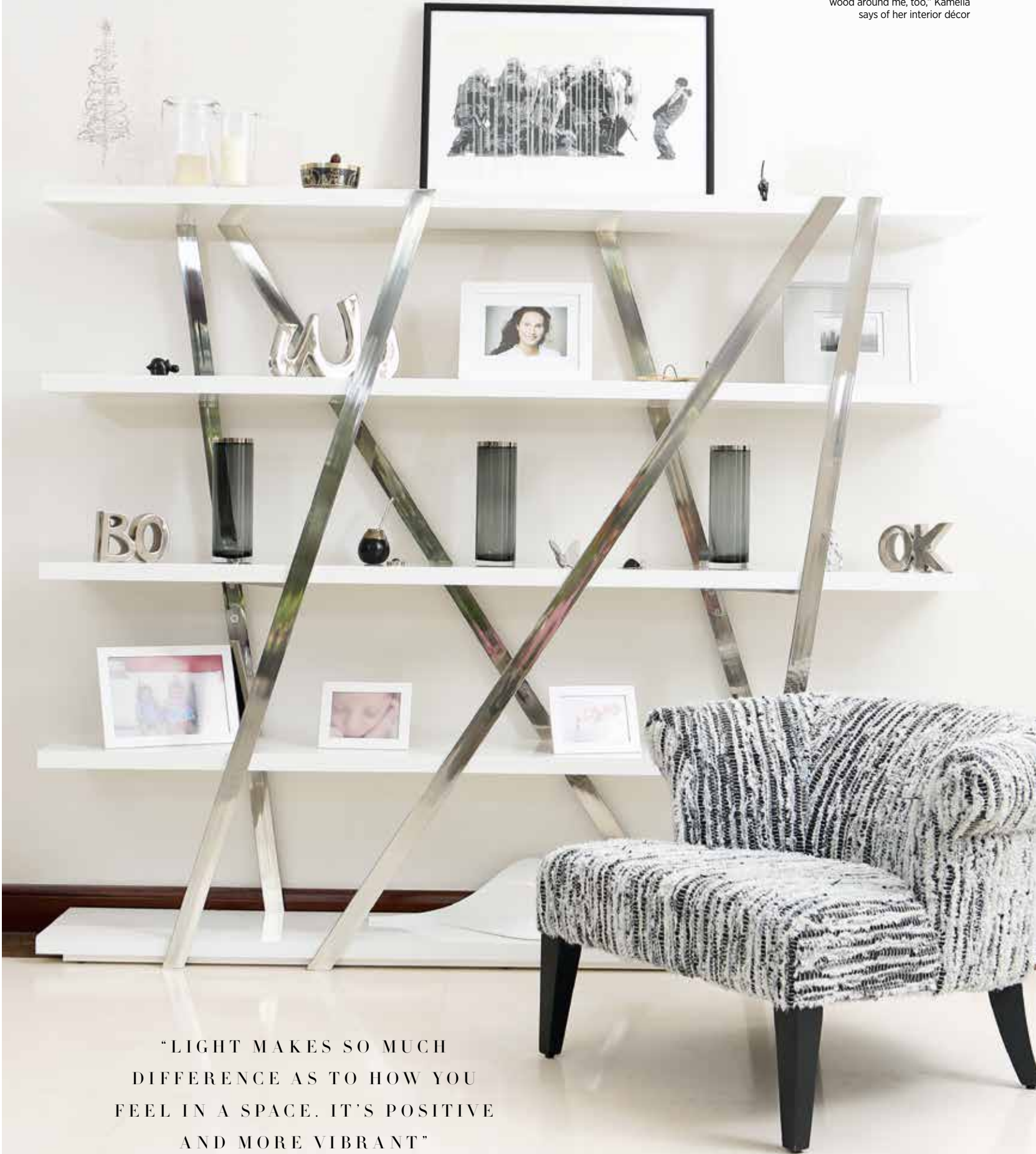
Top: Family is a strong focus in Kamelia's home. "The bond and love between a parent and child is such a positive force" Above: Kamelia says she has "constant reminders of travel" around her home with everything from books to jewellery Left: Kamelia wears: Top, Dhs630, Acne at Harvey Nichols. Skirt, Dhs2,800, Madiyah Al Sharqi. Shoes, converse, her own



Right: Records from Buenos Aires and one of her Bottega Veneta clutches are some of her favourite possessions Far right: Of her bedroom Kamelia says, "I wanted the space to feel cosy and soft, which is why I went for textures and a neutral colour palette"



"I love white and grey. I find the two colours relaxing and calm. I always need to have metal and wood around me, too," Kamelia says of her interior décor



"LIGHT MAKES SO MUCH DIFFERENCE AS TO HOW YOU FEEL IN A SPACE. IT'S POSITIVE AND MORE VIBRANT"



Kamelia wears: Jacket, Dhs4,470, IRO at Boutique 1. Skirt, Dhs990, Bambah. Necklace, Dhs825, Appartement a Louer at Harvey Nichols. Top and shoes, her own



Kamelia carefully nurtures her vegetable and herb gardens

“I FEEL VERY LUCKY TO BE LIVING HERE. WHEN YOU’RE SURROUNDED BY GREENERY LIKE THIS IT KEEPS YOU LIVING IN THE MOMENT”

is having a painting put up in the formal sitting room that she took herself while in Cambodia. “I went with a friend of mine to see the school we helped build with Dubai Cares through a charity called Pepy, and the founder suggested I visit the Ta Phrom Temple in Angkor with an ex-Buddhist monk,” she recalls. “After a slightly scary moped ride, we arrived and exploring the temple was incredible. To see these majestic trees growing out of the stone walls was awe-inspiring.”

In this same room is a large white, circular table that Kamelia made herself. “It’s actually a cable barrel. I got the idea as I was always driving around the site seeing them and I thought it would be make a great table, and it does!” she laughs. “I chopped it in half and had it painted white.” She also applied her DIY touch to the bookshelves that adorn the hallway upstairs. “I changed all the bathrooms in the villa and had all of these wooden cupboards and shelving units left over so I decided to recycle them. I had them painted white also and made them into bookshelves.” On top of these shelves, sits a collection of travel books from the destinations the self-confessed “tree-hugger” has visited, alongside records by Gloria Gaynor and Shirley Bassey. “I’m a disco girl,” she admits, which is evident as she playfully twirls around the house between shots. “I bought [the records] in Buenos Aires at a flea market, and I also found a really cool pair of ’70s sunglasses there too. It’s such an amazing city.”

Counting Notonthehighstreet, Achica, Etsy, Objects of Design, and Etcetera Living as some of her favourite homewares stores, Kamelia confesses that the thing she loves most about her home is the location. “I feel very lucky to be living here. There’s nothing better than a morning walk through the gardens with my son. When you’re surrounded by greenery like this and you spare a moment to take it in, it puts everything into perspective. It keeps you living in the moment.” ■



Above and left: Despite her love of Chanel and Bottega, Kamelia confesses that if she had to choose one fashion brand to live in for the rest of her life, “it would be Maje”



Kamelia wears: Jumpsuit, Dhs1,440, Theory; ring, Dhs1,150, Veta Fede, both at Harvey Nichols. Necklace, Dhs3,755, EK Thongprasert at Boutique 1. Shoes, her own



The spacious kitchen where Kamelia whips up her “signature apple and blackberry crumble”