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LIMITED EDITION COVER ART BY SARA SHAKEEL





RIGHT: An artwork by Christian Tagliavini hangs at the entrance to the villa. The ceilings are covered in limba wood varnished to a high shine.

OPPOSITE PAGE: In a small sitting area, two sheepskin Koumac armchairs by Lemaire are paired with his Helmet side tables. The painting is by Swiss artist Laurence Amélie Schneider.



# SCULPTURAL NORMS



Words Jessica Doyle  
Photography Jean-François Jaussaud

In the Moroccan capital Rabat, French architect *Thierry Lemaire* has created a contemporary home that's big on bold shapes and glamorous materials





**CURVED FURNITURE JUXTAPOSED** with clean, architectural lines and sleek materials sums up the dual character of this contemporary villa in Morocco's capital, Rabat. The work of French interior architect Thierry Lemaire, it brings his European design aesthetic to a property that is both rooted in its setting and a reflection of its owner's personality.

'She's a very sophisticated, elegant woman with great expertise in interior design,' says Lemaire. 'She's very feminine and glamorous but she has a strong character and knows what she likes. There's a mix of ideas here – lots of shiny materials and curves, but also a very masculine style, with square shapes. It's her character.'

The project was the perfect fit for Lemaire, who studied architecture before changing tack to focus on interiors in the late 1990s. Over the past 20 years, he has branched out from working on private apartments in Paris and Geneva to designing store interiors for fashion brands, and dreaming up exquisite furniture. In the case of this property, 'It was a project of architecture and also

ABOVE: Lemaire designed the pivot front door, which is made from stamped bronze.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Subtle pattern comes to the fore in this small living room, where a sideboard by the American mid-century designer Paul Evans is teamed with a leaf-print rug. The ceiling light was designed by Lemaire.

decoration and design,' he says. 'I like to have the challenge of both aspects.' He was involved right from the start of the build, over two years ago, working with the lead architect on the interior structure of the 2,000-square-metre building.

Rabat itself was a key source of inspiration. 'The city has a lot of white, modernist buildings that are very like houses of the Fifties and Sixties,' says Lemaire, who has infused the mid-century-style architecture with a dose of Seventies glamour in the form of smoked limba wood (which is used on furniture and to line the ceilings), polished metals, onyx and stone.

One of his main challenges was the shape of the open-plan reception space. 'It was like a corridor; very long and rectangular,' says Lemaire. 'I had to find a way of making the light flow around the space.' He solved the issue by installing *mashrabiya*, traditional latticework screens found across the Arab world. Lemaire has given them a strikingly contemporary spin in steel rather than wood to subtly divide the dining and living area.

He worked with the interior designer Clelia d'Aulan Benenati to select artworks and furniture, many of which are Lemaire's own designs; his made-to-measure pieces, characterised by sinuous lines and luxurious materials are a feature of all his projects.

Inspired both by 18th century antiques and iconic 20th century designers such as Jean Prouvé, Lemaire mixes diverse influences and finishes in his furniture. He has created collections for Holly Hunt and Fendi Casa, and in 2017, he opened his own gallery in Paris to showcase his signature collection.

In the Rabat villa, a pair of Lemaire's Koumac sheepskin and brass armchairs are teamed with two of his sculptural bronze Hellmet side tables in a quiet sitting area; and his Byron chairs, in slick ebonised wood and leather, surround the dining table. Standout bespoke pieces include the eight-metre-long sofas in the large living room; the stamped-bronze marble furniture in the bathroom; and a glossy frake wood piece in the master bedroom that neatly hides a TV screen.

Elsewhere are vintage pieces and antiques, such as a sideboard in the living room by the mid-century American designer Paul Evans, which was found in LA, and a vintage 1970s ceiling light in the dining room, picked up at the Saint-Ouen flea market in Paris. There's also a carefully chosen collection of abstract artworks, photography and sculpture.

The colour palette throughout is strong yet restrained, with rich brown and gold tones on a background of neutral cream and dove grey. Occasional flashes of green, celadon and powder blue add interest, while subtle pattern comes through in the textures of the marble, travertine, onyx and wood finishes. The resulting look blends deep comfort and dazzling glamour: the perfect home for a modern woman of substance. [thierry-lemaire.fr](http://thierry-lemaire.fr)





ABOVE: A detail of Lemaire's contemporary take on a mashrabiya, OPPOSITE PAGE: A bespoke table by Lemaire is surrounded by his Byron chairs, and a vintage 1970s ceiling light found at the Saint-Ouen flea market in Paris hangs above.





A collection of low marble tables by Lemaire stands between made-to-measure, eight-metre sofas in the main living room area.





ABOVE: A curved piece of furniture in fake wood and polished brass conceals the TV in the main bedroom. The modular sofa is from Edra. RIGHT: Eglomise glass panels reflect the glamorous storage unit.



Bespoke fittings in Rainforest Brown marble and stamped bronze make a modern statement in the guest bathroom.