

Enter The Bazaar: Marrakech Meets London

With summer travels a distant memory it's time to bring a little faraway magic into your home - let North Africa and the West collide for a relaxed interior with a touch of oriental mystery...



The Filaments by Suna Interior Design

Marrakech is hot right now and not just for the weather. The continuing trend for geometric patterns and artisan goods make Moroccan style the perfect focus for this month's feature. Interiors are interlaced with an Arabian rhythm that brings a sense of harmony to the home. Get it right and your home appears captivatingly relaxed - get it wrong and it will look more 'shabby souk' than chic.

Great interiors appeal to each of the five senses making Moroccan interiors extremely alluring. History, culture, cuisine and decorative architecture merge into a kaleidoscope of smells, sounds, patterns, colours and artisan styling that make it a designers dream. Having braved the derbs (alleyways) and souk some years ago myself; sipped mint tea, held a snake (not by choice) in the Djemaa el-Fna square, visited a tannery (by accident) and fallen in love with the Yves



Polly Gibbs, Creative Director at Coco Design, shares her down to earth approach to interiors, from design secrets to trends and everything in between.

Saint Laurent gardens (www.jardinmajorelle.com), I can relate to this look entirely.

Souk style embodies an eclectic mix of Moorish arches, stucco plaster, kilim rugs, cushions, lanterns, candles, incense and lush greenery - tastefully personified by designer Meryanne Loum-Martin at her hotel Jnane Tamsna, "Big Garden", just outside Marrakech. (www.jnane.com / www.villa12.com).

What we are trying to achieve is a refined version that's caught my imagination lately - a pared down fusion of Arabian influence and beautifully crafted materials, set against a chalky Western palette for a contemporary look that's a little softer. What's really lovely about this look is that in a world of fast moving technology, there is still a place for handcrafted decoration.

There are a few things to note though. Although precisely symmetrical patterns are key to the look, you can't have everything perfectly straight in the room. The layout needs to feel organic and spontaneous,



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Left: Four Seasons Courtyard by Meryanne Loum-Martin

Below: FiredEarth - 'Walled'

informal and relaxed. The charm comes from a careful mix of geometric patterns and neutral textures, with warmth in a variety of materials including dark wood, copper, bronze and leather; topped off with beautiful pottery and quality antiques; not souvenir type trinkets that will cheapen the look.

If chalky walls are too plain for you, there are decorators who specialise in polished plaster (tadelakt) for an authentic Moroccan texture. Alternatively, try

geometric wallpapers in oyster, pale grey/greens, or silvery whites to add detail. Have a look at Walled, pictured right, (www.firedearth.com), Origin, Jewel, Origami and Darcy (www.grahambrown.co.uk).

There's a wealth of fabrics and soft furnishings with geometric patterns around at the moment. Look out for a statement rug - an essential component, cushions and upholstery with quatrefoil type designs (a symmetrical pattern

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Step inside by Polly Gibbs

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representing four leaves/partially overlapping circles) and the eight-point star, as both particularly embody Marrakech style.

Take a look at the Marmoucha Rug with Berber imagery (rugsandpoufs.com), or Souk and Kasbah in steel by West Elm (www.westelm.co.uk).

Fired Earth have a really good selection of artisan tiles including the appropriately named Marrakech range. I like Sofia and Riad, which would make a beautiful kitchen splashback for your tagine. Trellis is perfect for a Riad inspired hallway floor, while Arabesque Sous behind a hammered copper basin and bronze taps would make an inspired cloakroom.

Furniture should be wooden and decorative, bone inlaid or metallic - see Martini, Chevron Bone and Carved Wood at West Elm, also Fontana and Camille at www.okadirect.com.

Modern sofas and chairs will work, however they need to be arranged informally, inviting you to throw yourself onto sumptuous geometric tasselled cushions in greys and golds. (Check out Starburst, Hex and Scion Dhurrie at www.johnlewis.com).

Oriental inspired lighting is particularly important; try hanging one large beautiful silver or nickel Moroccan lantern or cluster smaller lanterns together in a corner at various heights. Enjoy the beautiful contrast of perforated metal against chalky walls by day and the enchanting patterns they cascade at night. Take a look at the selection at www.moroccanbazaar.co.uk (the Round Silver Finish Moroccan ceiling light is stunning, though definitely an investment piece at £340).



Canopy at Menara Airport



Take the look a step further with Mashrabiyas - wooden lattice screens carved with geometric designs, used on the windows of traditional Arabic architecture since the 14th century.

Mashrabiyas offer privacy from the street, as well as relief from the intense sun. This makes them perfect as room dividers, window shutters or simply as decorative wall art. The canopy at Menara Airport, Marrakech, bottom left, is a great example of a modern interpretation.

Accessorise with a leather pouf or two in gold, monochrome or white and a smattering of quality ornaments; think hammered metal bowls (Hex, Joy by Alessi or Tom Dixon Bash at John Lewis), Berber jars, a large pearl mosaic or wooden mirror, lots of candles, floor cushions and an engraved tin tray - to serve mint tea of course. (Mint Tea £3.75 at www.maroque.co.uk).

• Polly Gibbs is an interior turned homeware designer based in Oxfordshire. Her designs, trend forecasts and expert advice have graced the pages of many a publication, whilst the simplicity of her homeware range delights designers and design lovers alike. www.coco-design.co.uk info@coco-design.co.uk Twitter: @coco_design Facebook.com/cocodesign.style

Above: FiredEarth 'Marrakech' tiles
Right: Pouf - www.rugsandpoufs.com

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