

Tile and Style

In Moroccan Design

by Stephanie Noel

Shady Canyon residence, in authentic Moroccan elegance, is a reflection of the common vision and talent of the owner, architect, and tile designer.

The successful transfer of authentic Moroccan details to the landscape of Southern California is remarkable. Walking through the grand home creates a lasting impression. “Instantly people feel like they are back in the Middle East” says architect Steven Phillips.

“The style is Andalusian with keyhole arches, very subdued,” Phillips continues, “but when you open the hand-carved wood front door, and look in the courtyard, you see rich colors, textures, mosaics, fountains, and imported light fixtures from Morocco.”

“Important spaces in the Middle East are the covered loggias on each side of the courtyard. In these spaces, business meetings take place without needing to go inside the home. In our case, we have a beautiful fireplace and seating arrangements for cool summer evenings...There is also a side court with a kitchen in it, an outdoor kitchen with a pizza oven. Perfect for entertaining guests.”



“All good designs take a lot of work, a lot of thought, a lot of detail, a lot of care” says Phillips. “They love it. They love their home.”



“So authentic. It flows well from the inside space to the outside space through the courtyards, which is one of the attractions of the design.” These courtyards, important in Moroccan architecture, have become the highlight of this home.

When asked which part of the home he was most proud of, tile designer Adil M. Naji, Vice President of Operations of Arabesque Moresque Design and Decoration, also mentioned the beautiful courtyards.

“The peaceful courtyard, floating space with water in the center, and places to rest on each side -- open sky, paradise, arches on each side...The fountain in the courtyard, with water coming out of the fountain symbolizing life in the desert.”

Describing the process of creating this scenic space, Naji said, “Coordinating colors and patterns between the three of us, [the home-owner] chose earth stone colors because of the desert -- beige, dark honey, light honey, neutral colors. And then we had to work around that, add a little green to work with the earth stone pattern to tie in the coexistence of color.”



The owner, “coming from a Syrian background, wants to identify with the culture yet still integrated into American culture. The columns and certain patterns interlacing were used back in the golden age of Andalusia Spain, where the three cultures, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, were living in peace, living in tolerance of each other. That’s why we used them in a courtyard -- welcoming to all people. Water that reflects light, symbolizing eternal life. All of us, we share our love of life, love of water, and love of coexistence.”

Meticulously concerned with symbolism and the artistic nature of the space, Naji has the experience to complement his artistic judgment. For seven generations, his family has produced ornamental design in Morocco. “I had to the privilege to bring this kind of artwork to the United States -- beautiful, complex and quite affordable.”

“The architecture of any element is signified by the beauty or the complexity of the people in that house,” Naji says. “The inside was more of a combination, a melting pot, represented in architecture, ceilings --

carved and painted. The balance of modern architecture and Moroccan design adds refinement and enhances beauty of environment. It complements interior work, enhanced visual beauty of the home.”

Steven Phillips Architect specializes in large, custom, residential private homes. Many are in the Southern California region. His designs have taken on many different styles, signifying his talent in the industry and reflecting his desire to bring his clients their perfect home.

Naji looks forward to working with Phillips again. He was excited by the “new elements, new motifs, new coloring” Steven Phillips incorporated into the design.

Phillips echoes this respect. “You really need to talk to Naji if you want authenticity. As an architect, I can come close with the outside. But it’s all the finishes that make it work.”

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