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Orenstein fuses the worlds of architecture, design, engineering and art in her work life and in her free time, pushing each and every boundary she encounters

ARCHITECTURE

TEL AVIV'S PRESTIGIOUS PENTHOUSE

World-renowned architect Irma Orenstein unveils her newest project, Sylvan Adams's penthouse in Tel Aviv

WRITTEN BY VICTORIA SCOTT

Establishing the Irma Orenstein Architecture & Interior Design Studio in 2002, Irma Orenstein has been guiding her clients through the design and architectural process for nearly two decades. Working on a diverse array of projects, including apartments, luxury buildings and a selection of contemporary commercial projects, she has attained an original viewpoint through which she can adapt and evolve her style and designs to fit each client personally.

One of her most recent projects was a penthouse in Tel Aviv, Israel, which owner Sylvan Adams brought her in to work on. With her uncompromising drive and attention to detail, Orenstein was able to create design excellence

tailor-made for an individual as accomplished as Adams.

Q. With complete creative freedom, how did you go about designing this space?

A. The penthouse is located on Tel Aviv's coastline, overlooking the beach out to the Mediterranean Sea. It was very important for me to insert the environmental elements into the house and still maintain a high level of design. The concept of the apartment included elements of reflections that brought the landscape, which the client loves so much, into the house.

Once I realized that [Sylvan] Adams liked the design and was willing to take a new path with me, the freedom of planning was more demanding

and challenging. Everything I showed him in the presentation he had to imagine. Since everything in the house was bespoke, it was a tremendous commitment to bring the most accurate and quality items. It is an honour and a privilege that many people do not get. All the references in the house, the concept, were in the artistic sense of what I call "ARTchitecture."

Q. In what ways did you infuse the wishes or the personality of the owner of the space into what you're designing?

A. When I met Sylvan, he emphasized a few things to me. First of all, as a cycling enthusiast and owner of the Israel Cycling Academy, he wanted to build a gym in his home for bike rides

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with the latest equipment. The gym involved a lot of engineering and thought about the smallest details in the design.

The spa next to the gym is a refuge for the body and the spirit, a harmonious atmosphere that fosters the quest for balance [and] offers all the rituals of contemporary wellness in a setting at once sumptuous and elegant. [It] contains a treatment area, bathrooms and an ice bath.

Besides that, Adams asked me for one thing – a wooden floor. I wanted a marble floor with a reflection that would bring lots of light into the home and reflect the view. After Adams expressed his desire for a wooden floor, I tried to find a floor with the same qualities of marble that would still work well with the design concept. When I could not find such a product, I developed the floor especially for him in co-operation with the Italian company Listone Giordano. I developed a new type of wooden floor, the Pearl Collection parquet flooring (now available through Listone Giordano Natural Genius range) that captures the texture of the soft sand and the movement of the sand sculpted by the winds. It grasps the colours of pearls and the toning of the sun’s rays, playing between the folds of the sand. The new texture of wood that I created reflects the shining sparks and mimics [the play] of light as if it were a living structure.

Another request was for a ping-pong table on the balcony. Here, I specifically designed a ping-pong table that would also serve as a dining table. This was built entirely of glass, so as to not obstruct the landscape and to reflect its surroundings.

From there, we continued designing and manufacturing items for the home, resulting in something completely bespoke and specific to Adams.



Orenstein has been working in this industry for nearly 20 years, amassing unparalleled levels of experience

The majority of the features within this penthouse were used to represent the environment of Tel Aviv that surrounds this project. Located on the coastline looking out over the Mediterranean Sea, Orenstein chose to reflect the diverse environmental elements within the house. Creating the array of bespoke pieces to display this within the house required trust between Adams and Orenstein, and it resulted in a striking and innovative space



One of the eye-catching features of this penthouse is the ping-pong table, designed by Orenstein. It is built entirely of glass and also serves as a dining table



Q. Did you face any challenges while you were working on this penthouse?

A. There were many challenges along the way. Because of the bespoke nature of the penthouse, we worked with many different suppliers and artisans. But without [a] doubt, the staircase was the most challenging. First, [it was because of] the design and working with the right company to help secure my vision, [and] second, [it was because of] the logistics. Weighing six tonnes in total [and made of 220 layers of polished glass], we reinforced the floor and the wall to support the structure. Then, bringing the stairs to Israel was a complex story, and to get the stairs into the penthouse, we closed a main street in Tel Aviv to move [them] with a special crane. The result, however, is worth it.

Q. What is one thing that every house should have to make it comfortable?

A. Planning the apartment is what I think is most important in order to feel comfortable in a space. Once the client says their program according to their needs, my role as a designer is to translate them in the best possible way, to provide the maximum level of comfort to them.

Q. Did you always know that you wanted to work in this field?

A. I spent my early childhood in Georgia. And [at] the house I grew up in, education was rigid,

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“DESIGN STARTS WITH A STORY, A DREAM THAT CHALLENGES ME TO BREAK THE BOUNDARIES OF MYSELF FROM PROJECT TO PROJECT”

in accordance with Russian culture, but I was always drawn to painting, fashion and jewelry. My father is an engineer, and my mother [is] a doctor, so it was very important to them that I study engineering. Because of my great love of art, I decided to study architecture, which combines engineering and art, and today I can say that my architecture is both.

Q. What do you love most about your job?

A. I love the challenges in every project. I like to

stretch my limits, to reach new places, to learn and to achieve the impossible for the client.

Design starts with a story, a dream that challenges me to break the boundaries of myself from project to project. People feel the prestige in every project I do, and I believe in investment and thought in every detail. One of the things that makes me unique is the design tailored to each client individually and uniquely. Behind each project stands a whole team in Israel and abroad, [and] together we sew the design dream for the individual client, which requires a lot of hard work.

I constantly strive to realize each client’s dream, to redefine prestige through new challenges and continue my exploration in rare materials and innovative technologies.

Q. What do you enjoy doing with your time when you aren’t working?

A. In my spare time, I am engaged in art. The world of architecture, design, art and engineering – worlds that once seemed so far apart – today combine. Architecture showed me the way back to the art I learned as a child, to the sculpture, the stained glass and the painting. Blending my love of art and architecture leads me to play with the limits of materials, to create innovation through design, but ultimately [it] fuses my personal and work time together.

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PHOTO BY AMIT GERON