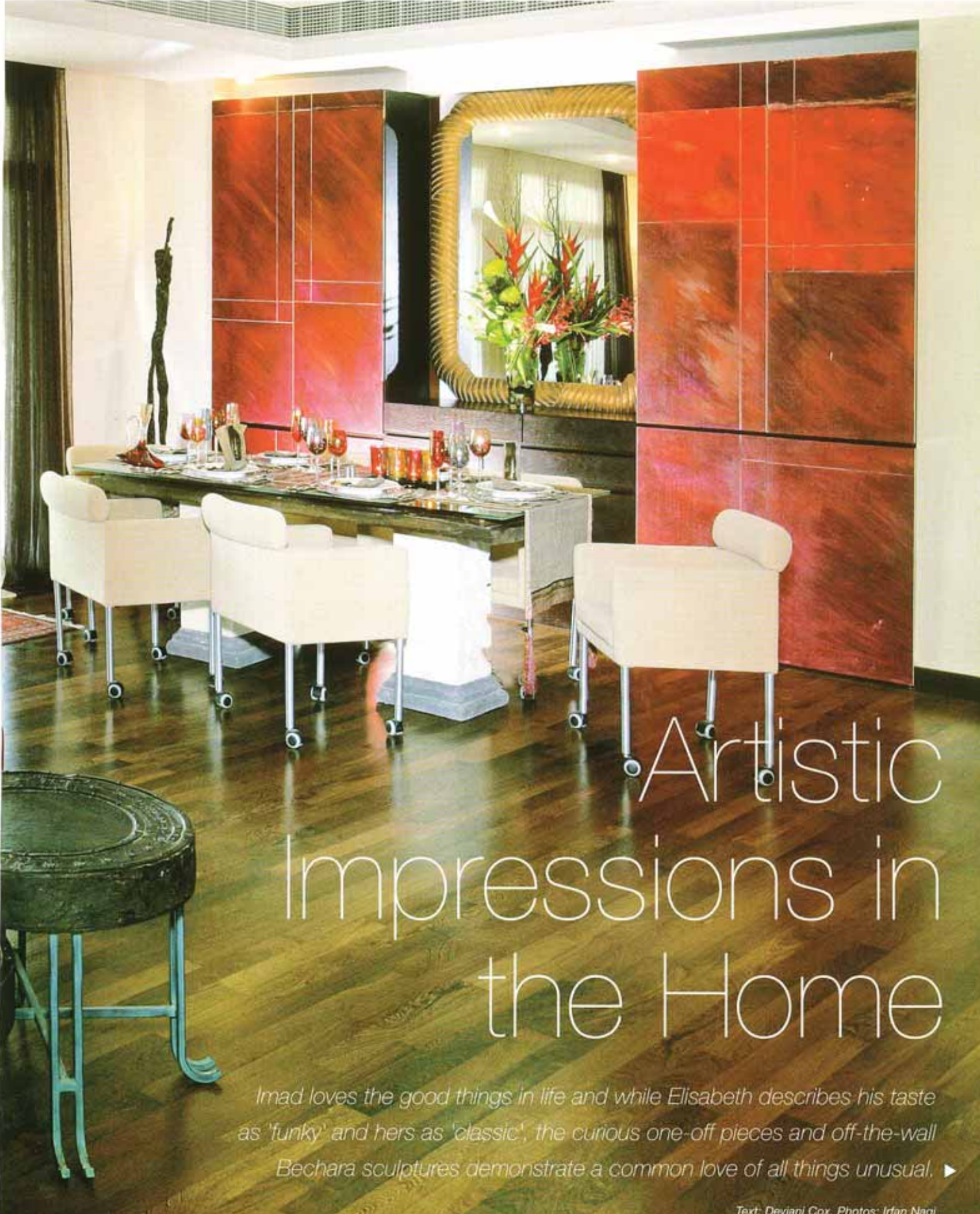






Artistic Impressions in the Home

Imad loves the good things in life and while Elisabeth describes his taste as 'funky' and hers as 'classic', the curious one-off pieces and off-the-wall Bechara sculptures demonstrate a common love of all things unusual. ►

Text: Devyani Cox, Photos: Irfan Naqi





Previous spread: In the dining room, what appears as just background walls are actually painted cupboards with deep recesses providing much needed storage space

This spread: One of Imad's triptychs presides over the living area. Very modern furniture all sourced from stores in and around Dubai surround the painting rendering a soft edged modern setting

It has been just under a year that Imad and Elisabeth Bechara moved into their spacious duplex in the tranquil Green Community. Against the backdrop of a massive lake and lush greenery, this complex is now one of the most sought after by couples intent on providing a secure, safe and green environment for their offspring, and the Becharas couldn't be more pleased with their choice.

Fighting the Dubai traffic has been relegated to history as the three children, Dahila, Dominic and Noor, attend school in the middle of the complex and Imad houses his impressive art pieces in the Bechara Art Gallery at The Market in the community.

Born of an artist mother and an antique-loving father, Imad is a well known name in the art circles of Dubai. More and more discerning homes and hotels have been exhibiting the artist's creative individuality and style. Already a hotspot for art lovers, his gallery sits alongside little restaurants and bistros overlooking the water and marks Bechara's leap from art as a hobby to a career. He has since built a large global following and his work is sought by families in the Gulf as well as by private collectors in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East.

The apartment complex at the Green Community is unassuming on the outside, but step into the whopping 4,800-square foot apartment with its jutting terraces and you might be hard pressed to believe that you are still in Dubai. The sparkling waters of a large lake coupled with lush green areas are visible from every window

The living/dining area has three bedrooms veering off a skinny corridor and is home to the three children. The upstairs area comprises the master bedroom with a soaring ceiling, a lounge area, which is the couple's office, and the piece de resistance – a glassed in studio off the terrace where the artist spends hours working on giant canvases, many of which are commissioned. ▷



Imad prepares his canvases in the most unusual ways, sometimes gluing it on to wire mesh and other times rubbing sand, henna, glue and gypsum on the surface. This provides a rough hewn texture on which a wide variety of media is used to produce mostly diptychs and triptychs. A lot of his work is figurative and unlike the bodies he approximates, which are mostly in outline, his canvases are buzzing hives of activity. Lettering, bits of wood and wire, and dripping paint transform the often static language of modern art into whirling urban dioramas.

His latest series features figurative work and one triptych from that presides over their living room. Gorgeous reds and mustards with splashes of 'barely there' bronze add a translucence to the triple canvases. Very modern furniture sourced from stores in and around Dubai surrounds the painting rendering a soft modern setting. Pure linen curtains in off white and chocolate billow gently in the breeze coming off the lake, while the 'Antiva' scarlet leather couch from Deco Art runs the breadth of the living room and adds dramatic colour.

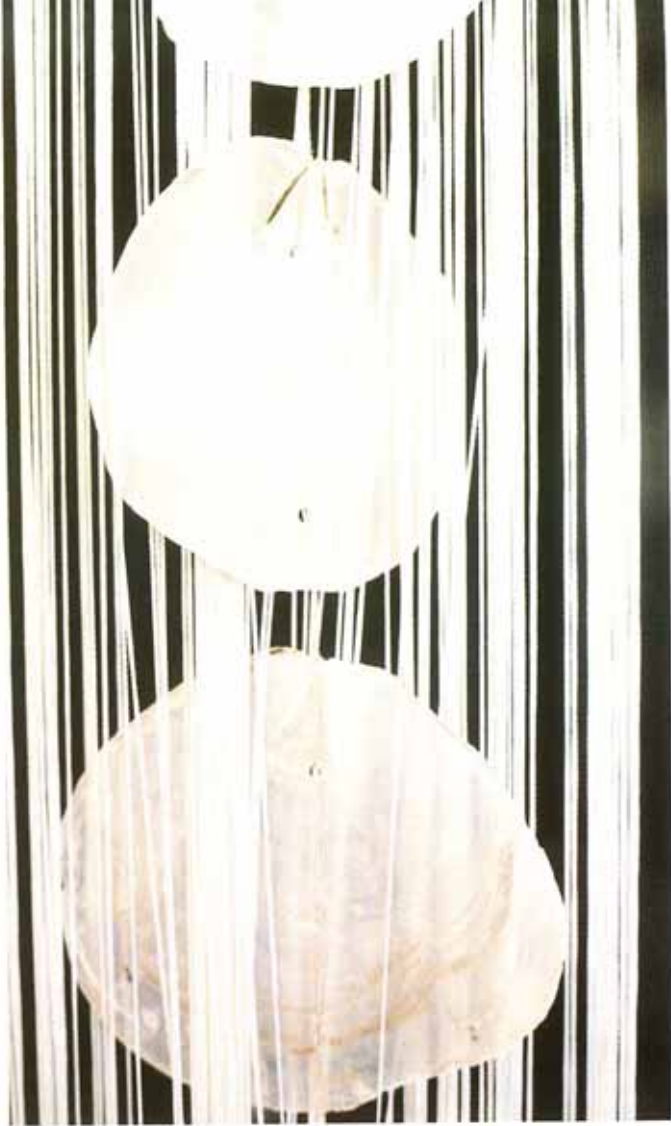
Whilst Imad is glad that Dubai has taken the leaps it has, he feels that there is a dearth of the

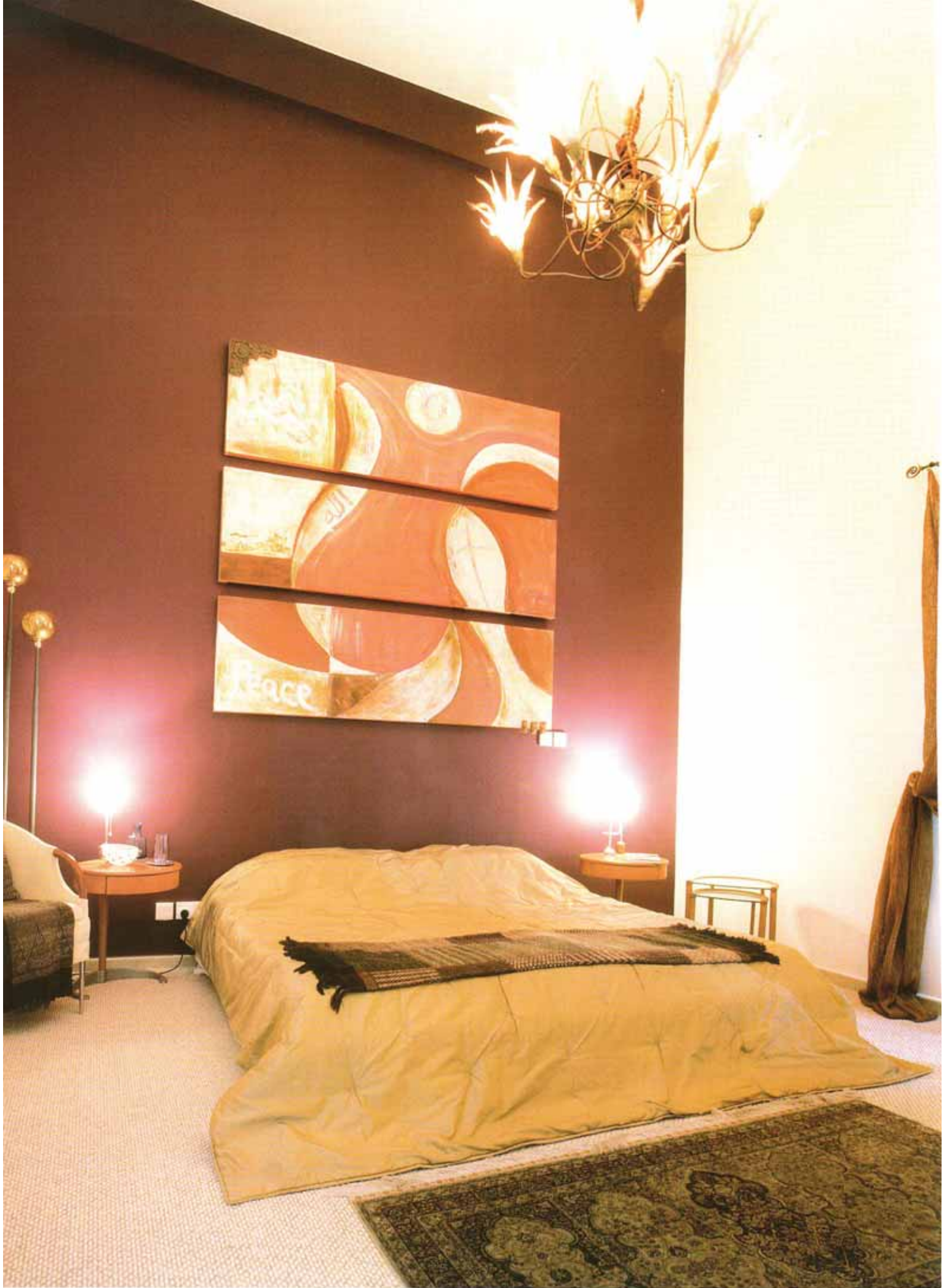


This picture: The study cum TV lounge, or the chill out area, is located on the upper floor of the duplex. In colours of chocolate and beige, this room personifies relaxed living.

Above left: Huge iron sculptures dot the apartment adding character to the mostly contemporary space.









hand carved sandstone base and an unusual sandblasted top," says Imad.

An artist has to have a muse so where does Imad look for inspiration for his fabulous art? "Whilst travelling, reading and especially when painting in my studio that overlooks the lake. The natural surroundings of the place where you live inspire your artwork. For example in my studio in Austria where I am surrounded by lush greenery, forests and mountains, I paint differently. On the other hand, in my studio in Beirut which is in the middle of a busy city, there is a distinct element of chaos in my work."

So did classic and funky live together in harmony when it came to designing their home? Elisabeth, who runs a very successful haute couture business in Abu Dhabi, laughs and says, "For the most part, I guess we complement each other. We rein each other in if the need arises – Imad from getting too way out and me from getting too classical." The dining room is a study of functionality meeting aesthetics. The background walls look like normal



walls but closer inspection reveals that they are cupboards carefully painted to look like walls and have deep recesses in them providing much needed storage space.

The bedroom with its high ceiling is one of the most successful parts of the home, according to Imad, and is painted a deep aubergine with one of Imad's triptychs dominating it. Embellishments have been kept to a minimum, giving importance to the scale and architectural ingenuity of the room. With breathtaking views of the terrace and the lake, ▷

Left: The bedroom with its high ceiling is painted a deep aubergine with one of Imad's triptychs dominating the room. Embellishments have been kept to a minimum giving importance to the scale and architectural ingenuity of the room

Above: One of the bedrooms has been turned into an interesting play area for the three children

Right: Dahlia and Dominic pose in Dominic's room which is painted a low maintenance deep chocolate



the room does not need much work, because of its ceiling that seems to soar to infinity.

With Bechara's vivid eye for space, colour and light, his work has taken off commercially as well. It is his ability, say aficionados, to capture the moment that makes him the runaway success that he is. "People can relate to my creations through their individual interpretations," says Imad.

No interview conducted in Dubai would be complete without asking what impact the emirate's fever-pitch development would have on the individual. Imad is excited but with some reservations. "Dubai has such modern architectural buildings. However, original contemporary art is still under-valued, I would like to see more progress in that direction." □

Above: The terrace area of the Green Community duplex. Most of the terraced apartments have the advantage of such balconies that hover above the large manmade lake

Left: The family pose on one of their terraces. The whopping 4,800-square foot duplex apartment is located in the tranquil Green Community area