

“A HOME SHOULD EVOLVE WITH ITS OWNER”

NATHALIE KÜPFER HENARES, founder of PORTORO Interior, believes that a house should reflect how its residents live, move, enjoy, and experience. In turn, it becomes a window into a family's preferences and passions

Text JACS T. SAMPAYAN

“I have a great respect for tradition,” says Nathalie Küpfer Henares, “not just the wonderful traditions that I was lucky to learn from my French grandmother and mother, but also those I had the privilege of discovering through travel and those of the craftsmen and artisans I work with.”

The founder of PORTORO Interior says it is an honor to share these traditions with her clients, particularly those for entertaining guests at home. “My great respect for craftsmanship stems from working with a number of master craftsmen on our collections and regular offerings,” Küpfer Henares says. “I have seen first-hand the way they uphold the meticulous methods and the emphasis on quality materials that have been passed on from one generation to another, yet they are open to innovative thinking and fresh ideas.”

Küpfer Henares has always been passionate about interior design, home décor, and styling, a love that goes hand-in-hand with her

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penchant for travel. It was a passion that led to her plans for starting her own design company.

Born and raised in Switzerland, she moved to the Philippines from her home country four years ago upon her engagement to Progressive Broadcasting Corporation chair and president Atom Henares. The two married a year later.

Launching PORTORO Interior, Küpfer Henares found, was quite a challenge, but one that she was happy to take on. Fortunately, her 15 years of branding and marketing experience as well as her travels through the years helped. Through her trips, she has met numerous artisans from all over the globe, whose work is now offered to appreciative patrons through the online store.

“Likewise, my first interior decoration and styling projects in Paris and here in Manila were a learning experience that took me through the nuances of the profession from initial planning to fully furnishing my clients’ spaces,” she shares.



L Küpfer Henares shares that it took her four years to build this home
R An upstairs library overlooks the well-lit living room, which opens up to the lanai

OPEN DESIGN

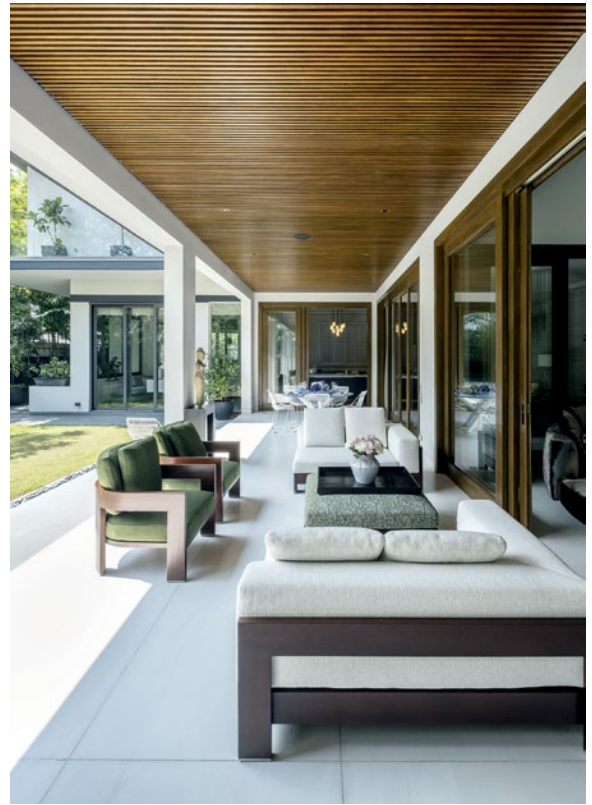
It also took the couple around four years to put together their beautiful Dasmariñas Village home, which they moved into just before the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) was imposed on Metro Manila.

“My husband and I had a very clear vision of what we wanted our house to look like with regard to the different areas and spaces,” Küpfer Henares shares. It was clear to both of them from the beginning that they wanted their nest to work around how they actually live—a vision that architect Ramon Antonio helped them realize.

This is illustrated in their kitchen, an area the two love spending time in after work, wine glasses in hand and a meal prepared by the woman of the house. The spacious kitchen opens into their garden and lanai, which reflects their preference for dining outside. “Likewise, even if I mix drinks in the living room as we welcome guests, we all end up drinking around the big kitchen island,” she says. “We get to talk as I cook and they enjoy a selection of Swiss and French cheeses while they wait for the meal.”

Architecturally speaking, the Henares house is a “very European home with a distinctive Swiss accent,” she says. “I am Swiss and much of our lives back home are spent outdoors, so it was important that the house had a lot of glass sliding doors that let in a lot of light and open right onto the garden so that we could feel the breeze and enjoy the fresh air.”

“These [pieces] are always a subject of conversation when we have guests”



TIMELESS PIECES

Last year, PORTORO Interior came out with a home line which, as Küpfer Henares shares, was borne out of inquiries from their patrons. “One of the things we do during our interior projects is to find beautiful, unique and timeless *objets d’arts* requested by our clients,” she says. “As the number of these requests grew, we wanted to offer several of these items to a broader client base.”

With the pandemic keeping everyone from venturing out, many people have trained their focus inward into what would make their homes comfortable and beautiful. This gave Küpfer Henares and her team the opportunity to see what people actually wanted, and what pieces would address those desires.

To come up with their line, they put careful consideration into each product’s aesthetics, practicality, and value. They also wanted pieces that are timeless; ones that their owners would grow to love more over time, in keeping with their brand ethos. “I am happy to say that we can see that our efforts are successful, as seen in the immediate response and interest in high-quality, unique, and timeless pieces that reflect our ideals,” Küpfer Henares says.

As with many brands and industries since COVID-19 changed the world, one challenge in growing PORTORO Interior and their home line is the lack of tactile experience. Clients would not be able to interact with what they are purchasing, and pop-up stores and other small events are still limited this year.

T The lanai, which is the same line of sight as the open kitchen, is one of the couple’s favorite spaces

B “My first interior decoration and styling projects in Paris and here in Manila were a learning experience that took me through the nuances of the profession from initial planning to fully furnishing my clients’ spaces,” Küpfer Henares shares

R The home is filled with artwork from Atom Henares’ own collection, many of which are pieces from the 70s







1

“The pandemic certainly helped us to identify ourselves better with our clients who cannot feel or touch our products,” Küpfer Henares says. “Portoro Online is our way of offering personalized service, as well as professional advice on interiors and accents during this time.” She and her team try to convey as much as they can through their website (portoro-interior.com) and Instagram account (@portorointerior), from the product’s story to how it can be used in a real setting rather than in a showroom.

CONTINUOUS EDITING

Beautiful pieces and elements, of course, are also spread out in the Henares home.

“We spent a lot of time around France and Italy selecting furniture pieces, artwork, and vintage items for the house,” she says. “Fortunately, my husband and I have the same tastes and we were attracted to the same pieces.”

Some of her favorites in the house include the Platner armchairs from Knoll that sits in their dining room. “These are custom-upholstered with a gray velvet from Dedar and they remind me of the stunning Girafe Restaurant in Paris designed by one of my favorite designers—Joseph Dirand,” Küpfer Henares shares. She also singles out their beautiful and unique console by the entrance, which is a brass artwork framed by an artisan in Italy.



2



- 1 Marble dominates a downstairs powder room along with the same wooden window slats from the open kitchen
- 2 The spacious open kitchen and corner, where the couple spend a lot of time in, also has a large island in the middle
- 3 Some of PORTORO Interior’s sought-after pieces include Grapefruit Service Plates made of Biscuit porcelain, Peony Collection hand-embroidered linen from Vietnam, and Carlo Moretti glasses made of Murano crystal
- 4 “My great respect for craftsmanship stems from working with a number of master craftsmen on our collections and regular offerings,” says Küpfer Henares



Murano glass is also another favorite, and appears in wall lights, chandeliers, and table lamps. Some of these are either custom-made, vintage, or limited items. “All pieces were expressly selected for the house and these are always a subject of conversation when we have guests,” Küpfer Henares shares. “In fact, several guests have already asked me if I could help source similar items for their homes.”

The beautiful and striking art pieces in their home are from her husband’s existing collection. Most of them date back to the 70s, a decade that he loves when it comes to art. “During our last trips before the pandemic, we managed to collect several lovely pieces from France and Italy,” she adds.

While it was challenging, Küpfer Henares says that it was a beautiful experience to plan, build and move in to your dream house. “We invested a lot of time in planning every room, storage solution, furniture placement, and even the decorative details of our home,” she shares. “But the best part is having a number of empty spaces that we hope to fill up with items from future travels.”

And that is one thread that stitches through Küpfer Henares’ design story, whether it comes to her home or her brand: you can be respectful of tradition and craftsmanship and still leave room for change.

“A home should evolve with its owner,” she says, simply. “Especially in these times, we need to nurture the spaces where we spend most of our time. It should not just be a place in which to rest, but also serve as a repository for our memories: the objects we feature in our homes should reflect our travels, our shared experiences, and the fondness we have for our friends and family.” ■



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