

what's new



Mirko Tattarini, of the Bansko Boo chair and carpet, and one of the visionaries behind Design Apparat, will open a branch of his Lagos Design communication studio in Doha this autumn

inside



Luxury next door

The Shangri-La hotel has changed the Between Two Bridges area **hh7**



Prime space

Alex Michelin took out every wall, ceiling and floor to redesign his flat in Knightsbridge **hh8**

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object of desire



Tivoli iPal radio

I've never been totally gadgophobic – I'm too enamoured of what some gadgets do for that – but the aesthetics have always been an issue (with the honourable exception of anything Apple).

It's vital, of course, that gadgets do as they say and do it very well. But – black and brutish, metallic monster, or just plain clunky – why do the denizens of geekville make machines so ugly?

Is it a refusal to accept that brains and beauty *can* go together? A fear that a functional item might actually complement its surroundings rather than just impose itself? Is it just a bloke thing?

As far as music-making gadgets are concerned, I no longer care. Not since I found the drop-dead cute iPal radio which, being made by that highly re-

spected company, Tivoli Audio, combines pretty with performance.

Pretty not necessarily in a sweet and girly way – unless you go for the powder-pink model – but funky-pretty, bold-pretty (as well as this Hockney-swimming-pool turquoise and mad tangerine, it comes in Kermit green, raspberry red... and boring old white) and retro-pretty (not a digital anything to be seen on its face, just good old-fashioned dials).

Speaking of digital, there's the rub: it's not DAB capable. But, since digital broadcasting is still a long way off in our part of the world, I will forgive it. Especially since the sound quality is Tivoli-terrific – whether it's in radio mode or hooked up to my iPod.

Everything else about this cutie is ter-

rific too, especially the fact that it's portable: a battery charge lasts for about 15 hours; the rubberised sheathing – similar to the material that Hermès used for its Jelly Kelly bags – is bump-resistant, dust-resistant, damp-resistant and who knows what other resistants.

So, having made my kitchen look fab while doing its breakfast duty, it can head out to the pool or beach, then come home for a barbecue on the terrace (sounding great all the while).

Just give me one in every colour. Please.

● Priced at Dh895 from The Shelter, 318 Road off Umm Suqeim Street, Al Quoz, Dubai; 04 434 5655; www.shelter.ae

★ Sandra Lane

cult shop few and far, london

A contemporary emporium with a whiff of the exotic

Priscilla Carluccio scans the world over to add to her range

Since opening its doors last year, Few and Far has been labelled a "concept emporium" as well as a "retail paradise". In many ways, entering the shop is like discovering someone's home – not because people's homes are ever-changing showcases of cleverly curated gems, as Few and Far is, but because the store has something that's often lacking in so-called lifestyle stores: character.

Few and Far is housed in a charming Victorian enclave where Knightsbridge morphs into South Kensington. The floor-to-ceiling windows – which have displayed vintage cars, gypsy caravans and even an elephant – entice you in.

Its founder, Priscilla Carluccio (the wife and business partner of the Italian restaurateur Antonio Carluccio and sister and sometime collaborator of the design guru Terence Conran), asserts that she is not a retailer, but a shopkeeper. In her view there is a critical difference: rather than concerning herself about the bottom line, her focus is a passion for the things she sells. She reckons it is time to bring back more shopkeepers and stall the rise of the retailers.

Carluccio scans the world for goods ranging from classical to cutting-edge. "The objects have to be very well made, fun or functional – and I have to like them well enough to have at home." While her career has been inextricably linked with the businesses of both her husband and her brother, Carluccio is now using her extensive experience for her own business.

Few and Far's philosophy is to offer a distilled collection of furniture, fashion and accessories unified by a theme that changes every season. This is enhanced by



Priscilla Carluccio at Few and Far in London where the Indian Summer theme will be replaced by things British in September. Jonathan Player for The National

a total change of setting, thanks to the store's clever design: some sections of the floor can be partitioned off and altered for different layouts. This is a masterstroke, enabling Few and Far to rise to the permanent challenge of appearing perpetually new.

For spring the store was full of fresh greens, whites and metallics and a portion of the floor was removed and planted with grass and daffodils. Summer celebrated an Indian theme, recreating the vibrancy of Rajasthan with a profusion of brightly coloured objects, evoking a well-ordered, but brim-full subcontinental bazaar. This autumn is all about things British – with materials, wood, baskets and hand-knitting.

Carluccio has been travelling to India for 40 years. "I have always loved India – it's like going home to me." She develops handicrafts there, working in Hyderabad, Rajasthan and Jaipur in everything from marble to hand-blocked linens and painted tin trunks.

"I think they have the most sensitive, interesting variety of craft abilities of anywhere I've worked."

Products, from the furthest corners of the world, are stocked in small quantities – hence the store's name – and span a wide price range. Clothes from Morocco, India and Italy nestle among French tableware, vintage toys and fresh roses. Everything has a touch of the unique, picked out with her photographer's eye for detail, texture and colour. (Carluccio studied photography at Guildford School of Art – the first school in the world to teach photography as a design subject).

In these uncertain times, Few and Far offers an uplifting shopping experience.

"I believe that people will be more interested in things that last, not throwaway," she explains. "I think they want service and product knowledge."

● Few and Far, 242 Brompton Road, London SW3; +44 (0) 20 7225 7070; www.fewandfar.net

★ Yvonne Courtney

@ view more photos at www.thenational.ae/houseandhome

??? ask the expert

Prioritise when picking a home

Q We've just arrived in Abu Dhabi and begun searching for a home to rent. The more I read and hear, however, the more confused I'm becoming about where to look. Even though my husband works in the capital, would Dubai be a better option, with more choice and lower rents? Of course, it'd be better if he doesn't have to commute. We have a two-year-old and will need to think about nursery school for him next year. What should my priorities be?

A As you've noted, finding your ideal home in Abu Dhabi is a challenge. Even in the current climate, demand for good-quality residential accommodation still exceeds supply. However, with an increase in Abu Dhabi's population, as well as the volume of commuter traffic from Dubai, journey times have increased significantly and a number of our clients living in Dubai are finding their commute a struggle.

Remember that living in one city and working in another also restricts the amount of social interaction you will have with colleagues, possibly making it more difficult to integrate. If you subsequently decide the commute is too much and you wish to relocate to Abu Dhabi, the move can be quite an upheaval for any small child who has established friends and a routine.

Much depends on the type of property you are considering. Prices for villas and larger, family flats are quite similar in both cities; the real difference comes for smaller units like studios and one- or even two-bedroom apartments, of which there is a lack of supply in Abu Dhabi and an excess in Dubai.

List your must-haves, such as outdoor space, parking, number of bedrooms, maid's room, and prioritise these into those you cannot live without and those on which you are prepared to compromise. You'll inevitably find that friends and family visit soon after your arrival, but this does wane so consider whether it's wise spending money on a property that exceeds your requirements (a commonplace mistake).

A good brief will help your leasing consultant find the most suitable property. While you can undertake your own search, an agent who has good contacts with local landlords and excellent market knowledge will know what is becoming available. Many popular buildings are snapped up before they can be marketed.

When considering locations, remember that areas evolve surprisingly quickly here and if you intend to be an expat for the medium to long term, look at what is coming to your area in the near future. To help focus your search, drive around and familiarise yourself with different areas and their distances from some of the key locations such as the main malls, the airport, restaurants and beaches, as well as schools and workplaces.

Even though your son hasn't started school yet, you must plan for it. Proximity to good educational facilities is a must and areas off the island, such as Khalifa A, offer a great selection. Also consider outside space in which he can run around – for eight months of the year the climate is very pleasant. Some newer villa compounds have excellent children's facilities on-site, which will give him the chance to mix with other young children. And, of course, having a young family immediately opens many doors socially. Many of these compounds are located off the main island, making rents slightly cheaper. For exam-

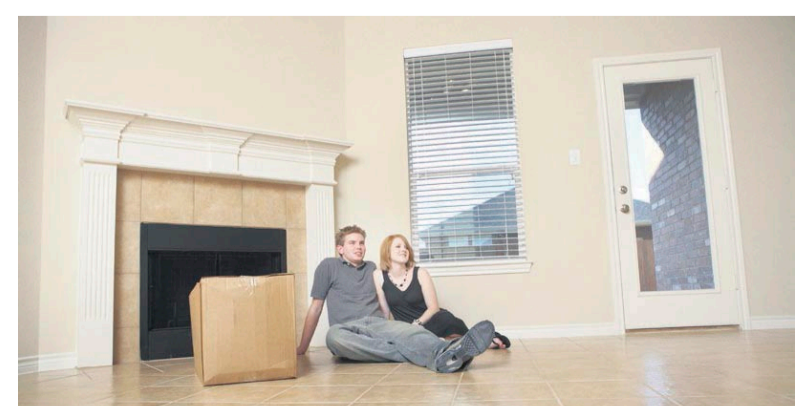
ple, a three-bedroom town house can be rented for Dh230,000 per year. Good road links into the city mean that journey times from these off-island areas can often be quicker than commuting across central Abu Dhabi.

When viewing properties, consider the following: Always check the air conditioning system – central air-conditioning is more economical than window units or split air-conditioning. Access to a car is important and this should be a decisive factor because parking can be an issue. If you view a property during the day, make sure you go back to the building in the evening to see how congested the area is before you decide. Typical rent for parking spaces is an additional Dh15,000 per year.

Very few buildings include white goods or kitchen appliances, so factor that into your budget or look for a building that does offer them. Is there construction adjacent or does it look as if there may be? Abu Dhabi is rapidly growing and a new tower being built next to your bedroom could affect your sleep for at least a year.

Wherever you choose, remember that this is likely to be an entirely new lifestyle with different demands (and benefits) – and, above all, be prepared to adapt.

● Emily Davies was talking to Andrea Menown, the leasing manager at LLJ Property, Abu Dhabi; 02 495 0500; www.lljproperty.com



A number of purchases, other than the house itself, have to be factored in when budgeting to buy a home. iStockphoto.com