

## FOREVER YOUNG

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Photos by Mohamed Abdel Samia

Every gallery is an autobiography. Elegant or edgy, Louis XIV or Pop, the surroundings people create tell the story of their lives. Decorating is entering the space, accepting the existing parameters, recognising the possible beauty or limitations and decorating the room within those confines. Interior design, on the other hand, gives one the chance to actually create architectural harmony within a space before one begins developing the decoration. "I was trying to build something different" artist Naguiba Meyassar says revealing how her career began. Her appreciation for beauty was nurtured and developed with an irrepressible and often consuming appetite for new ideas in form, function, structure and style. The lady, with long henna-dyed hair, reveals her simple inner beauty through her looks, her clothes and her work. The little girl grown-up, who is convinced that art and humanity are essentially good, reveals her intimacy with cultural art in all her collections and subsequently, her life.

"Decoration is a matter of emotion and knowing what you want" Meyassar believes. "By decorating my own home and those of my friends I learned how to translate these same sensibilities into something more concrete and tangible." The culmination of these lessons was the creation of Alef, a furniture gallery at 14 Mohamed Anis Street in Zamalek, where her vision of how to mould dreams with real designs took root and grew. Naguiba thinks that this is what life is all about, she does not believe in building false worlds; "when you combine good things it makes good taste". She approaches all facets of her life with this motto.

There are only few women of any age who have the charisma of Meyassar at fifty. She admires the classicism of old Egyptian art and the graceful disposition of old Egyptian textile, fabric design, woodwork and furnishings, which she calls, "very harmonious and very soul-healing". Yet, in the entrance of her gallery where the front door opens onto a huge wall, a perfect mural of contemporary art is displayed. Although Meyassar is very much drawn to the old, her ideology of combining draws her playfully into the new.

Apparently, it is not appealing for her to have six pictures in a row. Instead she breaks up the wall and you can find two installed glass panels, revealing the inspiration of floral decoration in a breath taking Venetian style. The design process perfectly handcrafted by her own

entrusted skilled workmen, is an ingredient of 20 levels of paint that results in amazing texture and shine. The few paintings chosen to add to her collection, demonstrate the uniqueness of her taste.

Everything else in the gallery is a reflection of her own creativity; she appreciates everything that is linked to the Egyptian cultural inspiration. Meyassar's challenging approach in her gallery, was described by the French press as, "The only cultural gallery on the Mediterranean grounds".

Meyassar cooperated with Ms. Magda Sedky, wife of formal ambassador Ahmed Sedky, in the restoration of Egypt's most luxurious palaces (Abdein, Kasr El Kobba and Al Tahra), where all the cultural furnishings and the interior decoration were reinvented.

Her designs help create rooms that could be informal and comfortable but could also set the scene for one's frequent entertaining. Naguiba believes in "pleasing your own eye and satisfying your own self". The result is always instant warmth. Her style not only reflects the individual in mind, but is also inspired by culture and history. That's what she loves and that's what she accents.

"I never feel completely satisfied with what I do". The wonderful thing about interior design is that it intermarries with so many different facets and characteristics; such as location, space, spirit and temperament, as well as the personality of the perspective owners. "I almost always provides an infinite variety of textures to play with." Meyassar explains, "that the dream of making a dream come true is a constant calling". Art involves culture, intuition and an ideal of transparency, which Meyassar compares to the art of literary translations. All her sensibilities function like a prism. She is the mastermind of her own gallery, and her own house. It's

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her own invention. So one cannot expect a woman whose life has been associated with artistry and beauty to lead an ordinary life. But in fact, she very much does. Her casual confidence illuminates much about the coincidence—in house and owner—of extravagance with humility and spirituality.

Naguiba Meyassar appreciates all that life has to offer. She understands the deep meanings of pleasure and pain. Learning to enjoy it has been to her, about finding a healthy equilibrium, a balance of contentment. Her family and her work are her number one priority. She is very aware of the snowball effect of negative thinking. She develops her own compassions and recognises that downs are an integral part of life. She enhances her sense of gratitude by appreciating what she has at hand. She makes a choice in how to respond to life by setting aside some quiet time for her self everyday. Whether it is a couple of hours of meditation or Yoga, Meyassar believes that, "time for yourself is essential for your well being". For her, the only way of leading a positive life is to get your mind working positively and everything else will simply fall into place. Meyassar says "I keep my balance by keeping on the move, flowing

like the waters of a river, while going around obstacles without allowing them to alter my course". She keeps her optimism always alive, her attention on the here and now. Feeling young, Meyassar asserts, comes from within. She lives only in the present, lives the passion of her heart. She does not think of age, nor much of the future, for time to her should never be allowed to interfere with the soul of a person. She is as happy as she made up her mind to be. Asking her how she views herself, Meyassar compares herself to the four seasons, constantly changing, always different.

The only thing that can alarm this woman is people's insincerity. She is used to speaking her mind in her interactions with people and has difficulty comprehending scruples and fraudulence. She adheres genuinely to her solid ethical values. One is moved hearing her speak of her son and daughter. "They are the sun and the moon in my days and nights. They are the blood in my veins and the light in my eyes, without them things take on a much smaller meaning", she then pauses and revels in the strength of her own words. With these measurements to follow in life one can clearly envision that Meyassar's happiness comes from within and that she embraces life as it unfolds.

Her life reflects her artistic sense; a mixture of timelessness decorated with youthfulness that is and could only be, Naguiba...