

JUMAYRA Beach

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Inner Views

Lifestyle

Luxury & Leisure

Entertaining in the Emirates



Beautiful Interiors at Aiee Gallery

Alef

AN
Enchanted
JOURNEY
OF
Dreams

Egypt is the land of pharaohs, the land of pyramids and ancient Arabian history. It is a land steeped with legends and memories of foretold lore carrying within it the very magic of Arabia. In its heart Alef rises; a niche interior design gallery that has soared beyond all expectations to deliver a taste of the unique and exquisitely cultural designs that transport you across the ages to a paradise lost and identify the brand as an innovator in its field.

Text by: Sandra Khoury
Images courtesy of Alef Gallery



Exquisite Alef display at exhibition in Beirut

The roots of Alef return to all origins: it is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, thus eventually commutating knowledge and a world unfurling into a time before unknown. It is a vision that was born incidentally. Today adolescent, its dream exceeds it, its wings have sprung and like the blue bird it seeks to soar ever so higher. That is its motto. Alef is more than just a gallery; it is a place where people can wander from reverie to reverie, a trip into ancient civilizations that continually fascinates us. This gallery invites each and everyone of us to peruse the beautiful furniture that reflects all the cultures of the region into one singularly exclusive package. Alef dreams and wants to make people dream, it is a concept that seeks to share its nostalgic journeys down memory lane with all the cultures that have crossed the Middle East, which was home to such rich and unfettered visions dating back to Alexander the Great. Alef draws from these sources its inspiration, mixing modern and traditional, luxurious flair with simplicity. Owner and Designer extraordinaire Naguiba Damerji is attracted by contrasts but her recipe relies on creating, through this multicultural

amalgamation, a harmonious ambiance, atmosphere and elegant seduction in tremendous comfort. The gallery's main aim is to revive high quality handicraft furniture in all domains and to maintain this quality through its own creations and intuitions stepping out of the classical boundaries by modernizing and actualizing that look with Alef's very own style. It is a style that counts as Oriental with the nostalgia of a romantic and poetic past floating in its soft realm. It is an evasion into paradise lost and found far from a global world where materialism has overtaken people's ability to dream. Alef dares to go against the current, it dares to offer an individual style of authentic and humane character as well as cultural in a virtual and technical world.

Permanently supervised, artisans and craftsmen work from the heart in the Alef workshops to transform the vision of the talented creator into reality. There are also glass blowers for the chandeliers and leather specialists that ensure each piece is unique in its own right. Alef also has a fabric boutique within its gallery as textile is a very important part of it and counts as its passion. It is

all natural fibers, some parts hand-woven, along with cottons, linens, veils and velvets all carefully selected. Fabrics are then moved into the printing atelier for the execution of revisited cultural designs in shape and color. These fabrics are exclusive to Alef who today owns over 250 patents of these completely unique drawings. Naguiba muses: "Alef is a true love story, it is a madness that can be understood by all lovers of landmarks and heritage".

Naguiba Damerji has truly set trends within the creative and decorative arts industry and she has transferred that love onto her daughter Loulia who is the chairwoman of the enterprise. If one asks Naguiba to define interior design, her answer would be an infusion of soul, the soul of those who will inhabit it; it is about trying to follow a client's dream by listening to him dream. It is simple yet complicated. "The vision is inside of me but to customers one has to reflect it, give a choice, sensitize them by trying to orient them very subtly through suggestions and images where dialogue is necessary. There is no concession if there is no



Another angle of beautifully cultural Alef designs

conviction but one needs a lot of understanding. One succeeds in the realization of an interior design project when the client thanks you for fulfilling their aspiration and that is wonderful as it is a creative birthing process of ultimate delivery and fusion".

There is always a specific process when it comes to selecting the pieces one wishes to design and like a painter or musician, Naguiba believes the basis of every conception is intuition, exploration and experience. Sometimes all it takes to light a painting is a color. A sliver of an idea for a decorator can animate an object and give it a soul. Creative inspiration is everywhere, you just have to look around you, inside you and draw from the cultural sources. Suddenly an idea sparks like a morning star and a theme develops building itself always through those same instincts. Very modest, Naguiba feels that Alef speaks for her: "Alef has already said so much, Alef is more than a boutique, it is a storyteller who loves to amuse and be amused, surprise and amaze. I hope it will keep on sowing its magical pearls on the golden caftans of an Orient that has lived its

golden years and that Alef keeps on promoting. I am sure that my daughter Loulia will manage that end quite splendidly." She also believes that art is an innate gift explored by life's experiences that develop it and enable it to bloom. That is where inspiration comes from. It is through extreme anguish and happiness that an artist expresses his skills predominantly because there is no art without the expression of an intense emotion, without a borderless imagination to open the gates of paradise or hell.

A careful perusal of all the available exclusive designs uncovers a high interest and profiling in Arabian design and culture. Syrian native from Aleppo, Naguiba is very proud of her heritage: "The Vienna of the Levant region, our land was a major stop on the silk road. It witnessed all invasions thus all cultures. My life has been through so many stages: Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt where I live today. How can one be indifferent to the savors of this Orient that we breathe and that is so passionately a part of me? Everything inspires me and everything moves

me. Our region is the crib of all civilizations; it marked man's first thoughts, his grandeur, his wisdoms and madness from Antiquity Greece to the great empires from Rome to Byzantium and all the way to Napoleon. What a wonderful human mosaic. That is Alef, a nostalgic love story between the Orient and the Occident who is passionate for our land, cultures and flavors."

Today Alef is ready to open up onto an international market sensitized to its cultural and personal style. "We have already participated in many international exhibitions in Paris, Brussels, Jeddah and Beirut. The French press had greeted us with the following words: Alef, the only cultural gallery on the Mediterranean. Welcome Magus Kings of the Orient, you bring us a dream when we thought dreams existed no longer. The Alef caravan passes and I certainly hope it continues to Dubai, the miraculous city of dreams, God willing." Alef is completely ready for the European market. "We are getting ready for a worldly exhibition in Milan at the end of January, which is prestigious for us and at the



A selection of interior accessories

same time challenging because all the international bigwigs of interior design will be there. However we have a large European clientele that keeps on encouraging us to branch out into Europe. Textile will be a priority for this market as it is very valued and appreciated for its cultural drawings and the natural fibers that are so exclusive and high end quality".

What makes Alef unique? It has a soul, a message of love. It is a bridge destined for multicultural exchanges; it is for all those who are sensitive to human valor, dignity and the respect of manual and creative human labor. There are no frontiers in the language of art that is why on this free highway, man expressed himself so well free from all constraints and obstacles. If Alef's style reconciles you with life then its message has passed. Naguiba muses: "Some people have remarkable dreams and they are remarkable visionaries whose dreams turn into realities such as HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Minister of Defense for the UAE and his late father before him.

Thanks to their vision Dubai is a miracle and what miracle! There is a great lesson to be learned there. I believe if one has a dream or aspiration, if we believe in it and chase it, nothing and no one can stop you from attaining these objectives. Evidently each aspiration is tailored according to a person's limits and potential. The dream of Alef is like a boat at sea looking for friendly ports where it will be welcome for enriching experiences that will add with each journey".

Alef is a magical trap between dream and reality, it is a style of living, an invitation to enchantment that is so rare to find today. We invite you to embark on a cultural exploration where you will be able to reconnect with foregone eras that have long held fascination in our hearts. If the Alef barge is welcome then it will install its counter of dreams to take people on a journey that promises to be unforgettable. {J B}

For further information log on to www.alef-gallery.com or contact 00202 7353690

*"Alef transcends time
to bring back all
the past civilizations
that have come across
the Middle East.
It is a story onto itself."*



Opulent canopy sofa