

EMERGING LAB

#1

EMERGING
ART & DESIGN
FROM THE WORLD TO THE MIDDLE EAST

KHALID SHAFAR

18. EMERGING DESIGNER INTERVIEW

By Rebia Naim

Can you please tell our readers about your vision of design and how you define it?

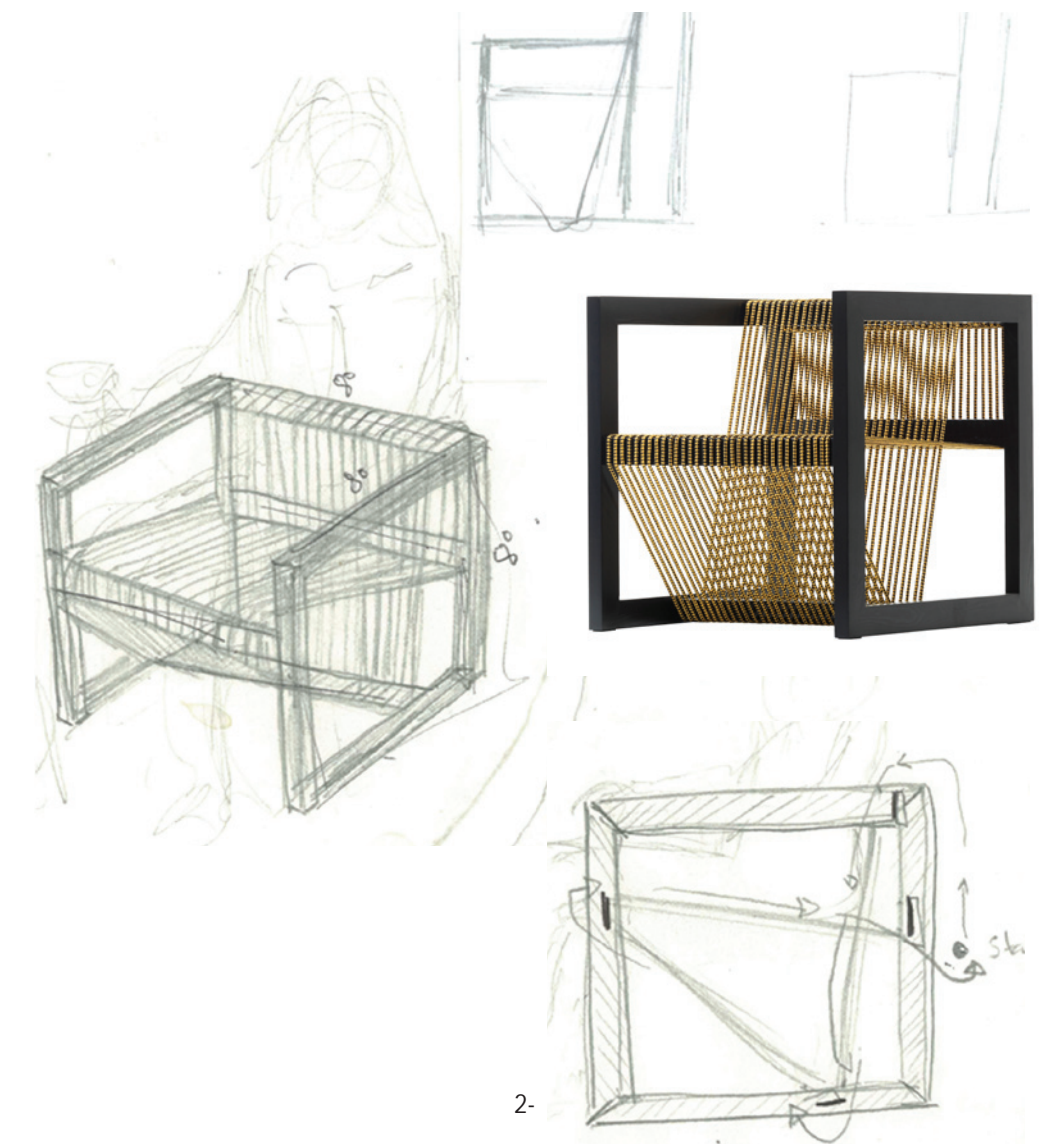
Everything around us is designed somehow to function in a certain way or to serve a certain purpose. Design is like problem solving. It answers questions, challenges and problems. Design allows you to transform a thing into function. Functional design is not only focused on the aesthetic side of the object, it studies the functionality of the object and even its practicality. A good design for me is a design that combines what I embrace as my design ethos: Functionality, Practicality and Creativity.

What values are you defending in your work?

I believe the biggest misconception about Dubai is that it is a superficial city, that it is not genuine in content or context. The naysayers believe that Dubai is a city that only cares about breaking records in terms of the biggest, the best, the tallest and that it has no past or a story to tell. Dubai is so much more than that. Over the last decade Dubai has transformed into a 'city of the future' and all eyes were on the city's development – and deservedly so – but that does not mean we do not have a heritage, or culture. There is so much history here... Unfortunately it got lost in the hype! Through my work, I am defending my hometown by showcasing part of its culture and heritage in contemporary objects. I want to reinforce that Dubai has genuine content and context reflected in design work. I also defend the originality and uniqueness of work coming out from this part of the world. The integrity in creating work that defines furnishing trends globally is a vision that me and other designers from this region strive to achieve.

What inspires you in your creation?

My lifestyle, the surrounding, the city I grew up in, and my life memories are always a rich source of inspiration. Yet a designer is always sensitive to the beauty of things around him and for me I find inspiration in many things around being architecture, crafts, art, and people. On other words, I take the beautiful side of things around me (smile).



Design Days Dubai is the first design fair in the Middle East which is launched on March 18, 2012. Tell us about Carwan Gallery, the gallery representing you at this fair?

My relationship with Carwan Gallery started last year when the gallery represented my first object with them ARABI - Space divider. The object was on display at Carwan Gallery exhibition 'One hand cannot clap' at Qubique Tradeshaw in Berlin, Germany last October between 26-29. Another new object represented by the gallery is my new light ARABI Chandelier which will be revealed during Design Days Dubai at Carwan Gallery exhibition 'Design and New perspectives in Middle Eastern Crafts'.

How do you think this fair will impact design in the region? How do you see it evolve? Will this open new doors to emerging designers from the region?

Design in the UAE is still in its infancy – but, it is evolving and we have a potential market for designers in the region. For me Design Days Dubai is the first step to build a strong base for design in the region. I can see it becoming the hub of design launches and creative gatherings.

I am confident that an event like Design Days Dubai will attract more and more international design galleries in the future and will address and resolve many challenges designers face locally. It will also encourage more local designers from the region to express their passion about design and show their work publically.

What are your future projects in the region?

I am mainly focusing now on my new collection to be released by end of year. I am also involved in couple of commercial projects and proposals locally and regionally to commercialize some of my objects. So, nothing major really till now regionally, yet internationally, I am invited to exhibit and lecture at Outdoor Lifestyle Hangzhou Exhibition in China between March 21- 24 and I look forward to my trip to Italy this April to see the latest in design at Milan Design Fair.

Your work with the Campana brothers and the creation of an object out of recycled material raises an interesting question. This is such an actual issue in the region and maybe the development of design will help towards supporting the environment's sustainability. What are your thoughts about it?

I don't think that people in the region neglect this topic completely; however, it's the lack of education about sustainability and how to preserve the environment. We are a very disposal-oriented community as opposed to a recycling-oriented one, and that again due to the lack of knowledge about the environmental issues and how we can re-use things. There are many initiatives in the country by many private and government authorities to spread the knowledge on such issues. I am very confident that design evolution in the region will play its role by educating people about such issues and will encourage the re use of many materials that currently are considered waste and disposable. The work we did with the Campana brothers was a bold statement to both communities in the UAE and Brazil about sustainability and how we can re use a material like cardboard in a creative way. We needed to find a common factor between both cultures to create such work and the notable cardboard waste in Brazil which is reasonably put in a good use by some recycling factories contradicting the disposed cardboard here in UAE was the link between both cultures and therefore the need for such design statement.



1- New light ARABI Chandelier presented in exclusivity at Design Days Dubai 2- The making of Armchair, 2011, prototype. Description: stained ash wood, polyester rope, dimensions: 80 x 85 x 85cm 3- Khalid Shafar and the Campana Brothers, Sao Polo, 2010. ©Khalid Shafar.

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