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Modern Man



Design Maestro

Khalid Shafar, Kiehl's Regional Brand Ambassador talks to Mondanite about his new role with the leading skincare brand and his passion for furniture and design which has seen him exhibit his work in galleries across the world such as Tokyo, Berlin, Paris, London and Milan. Here he opens up about noteworthy international collaborations and how he intends to impact society with his creative genius.



Q You have a background in Furniture & Objects Design. Tell us a bit more about yourself and the highs of your career?

I was born in 1980 in Dubai and as a business graduate of AUD I worked in Marketing & Communication for almost 7 years. In 2005 I completed a Degree in Fine Arts in Interior Design and by the end of 2009 I had decided to leave marketing and follow my passion for design. I then studied and specialized in Furniture & Objects design, first at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in UK, then at the Centre for Fine Woodworking in New Zealand. In 2011 I opened my own studio in Dubai and in Nov 2012 I inaugurated my first showcase space 'KASA'. My approach to design encompasses my personal expression of form, movement, emotion, and in particular, 'the tale' of objects.

Q Give us an insight into your world of artistically unique furniture pieces?

A simple apple falling from a tree was the beginning of much thinking and research that gave Newton the formula for the law of gravity. A KHALID SHAFAR object is conceived in the same way – sparked by a moment of inspiration and developed through a process of applied creativity, practicality, and functionality – until a design is formulated. Each object is the outcome of many experiments. Each object has its own journey and tale to tell. This is the essential tale of the KHALID SHAFAR brand.

Q Tell us about the iconic chest of draws that was presented during Design Days 2013. Any other unique inspirations?

In October 2012 I was commissioned by Moissonnier to reinterpret one of their iconic chests as a limited edition work for their participation at Design Days

Dubai 2013. Looking at the chest shape in one of the brown colour shades, the first thing that came to mind was the shape of a horse's body. Somehow I remembered Dali's famous elephant drawings and his sculpture with long skinny legs. From there I started my design research and exploration, linking it to my Dubai roots and how the city hosts the 'Dubai World Cup' – one of the richest horse races in the world. My design interpretation has transformed two of the Moissonnier chests into pieces of art – sculptures that tell the stories of two legendary horses that were victorious at the Dubai World Cup and which left behind great memories. The dramatic side of these stories is that both horses have since tragically died for different reasons. Therefore, I called the design story 'HEADLESS HORSES' and presented it as a commemoration for those horses and the history of the 'Dubai World Cup'. The two horses according to their year of victory are: 'Dubai Millennium' (2000) & 'Rewilding' (2011).

Q What else do you have planned for the year in Dubai and around the world?

I am in the preparations to launch my new furniture collection and product line for 2015 by the end of February. I will also have two new collaborations and a launch in March for a limited edition release of rugs collection and urban furniture pieces. I am currently in discussion for two installations, one internationally and the other locally, for July and November this year.

Q As a keen supporter of the welfare of the community, how do you plan on making the world a better place with your creative talents?

I think this is part of the Design Philosophy globally; to find and create solutions &



to improve things for better lifestyle. So, it's part of my mission and other fellow designers to contribute our creations and ideas to the welfare of communities through many different approaches. One of the approaches I use is preserving, protecting and encouraging the craft of our nation by integrating the crafts, craftsmen, and crafts-women in my contemporary designs and to tell their stories through my creations.

Q) Why did you choose to partner with Kiehl's?

Knowing the brand earlier the approach made it quite easy for me to accept such association. I was very pleased and honored with Kiehl's choice of me to represent them in the region. We (Me & Kiehl's) believe in many similar principals and we both have some key messages to deliver to our target audiences through this ambassadorship. Therefore, this makes this association a perfect fit for both of us.

Q) How did you work your trademark style and furniture ethos into the special Kiehl's label?

As the label area given to design was small, I wanted to design a label that grabs attention yet stays humor and interactive with the individual. I had this image in mind of Horses Carousel ride that always brings a smile on my face along with childhood memories and I am sure many share the same. So, I thought of one of my designs I created for the French historical brand Moissonnier in 2013. It was a horse body commode (chest of drawers) and I used its image as the main element in the design; I repeated the image circularly around the label reflecting on the Carousel motion and numbered them from 1 to 12. Accidentally, the outcome and order of horses reflected as well a time watch with the 12 hours icons; using the charity line copy as the hours and minutes hands. The final design showcases those two directions in one setting that is humorous, interactive, and definitely a collectible.

Q) What are your personal favorite products from the brand?

The list is very long but the Ultimate Strength Hand Salve is my favorite product and in fact it was my first introduction to the brand years ago. I also enjoy the Facial Fuel Energizing Face Wash and the Eye De-Buffer that is just perfect for my daily lifestyle and travel routine.



"Kiehl's embodies what it really means to be a socially conscious brand, from its products made from natural ingredients to its avid support of programs that help children and the environment. I am excited to be an ambassador for a brand that is committed to the welfare of the local community and I am excited to use my creativity to contribute to charities and meaningful causes in the region."
Khalid Shafar