

The Source

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KHALID SHAFAR'S

Tales from the drawing board

Outdoor Adventure in the
GARDEN CITY

Forging ahead
in a new
CAREER PATH

LAUGHTER
IS Therapy

**DOLPHINARIUM
WINNERS
REVEALED!**



Al Majlis Telltale Objects

Khalid Shafar digs deep into Emirati roots and culture to design products that have stories to tell.

By Khudayja Saloojee

In my imagination I was enroute to Ras Al Khor, to meet charismatic Emirati designer Khalid Shafar. In reality, he was at his gallery and I was in the comfort of my manager's office having a phone interview. In my fantasy, I imagined I was in the company of quintessential Khalid admiring the stripped-back concrete floors and white walls, and quirky designs which have made him internationally renowned.

Born and raised in Dubai, looking back at what he always enjoyed, even as a child, Khalid realized that he had a deep interest in art. At school "I was very good in my art classes and preferred drawing lessons to football." Khalid enrolled for a Bachelor in Fine Arts in Interior Design at the American University of Dubai. The furniture design course within this discipline was his defining moment because that's when he realized "I want to be a furniture designer not an interior designer." After graduating, he was uncertain about his future and explains, "I wasn't sure if an international company would accept a local designer", so he enrolled for a Bachelors in Business Administration.

Khalid started his career in marketing and communications and quickly moved up the corporate ladder. After eight years, Shafar decided to relinquish his career to follow his design destiny. This destiny required him to move to New Zealand to further his education, skills and expertise. He completed a one year woodwork course and stayed for a further two years to explore business opportunities between New Zealand and Dubai. Last year Khalid could no longer resist the buzz and energy of Dubai, so he moved permanently to Dubai and focus on expanding his business. Khalid's designs combine contemporary taste with a distinct Emirati influence. He confesses that he draws inspiration from his "own stories, culture and childhood. At the moment I'm digging deeper on our roots and culture." Shafar's Auction coffee table, one of the five pieces that makes up his latest collection is a recollection of his childhood. The Indian sellers that roamed around the neighborhood

Fallen Palm bench



Flip lounge chair



Auction coffee table



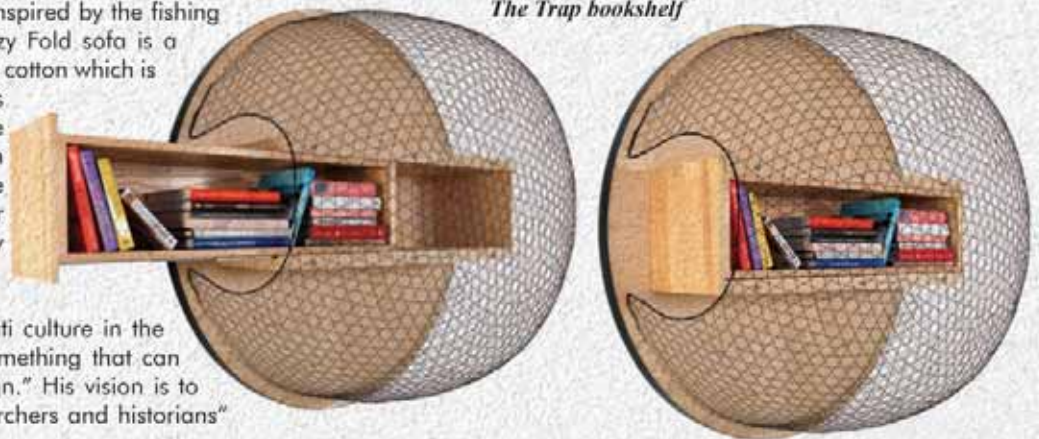
with an oversize sack on their heads filled with fabric, toys and other valuables announcing their arrival with cries of 'lelam, lelam', the Malayalam word for auction. The Auction coffee table consists of a large sack-shaped fabric base with a marble top. The beauty of this design is that the sack can be untied to reveal a hollow interior which can be used as a compartment. For Shafar, it's all about telling stories, therefore The Trap is inspired by the fishing trap that fishermen use and The Lazy Fold sofa is a contemporary sofa made with natural cotton which is still a standard feature in the cushions of the majlis (Arabic cushions). The Flip lounge chair has a back that can be flipped so that "you can still have an armchair but you can cross your legs on the chair exactly the same way you sit on the floor."

Shafar aims "to preserve the Emirati culture in the contemporary way and to define something that can be called in the future, Emirati design." His vision is to become a "reference point for researchers and historians" who study Emirati designs.

Khalid successfully launched two collections and is currently working on his 2014 collection which he plans to unveil in November. He also worked on a number of new collaborative projects for the 2013 Design Days Dubai which took place in March. Some of these collaborations are with the prestigious French furniture company Moissonieur, Hong Kong-based carpet and rug company, Tai Ping and Beirut-based, Carwan Gallery.

Khalid is also very proud to be one of the four designers selected to take part in an initiative organized by Dubai Culture Authorities in collaboration with Tashkeel and Creative Dialogue Association based in Barcelona. The initiative aimed to promote intercultural exchange between local and international designers included trips to London and Barcelona where he attended workshops. At the end of the program the designers produced a piece based on their experiences and Khalid planned to showcase his piece at Design Days Dubai. As if that wasn't enough to keep him busy, he also helped design a home-grown café, his very first design consultancy project.

The Trap bookshelf



Curious to know about his future plans, Shafar aspires to showcase his work in Milan, Sydney and Tokyo. Although I've only briefly met Khalid, one of UAE's most talented designers, and in total absence, I know this much is true: In my imagination our meeting would be awe-inspiring, and though in reality, it was not short of it.

Khalid's telling tales will continue but before we ended our conversation, I asked him to share some of his wisdom and knowledge....

LIFE LESSONS

- Build your confidence because without it, you can't continue or grow.
- Patience is important.
- Think local but act global.



Lazy Fold daybed