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COMPLIMENTARY



LIVING BY DESIGN

Art and design are in their DNA. So it comes as no surprise that the Nakkash siblings are taking the region's most respected design gallery in new directions

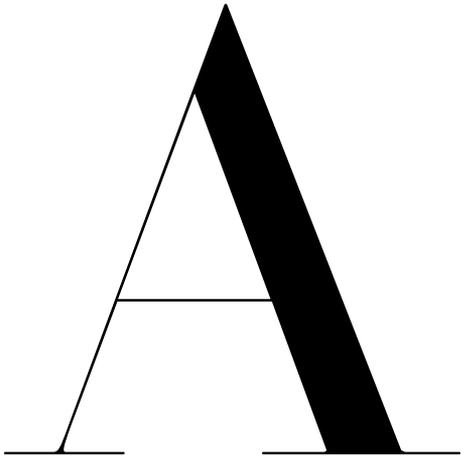
*Words by PRATYUSH SARUP
Photographs by PAUL ROBIDA*

A palette of ivory, light greys and sea blues play host to the Nakkash family's treasure of art and design pieces.



Layering crystal, steel and glass endows the home with a sophisticated, natural ambiance





Alberto Pinto and Vincent Wolf. I even remember having to save them on a floppy disc!”

His elder sister Aya, had a very different career path in mind; at 14, she decided to intern in a law firm, only to realise it was not a suitable fit. Instead, Aya decided to complement the family business by specialising in marketing. With a Masters in Strategic Marketing from Imperial College London under her belt, she joined forces with Omar to find new horizons for the family business.

They couldn't have timed the revamp better. “The Gulf region has witnessed a shift in its artistic and cultural landscape,” says Aya. “Exhibitions such as Art Dubai, Design Days Dubai and the Sikka Art Fair are influencing the region's understanding and appreciation of the arts, both old and new.” Bolstered by the UAE's growing prominence as an arts and design market, a fresh, current approach was needed - one that would resonate with the younger generation.

“I remember wanting to improve the Gallery more than change it,” explains Omar. “I hoped to add a more modern look to the showroom as well as new objects to present to our clients.” Accompanying his father on buying trips helped to endow the collection with a contemporary style. “I believe it's only natural for a gallery of such caliber to expand and offer its design to a broader audience. I hope to introduce other markets around the world to our style,” he says.

It helps that the siblings – a year apart in age – are very close. “It does take the edge off work,” says Aya. “Omar is a natural born leader and is very passionate and driven. He truly loves what he does, but his best trait is his awesome sense of humour. He never fails to entertain me! I am blessed to be able to call my brother my colleague, because it really is great fun to work together.”

Growing up in a city that evolves faster than you has a way of broadening your outlook. In Aya and Omar's métier, it certainly helps. “From a design perspective, I appreciate the willingness the UAE has to experiment and welcome the ideas of top leaders from around the world,” says Omar, who describes his personal aesthetic as one governed by purity and simplicity of purpose, a sentiment echoed by Aya who counts Audrey Hepburn as a muse. His father's taste has left an indelible mark on Omar as he carries Wajih's legacy forward, infusing it with a

ya and Omar Nakkash were, quite literally, born into the world of haute design; their happiest childhood memories revolve around the gorgeous pieces their father Wajih Nakkash curated at the eponymous gallery he established in 1983. “I must have been 12 years old when I first interned at the gallery,” remembers Omar, a Parsons graduate in Design. “My father asked me to read and summarise interior design books written by industry leaders, such as

Aya's strength in marketing and new media is charting new courses for Nakkash Gallery



modern spirit. “Almost everything that I know about design is from my father,” he says. “Clients who have worked with my father often tell me our tastes are very similar.” In addition to bringing new creative energy to Nakkash Gallery, Omar is planning on a gallery dedicated solely to al fresco living. “I hope to design my own line of furniture someday.”

As the siblings work to ensure Nakkash Gallery stays above the noise of a crowded marketplace, they do wish artists and designers had more freedom to create. “Censorship is still common at art fairs. I would like to be able to see artists have more liberty,” says Aya. “Artists

have the potential to positively contribute to democratic transition through their works and we sorely need that in our world today.” Omar, who admires the works of the artists Zena Assi and Hassan Hajjaj, wants to have a regional art and design calendar that is buzzing all year. “On a personal level, I am looking forward to including more regional designers to our portfolio.”

Be it their offices or home, good design remains a constant for the Nakkash family. Endowed with a sea-glass palette and a view of Dubai's iconic skyline, the Nakkash family home invites you to curl into one of the many sofas and let the bustle of the day go by. “It's such a calming and serene space that never fails to put a smile on my face,” says Aya. Omar's favourite pieces - a Charles & Ray Eames lounge chair and ottoman – speak not only of his refined taste but also a keen eye for timeless, investment design pieces – a trait he shares with Aya and their father.

When the siblings are not planning the next big design takeover, they love to relax, spend time outdoors and just enjoy life. High on Aya's bucket list is skydiving. “I've been putting off cooking lessons for a while now. So that's also one thing I hope to scratch off the list pretty soon!”



“Artists have the **POTENTIAL** *to positively...*

The sea-glass inspired interiors of the home flow seamlessly into the skyline beyond.

...contribute to **DEMOCRATIC** *transition”*