

# MYSTERY PIECES

Contemporary Egyptian Furniture

Author

Dr. Khaled Mehrez

Editor

Iman El-Ashry

Author: **Dr. Khaled Mehrez**

Editor: **Iman El-Ashry**

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Cover Artwork By **Omar Youssef**

Photography By **Khaled El-Desh - Dr. Ahmed Zedan**

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## Foreword

*M*

Mystery Pieces is a journey through design, history, art, and emotion. As Mehrez explains the concept behind every design piece, you can truly feel his passion about the ancient Egyptian culture. Reading through this book is like going through tales and stories that touch your heart, and what's more; you discover interpretations of these stories into artworks of contemporary design. You get to explore the ancient Egyptian culture as expressed from a true admirer who was so attached and inspired that the pieces as if would speak to you of the stories he's telling!

Beyond enjoying the reading, other artists and designers can grasp through this book the true meaning of inspiration, abstraction, interpretation, and novelty. Despite the fact that every item has linkage to the ancient Egyptian culture, it's actually new; has never been there before he created it. So, how can cultures, traditions, concepts, stories, and tales inspire furniture design? This is what this book invites you to know...

## Dedication

*To the South... to which I belong*

*To my father... who has always lightened my way*

*To all those who have inspired me...*

*Abdel Rahman El Abnoudi (poet)*

*Mahmoud Mokhtar (sculptor)*

*Shadi Abd El-Salam (director)*

*Charles Mackintosh (architect)*

*Michael Graves (architect)*

*Charles Jencks (theorist)*

*To my mentor*

*Dr. Ismail Awwad*

*And to the workmen who have experienced a new way of making  
furniture; with its hardships and its pleasures!*

## Acknowledgements

*I*

I give my thankfulness to all those who had their input in getting this book out to the light; and making it a step forward towards the spreading of knowledge and a contribution – even if a little one – to the world heritage.

Most importantly, I thank the photographers Mr. Khaled El-Desh and Dr. Ahmed Zidan for setting up the designs so they can show and taking a record of their existence. I also thank Arch. Iman El-Ashry for developing the book text, and my friend, the art director of this book; Mr. Omar Youssef.

I truly acknowledge my supportive team of engineers who have had their input in creating the working drawings and details of this collection, as well as fetching and organizing these old photos for the book production.

Last and not least, I thank my family; wife and children, who have bared with me the distance as I put my attention to designing, creating, and writing about the mystery pieces...

## Preface

A decorative flourish in a dark brown, calligraphic script, resembling a stylized 'S' or 'G' with elegant curves and a trailing line.

This book is like a record of a special part of my life, a very private part of my life; on the artistic and conceptual levels. Between the years 2002 and 2006, I had dived into the Egyptian history and explored how I - as a designer - can relate to it from architectural, sculptural, or applied arts perspectives.

As I worked on these mystery pieces, I treated each as an artwork, and still as functional matter. I tried to express concepts, beliefs, stories, and scenes from our daily lives or others from our far ancient heritage; to which we originally belong.

At some point in time, these pieces were created, and reside now in some appreciating homes. Now all that is left here are photos and memories.

That's why this book is here to tell their stories; hoping it can commemorate their existence and act as guidance for all those who love Egyptian art and wish to know more about it, or wish to be inspired.



*“Our bodies were tanned by the golden sun and flooded by the waters of the blue Nile. As we got onto boats of papyrus\*, the green leaves of the palm trees laid their shades upon us and a sandy valley surrounded us. Above, we saw buildings amongst a crescent silver moon. That’s when memories of graciousness from our timeless history sparkled in my mind; so I let my hand draw on my paper and the broach went off recarving the future...”*

*Khaled Mehrez*

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## Introduction

*M*

The book takes us on a journey as we enter through the gateway that lead to the evolution of the featured designs. That is, the philosophical concept behind the collection and the adopted approaches. Then we get to explore the "Mystery Pieces" themselves, as designs, and as a phase of my own life. One piece tells a story, another proposes a critical issue, while a third might record a part of history in Egypt's ancient life. Every piece tells its concept or story through lines, colors, textures, and motifs. Each design element in a piece is like a letter, as together they form its speech and from this speech we know meanings and decode the messages that were kept inside me and mysteriously expressed through the design. The Mystery Pieces vary, standing alone sometimes and forming sets at others, in which they definitely vary in function but connect in concept. The different sets vary in function too and as much as there is a variety in function,

there is a variety in interpretation. One design depicts a temple, another depicts some historic building, or simply an old Egyptian piece of furniture; or even a story from our old culture, or a poem flooded with emotions, maybe a bird, an animal, or anything that has inspired me from my surroundings and my built-in heritage. Eventually, and necessarily, this has lead to a variety of designs. Perhaps the common grounds are the artistic basics of harmony and unity, as well as the absurdity of inspiration and the uncommonness in the means of expressing it. This absurdity has actually lead to the attraction of the viewers of these pieces as I first exposed them, where I watched my viewers being involved trying to figure out their unspoken stories. These are the stories now being revealed, for the first time along with the pieces' visuals; through this book.

## The Origin of Concept

*F*

Furniture design has always played an important role in people's lives; due to that air of mystery and curiosity surrounding it, and the way it can be used as a reference for social classes in a community of a certain era. It is one of the three-dimensional forms of art which can be used as a source of information when studying the history of art, culture, and technology. Due to this vitality of role and value of impact; it has become essential to search for furniture designs that can express the culture, civilization, and traditions of its people.

Despite the fact that we have a lot of Egyptian furniture discovered by the beginning of the 20th century, we haven't yet contributed to the world with any relevant input, nor did we fulfill our own needs for furniture designs that can express our contemporary lifestyle, while emphasizing our entity and Egyptian identity. The Egyptian identity in general has faced a variety of natures throughout history; which has reflected on the Egyptian citizen through an enrichment of character. It was thus desired to revitalize a part of this rich history. I chose the ancient Egyptian era based on the fact that it's one of the pinnacles on which the world's history has been formed; not to mention how this time had been the most effective – if not the only effective – phase in the history of Egypt. The ancient Egyptian era also holds a huge amount of ideas for every designer who wants to be inspired by the Egyptian style; that style which tells us who we originally are.

Speaking of our identity and nature isn't really a sort of cultural luxury, but rather a matter of vitality that requires research and documentation. It is through finding this identity, that we nurture the sense of belonging and emotional attachment among a community. It also allows us to feel senses of security and personification while enriching our knowledge and depth of character. As we search for our identity, we need to learn to deal with our heritage with a level of awareness that exceeds the materialistic presence of elements and documentations of history; towards the actual revitalization of this past community's visions, concepts, and creative approaches.

On the other hand, if we separate from our history, we separate from our human roots; where elements of history form a renewable lesson about a community's means of expression. These means have crossed their functionality and fulfillment of materialistic functions, towards responding to a man's need for creating mystery and symbolism. We dig through history to bring back the old wisdom and renovate it. The new would give life again to the old and the old would give value and richness to the new. This mutual relationship holds within it much controversy, I know. But "history is the shadow of man on earth, like geography is the shadow of the earth on time." Caring to achieve this mix between past and present, I proposed some ideas while being totally aware of the value of both. I created

a context that aims at varying the means of expression and visualizing the past. This is based on an understanding that extracting parts of history will give life to what has been long dead, while enabling the expression of the amazing artworks created through those past times.

## Tools of Inspiration



Through the recent discoveries of ancient Egyptian tombs, and through the murals we find, we are able to know how ancient Egyptians have lived and how their lifestyle was like; including the features of the furniture they had used. There are also documentations by classic historians which describe the different belongings of the ancient Egyptian which he had left behind.

The main items discovered in ancient Egyptian furniture were royal chairs, stools, coffers, beds, and cabinets. Technically speaking, all kinds of installation and wood interlocking techniques were actually used back then. Highly technical hand crafting techniques were adopted, including gilding which might have been achieved through an ancient form of gold plating technology, along with the usage of other rich metals and materials; all expressing the special craftsmanship of the ancient Egyptian craftsman. These elements even reflect deeper awareness and understanding when compared to all the works created in Europe during that time (early ancient history – mid 18th century).

Among the tombs discovered was that of Queen Hetepheres – wife of King Snefru, the first king in the fourth dynasty, and mother of King Khufu\*. The tomb was discovered near the Pyramids of Giza and had a good amount of furniture which was successfully restored. The point is, this furniture was actually quite similar to that which was discovered in the tomb of

the young King Tut Ankh Amun\*; despite the gap of time between the deaths of King Tut and Queen Hetepheres which amounts to one thousand years. This was a proof of how there had been a preservation of both tradition and principles among the ancient Egyptian community; which reflects this community's level of power and continuance!

This timelessness is what inspired me to dive into the ancient Egyptian history while I still held on the edge of the present and looked upon the future. Through its Islamic and Christian religious views, the current contemporary Egyptian community looks upon the ancient Egyptian culture as some sort of paganism\*; due to the variation of the afterlife concept between now and then. I have aimed at transforming this view. That old concept of the afterlife was truly believed in by the ancient Egyptian citizen, and this belief resulted into massive dedication through hard work; resulting into an enormous amount of amazing art.

The sad methods of revitalizing this art in our current times have been rare trials. They were direct, too demonstrative, and too depictive of the old style; which contributed to the contemporary Egyptian community's rejection to them. It has become more challenging then to design Egyptian furniture that is contemporary and which fulfills its emotional and materialistic roles. I tried to create furniture that had an Egyptian tone where the details have faded into concepts and contemporary

ornamentations which can connect our hearts to the past and let us contemplate; bringing feelings and emotions to the inside of our homes, where we actually live. The furniture pieces, through their links to the past, form a mutual relationship between us and our belongings; while balancing our metaphysical, spiritual, and intellectual needs.

In my collection, I created new features that allow deep exploration of the concepts of the ancient Egyptian style. I also applied some artistic experimentations; as means of creating something new that has an essence of art. This new something aims at establishing the values of creativity, while fulfilling the needs of the post modern community.

## Design Approach



This contemporary Egyptian collection adopted a set of artistic approaches which gave it its identity. Perhaps the most important of these has been symbolism; which I find quite an essential design aspect, when in need to express concepts and thoughts through a product that is still functional and consumable. Symbolism in furniture design is generally appreciated because the design which only represents a function decreases the value of this function, not to mention how the alternative presence of symbolism gives the design more power and helps in showing its identity.

With symbolism, comes a sense of mystery; which enables a multi-readable creation that has a variety of inherent values. These values eventually give the design work more richness in terms of art and creativity, while encouraging contemplation.

There are also other approaches adopted in this collection, which I aimed to emphasize; especially Pastiche. I tried to borrow elements of history and use them within a context of freedom; improvising without awareness of why I would borrow this or that. Irony marked the borrowing action; mixing unexpected elements of different times, altering the origin through exaggeration or abstraction, leaving the inspiration to fulfill the function or crossing the boundaries of functional measurements to create dimensions of beauty and creativity that fulfill the emotional needs of the contemporary

community.

Human depiction, manipulation, and collage\* were also used to fulfill my own creative needs. As humans, we generally like self depiction due to our will to see ourselves in the things that surround us. Collage, on another note, helps in connecting different elements that naturally wouldn't form a traditional element together. The element of color was also used within conceptual contexts, being one of the basic foundations in any design. Modern designers are now aware of the value of color, so they use it as a dynamic element for sending complex messages to viewers' minds about the product they're designing. This also applies to furniture. Color is born when the design is, and in ancient Egypt, color was used symbolically while expressing religious rituals as seen in ancient murals. The black color was a sign of eternity as represented in Anubis\* – the ancient god of death; whereas Osiris\* – the ancient god of resurrection was painted in green as a symbol of life. Naturally, plants were all painted in green, but so were all elements that represented youth and healthiness. The color yellow, represented gold in ancient Egypt, as well as the sun and many gods. The color red, on the other hand, was used as a sign of notoriousness.

In my palette, I made a trinity of color on which I based the whole collection. I used the brown color in its different grades in parts where I wanted to show the beauty of the natural wooden patterns. I used the black color at

other parts, to refer to the color of ebony; that rich wooden material which was marked by its darkness and of which the ancient Egyptian furniture was quite acknowledged. Finally, I used gold; in very specific minute parts of the designs; mostly ornamental or sculptural, in the form of geometric motifs or golden strips. This way, the sense of richness was emphasized and opulence was reflected through the furniture pieces; where the usage of the gold color was actually another element of inspiration from the ancient Egyptian style which was rich in gilding. Through my own trinity of colors, I was so keen to always reevaluate how I used each color; in order to maintain the balance between the color formations in every furniture piece.

Ornamentation also helped me in creating visual entities for the furniture pieces, while contributing to the overall interpretation of the Egyptian style. Far from that, ornamentation decreases the burdening effect of huge masses by giving further details that attract the eyes, not to mention their artistic value; beautifying and decorating surfaces to make them more dynamic and more humane.

Through the whole collection, my goal was to create this sensation that brings the viewer back to the ancient Egyptian history; while at the same time presenting the designs in a context that allows a new method of interpreting furniture design. You will see how the furniture here becomes an interactive medium for exchanging ideas and visualizations...

# The Collection



## Console of the Sun

*M*any ancient Egyptian tales speak of the daily cruise taken by Ra\*, the ancient god of the sun. The legend says, that as the sun rises above the water, a group of dancing chimps get off their sleep to dance in joy of sunrise. Ra would ride then his boat for his day cruise along the skies, until the night comes and he moves off to his night boat which he rides through the other world while being unseen for twelve hours until he – as the sun – would rise back again.

As much as this legend seems to be a fabrication of imagination, it still expressed the thoughts in this ancient community's minds and their own interpretations for what they experimented. So, I found in this legend my inspiration and crafted visuals as my own means of expression. The sun – of course – remained the core of the design, decorating the console, and appearing in its elliptical form; as it had always been expressed through the ancient Egyptian culture. Behind the sun, I fixed another elliptical form, in ebony black; for symbolic protection and to add a dramatic background to my design; which in turn harmonizes with the boat form below. As for the body of the console itself, it's an architectural form that brings in a memory of the ancient Egyptian temples with its inclined walls. In the middle, a gap reduces the masses and a group of drawers are ornamented by engravings of palm trees to symbolize sprout and add a humane sensation to the temple structure. As for that boat which suspends on golden balls, it's an ironic unexpected element that only relates to the legend and not to the function. If you step back and look upon the design overall, you'll find it's a mix between geometry and sculpture and you might experiment metaphysical visualizations which were intended to take your mind beyond expected impact.





## Henna Tree Dining set

The tree, as a symbol, has always been linked to cultural and ethnic values throughout the variable Egyptian cultures across history. It is a sign of the after-life for the ancient Egyptian and a symbol of the Easter and the Spring season until today. It also signifies life in Christianity, and because it's an element that grows; it inspires peacefulness and goodness through the shades it lays upon the world. The shape of the tree in this design was inspired from the ancient Egyptian's representation of the tree element; and I chose to name it the "Henna Tree" in significance to the common henna trees found in my beloved Nubian lands; giving thus this motif a personalized emotional entity.

In the design, I split the dining tabletop over two halves; where each has been divided into squares by fine ebony-colored wooden rods. In each half, you'll find the corner squares carrying engravings of the henna tree, while the middle square carries a motif of water waves;

symbolically watering the trees around it. The edge of the tabletop has been inclined outwards to resemble a temple ledge; which is a dominant element in ancient Egyptian architecture. The table suspends on four legs which connect to the tabletop through ornaments that depict the wigs of ancient Egyptian ladies; tied in golden strips. Then at the feet of each table leg; I made another ornament to depict papyrus rolls on a black contrasting background.

The dining chair has a back that curves outwards, with the Henna Tree engraved at its center. It has an upper ledge in ebony black; wig-like ornaments below and a black support further below ornamented with water waves; symbolically watering the henna tree above. At the sides, another support is installed to connect the chair's anterior and posterior legs. As for the seating portion, it resembles that of King Tut Ankh Amun's chairs. The chair overall has a rigid outline resembling that of the ancient Egyptian chairs in general; but rephrased in a



more contemporary structure.

The china cabinet is designed to resemble an architectural structure with a classic curved base that matches with the boat representation at the top. With side storage units, glass comes in the middle for items display and masses reduction, while the drawers below carry a representation of palm tree leaves. The cabinet is ornamented with Henna Trees in gold, added to a golden sun preceded by a golden cobra; which was commonly used in the crowns of Egyptian kings and queens.

Colors wise, the natural wooden pattern used here played an important emotional role with the ebony black and golden ornaments; creating the Henna Tree Dining Set's own trinity of color.





Henna Tree Chair

## The "Song of The Harper" Clock

*I*

I was amazed by the intelligence of the ancient Egyptians' ephemeris\* which the world still uses until today; so I created a clock to talk about it and symbolically expressed the fundamentals of this ephemeris in the design. I also used excerpts of lyrics from the famous ancient Egyptian canticle "The Song of The Harper"; which matched the topic herein proposed.

To understand the symbolism used here, let's talk about the ancient Egyptian ephemeris first. The year was divided into 12 months, 30 days each, and a remainder of 5 days were added at the end of each year to fulfill a total of 365 days. Each year had 3 seasons; The Flood, The Winter, and The Summer. Each month was divided into 3 divisions, 10 days each; and each day was divided into day and night hours; forming 24 hours in total. However, those hours weren't all equal, the duration of each of the 12 hours of the day varied from that of each of the 12 hours of the night and all hours varied in durations according to the season! In the summer, for example; day hours were long and night hours were short and the opposite was the case in winter;

while hours of equal durations were generally identified.

In the clock design, I chose first to give it an obelisk form through its verticality and that upper golden pyramid resembling an obelisk pyramidion\*. The pyramidion can be seen suspending over four supports symbolizing nowadays' four seasons. Through the interaction between the solids and voids here, I hint to the opposites one encounters in his daily life. Then, a stripe of decoration frames a solid black cube which stretches downwards on the sides and back of the structure. At the front side, there are plaits of golden wood representing the ancient Egyptian ladies' wigs which have creatively varied in shape. The pendulum suspending at the back of the golden plaits represents a golden sun with an Egyptian eye that looks through the mysterious world of darkness behind. Each of the opposing solid sides holds 12 Henna Trees symbolizing the 12 months, and the 24 hours of the day; when both sides are added together. The Henna Tree is also the core of the clock itself, while the hours are stars that are shaped as the way they

were in ancient Egyptian findings.

Each solid side of the clock has a different excerpt from the "Song of the Harper" lyrics. The song was common amongst the writers of the modern empire in ancient Egypt and was translated off papyrus findings into Arabic. The excerpts carved here can be further translated into English as follows:

### Right Side:

*Spend a day in cheerfulness*

*Enjoy the most beautiful scents*

*Put garlands of lotus\* on your wife's arms*

*May someone you love sit next to you*

*May you have singing and music ahead*

*Put the worries far away*

*Don't think of anything but joyfulness*

*Until it's time to go to the land of quiescence*

### Left Side:

*The sun which is born in the morning*

*Rests when the night comes*

*At the Western Mountain*

*Where men beget, wives give birth*

*And all living beings breathe the air*

*The children are born to specific times*

*Then they go to their graves*

*No life can be lengthened in Egyptian lands*

*No one wouldn't go to the other world!*



## Tut Chess Set

*I* Inspired from King Tut's original chess set and modernized into this design, I made the table chess-patterned with ebony and ivory colors through a technique of relief carving. On two opposing sides of the table, I installed drawers for the chess items; depicting King Tut's set which was made in the form of a chess-patterned box. On the four sides of the tabletop, relief carving divides every side into a set of flat dark squares carrying golden Henna Trees, separated by vertical wooden rods. As for the table legs, they represent my interpretation of the ancient Egyptian palm tree columns. The chair has a classic outline of ancient Egyptian furniture, with a seating and back slightly curved for comfort. The Henna Tree is also used here with a background of rich wooden veneer\*, and the feet of the chairs are hoof-inspired. At the back of each chair, there's an Egyptian eye engraved to symbolize the alertness of the person sitting; as if he can see it all! The back of the chair, like a face with eyes, together with the four legs imply animal or human presence; if I leave those chairs alone I imagine them moving!





Tut Chess Table

## Life Flower Pot & Table Light

*T*he idea here was to present the Egyptian column in its basic form; which the ancient Egyptian had developed later into many forms and architectural styles. The flower pot and table light here have cuboid structures depicting the landmarks of The Northern Monastery\* in ancient Egypt, which I consider to be the best example on architectural candor and purity. At the top of the "column", I added ties that virtually wrap up the flower bunch or light source; an act by which I have blended reality and imagination through symbolism.





## The Eloquent Peasant Cabinet

*T*his cabinet tells a famous story from the ancient Egyptian literature where there was a peasant whose livestock and crops were all taken away by a corrupt man of governance. The peasant did not stand still against this injustice, but rather spoke to the king with a voice of truth coming out from between his lips. Through nine whole speeches, the brave peasant explained his complaint; to you I mention the last speech in which he said; "If you resolve to injustice, you shall not have descendants and your eyes won't delight with an heir. He who rides the ship of swindle shall remain in the vast seas where there is no shore to end up to, and no harbor to moor at"... The story ends with the king giving orders to resolving the case and giving back the peasant his rights. Through the implied features of wisdom and steadiness on the side of someone who has a right to claim, and the features of setting justice on the other side; I find this story one of the most eloquently told stories in the ancient Egyptian culture.

Now that you know the story, let me tell you how

it inspired me here. The cabinet's vertical form represents the peasant himself; where he has a mind and a heart of gold that beats with wisdom, eloquence, and steadiness. The golden sun protrudes to send rays of justice, goodness, and an alertness of conscience, while the heart is made of a seashell to symbolize the birth of righteousness and justice. The drawers of the cabinet are divided into nine segments to represent the nine speeches, while the dark background holds engravings of motifs showing sheep and donkeys, trees, and water waves; all symbolizing the drama in the peasant's story. The peasant's chest, which functionally shields the internal shelves of the cabinet, carries an excerpt of the eloquent peasant's speeches, which translates into:



"The Eloquent Peasant" – Film by Shadi Abdel Salam

*Set justice for the sake of God whose justice has become a law of justice*

*Justice leads to immortality, it goes down to the grave with he who owns it*

*When he's wrapped in his cerement and put amongst the dust*

*His name does not get wiped away from the land*

*But rather remembered; for he has set justice*

*Which is the law of Allah...*

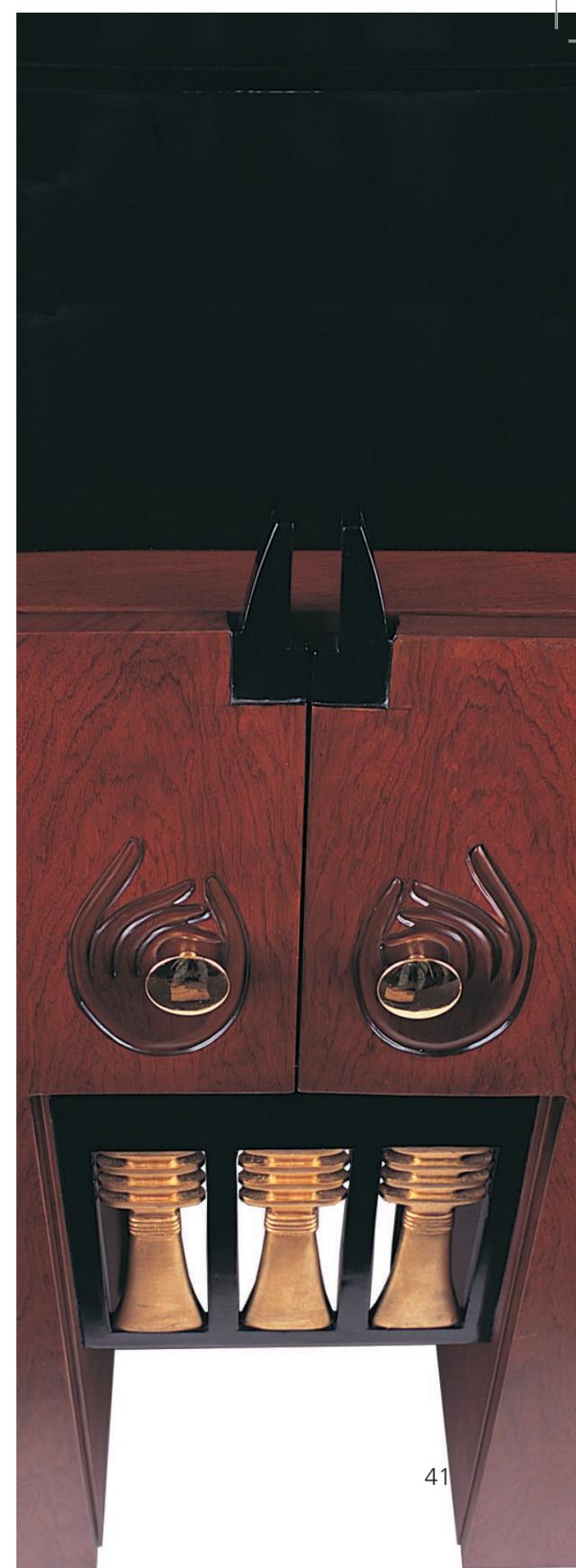




## Solar Boat Cabinet

*S*olar boats are one of the most important ancient Egyptian discoveries of the 20th century. Those boats have linked the concept of the “underworld” to the sunset; as in the legend previously told. As per this legend, the boat which Ra - the god of the sun - rides to the underworld, or the unseen side of the world, is seen represented here in ebony black. Above, a golden sun rises and is shaped elliptically to depict the ancient Egyptian method of representing the sun. The cabinet’s design is split into two halves, and has two engraved hands around its knobs; while on the inside there are engravings which tell the legend of the sun as known to the ancient Egyptians. The hands here give the impression as if someone is looking upon the world from the inside, and the design generally involves metaphysical implications.

At the center of the cabinet, there are 3 windows of ebony that carry abstracted golden motifs of the Djed\* Pillar, which was considered in the ancient Egyptian culture as a sign of stability, immortality and rebirth; symbolizing the backbone of Osiris; the ancient god of resurrection. Overall, the geometric form of the cabinet eventually blends smoothly with the organic sculptural feet below.





## Moses' Table



This coffee table represents the story mentioned in the holy Qur'an about Prophet Moses\*, may peace be upon him, when Fir'aun\* (Pharaoh) was told by a sorcerer that there shall be born a boy who would one day take his throne and kill him. In response, Fir'aun ordered his army to kill every male infant that was born. When prophet Moses' mother knew of that, God instructed her to hand him to his elder sister to put him in a basket and throw it in the sea. Prophet Moses' sister kept watching him from afar as he escaped Fir'aun's brutality. The waves took the basket near Fir'aun's palace. Seen by the guards, they picked the basket and found that it had a male infant. Before any fatal action was made, the heart of Fir'aun's wife softened for the boy and she asked to keep him which ended up to Fir'aun's ordering to the infant's care!

This story has always captured my mind and heart since childhood, so when I thought of expressing it; I thought about this great basket that kept prophet Moses safe! So, I made this basket the topic of my design piece here; a table symbolically formed of papyrus wrappings all around with vertical

strengthening ties. The tabletop is full of drama; with a frame of squares holding motifs of the Djed Column—the ancient sign of immortality and rebirth – which I stretched to match the squared outlines. I implanted 24 Djed Columns to signify guardians that looked over the infant throughout the whole day, and I centered the design piece with a golden plate that symbolically radiated light throughout the table sides. The golden plate has an elliptical form; signifying the world as represented in ancient Egypt, and was created from different interweaving levels that transformed its static rigidity into a status of dynamism that is full of action; while still being safely stable inside the well-wrapped squared form of the table.





Lotus  
Flower Box

## Lotus Corner Table

*T*he lotus flowers used to grow in still ponds and at the watersides of the desert canals in ancient Egypt. They spread throughout the vast wetlands of Faiyum\* city, across The Nile Delta\*, and wherever there had been still waters. The lotus flower, scientifically called "Nymphaea Caerulea Flower", was also known to the Greeks and Romans as "Water Lily"; whereas the word "Lotus" refers to the Egyptian culture. Using lotus flowers as a floral motif was quite common in ancient Egypt; where papyrus could not compete to have the same level of importance.

I praised the lotus in this table; of which the top depicted temple ledges in ancient Egypt. I then added four legs with animal-inspired feet. Windows can be seen below the upper ledge in ebony black, where golden lotuses embrace one another as if they were ballet dancers on stage. Through the windows, the lotuses create a positive and negative variety through the surrounding space, added to their color exchange with the ebony black which assists in giving the table further drama.



## The Life Story of Tut's Door

*T*

I have always felt something strange about entrance doors; they have this privilege of allowance and prevention. Standing amongst city squares and looking upon city streets; they become witnesses to time and history incidents. Every time I walked in a street and some entrance door captured my thoughts; I have visualized it as a witness to a story; its own life story. Because it feels like a person speaking of what it had seen and experienced; everyone can actually see a reflection of himself upon facing a closed door. With Tut, a king dying young but still witnessing everything; I named the door after his name. The story herein told is that of every Egyptian; with the sorrows, dreams, and a whole life through childhood, youth, and agedness. It's a story that brings the past and the present, the darkness and the light; as well as the hope that one day the torch of civilization will light its hometown again. I wrote the story on the door, which has a symbolic head and looks at us with Egyptian eyes. It holds a flower pot, it talks and it signs...

*I'm a door. Originally, a tree of tut*

*I'm named after a young king; Tut!*

*A monastery is where I live*

*Embracing a minaret, palm tree copses, and homes*

*My siblings are Rebab\*, Clarinet, Throne, and Coffin*

*My key slot is a jewelry box*

*With a body of ivory, ornamented in ruby*

*My lifespan – if long – will pass*

*Like a palm of water in a whale's gut*

*My lite holds a flowerpot and a birdhouse*

*I'm a mashrabiya\* in sadness & a liar in joy*

*I'm not just a framed door, nor am I ink in a book*

*My value comes from all that I have seen; kings, generals, and curs*

*I've opened and closed doors for many; strangers, and companions*

*Friends made of timber, and others of ivy*

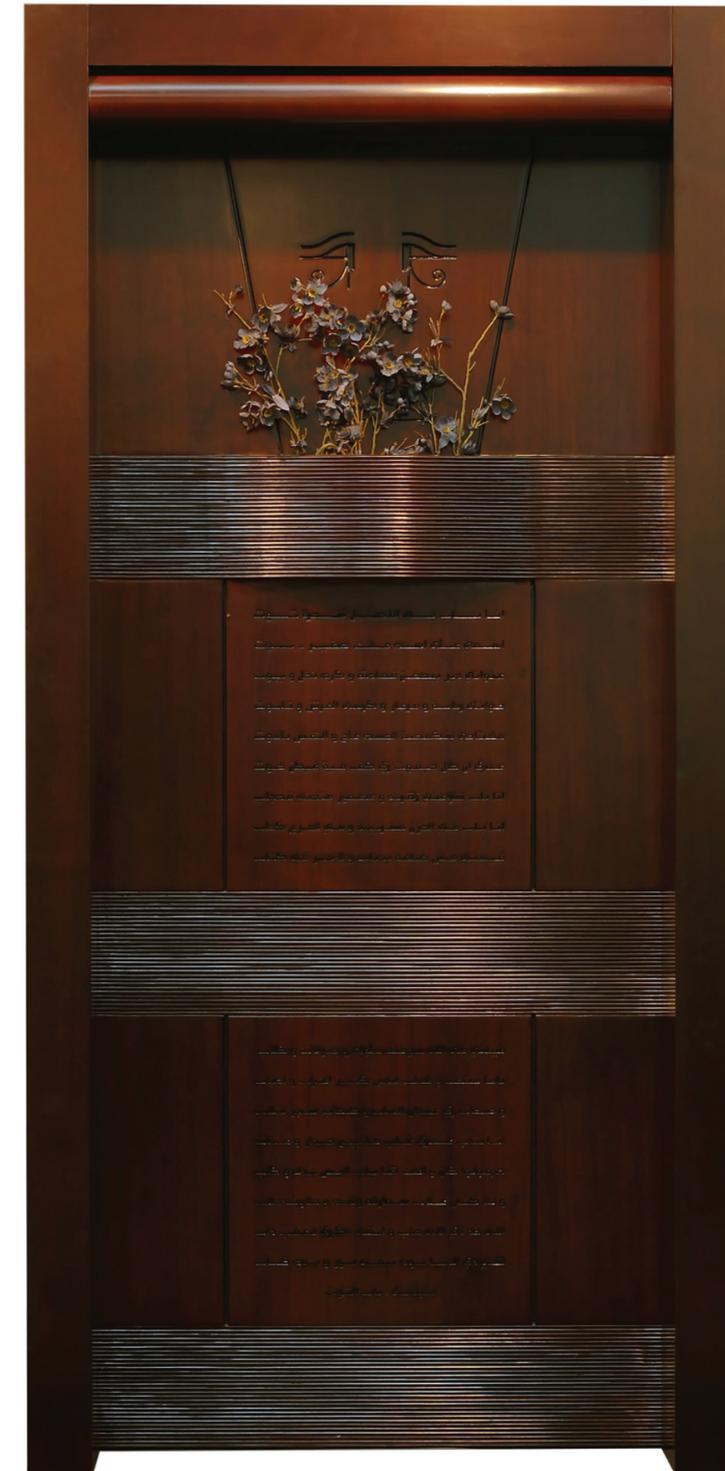
*My lifespan has elapsed between the wall and the jamb*

*As it comes, as it goes; I'm a memory in a worn-out sill*

*This is life; a day of light, and a day of murk*

*Signed By:*

*Tut's Door*



## Tell El Amarna Console

*T*

The console, in general, is a welcoming element; which I named here after Tell El Amarna; the site of Akhetaton; the ancient Egyptian city founded by Akhenaton\*. The city was known for its marvelous architectural establishments, where baked mud brick was a common building material. As for Tell El Amarna console, it is formed of two sides, each side having an upper drawer and a door ornamented in palm tree leaves. The console top is padded with crocodile skin leather, while on the wall a relief artwork is embraced by a framework of papyrus ties; symbolically. To blend and to unify, I have deliberately intended to create a monochromatic theme in my palette which still varied in texture and material.



## Alabaster Appliqués

*As*

As I believe in utmost harmony, I wanted to provide lighting items of Egyptian style to match with the collection. I used the alabaster\* material to hold the source of light; being an acknowledged ancient Egyptian material that features beautiful natural veins especially when lit from inside. Below, I made a wrapping from copper that is painted sometimes in gold, and sometimes in silver; depicting a flower receptacle. Further below, a sculptural form of leaves or perhaps algae descends, and is made of polyester and painted in bronze or golden oxides.



\*Transliterated from Arabic, meaning "berries"

Gold  
Heart Pot



## Zodiac Bedroom

*T*he ancient Egyptians mastered astrology which inspired me for this bedroom; so I made the ancient Egyptian star the core of the design, and named it the Zodiac Bedroom. The star can be seen in both sides of the bed; which are designed asymmetrically; where the footboard top resembles ancient boat outlines and its sides resemble those of ancient Egyptian temples. The stars which give the room its romantic ambiance are in the footboard's central ebony-colored recessed area and in the side commodes which are actually part of the bed's dual vertical veneer side frames. These frames carry wall lights of lotus design, more stars, and a small snake in the ebony-colored background. Further upwards, a horizontal rectangle on each side is made of ebony-colored strips depicting ancient Egyptian papyrus ties; where both rectangles are linked by a golden pipe that ends with a snake head. The pipe carries an emotional semi transparent curtain with the same star sign as a pattern to match the whole design, while the dual door wardrobe is ornamented by vertical engravings which are common Egyptian elements in architectural façade design. Further upwards, the wardrobe is decorated by engraved repetitive motifs and a pattern of squares.





## Life Console

*L* This console is composed of a base depicting a building structure that is grooved in the middle to soften the effect of solid masses; while at the same time to create legs for the upper part of the console. The opposition in color and texture made here helps in diffusing the solid form; where veneer surfaces are soft and the ebony-colored sides of the legs are striped to depict the ancient Egyptian papyrus columns with upper papyrus ties. Centering the console base are icons of a tree, water waves, and a star; acting as symbols of the universe and of life; from which the console gained its name. In the upper part, these icons are arranged in squares along with a reptile icon which is inspired from the ancient Egyptian culture of using animal-inspired icons in design. A spiral icon is also seen; as inspired from the organic form of water waves, grass, and animal contours. All these symbols are rotating around a squared mirror; so that as you look, you can see yourself while thoughts about life and symbols of the universe tour your mind.



Djed Chess Set





*T*

The table here suspends on Djed pillars (the ancient symbol of immortality and rebirth), while a curvature depicting the universe is made in its usual elliptical representation below the tabletop; creating a virtual gateway. Two opposing drawers hold the pieces of chess, and the chess board protrudes in a wooden veneer pattern. The chairs are inspired from animal forms; in the same way the ancient Egyptian was inspired by the many wild and mild animals; such as the lion, cow, buffalo, and donkey; which have all reflected on designing animal-inspired chair legs; among other design items. Animal skin was also used and depicted in creating patterned seats and these patterns were also reflected on wooden designs; by

integrating contrasting wooden veneers. In this chess set, I interpreted this inspiration and developed a chair design that is clearly Egyptian and obviously inspired from an animal form; from all its sides. The most significant feature here is that soft inclination of the back which has the maximum level of virtual plasticity and depicts the backs of ancient Egyptian royal chairs. I also deliberately balanced this backward swirling with the outward projection of the posterior legs which gives the back of the chair its own complete form. The anterior legs are connected by a curved support that is framed from below. These have a different form from the supports connecting the posterior and

anterior legs on the sides which – along with the forms of the legs – give the chair its own side look. The variety and asymmetry in shaping the chair legs was actually intended; same was the case for the supports which alternatively don't exist at the back of the chair. Looking upon the chair all over, you can feel unity through the inspiration of an animal's body that is reflected in an organic form with curved outlines all around. While on one end there's the chair's backward curvature; on the other end, the leather patterned seating is juxtaposed while depicting the ancient Egyptian's choice of different animals' leather and fur skins in chair - and generally furniture - design.

## Tut's Coffin





## Isis Dining Set

*L*ike the Djed Chess Set, I was inspired again by the organic animal forms; but here I gave the chair an air of lightness. The back curves outwards, the feet are identically like animal hooves, and the front side of the chair's back holds ornaments of palm tree leaves. With these leaves, I also wrapped the table legs, then used them again at the front of the china cabinet. The tabletop is split in two, designed in a module form while hosting two groups of glass-shielded golden pearls. As for the cabinet, it holds two monoliths on the sides with a front of glass each, and rays of light coming from the inside. Between the monoliths, lies the golden sun against a background of ebony black. Below each monolith, a set of variably sized drawers are present. At the center, a set of drawers is aligned from both sides with the palm tree leaves cabinet doors. Above them, lies a box of papyrus wrappings and ties with ornamentations on top. Inside, the box is designed to host all tableware; each in its suitable spot.







## Zebra Salon

*A* An honest depiction of the ancient Egyptian's usage of animal representation is this Zebra Salon set. Like he had always enjoyed depicting animals and birds in murals and designs; I have depicted the zebra here through a set composed of a sofa and two arm chairs, as well as coffee and side tables. The legs of all seating are animal-inspired with obvious hooves, and the sides and backs are covered all around in a zebra pattern ornamentation through contrasting wooden veneers. The same pattern can be seen at the top of the coffee table and over the legs of the side table; as means of creating a unified composition for the set through its different elements.



## Hieroglyphic Bedroom

*T*

The hieroglyphic\* bedroom is designed within a module created by engraved lines that divide the wooden surfaces into panels to remind us of the stone works of ancient Egyptian temples. Hieroglyphic letters are arranged in most of the wooden divisions in a simple non-dominating style that unifies the bedroom elements; as does the natural wooden pattern. This pattern was created through serious means to match wooden veneers to create a natural pattern that blends light and dark colors in an aesthetic context. The hairdresser and commodes own tops padded in leather in an ebony black color. The wardrobe is a continuity of the wooden pattern and is formed of foldable doors, while the bed headboard and footboard end at the top with swirling ebony-colored edges that remind us of ancient Egyptian boats. On each side of the bed, dual obelisks ornamented in ebony color stand as guardians while being topped by Egyptian alabaster lighting units; transforming the obelisks into candlesticks.







## Palm Tree Corner Table



*I*n this corner table, the squared tabletop is decorated by a frame of squares with middle circles and squares of stripes. It's inspired from the ancient Egyptian innovative technique of marquetry\*; in which a variety of rich veneers are combined to create contrasts and ornamentations in wood. In the tabletop thickness, that frame is repeated but in a sculptural three-dimensional form. The tabletop overall rests on four legs representing my interpretation of the ancient Egyptian palm tree columns which originally had

smooth cylindrical forms. Every column in this table here is decorated from below in sculptural palm tree leaves which intertwine around the body, while the column capital completes the overall picture of ancient Egyptian temples.

## Valley of The Kings Floor Lamp



## Tut's Boat Cabinet



*A*

Ancient Egyptians had a fondness of boats which were the common means of traveling at the time. Made of wood and papyrus wrappings; the boats had different forms and designs. Symbolically, there came out a variety of interpretations for boat forms which is what encouraged me to tackle the topic of boats in more than just one design; considering how I personally have a preference for boats myself.

Here, you can see papyrus wrappings around a smooth golden boat shape that has different ends identifying its front from its back. These asymmetric ends actually create a sense of dynamism especially when compared to the scenery below that symbolically features the Nile valley with accompanying lotuses.

Despite the fact that the design has a form of a memorial; it's actually functional as a cabinet through drawers and closets on each longitudinal side. Standing through multiple legs on a skiing board, it imitates many furniture bases created in ancient Egypt. Tut's Boat is designed to be an island and a center piece in space, where both sides have the scenery explained to explore the piece from all around.



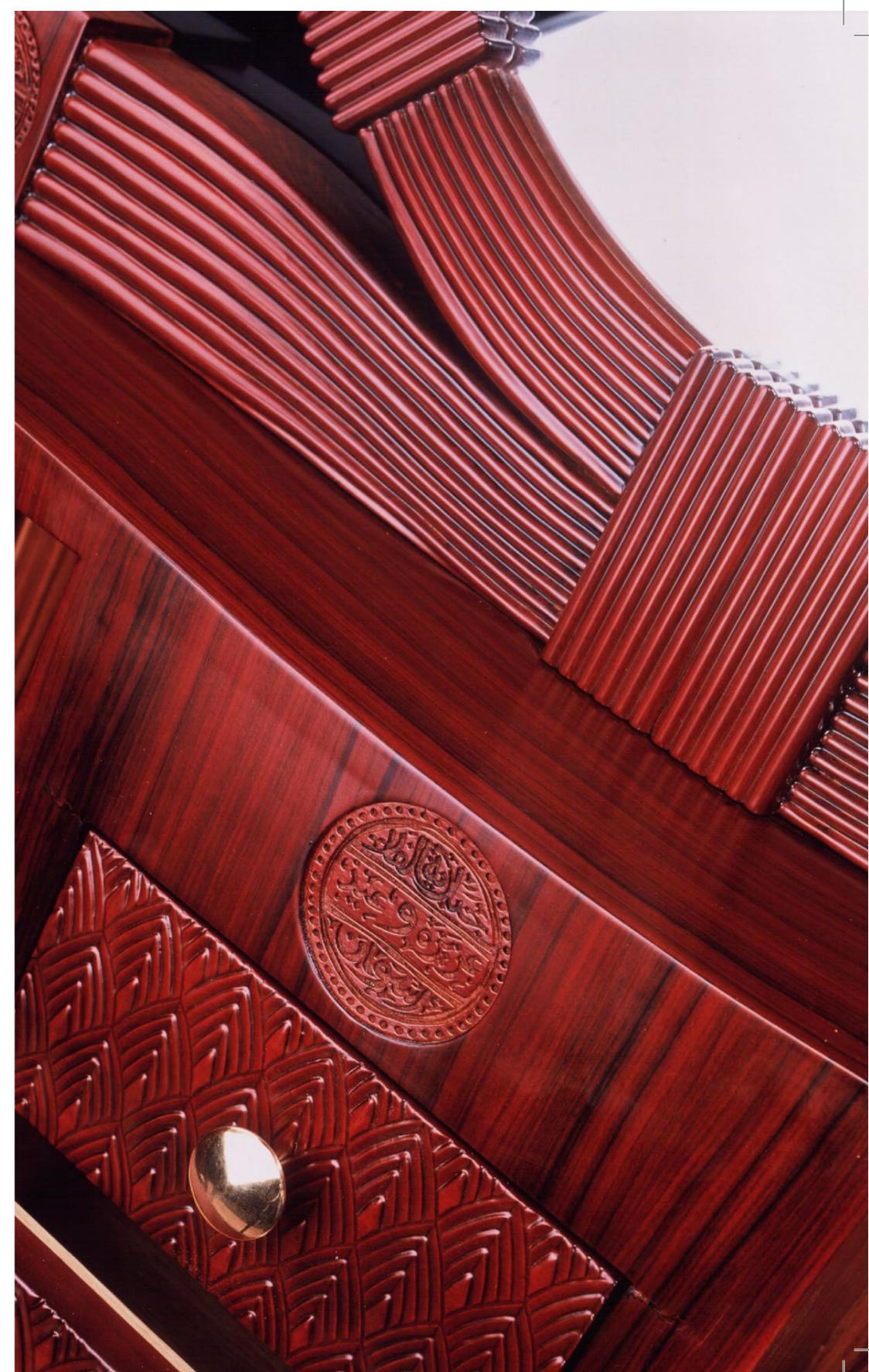


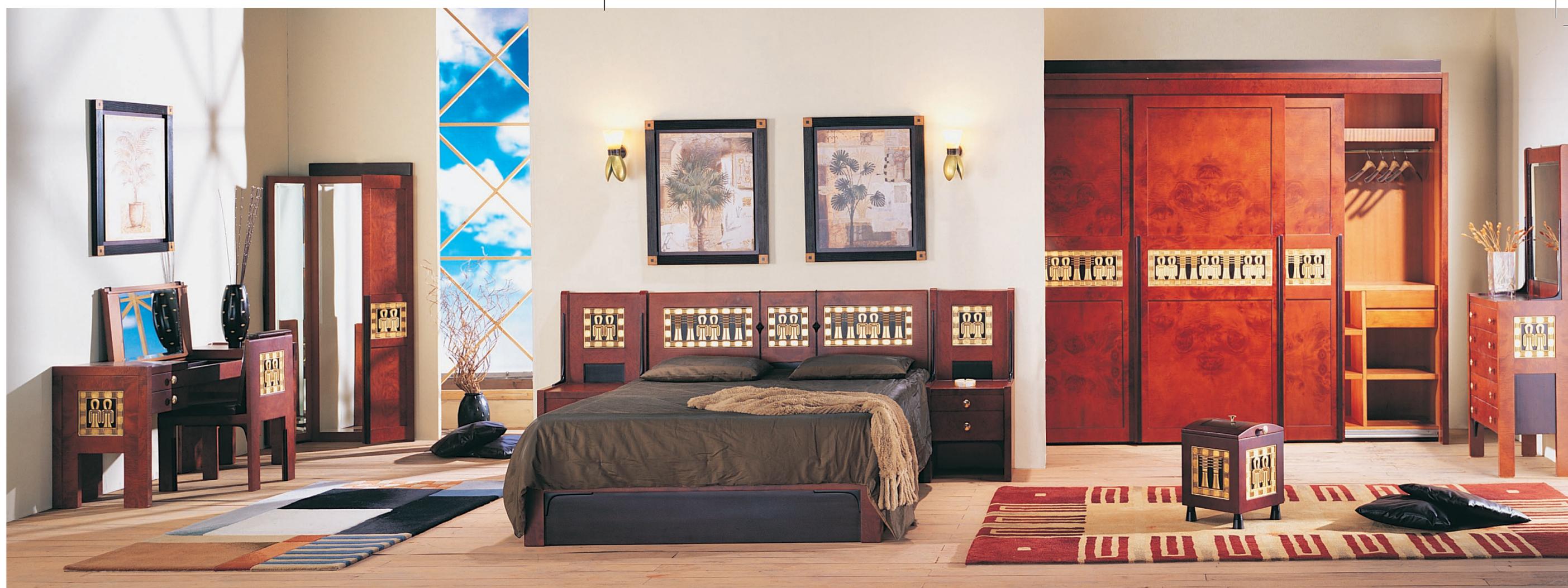
## The Cabinet of Heradjy ElKot & Fatna Abd ElGhaffar

*T*his cabinet was inspired from one of the most important poem collections written by the Egyptian acknowledged poet; Abdel Rahman El Abnoudi. It's an epic story that features the struggles of a worker (Heradjy) who left his small hometown to go help build the High Dam\* in the Southern Nile Valley. It was a tough experience for the simple workmen who had never previously left their hometowns. It was tough to be away from home for six whole years through which he exchanged many letters with his wife (Fatna). 24 letters, to be precise, speak of the lives of both spouses while being separated by the distance. The poems are so full of love, agony, and sadness, as well as happiness, anguish, and blame! As usual, El Abnoudi has filled his work with puns that actually had political and social meanings and I personally consider this collection of poems to be the most eloquent literature written in contemporary Egyptian history! I was so passionate about the dramatic structure of those letters, which I tried to

express through this cabinet. You can see the palm leaves decorating the drawers which grow upwards in a descending and rising order. The drawers have 24 divisions, depicting the number of letters exchanged. They embrace two doors on their sides, which have golden knobs that center the overall design. Beneath this part, I've actually engraved the names of Heradjy and Fatna's kids; Aziza and Eid; to commemorate their sufferings during their father's long journey abroad. Above the base, there are arms spread wide open; each ending in an engraving of Heradjy's, or alternatively Fatna's, names and addresses. In the middle rises an elliptical mirror; where the arms and mirror resemble an ankh\*; which expresses how I see this story as a true epic of gracious struggling!

The representation and symbolism implied here are actually intended; like you can definitely see the shape of a human body in the cabinet. I have worked on this piece with the aim that I can encourage people to discover other means of inspiration; such as poems and stories, of which the hero can be the topic of the design. You can always mix literature, history, architecture, and furniture inside one unified form that has its own artistic identity and that which can add an experience of contemplation to our lives.





## Royal Bedroom

*T*

This bedroom tells the story of Isis and Osiris who ruled Egypt together. Their story is expressed through the ancient symbols Djed and Tyet\*; where Djed acts as a representation of Osiris' backbone; or the backbone of Egypt and a sign of immortality and rebirth. Tyet, on the other hand, acts as the Knot of Isis and is a symbol of protection; or of life due to the

similarity it has with the ankh. The two amulets unify the elements of the bedroom, where the wooden texture is kept smooth and attractive, but there's a trinity of color between brown, ebony black, and gold. The carpet was even designed specifically to harmonize with the design so that in the end, it's a complete scene that is overwhelmed by richness and glory.



## Mehrez Tree Dining Set

*T*

The design of this dining set is all about the Mehrez Tree icon which is used at the front and at the back of the chairs and all around the tabletop thickness. Mehrez Trees also decorate the upper frames of the side monoliths in the china cabinet. The tree was even sand blasted on the glass panels of the monoliths; creating

harmony and interest. On the other hand, the plain surfaces were decorated by abstract palm tree leaves. The chairs in this set have unconditional legs; depicting ancient Egyptian ladies' wigs, while being topped by ebony-colored resemblances of temple ledges.



## Royal Coffin



Out of all the recent discoveries of ancient Egyptian tombs; perhaps the most important items discovered are the wooden coffins with their various shapes and sizes; especially those found in King Tut Ankh Amun's tomb. The royal coffin here is inspired from those discovered coffins; where it suspends on dual legs at both ends, while having supports of ebony beneath its longitudinal faces. Both faces are ornamented with golden Djed and Tyet Pillars which were commonly seen together in many ancient Egyptian findings. The coffin has two upper knobs of ebony to enable opening upwards, added to the side knobs which complete the picture and enable carrying.



## Akhenaton's Dining Set

*T*

The monotheism-based religion Akhenaton had called for revolved around that the one god was that of the sun; Aton, which was represented in the ancient Egyptian culture as a golden sun that had many hands. This icon became the topic of the dining set featured here; which is composed of a dining table and eight chairs, as well as vertical and horizontal china cabinets. The Aton concept dominates the design and unifies it, as which is done by the harmony in texture and color. You can see the sun and eight arms centered in the tabletop and



at the base of the vertical cabinet, as well as at the back of the chairs.

The table has four legs, connected through geometrical posts imitating some of the ancient Egyptian furniture, especially those found in the tombs of the historic site, Valley of The Kings\*. The vertical cabinet has a set of drawers and a couple of doors at its lower part, while at its upper part there are two side monoliths topped with eight alabaster lighting items; one for each person. These items add an emotional effect to the cabinet as they seem to be candle holders.

As for the horizontal cabinet, it has two side doors that are decorated in palm tree leaves to depict the decorations in ancient Egyptian columns. The middle plain drawers are topped by a huge drawer that is made of strips and designed for hosting the tableware.

The chair is one of my personal favorites. I have meant to differentiate between its front and its back. At the back, it has the Aton icon to denote for the "afterlife", while at the front, it has a golden square that holds a lotus receptacle which blossoms into those veneer lotus leaves above; herein denoting "life". The back of the chair curves inwards, backwards, then inwards again to embrace those seated and grant them comfort. The posterior legs stretch backwards, while the anterior ones inwards; giving structural balance for the chair, considering the level of curvature in the back. Ebony supports of ancient Egyptian style are installed to connect the posterior and anterior legs; giving further stability, as well as visually connecting the legs with the back and seating.





## Tut's Golden Boat

*TH*

This is a memorial where a golden boat is wrapped in golden papyrus over a structure of a temple that has eyes and legs on each side to symbolize human figures. As for the name, I've always felt that just mentioning the name of King Tut adds richness to the design!



## Akhenaton Fireplace

*A*

In Egyptian history, Akhenaton was a pharaoh of the 18th dynasty. He was married to the famous queen Nefertiti\*; known for her utmost beauty. Akhenaton ruled Egypt for 17 whole years through which he introduced a new religion that was based on monotheism for a new god of the sun under the name Aton\*. Akhenaton chose a new capital for Egypt to go far from the priests who did not support his new religion. He named it Akhetaton (Aton Horizon), now known as Tell El-Amarna. It is where he built his temple, known as The Great Temple of Aton, which was mainly composed of walled courts that lead to an open-air sanctuary; and which I represented here through this fireplace.





## Cleopatra Clock

*C*

This classic structure blends different eras; it's an Egyptian obelisk, a Gothic church tower, and a minaret of a mosque! When you explore it, you'll find a steep pyramid with a golden tip to depict the golden obelisk pyramidions which shined under the rays of the sun. You'll also find the church bell, and Cleopatra's crown, acting as a base for the clock and as a top for the lengthened base of the structure. The ebony black color dominates here; where only the bell and pyramidion shine in gold.





## Lifetime Tree Clock

The Lifetime Tree Clock explains the strong relationship between man and life, as well as time; being an intermediate connection between the two. The clock has two main parts; that squared marquetry-decorated base, and the clock body, which in turn has internal and external parts. Internally, there's a three-dimensional Djed pillar in an upright position symbolizing livelihood and the means to conquer the stillness of death and decay. This uprightness inspires continuity and the symbolism of the Djed amulet denotes stability, even seen by ancient Egyptians as if it were the pillar stabilizing the universe or uplifting the skies! Since Djed was also considered a symbol of immortality and rebirth, this solidifies the concept of continuity in time which is expressed here through the clock.

In this design, Djed has an alternatively elliptical cross section; giving a manipulative approach to the originally flat amulet. It is topped with a cylindrical form around which are arranged many golden tree leaves that amount to the

number of days in a year. These leaves link the concepts of time and life; as if the tree shows the lifetime of its human entity.

The external part of the body is like a four-sided shield that implies the four seasons (summer, winter, fall, and spring). Each of the four sides has a framed clock with ancient Egyptian star symbols arranged around a Henna Tree; to which the clock hands are attached. Below that, Djed pillars look upon us again through vertical windows that depict Egyptian architectural openings. There are 12 Djed pillars looking upon us, in total, denoting the 12 months of the year.



## The Desk of Mehrez Tree

*S*

I designed this tree in abstraction and made it an icon that I used in different designs to ornament certain portions of furniture. I called it The Mehrez Tree. The desk here has the shape of an ancient Egyptian temple with its bold vertical and horizontal lines that demonstrate the graciousness of architectural engineering in ancient Egypt. The desk edge is ornamented in marquetry through longitudinal lines that emphasize the architectural structure; as if it were a temple ledge. The temple frieze\* below, if I may say, is divided into ebony-colored squares that hold gold-plated Mehrez Trees made of copper. The desktop stands on several columns that are sculpturally ornamented with palm tree leaves; creating a sense of spaciousness among them.





## Valley of The Kings Collection

*T*

The Valley of The Kings, on the western bank of the river Nile, is home to the tombs of the greatest pharos and masterminds of the ancient Egyptian modern empire. Naturally, this is where the tomb of Tut Ankh Amun was discovered; and this is where much of the ancient Egyptian heritage and treasures were found. I was inspired by the content of these tombs in many of my works; such as those featured here, which I have named after this special place. The collection is marked by these intersecting vertical, horizontal, and inclined posts; which the ancient Egyptian craftsman used in many furniture pieces. They have a true aesthetic value created through their simplicity which reflects purity of form and abstraction to the greatest extent. They give elegance here to the lighting items through their towering design and gold painted copper nature, and they give boldness to the chess set and bar; where they're made of wood that's painted in ebony-black or grey.

100



101

Valley of The Kings  
Chess Table & Stools





## Light Obelisk Floor Lamp



Obelisks go back in ancient Egyptian history; even before the era of the Egyptian dynasties. Originally, an obelisk was a lengthened structure made of stone, which met sun rays at its peak where there was a pyramidion that was usually made of gold. I tried to express the verticality and loftiness of the obelisk form which projected through the skies using a lighting item that shares the symbolic function of the obelisk in spreading sun rays. This was achieved through a solid function of having an actual source of light at the top. The light source is installed in a gracious Egyptian alabaster plate that allows the light rays to shine above over the ceiling.

The body of the structure, on the other hand, is formed of four horizontal portions, decorated by golden Egyptian stars against ebony colored squared backgrounds. These ebony-colored squares connect the portions of the structure through vertical and horizontal engraved lines which divide the form, while still maintaining its traditional architectural structure.



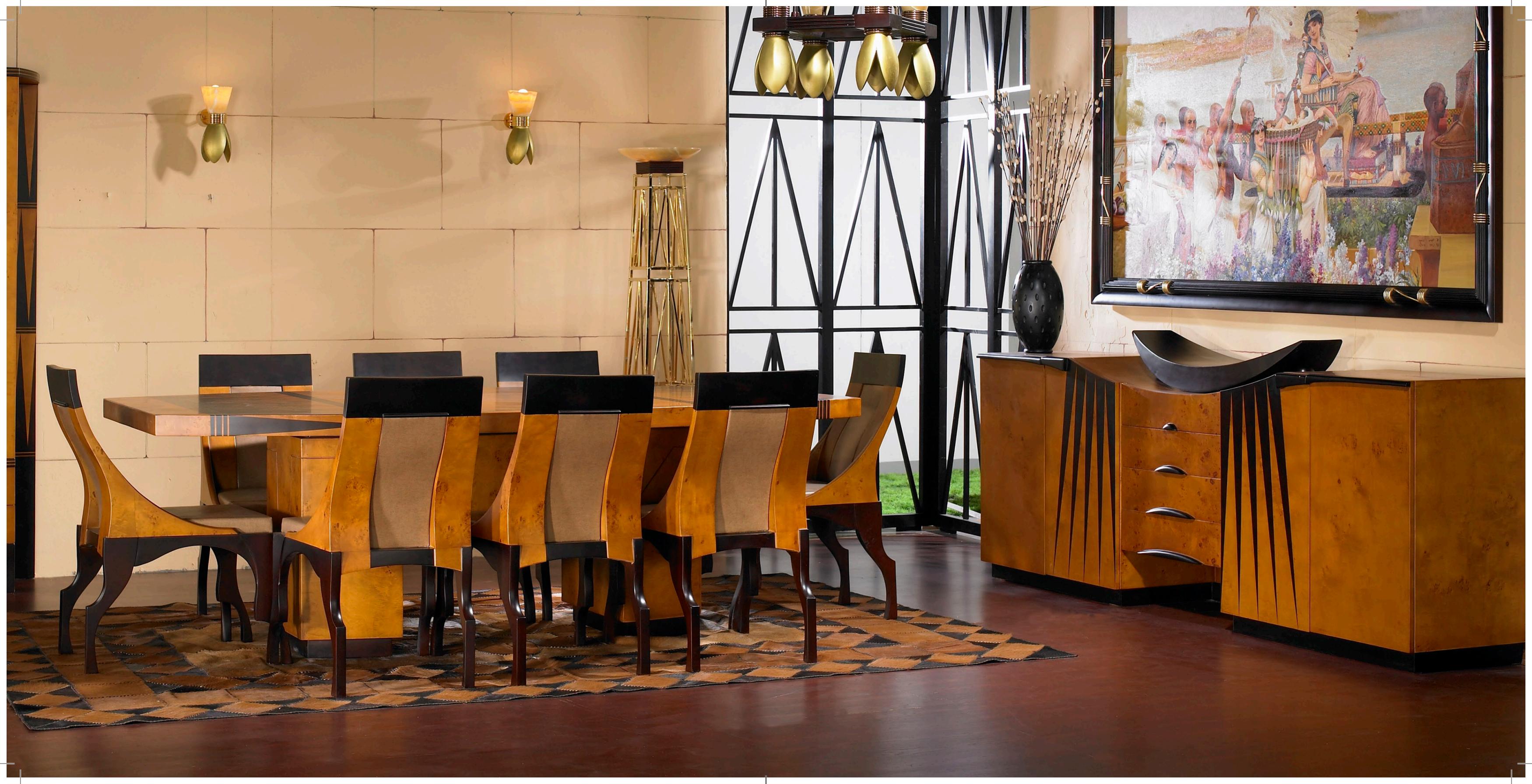
## Papyrus Boat Dining Set



The overall design here is inspired from that of the ancient Egyptian papyrus boat; one of my favorite forms. The boat is abstracted when topping the horizontal cabinet, and then reversed to create drawer handles. The decoration represents palm tree leaves, at the tabletop and in both cabinets; while the table's dual legs remain plain, only framed below with ebony-colored feet.

The Papyrus Boat Chair remains the focus of the set, actually. Inspired from an animal's body, you can clearly see the structure of an animal's legs and hooves. The curvature of the back comes naturally from the seating; giving continuity for the chair's lower part as if the chair was a real animal with a full body. The back of the chair also implies the curvature at the front of the ancient papyrus boats; hence

relating to the boat above the cabinet and the overall theme. The harmony - and contrast - between the colors gives further interest to the viewer of the set; where the chair seating and the central part of its back are light-colored, then the gold color introduces itself through the chair back and sides in wooden veneers.





## Precious Stones Screen

*I* broke free from my trinity of color here, and was alternatively inspired by ancient Egyptian jewelry; which couldn't be expressed in just three colors. I was inspired by the beautifulness of the jewelry which ancient Egyptian ladies used to wear and how they were always rich in gold and precious stones. This was expressed through acrylic paint that depicted the ancient Egyptian jewelry designs in different means. Each door of this screen is like a lady looking at a direction of her own from behind her burqa\*, the feet below are like her own feet, and on her chest there's beautiful jewelry. The Egyptian eyes are both her eyes and also icons of ancient Egyptian jewelry designs.





## Solomon's Hoopoe Console



*P*rophet Solomon\* – may peace be upon him – was blessed by understanding the language of birds, animals, and insects. As the holy Qur'an tells us, one day, Solomon's hoopoe was absent, and when it returned; it explained to the prophet what it had seen of a kingdom of a queen that worshipped the sun. Prophet Solomon wrote a note to the queen that said "It is from Solomon, and it begins in the name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful" . The

note was the start of a long story which ended with the queen's visit to Solomon's empire where she was amazed by the miracles she saw and joined the religion of Islam. The hoopoe is also linked to me, personally; it's with whom I used to play in my days of childhood. After growing up to the new city life, I missed its presence and wanted to express the hoopoe through this console.

A hoopoe's body is quite inspiring, with its smart form, intelligence, and ability to transform its looks by folding its crown once and then diverging it again into a beautiful fan shape. I need not speak about its slender beak and beautiful color trinity; which I expressed here in ebony black, brown veneer, and white paint.

The console in its outlines has the style of a classic furniture piece; looking at its curved base and feet, as well as that upper circular mirror. But in essence, the base of the console depicts the hoopoe's wings and central tail, while the mirror depicts its crown when it's diverged. The beaks, on the other hand, are represented in the appliques on the wall. Despite this representation, the console is still functional through an upper drawer and lower doors. It's the hoopoe's body disassembled and reassembled in a furniture piece that glorifies the role prophet Solomon's hoopoe had played, and commemorates my own memory of the hoopoe bird.

Living Set





Nine Pearls Cocktail Table



Zodiac Table & Chair





## Glossary

This list gives further information to some expressions, items, and personas noted with an asterisk "\*" through the book body. Although these terms are briefly clarified through the book text so as not to pause the flow of reading, this glossary offers further understanding and the references – listed afterwards – provide even further readings...

### *A*

**Akhenaton** – Also spelled "Akhenaten", an ancient Egyptian pharaoh who ruled Egypt for 17 years. He was formerly known as Amenhotep IV until his monotheistic call for the one God "Aten", or "Aton" where he gained this new title meaning "effective of Aton". Aton represented the sun disk and was formerly just an aspect of the ancient God of the sun; Ra.

**Alabaster** – A fine material with uniform grains but also slight brown veining. It is soft, easily carved, and relatively transparent thus usually utilized with light. It is believed that it also refers to the ancient Egyptian word a-labaste which was given to the vessels carrying the lioness figures of Bast, the ancient Egyptian goddess of warfare.

**Ankh** – An ancient Egyptian symbol that can be seen as a cross with a handle as per its interpretation of its Latin name *crux ansata*. In ancient Egypt, the ankh was a prevailing amulet that represented life, or new life as emerging from its implied male and female bond or in reference to the belt of the goddess Isis; where it gains similarity with the other amulet Tyet. The ankh was also seen as the key to hidden knowledge, or where the cross was seen as a symbol of death, the ankh was the key to the mystery of life and death.

**Anubis** – An ancient Egyptian God associated with the process of mummification and afterlife. Represented in black, it had a human body and the head of a canidae (African wolf). It was believed that Anubis was the protector of graves and the ancient god of death.

**Asyut** – Also known as Lycopolis, i.e "wolf city"; where mummies of wolves had truly been found in the city's

excavations. It is said that an invading army was repelled out of Egypt by wolves, and the ancient god Osiris was worshiped here in a wolf symbol; the form in which he rose – according to the legends – to aid his wife Isis and son Horus in their combat against Seth; a monstrous snaky giant. Asyut city still exists and is the capital of the modern Asyut Governorate in Egypt where the highest Egyptian city percentage of Coptic Christian population exists, and where the Coptic dialect – known as “Lycopolitan” – originated.

Aton – Also spelled Aten, the god whose worship Akhenaton had called for through his monotheistic religion, the ancient god of the sun; represented in a combination of the sun with arms and hands, a lower ankh and an upper cobra.

*B*

Burqa’ – A garment worn to cover a woman’s face, common in Eastern and Arab cultures and in the Islamic religion.

*C*

Collage – A form of art where various materials can be arranged to form an artistic surface.

Cleopatra – With Greek origin, Cleopatra was a member of the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt after Alexander the Great. She was marked as an icon for women leadership and independence. With a life of love and war, her stories with Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony; rulers of the Roman Empire, have inspired much literature and art.

*D*

Delta – A triangular form of land resulting from the accumulation of silt and sediments at the mouths of rivers. It is similar to the Greek Delta alphabet, hence the name. The Nile Delta is the mouth of the world’s longest river, The River Nile, as it pours into The Mediterranean Sea. Along with the river bank, the Nile Delta is the most habitable and fertile land in Egypt stretching over an area of 22 thousand square kilometers.

Djed – An ancient Egyptian amulet representing the backbone of Osiris, the ancient god of resurrection. Myth has it that Osiris was killed and his coffin was thrown in the Nile towards the sea and settled in Babylon around which grew a sacred tree where the coffin resided in the trunk. When the wife goddess Isis found the tree and extracted the coffin, she treated the trunk to be a stable pillar; known as Djed.

*E*

Ephemeris – A study that shows the vertical and horizontal positions of spatial objects – such as stars, planets, or even satellites – on certain dates. In ancient Egypt, the rising of the star Sothis was concurrent with the

“flood” season happening at the ancient Egyptian capital; “Memphis”. The “flood” season was equivalent to June the 25th; a date inaccurate now after the construction of the High Dam at Aswan city, Upper Egypt in 1970.

*F*

Faiyum – A city only 100 kilometers south of Cairo; famous for its fertile land and water formations. Originally a desert basin, Faiyum was transformed into a fertile garden when the river Nile diverted towards its region along with a flow of rich soil; which sprouted vegetation and hence wild life; to be even known to the Greeks as “Crocodylopolis”. Faiyum was a hunting spot for Egyptian noblemen and is home to Lake Qarun, the water reservoir resulting from the canal works constructed during the Middle Kingdom. Faiyum is famous for the Faiyum Portraits; a collection of death masks painted in pigmented wax on wood showing elite members of the Egyptian community during the Roman era.

Fir’aun – Arabic for Pharaoh, a title given to the rulers in ancient Egypt who had also claimed to be gods.

Frieze – An architectural element in ancient Egyptian temples, likewise in Roman and Greek ones. It is part of that horizontal structure that topped temple columns; lying right above the capitals. The frieze was centered between the architrave, or main beam, and the upper cornice. It was sometimes designed plain and at other times decorated with relief carving.

*H*

Henna Tree – Also known as the Egyptian Privet and scientifically as *Lawsonia Inermis*, the substance created from which is used for hair dyes and body art. This tree was most commonly cultivated in several Arab countries among other African and some Asian ones, including the Egyptian Nubian lands to which Mehrez belongs. The reference of the Henna Tree in this book is of a certain tree motif Mehrez created to which he had given such a name.

Hieroglyphic Letter – A letter of the ancient Egyptian alphabet known as hieroglyphs. Developed 4000 BC, the letters were of picture forms mainly used by Egyptian priests and called “the words of God”; where a more abbreviated version was more commonly used. Hieroglyphic letters are written vertically or horizontally and can be read from top to down or left to right/right to left based on where the animal figures are looking in the script.

High Dam – A massive structure across the River Nile in Aswan, Upper Egypt; constructed by the late Egyptian president, Gamal Abd El-Nasser in 1970 in cooperation with the Soviet Union. The dam protects Egypt from seasonal extreme flood and drought but has resulted into restrictions on the spread of fertile sediments in the soil. Added to holding a hydro electric plant, the High Dam has also lead to the formation of Lake Nasser; the world’s largest man-made lake which extends between Egypt and Sudan.

*I*

Isis – An ancient Egyptian goddess, believed to be a daughter of the Earth and Sky. She was wife of Osiris and mother of Horus – the ancient god of the sky, war, and hunting. Isis was known of her motherly virtues and magical powers that were believed to have helped the deceased into the afterlife.

*K*

Khufu – Also known as Cheops, an ancient Egyptian pharaoh who ruled Egypt during the Fourth Dynasty after his father Snefru\*. Khufu is acknowledged for commissioning The Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the seven wonders of the world, and was son of Queen Hetepheres who's well known for the preciousness of findings in her grave.

*L*

Lotus – The Egyptian name for the “water lily”, a flower that grows in ponds; closing and sinking in the water at night then rising to bloom gradually as the sun rises. There was a linkage of the lotus flower with the concept of rebirth in ancient Egypt; a symbolic reference that lead to its existence in many findings. The combination of lotus and papyrus flowers represented the bondage between Upper and Lower Egypt, respectively.

*M*

Marquetry – The art of inlaying thin slices of wood – or other materials – to decorate furniture. The ancient Egyptians initiated the art of wooden marquetry by using wooden veneers (thin slices of wood) in contrasting tones to form geometric patterns, which sometimes involved semi precious materials and were mainly used in decorating chairs.

Mashrabiya – A balcony or window made of an openable wooden latticework that provides shade and thus natural cooling for buildings. The origin of the mashrabiya dates back to the Abbasid era in Egypt, Iraq, and the Levant. It became further popular in the Ottoman era and is an essential element in Islamic architecture due to its resolution of privacy concerns; where a mashrabiya allows residents to view the street without being seen by passers by or those behind other mashrabiya's.

Moses – A prophet iconic to Islam, Judaism, and Christianity; known for receiving the holy Torah from Allah. The story of his mother Jochebed who followed God's orders and laid her infant in what is known as “the ark of bulrushes” (a vessel of wetland grass) to protect him, is most linked to his name and so are the “Ten Commandments” God sent to him at Mount Sinai; in Egypt.

*N*

Nefertiti – A queen most known for her beauty and power. Nefertiti ruled Egypt along with her husband Akhenaton during mid 1300 B.C; where together, they had called for the cult of Aton as the god of the sun. Their daughter Ankhesenamun was wife to the famous young pharaoh Tut Ankh Amun who was also Akhenaton's son.

Northern Monastery – Which translates its Arabic name “El-Deir El-Bahari”; is a complex of temples and tombs on the west bank of the river Nile; and home to the largest and most preserved Egyptian temple of Hatshepsut. Between The Northern Monastery and The Valley of The Kings; lies “El-Qurn”; a mountain with a pyramid form that was sacred in ancient Egypt.

*O*

Osiris – The ancient god of transition, resurrection and regeneration, depicted in a green skinned, partially mummy-wrapped, figure. He was believed to rise from the dead and grant eternal life to the kings of Egypt and also sprout vegetation and fertile flooding of the Nile.

*P*

Paganism – Belief in ancient religions that are not Abrahamic; not Judaist, Christian, nor Islamic; where many gods were worshipped, including elements of nature. There are several acts of reviving or reconstructing ancient religions, those related to Egyptian paganism (kemetism) are known as kemeti traditions, in reference to “Kemet” meaning “black land”, one of the ancient names of Egypt.

Papyrus – Scientifically known as the Cyperus Papyrus plant, or Nile Grass, an aquatic flowering plant that forms reeds in shallow waters. It was quite abundant along the Nile Bank and Delta and was used by ancient Egyptians in the construction of mats, sandals, baskets, and reed boats which were waterproofed by some form of tar; estimated to be Nile mud. Another necessary utility of the plant was the writing sheets; which were also referred to as “Papyrus”.

Pyramidion – The uppermost part of a pyramid or obelisk which provided the pointed peek. Pyramidions were usually made of granite or limestone and covered in gold, some left plain and others with inscriptions. A pyramidion is also referred to as “benbenet” in reference to the sacred Benben stone to which – according to Egyptian legends – the sun God Ra' rose out to step on after coming from the sea. Since the legends say the rays of the sun fell down on Ra' showing him the way to ascend to heaven; obelisks and pyramids share a likewise benbenet or pyramidion form pointing towards the sun and reflecting its rays.

*Q*

Qena – A city located South of Cairo, North of Luxor; and is a major touristic spot on the route between Luxor

and the Red Sea. Qena was known in the Greco Roman culture as Kaine, and also as Caineopolis. It is where much ancient religious and philosophical Coptic writings were discovered and it is home to the 40,000 m2 Dandara Temple Complex, while being also rich in Islamic heritage and known for the art of pottery.

*R*

**Ra** – The ancient god of the sun, who merged with other gods forming different deities. Not just a god of the sun, but also the sky, the earth, and the underworld; Ra was believed to ride a night boat through the underworld – where he merged with Osiris – then gained rebirth to ride a day boat through the sky while being accompanied by other deities through his journey. The disk of the sun – Aton – was seen as Ra's eye or body; except during Akhenaton's time when he gave this disk Ra's role and made Aton the god of the sun. After Akhenaton's rule was over, Ra's cult was restored again.

**Rebab** – Or Rababa, as per its Arabic pronunciation, is a musical instrument formed of a long neck and a small rounded body. The front of this body is a stretched membrane of sheep or cow skin; where the player uses a bow to play music over the rebab string(s). The rebab is basic in the musical folklore of Upper Egypt and is considered the ancestor of the violin.

*S*

**Snefru** – A supreme ruler who had ruled Egypt for almost 27 years. He was the first ruler in the fourth dynasty of the Old Kingdom in ancient Egypt and is famous for his three pyramids that still exist until this day. These are the stepped Meidum Pyramid; located at the archaeological site of Meidum; Lower Egypt, the Bent Pyramid which was considered a transitional stage between the earlier stepped pyramids and the later smooth-sided ones, and the 4 km away Red Pyramid; where both are located at Dahshur; South of Cairo.

**Solar Boat** – A boat that was supposedly rode by the sun; or the ancient god of the sun Ra, which he used through his daily journey in the sky where it was known as the Mandjet, or alternatively in the underworld where it was known as the Mesektet. Throughout the different dynasties, solar boats were constructed to carry the pharaohs with Ra for resurrection. Perhaps the most famous ones are those of King Khufu which are exhibited at The Solar Boat Museum in Giza.

**Solomon** – A prophet gifted by many powers. Born in Jerusalem, he was son to prophet Dawud whom he had shared his wisdom. Added to his ability to hear, understand, and talk to birds, animals, and insects; prophet Solomon was served by the jinn and the power of wind, where he could perform journeys in the blink of an eye! Prophet Solomon remained a king for 30 years, and his kingdom was known for its utmost wealth.

*T*

**Tell El Amarna** – A historical site, in Upper Egypt, South of Cairo; where we find the ruins of Akhetaton, the city which Akhenaton had built for the worship of Aton and which was capital of Akhenaton's new kingdom. At Akhetaton, a long royal road was aligned with the main buildings including the Great Temple of Aton, near which lied the palace and residences of the royal family.

**Tut Ankh Amun** – An Egyptian pharaoh who ruled Egypt since he was nine years old until his early death at the age of 19. It is believed that King Tut was the son of his preceding King Akhenaton. King Tut's tomb was discovered in 1922; and is one of the most important discoveries of ancient Egypt due to the good condition of King Tut's mummy, his belongings, and the many accompanying treasures.

**Tyet** – An amulet used in decorating walls in ancient Egyptian temples; originally dating to the predynastic period, getting popular by the third dynasty (Old Kingdom) and mostly associated with Isis in the New Kingdom. Tyet, also Tjet, was known as "the knot of Isis" and could have represented the knot that tied Isis' garment. It was also referred to as "the blood of Isis", as in a sanitary cloth; or even as her reproductive organ to emphasize Isis' role as a mother. The Tyet amulet was commonly used with the Djed amulet; in representation of Isis' husband, Osiris.

*V*

**Valley of The Kings** – A valley on the west bank of the river Nile, beneath the sacred mountain of "El-Qurn". The valley is home to many tombs of Egyptian pharaohs and nobles of the 18th, 19th and 20th dynasties. Composed of two valleys, the Eastern one has most of the royal tombs, while royal as well as non-royal ones reside in the Western one. The Valley of The Kings is known to ancient Egyptians as Ta Sekhet Mat or "The Great Field".

**Veneer** – Very thin slices of wood cut from tree trunks to be glued to an underlying material and act as a wooden surface for doors, boards, and floors. Veneers glued to each other also form the commonly used plywood. Veneers originated in ancient Egypt and were quite commonly used in furniture items and tomb caskets. While veneer works were discovered in Tut Ankh Amun's tomb, history tells us also that Cleopatra had gifted Caesar with a veneered table.

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## About The Author



*D*

Dr. Khaled Mehrez was born in Qena\*, Upper Egypt; a city of the South with ancient heritage and a life structured along the Nile. He grew up with a love for Egyptian traditions, which were built inside his character. His love for fine art and sculpture encouraged him to join the Faculty of Applied Arts in Cairo University in 1982. He carved his way through success; won the State Encouragement award of Furniture Design in 2004, and acquired the position of a Professor of Interior and Furniture Design in 2010. Through over twenty years in which he enjoyed the academic sharing of knowledge, he provided insight to many students through his tutoring and his designs, even after resigning from his academic life in 2011 and until today.

The pieces featured in this book represent Mehrez' first furniture collection ever, which was created between 2003 and 2006. He has considered this collection as the means of expressing his own thoughts and beliefs. The clear Egyptian identity in the designs gained

the admiration of many and became an icon for recognizing his designs in the furniture market in Egypt. The flavor of tradition remained in his designs, but the collections that followed expressed more modernity and practicality in reflection of his many travels and in compliance with nowadays' demands. Still, his approach to design has always been based on studies and research; as well as experimentation and observation. Through a philosophical approach to design, much of his Southern character gets revealed.

Despite his choice to specialize in Furniture Design, Mehrez' belief in the unbounded creativity of art enabled him to tackle different artistic fields through his work. He created various award-winning graphic designs for different festivals and cultural organizations. In urban design, he expressed his love for his Southern town with a five-year project of enhancing Asyut\* City, Upper Egypt. The project included the redesign of city squares, the river bank, public gardens, landmarks, fountains, and city murals.

His interior and furniture design portfolio includes over 150 projects. The touch of heritage in his designs was favored by many embassies and hotels, enabling him to design presidential and royal suits as well as embassies and ambassador residences, inside and outside of Egypt. Through his different

projects, the other artistic aspects occasionally showed, where he included his own paintings or sculptures to complete design themes. This direction is one he still applies until today by offering a miscellaneous collection of artistic home items to compliment his design sets which he offers through the trademark, Mehrez+Krema. The name Krema, refers to Dr. Hanan Krema, Mehrez' student, and later, his wife. Dr. Krema's initial work featured folkloric designs and later Islamic ones and was marked by calligraphy and warm tones. Dr. Krema's work was later merged with Dr. Mehrez', under the name "The House of Design & Furniture Industry" which was formed to represent both of their designs. The "Mehrez+Krema Factory" handles the manufacturing processes, while "Mehrez+Krema Furniture Trade Company" displays and sells their designs through several furniture exhibitions and "Mehrez+Krema" showrooms.

Throughout his design life, Dr. Khaled Mehrez has been an inspiration for many, whether through his exhibited designs, his research papers, or his decoration radio show "Alwan" or "Colors" back in 2007-2008. Several articles and interviews have also been published to document and explain Mehrez' design approaches, just like this book in which he speaks; and so do his pieces.

## About The Editor

Iman El-Ashry is a Fine Arts/Architectural graduate with a long passion for writing expressed through poetry and press since the year 2000, and through marketing documents since 2008. Working with Dr. Khaled Mehrez since 2012; she has gained a lot of experience in understanding his concepts and revealing his thoughts in words.

*F*

For the first time, Mehrez reveals the secrets behind his mystery pieces; this collection that has marked his work ever since he approached the field of furniture design in 2003. The book solves the codes of those mysterious designs by telling the story behind each, and the philosophy behind his design approach, as well as the interpretations, impressions, techniques, and functionality of every item. He explains the aesthetic values in each design while involving us in history, poetry, and tales that are interpreted in design elements and which are linked somehow with their artist as he personally explains...

