



CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN MIDDLE EASTERN CRAFTS

Carwan Gallery presents "Contemporary Perspectives in Middle Eastern Crafts", a groundbreaking project exploring new avenues in design. A selection of international designers and their recent work, conceptualized with traditional craft techniques of the Middle East, will be featured. The designers are Karen Chekerdjian (Lebanon), Khalid Shafar (UAE), Lindsey Adelman (USA), Marc Baroud (Lebanon), mischer'traxler (Austria), Nada Debs (Lebanon), Oeuffice (Canada), Paul Loebach (USA), Philippe Malouin (Canada) and Tamer Nakisci (Turkey).

With a concept that seeks to expand the vocabulary of traditional crafts, Carwan has commissioned designers from the Middle East and beyond to create a series of new, limited-edition objects in partnership with local artisans in the Middle East. Each designer's project encapsulates the re-imagining of a distinct, time-honored craft, where the specialized technique of each artisan has formed the basis for the creation of a new object by the designer. This unique collaboration between artisan and designer highlights the richness of Middle Eastern craftsmanship as well as its capabilities for contemporary design.

Founded by the architects Pascale Wakim and Nicolas Bellavance-Lecompte in 2010, Carwan began as the first pop-up gallery in the Middle East.

Established in Beirut, the gallery exhibits limited-edition pieces in art and design events throughout the world, with a focus on internationalizing design in the Middle East.

In exhibitions as well as in its primary Beirut space, Carwan features the work of international cutting-edge designers of unique contemporary objects such as limited-edition furniture, lighting, and objects d'art.

Carwan Gallery also provides creative and design centered consultancy and assistance to collectors, architects, interior designers and decorators, offering the possibility to receive a site specific tailored service, assisted by the most accurate selection of craftsmen from the whole Middle East in terms of production, adaptation and integration and techniques, in order to find an exclusive and unique contemporary solution with unique, handmade "caractère".

presented designers and objects

Karen Chekerdjian

Karen Chekerdjian was born in Beirut; she lives and works in Milan where she received her master's degree from Domus Academy. Her works have been selected for numerous international exhibitions including Utopi/Copenhagen, Beyond the Myth/Europe, Promosedia 2007/Milan, Northern Lights/Tokyo, and ECHO/Beirut. She has been featured at the Sfeir-Semmler Gallery in Beirut as well as the Nilufar Gallery in Milan. In 2007, she opened a retail space for design in Beirut and founded Karen Chekerdjian Studio and Consultancy. She is currently producing her own furniture and design products in Lebanon, incorporating the expertise of local artisans.

Object: Living Space III, Multi-purpose Furniture/Installation

limited edition of 8 + 2 P

Material: Rattan, Acajou wood

Dimensions: 268 cm x 50 cm x 69 cm (h)

Carwan commission, produced in Lebanon 2012

Description: Sculptural and functional, this piece combines a lounger, coffee table, stool, and magazine rack into a single unit that becomes more than furniture. It is a living space, verging on architecture. This collection began many years ago with Living Space I and II. Living Space III harkens back to the radical designs of earlier eras, yet its shape and conception are very clearly of today. Sanded in places, notably at the head and feet, the chair conveys an impression of use, as well as one of ease, familiarity, and comfort, even while being rigidly constructed. The wooden structure is made airy by its rattan panels- a style once commonly used to make sidewalk café chairs in Lebanon. Its embroidered cushion references the lhaf, the quilted blanket used in wintertime in Lebanese mountain houses.



presented designers and objects

Khalid Shafar

Khalid Shafar left the world of marketing to pursue design at the prestigious Central Saint Martins College of Art in London, followed by the Centre for Fine Woodworking in Nelson, New Zealand. His bespoke works have since been featured in many international design publications including Wallpaper, GQ Japan, Urbis, M2, Harper's Bazaar Interiors, Brownbook, and Abitare. He has recently exhibited in several solo and group shows in Berlin, Japan, and Dubai. He creates contemporary and quirky interior design objects with stories to tell, objects that rely on form, movement, and emotion. He is currently based in both New Zealand and Dubai.

Object: ARABI Chandelier

first prototype of a limited edition of 8 + 2 P

Material: Wool Egaals, silk rope, brass wire, metal structure

Dimensions: 60cm (central diameter) x 150cm h

Carwan commission, produced in the United Arab Emirates 2012

Description: ARABI Chandelier is an object that uses craft items to bind its structure together, suspending the central light fixture and extending its form to create the shape of a classical chandelier. Circular handmade wool Egaals, the black headband worn by men in the Arab region to hold the head cover, act as the connectors of the structure, serving as the repeated visual and functional foundation of the object. The result is an emotional object that harks on traditional shapes and traditional items to create something entirely contemporary.



presented designers and objects

Lindsey Adams Adelman

Lindsey Adams Adelman was born in New York City in 1968. Her current work is the apex of a lifelong exploration in making objects. An ongoing interest in combining the handcrafted with the machine-made, the sensual with the practical, and the feminine with the masculine consistently defines her work. She has been featured in the Cooper-Hewitt Design Triennial and Design Miami. Lindsey lives in Brooklyn and works from her showroom in Manhattan.

Object: Refraction Tiles by Blatt Chaya

limited edition of 9 tile designs available for one year

Material: Marble and concrete powder

Dimensions: 40cm x 40 cm

Carwan commission, produced in Lebanon 2012

Description: Lindsey Adelman collaborated with Lebanon's leader in handmade colored cement tiles, Blatt Chaya, in order to create an exclusive surface for Carwan of nine tile designs as a unique composition. The abstract geometric forms call to mind shards of glass or architectural planes in space. Each tile is hand poured and polished with precision according to Blatt Chaya tradition, providing its unique quality and finish. Lindsey Adelman's design brings a new irregular twist to Middle Eastern geometry by introducing shatter-like shapes that influence space perception.



presented designers and objects

Studio mischer'traxler

Studio mischer'traxler was founded in 2009 by Katharina Mischer (1982) and Thomas Traxler (1981) after graduating from the Design Academy Eindhoven and several years of collaboration. Their projects have been exhibited at the Art Institute Chicago, the Design Museum London and the MAK Vienna, and the studio was honored with the Designer of the Future Award at Design Miami/Basel in 2011. Based in Vienna, the studio creates furniture, installations and more, with a process that experiments with context and conceptual thinking. Balancing craft with technology, they envision whole systems, processes, and new production methods that deal with contemporary themes, indicating sustainability and the relevance of nature. Their results make use of unexpected materials and interactions, involving the condition of the weather, an existing environment, or the viewer.

Object: Gradient Mashrabiya Sideboard

limited edition of 10 + 2 P

Material: Hand crafted oak

Dimensions: 146 cm x 37cm x 89cm (h)

Carwan commission, produced in Lebanon 2012

Description: Studio mischer'traxler teamed up with an expert woodworker in Lebanon to redefine the constructive system of the traditional mashrabiya: delicate wooden window screens often found in Middle Eastern architecture. Inspired by the process of lathing the small wooden parts for mashrabiya, mischer'traxler focused on exposing the many steps of production, to make the craftsmen's work visible and understandable to the observer. The result – a sideboard – is composed of a network of more than 650 distinct pieces of manually carved wood. From rectangular slats to refined decorative elements, all stages are visible within the one object, which becomes increasingly more defined, detailed, and fragile, but at the same time progressively more three-dimensional.



presented designers and objects

Marc Baroud

Architecture and product design practitioner, Marc Baroud has been teaching Product Design at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) since 2004. He has been appointed head of the design school in 2012.

He graduated from ALBA with a double major in Interior Architecture and Furniture Design and holds a DSAA in Industrial Design from ENSAAMA-Olivier de Serres (Paris). He worked in Paris in the fields of luxury product design and commercial architecture. In 2004 he established MÛdesign Global, a brand development company based in Beirut.

In 2008 he extended his activities to architecture and co-founded RGMB-ad (Rabih Geha Marc Baroud Architecture Design) and has been developing and building various projects (individual houses, housing projects, offices, retail, and corporate).

Objects: Seat, Ottoman and Table

limited edition of 10 + 2P

Material: Walnut, Leather, and Copper

Leatherwork by Johnny Farah

Dimensions:

Seat: 100 x 85 x 44 cm

Ottoman: 36 x 36 x 52 cm

Table: 70 x 70 x 40 cm

Produced in Lebanon 2012.

Description: Tessera in Latin is the individual tile, usually formed in the shape of a cube used in creating mosaics. It is also number 4 in Greek. Tessera is a handcrafted line of products built with leather-bound walnut units of 4x4x4cm. Tessera questions rigidity, flexibility, assemblage, pattern, and modularity. increasingly more defined, detailed, and fragile, but at the same time progressively more three-dimensional.



presented designers and objects

Nada Debs

Nada Debs, of Lebanese origin, was brought up in Japan, and studied at the Rhode Island School of Design in the United States, soon after starting East & East, her own custom furniture design company in the UK. In addition to two spaces in Beirut- the Nada Debs Gallery and Nada Debs Boutique, her products are represented in New York, London, Rome and Dubai. Her work has been featured in various international publications such as Wallpaper and Monocle, and she is presently working on several interior design projects in the Middle East and the USA.

Object: The Fragmented Clock

limited edition of 10 + 2 P

Material: Hand carved maple wood and mother of pearl inlay

Dimensions: 60w x 60d x 190h cm

Carwan commission, produced in Lebanon 2012

Description: Using her recently established East & East workshop which focuses on modernizing traditional craft, Nada Debs has created the Fragmented Clock: a contemporary take on the grandfather clock, which is reminiscent of the past and captures the significance of heritage. The clock is carved from solid maple wood, an unusual material in the region, and incorporates mother of pearl inlay. The diamonds form an intricate pattern from the top, becoming distorted and more fragmented as they reach the base, until there is no more carving, reflecting a purity of design. The mother of pearl inlay is also scattered, showing the dying craft as time passes, requiring meticulous workmanship for each diamond shape to be carved into its 4 facets. The clock itself is fragmented into 4 pieces as if time were broken into units. The secret doors hold memories collected over time.

The Fragmented Clock requires 4 hand carvers and 6 craftsmen specialized in mother of pearl inlay, 500 hours of work, and 30 kilos of mother of pearl to create the final object.



presented designers and objects

Oeuffice

Oeuffice was founded in 2011 as a collaboration between Nicolas Bellavance-Lecompte and Jakub Zak. After many years of a parallel life between Canada, Berlin and Milan, they united to form Oeuffice, a new research laboratory with a focus on developing innovative objects in limited editions. Their work reflects a common ideal of creating objects inspired by visions of a contemporary utopia. Oeuffice recently exhibited with Carwan Gallery in Milan, Beirut and Berlin, and is currently showing as part of an exclusive selection at Philips De Pury's pop-up shop in London. Oeuffice is currently based in Milan, Italy.

Object: Ziggurat Containers

limited edition of 12 + 2 P

Material: Wood box inlaid with acrylic

Dimensions: 25 cm x 25cm x 55cm (h)

Carwan commission produced in Lebanon 2012

Description: Oeuffice explores the world of Middle Eastern architecture and ornamental structures. Collaborating with a Lebanese craftsman specialized in wood inlay, Oeuffice has created a system of independent boxes that stack together forming a monumental tower fitted for the domestic landscape. The form evokes a simplification of traditional Muquarnas found in Middle Eastern architecture, and the inlaid ornamentation renders a new study of scale and an unexpected shift in direction of traditional pattern standards.



presented designers and objects

Paul Loebach

Paul Loebach was raised amid the industrial landscape of the American Midwest in Cincinnati, Ohio, and studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, graduating in 2002. Descended from a long line of German woodworkers, Paul sees his projects as an idealistic fusion of his family's distant and more recent history. He is now based in New York City where he has established a design studio and currently works as a consultant, specializing in wood furniture and emerging manufacturing technologies.

Object: Wall of Light

limited edition of 8 + 2 P

Material: lathed polish brass and brass structure

Dimensions: 160 cm x 20 cm x 240cm (h)

Carwan commission produced in Lebanon 2012

Paul Loebach's project is based on the idea of a 'vertical chandelier', inspired by a voyage to the Middle East where he found the traditional oil lamp manifested in countless unique shapes and extraordinary configurations. The project is a collaboration with a local Beirut metal atelier that was able to use antique casting molds to recreate the old, metal lamp forms. These were assembled together with structural tubes and light fixtures to create a floating, illuminated installation.



presented designers and objects

Tamer Nakışçı

Tamer Nakışçı explores physical and emotional interactions between human, spaces, and objects; playing with ideas and forms, technologies, emotions and materials in surprising and innovative ways. Graduated from the Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts, he started his career at the Fiat Advanced Design Concept Lab, received the Nokia Design Award in 2005, and was named one of “Europe’s 100 Young Creative Talents” in 2009. His Istanbul-based Studio/Nakisci works on product and interior design projects. His designs have been awarded the prestigious Red Dot and iF Product Design Award, among others, and have been published and exhibited around the globe.

Object: “Shade” Kilim

limited edition of 10 + 2 P

Material: Hand crafted wool & silk

Dimensions: 150x400

Carwan commission, produced in Turkey 2012

Description: Inspired by the sunny Middle East and its unique floors & ceilings, “Shade” stands at the intersection of illusion and reality, light and matter, geometry and transparency. Hand-made in Turkey, the rug is composed of (185 pieces) 400 meters of carefully crafted wool strips that are hand-stitched to each other in 4 layers and axis using silk threads. The intersecting strips reveal unique graphics deconstructed from the Middle Eastern patterns, resembling the light rays inside the shadow. Going beyond the traditional techniques, Tamer Nakisci explores the possibilities into the rug (Kilim) making; tying the future to the past.



Carwan would like to thank the following contributors for their work on this exhibit:

OH!Studio

is the brainchild of the Italian architect Michela Tombari and the Turkish-Greek architect Deniz Galip who began collaborating while working together at the Patricia Urquiola Studio. They create contemporary spaces blending Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and European elements to create a new visual language. For Carwan, they are the official designers of the gallery set-up in fairs around the world.

Richard Kahwagi

Richard Kahwagi is a multi-disciplinary independent graphic designer, born and based in Beirut. His work explores the possibilities of print, advertising, music, and television. With a special penchant for cultural, art, and design projects, he brings to Carwan a special facility with the vernacular of both Arabic and Latin typography.

The students of ALBA

The students of ALBA (The Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts) traveled to numerous workshops to learn about various artisans and their particular skills. Their research and reports on the subject were fundamental in connecting the designers and craftspeople who created the pieces in this exhibit.

Photo credits Ad Achkar

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