

ENGRAVING HERITAGE

FEATURE: OLIVIA JENSON. PHOTOGRAPHY: HAIGAZ KRADENIAN

Naqsh Design House takes traditional embroidery to another level with a new line of furniture and décor.



Designer Nisreen Abu-Dail



The works are a combination of wood, copper and Corian

Recreating traditional patterns with a modern twist, the collection from Naqsh Design House displayed pieces with embroidery motifs and old city maps at Tiraz: Widad Kawar Home for Arab Dress.

Naqsh – which translated from Arabic means engraving – was established in 2009 by the sister trio Nisreen, Nermeen and Shireen Abu-Dail. They coordinate together to produce handcrafted products that represent their heritage.

In their studio located in Amman, Nisreen works with a team of trained staff and her father to construct the designs for each collection. Nermeen, a graphic designer, creates the graphics behind the works and Shireen, a music teacher, works on the administrative aspects including sales and client services as well as event coordination and marketing.

“When we started Naqsh we wanted to work around the Oriental theme and each year we work on a different collection,” says Nisreen, who holds a bachelor’s degree in architecture.

The first year, the design house tackled the theme of poetry and worked with calligraphy and different kinds of artwork. The following year was the beginning of the Arab revolution and the team focussed more on heritage. In the third year, they dedicated Naqsh to the concept of *Thawrat Thurath*, which translates to mean a heritage revolution.

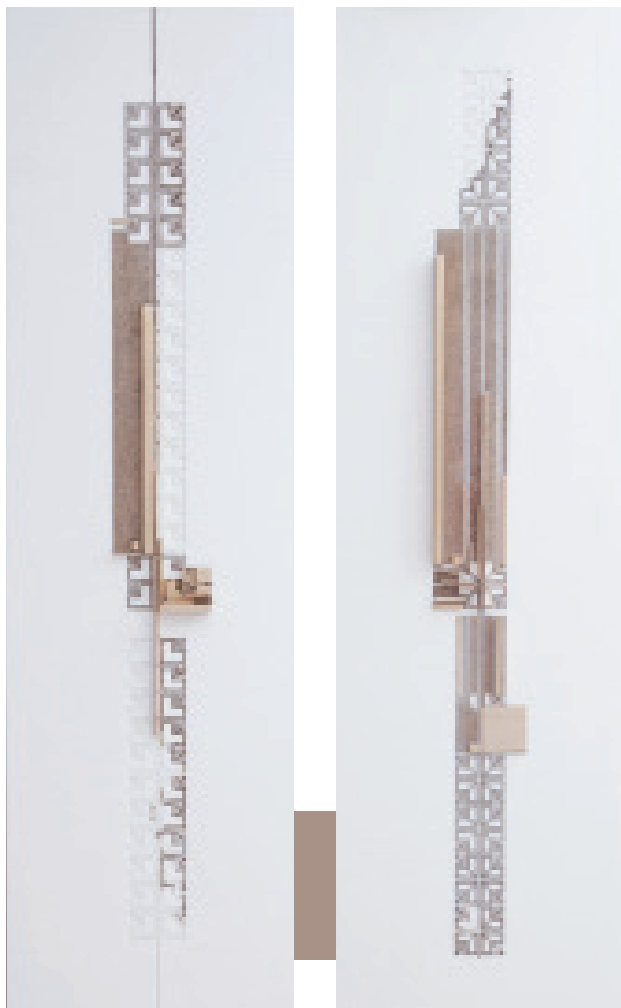
“Because it was the revolution at the time, we decided to start something different as designers and see our culture in a different way, as if the design wants to do a revolution on itself,” explains Nisreen.

For the first collection under *Thawrat Thurath* in 2013, Naqsh used simple sieves with embroidery on top to create a series of modern tables and wall displays.

Their most recent collection features brass, Corian and wood. “We wanted something solid that will last as long as the craft of embroidery itself. Embroidery is a timeless concept and the motifs are something we will use and enjoy again and again,” Nisreen explains. “The idea behind the Corian is that the purity of the white



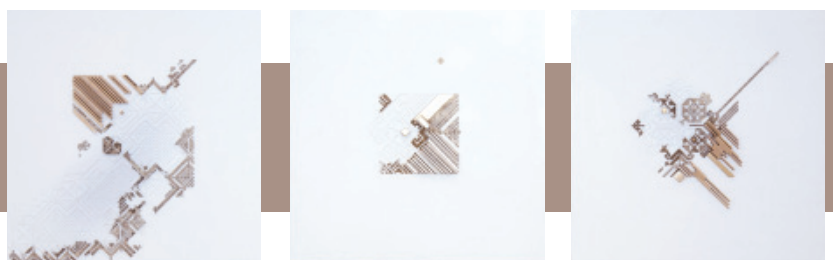
The collection includes a variety of items including vases and tissue dispensers



The designs are based on traditional embroidery patterns



Naqsh transformed simple sieves into embroidered tables



A selection of wall reliefs

“WHEN YOU LOOK AT OUR WORK, YOU NOTICE THE EMBROIDERY VERY CLEARLY BUT YOU ALSO NOTICE THAT IT HAS BEEN TAKEN TO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION”

material used gives the pieces a very modern look. And due to the copper, each piece is very durable. These materials, paired with the wood, gave us exactly what we were looking for.”

All of the items were created in the Naqsh studio. “We do the design on the computer and use machinery to do the engraving. Then, it’s all about hand-finish and hand-inlay when it comes to the copper,” says Nisreen, who is personally responsible for this stage.

The detailing used in the collection focussed on Palestinian dress and its motifs, while an upcoming collection will work with motifs from Jordan, Syria and Iraq, as each country has it’s own special designs.

“Whenever we take a motif we respect it. We play around with it, but we want to keep the original feel and look because each motif has a story to tell. We are not trying to destroy the shape or bring out another shape. When you look at our work, you notice the embroidery very clearly but you also notice that it has been taken to a different dimension.”

Naqsh’s collection exhibited at Tiraz: Widad Kawar Home for Arab Dress, which is an interactive museum for regional history that focusses on items from women’s lives over the last century: dresses, headdresses, belts, silver jewellery as well as hand woven rugs, baskets and pottery. Items that Widad has spent her life collecting.

“When we started this collection, we planned on launching it in our gallery,” recalls Nisreen. “However, we met with Widad, who is known as the mother of the Arab dress, to ask her to give us the honour of opening the collection. When she saw the pieces she invited us to do the exhibition in her museum next to the dresses and connect the theme.”

“This heritage and embroidery of the old costumes need two things,” explains Widad. “Number one, continuity and number two, modernisation,” she says. “Sometimes it continues in its old form or in a new way with a modern concept and new materials. My aim is to have this heritage of embroidery continue and when I saw their work, I thought that this is one way of continuing, but in a modern style.”



The Corian and wood features inlaid detailing



A selection of pieces on display



The designs reference Palestinian heritage



A set of tables and wall hangings with the names of towns in Palestine



The tables are inlaid with an old map of Jerusalem