

courtesy Eklego Design



Dina El Khashab and Hedayet Islam



EXPERT TIPS TO DESIGN YOUR SPACE

Eklego Design Firm co-founders Dina El Khashab and Hedayet Islam share their handy tips for designing the perfect home or office space that reflects our reality and brings us the most comfort.

By Maria Fathy

Some people enjoy being their very own interior designers when it comes to creating their first home or business space. They spend hours and hours flicking through every type of home décor magazine that they can find and, of course, everybody's favorite, Pinterest. While some get it right; others might end up choosing something that is completely opposite to what they actually wanted; and more importantly, something that conflicts with their own personality.

We talked to interior design gurus and co-founders of Eklego Design Dina El Khashab, head designer, and Hedayet Islam, who gave us a few handy tips when creating our own homes or seeking the help of a designer.

Established in 2000, Eklego Design is an award-winning architecture, interior, and furniture design firm that has grown to include 72 employees. Eklego currently works on a range of commercial and residential projects in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, catering to the needs and choices of its

clients with a fusion of different ideas, cultures and styles.

1. Comfort comes first

Because nobody knows what makes you more comfortable better than you do, Khashab's first advice before stepping into the design process is that you should always start by making sure you know exactly what you want, and not what you "should" have.

"The chances of you being totally someone else just because you got a new house are probably minimal," Khashab says.

So moving to a home with a massive garden does not necessarily mean you need a pool if you do not actually enjoy a swim. That just means you will be stuck with the responsibility of maintaining it without any of its benefits.

2. Reflect on the reality of your life

You always need to consider where you are directing your resources, and make sure you are not making an unworthy compromise.

"I think many people who don't have enough guidance tend to

spend a lot of their resources on things that are not well-thought through," Khashab says.

So creating a home office, while you actually don't like to work except with noise around you, is not really the most reasonable idea.

"I think many people have the tendency to think, now that they're moving into this bigger house, they should get all these things and they don't think about what they do [with them]."

3. Function trumps show-off

Egyptian homes are notorious for dedicating the best areas of the house for the formal guest, who comes along once every blue moon. Islam's pet peeve when it comes to home designs are under-utilized spaces that are closed off for the seldom formal occasion.

4. Less is more

Islam warns against cramming spaces around the house or cluttering with furniture and accessories. A well-placed painting, for instance, displayed proudly and without too much clutter, brings out its value and beauty and draws



Photo courtesy of Eklego Design

attention to your piece. On the other hand, a reception crammed with a dozen pieces of art means we often overlook their beauty and are left overwhelmed.

5. Be true to yourself, not the latest trend

“I am not much of a trend follower as I do believe in genuine timeless design that suits your situation and your functional needs,” Islam says. “Trends are not too personalized, I find.”

While trends come and go, your own taste and needs are unlikely to change as quickly; so stick to what you like and need, rather than what’s in vogue for the cur-

rent month.

6. The designer isn’t there to set your workflow

Now moving to designing your perfect business space, Khashab points out that the designer will not be able to actually solve all of your non-design problems. You should take care of that.

“In commercial, you always have people who come to the designer thinking that they’re going to solve the problem of the organization. They don’t have any printing stations; they don’t have any filing [system] and they think that the designer will fix that,” Khashab says. “A designer can suggest best ways, best practices ... but they can-

not tell [clients] what the best way for them to work is.”

7. Will this function best suit your line of work?

When it comes to designing an office space, you need to make sure that your people will actually function best with whatever you choose.

For example, there are certain people who only work in open spaces, others who work in closed spaces, Khashab explains. So when you go to an interior designer and say ‘I’m going to have open space,’ you need to make sure that you know your people are going to be good with this; if not, the design

gets ruined.

“A client needs to come knowing exactly what they want, for the design to come out perfect. They need to know how they best function,” Khashab says.

To sum it up, you need to start planning and do some soul searching before you begin the design process to figure out what you actually do and do not want. And if you're seeking the help of a designer, you need to be both on the same page. The designer is the person who will initially be creating the space that you will be living or working in, so you must be completely satisfied before taking the plunge into the developing process.

