

# The resident

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# THE ROAD TO CAIRO

*New to the London design scene, Hedayat Islam Taymour is bringing an Egyptian flavour to interiors*

Words JACKY PARKER

**E**gypt may not be the first place you think of as a hotbed of modern design, but interior designer, Hedayat Islam Taymour is on a quest to change that perception. A recent arrival to the capital, she splits her time between her design studio, Jam Space, in Chelsea and her international architecture and interior company, Eklego Design, based in Cairo. Set up with business partner, Dina El Khachab in 2000, Eklego has over 180 projects to its name including Sony Music offices and the award-winning Forty West apartments on the outskirts of Cairo. 'The contemporary Egyptian design scene is thriving,' says Hedayat. 'Young minds, innovative materials and skilled artisans have led to a vibrant scene. It gets dwarfed by political events, but should be celebrated as I believe the future and impetus for any progress is innovation and experimentation.'

Eager to highlight this, Hedayat has created Jam Space, to be part design clinic for interior projects and part retail space, offering a hand-picked

selection of furniture, lighting and home accessories, with much of it sourced and made in the region. Her criteria when sourcing a piece is that it has a strong design element or interesting story behind it.

'I like it when I know the story behind something and value even more the idea of being able to customise it,' says Hedayat. 'When I moved here with my family in 2014 and began furnishing my own home, I found it was a choice between buying mass-produced furniture or paying a fortune to commission bespoke pieces. I wanted to provide beautifully-crafted furnishings within reach

budget-wise. Most of the pieces at Jam Space have contemporary forms and materials, but are infused by an element that relates to a story or ornament.'

Whether they want to refurbish their entire home, update a room or buy a new dining table, customers can expect to find unique pieces inspired by local geography and traditions. There's the stylish Weave sideboard, which takes its reference from Egyptian reed baskets and the striking hand-blown Rain Drop

*Egyptian design should be celebrated. I believe the impetus for any progress is innovation*



From bespoke furniture to fabrics and wallpaper, Hedayat's style takes subtle influences from Egyptian history





Hedayat's Cairo-based company Eklego Design has worked on a series of successful interiors projects, including the Miria restaurant in Egypt, pictured

glass pendant lights that can be customised in 23 different shades.

Having already established a furniture retail side with Eklego Design in Cairo in 2005, Hedayat has a trusted army of skilled artisans and designers to call upon. 'We ventured into furniture around ten years ago,' she tells me. 'There are abundant skills in Egypt such as woodwork, ironmongery, glass-making and upholstery as well as a renewed energy and desire to look inwards for inspiration rather than outwards. This has resulted in a strong movement to infuse contemporary design with traditional elements and to build on the latter through different manufacturing techniques.'

Whilst pursuing a Master's Degree in Islamic Art and Architecture (in addition to degrees in Interior Design, Fine Arts and Political Science), Hedayat found much inspiration in Egypt's rich cultural history. 'As a child my mother was determined to expose my sister and I to the many different flavours of Egyptian life and the influences of the various eras,' she says.

'Each week we would visit a different historical site and see Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic spaces. These motifs were ingrained in our minds and I was intrigued when people spoke of Egypt's "bygone era". It seemed as if they were always nostalgic for a past I had never experienced, so I wanted to know

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The academic programme Hedayat embarked on included extensive walking tours of the city and archaeological digs; she has since been able to draw upon the visual references she studied to use in her work. 'I knew I wanted to include this heritage in my professional life as a designer, be it in interiors, furniture or textiles.'

These influences are most apparent in Jam

Space's latest venture, the Ornamental Stories fabric and wallpaper collection which presents Egypt's ancient motifs, symbols and mythological figures in a refreshing and vibrant way. The Lotus Flower, the Falcon God Horus' wings, the Nile

Zigzag and other sacred designs have been cleverly translated into graphic geometric repeat patterns on textured natural linens, cottons, and wallpapers.

The colour palette ranges from fresh and tropical aquas and marine blues, to the warm earthy tones of papaya and terracotta, as well as monochromatic neutrals. 'I wanted to celebrate our rich ornamental past, which appeared to have been lost under a layer of dust and nostalgia,' says Hedayat. 'I thought Ornamental Stories would be a good way to celebrate my entry into the London design scene.'

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