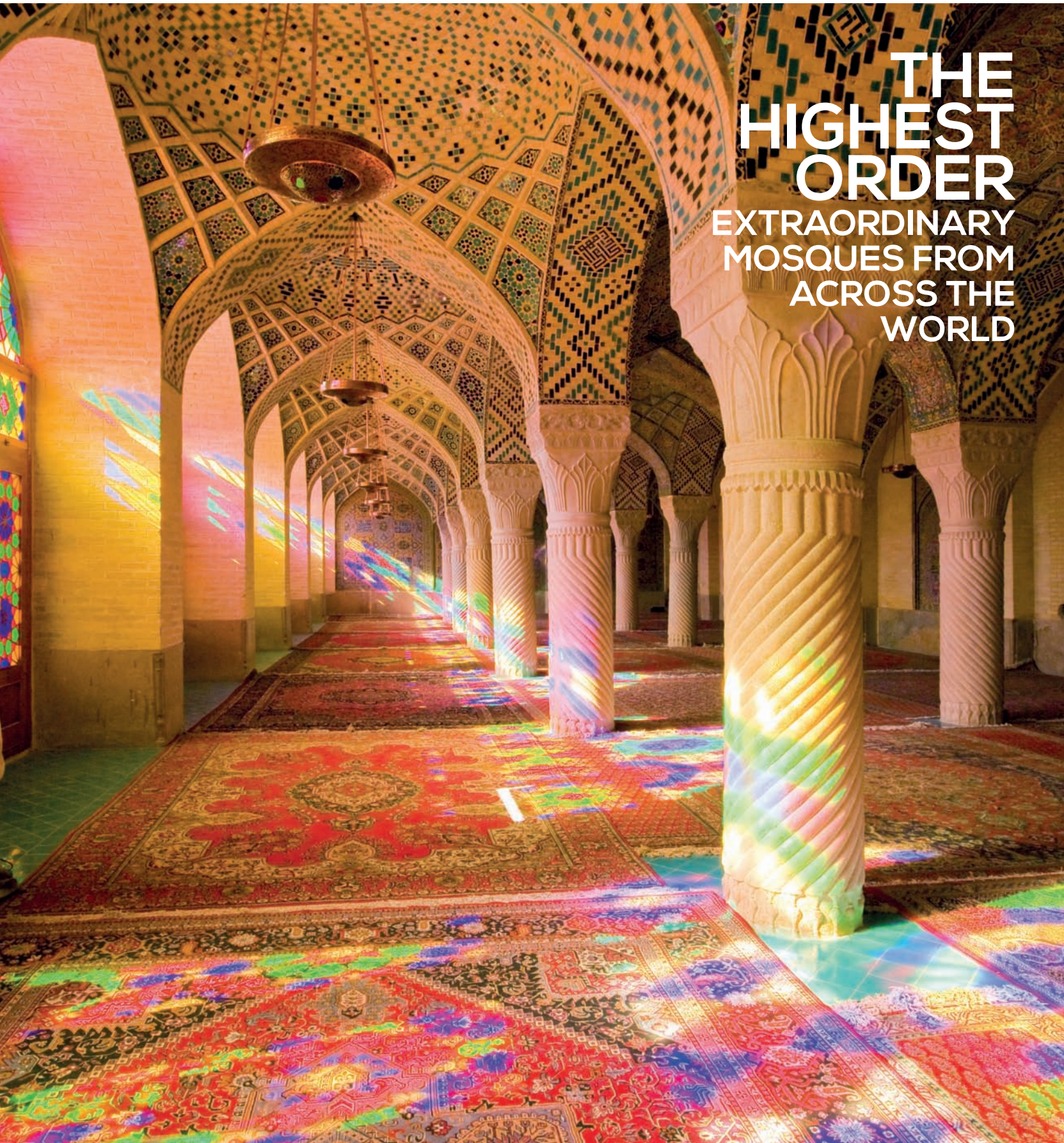


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ARCHITECTURE • DESIGN • DECOR

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**THE
HIGHEST
ORDER**
EXTRAORDINARY
MOSQUES FROM
ACROSS THE
WORLD



A ROOM WITH A VIEW

FEATURE: MARION EELE. PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF EKLEGO DESIGN

Cairo-based architecture, interior design and furniture firm, Eklego Design has created a stunning abode at the very foot of the Abu Sir Pyramids on the outskirts of Giza.

The house's interiors are the work of Hedayat Islam, a graduate of the New York School of Interior Design and Eklego's co-founder. The owners, a modern, Egypt-based family with young children, are avid collectors of art, furniture and artefacts from the Middle East and North Africa. They were seeking a home that would provide the perfect backdrop for their collection while remaining sympathetic to the historic gravity of its immediate surroundings and visually cohesive with its desert environment.

The house itself, was designed by Ahmed Hamed, a student of the renowned Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy. The design reflects the vernacular of the locale's traditional building style, while taking into account the needs of a modern family. An inbuilt wind-catcher, a technology little-changed since the days of the pharaohs, helps to circulate air and keep the house cool throughout Giza's scorching summer months. The central courtyard,



The sitting room offers stunning views of the Abu Sir Pyramids



The property is an oasis of green in the desert surrounds



A custom-designed stepped wall appliqué by Eklego Design is reminiscent of the nearby Saqqara pyramid



Artwork by Katherine Bakhoum adorns the wall in the dining room



The sleek kitchen from SieMatic

epicentre of a typical Egyptian residence, includes a luxurious private swimming pool to while away in over summer. The central living room is in the style of a traditional qa'a, with a double-volume roof, and all the other rooms opening off it. The ceiling has been updated with traditional, dark wood to cool and more modern white gypsum board, which hides cove lighting.

Hedayat Islam has taken a highly artisanal approach to the Abu Sir house, fitting with Eklego's ethos of supporting local makers and designers and keeping traditional crafts alive. An intricately-patterned copper pendant light-unit makes a captivating statement as it hangs over the main living space. The piece is designed by Cairo-based design company Caravanserai, which creates bespoke furniture and accessories. From the same company come the lamps in the upstairs corridor, the wooden armchairs in the living area and conservatory, and the beautifully solid dining table. Artworks from Egyptian artists such as Omar el Magdi and Katherine Bakhoum hang proudly on the walls.



The sitting room features artwork by Omar El Nagdi, a leather sofa from Roche Bobois and a vintage Balinese coffee table as well as an antique Caucasian carpet

“THE HOUSE IS FIRMLY ROOTED IN ITS LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, WITH LINKS THAT ARE HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL”



The striking copper pendant light is by Caravanserai in Cairo



Natural firewood doubles as décor in contrast to the sleek interior

The mosaics are also handmade – both within the house and in the winter loggia, which features an outdoor fireplace to ward off the chill during Giza’s cool winter evenings. In the outdoor spaces, wooden accents from railings to pergolas feature the traditional geometric designs that are ubiquitous in this region. Even the wall-coverings are bespoke, from the hand-glazed tiling to the locally-made terrazzo paint covering the exterior walls.

It is not only these traditional craft techniques that help to anchor this home in its surroundings, but also the materials themselves. The polished, bush-hammered local Galala marble flooring creates a visual link with the surrounding desert landscape, while the internal courtyard walls are clad

in the same rough, local limestone from which the Abu Sir Pyramids were built. The form of the pyramids is used as a visual trope within the house: a custom-designed stepped wall appliqué rests in the corner of the conservatory and is reminiscent of the nearby Saqqara pyramid of the same shape.

Despite the heat and dust that surround it, the house stands almost like an oasis amid the desert. It is not just the lush green lawn that gives this impression; the cool interiors exude a calm and airy feel thanks to a series of carefully thought-out designs. Interior doors and partitions were removed from the living spaces, allowing for a free flow of movement, light and air. Similarly, the monumental glass

staircase does not obstruct daylight from entering the traditional, square windows that are inset along the length of the wall. The conservatory, with floor-to-ceiling glass on three sides, not only affords spectacular views of the pyramids but also floods the room with sunshine, allowing the play of light to accentuate the elegant architectural forms of the house’s high ceilings, curves and arches.

The Abu Sir house is firmly rooted in its local environment, with links that are historical, cultural and physical. However, it is also a modern home, designed to fit the needs of the decidedly contemporary family that inhabits it. It is the combination of these two factors that make it a truly sublime space.