

INTE

Sami Amin Stylish Access

LISA KAAKI | SPECIAL TO REVIEW

ALTHOUGH he studied to become an architect, Egyptian-born Sami Amin designs anything but homes. "I only worked a few months as an architect," says Sami Amin, a creative designer who is reinventing ubiquitous home accessories.

He rethinks, reshapes, redesigns a banal accessory and turns it into a unique object of art. The ordinary mug holder is transformed into a functional sculpture, which brings fun, beauty and art into the kitchen.

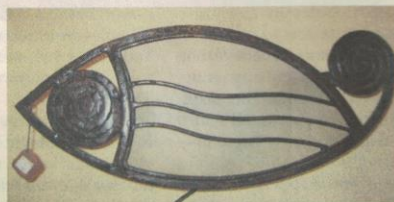
Sami Amin is deeply attached to hand-making techniques. He feels that even the most sophisticated machines always place limitations on forms but this never happens with handcrafted work.

"I devised a new technique to work with brass. I paint directly on the brass, this technique not only highlights the artistic value of the piece but it also guarantees its uniqueness. An artist can never reproduce exactly the same object," he said.

Sami Amin's workshop in Old Cairo is a human beehive resounding with voices and the sounds of tools. Sitting on a basic wooden chair, in stark contrast with his sophisticated line of furniture, the designer cum-entrepreneur talks about his passion for design.



Room and brass pieces designed by Sami Amin.



Fish lamp



Boat lamp

"My love for drawing really showed up when I was in high school. I first started working with brass when I was a student. I produced a line of copper and brass jewelry mainly necklaces, bracelets and earrings. I also made leather belts. I sold my products in galleries and the money I earned financed my holiday trips," he says with a smile.

His uncontrollable creative instincts soon overpowered his will to work as an architect. He decided to open a workshop where he could put his ideas into concrete shapes. He soon earned a reputation for making stylish bags. One of his first designs is the "Sunflower Bag"

named after his daughter Shams v means "sun" in Arabic.

Like all the objects he designs, Amin wants his bags to be practical. "Women nowadays have certain objects which they always carry in their bags such as mobile phones, keys, sunglasses, make-up, a pen and a wallet. They don't want to spend time looking for these items in their bags so it's important for the bags to have special pockets to store these items in place. Women also want their bags to open easily and shut easily," explains Amin.

He has recently added sharp colors such as red and blue to his bags.



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lection of beige, brown, black and tan. Recognized as an emerging brand, his bags are currently exported to Cyprus, Norway and Dubai. Amin also combines leather with wood and wrought iron to produce a creative line of furniture including chairs, tables, chests of drawers, sofas, armchairs and stools.

When I asked him about his favorite objects, he pulled a pile of sketches out of his briefcase and laid them on the table. "I always prefer my latest designs, my newest ideas. I am working now on a new collection of leather boxes. Because I am an architect, I pay great attention to the shape. For many years I favored structured designs but I find myself preferring organic shapes now," explains Sami Amin.

His mind is fueled by an endless inspiration. It was difficult to single out a home accessory he had not already designed. Amin finally came up with the idea of a tray. "Would you believe it but I have not yet designed a tray," he cried out.

Whether Sami Amin is designing a bathroom fixture, a frame, a lamp, a chair or a bag he always makes sure it is first and foremost practical and functional then he thinks about the style. He admits that he is attached to his African roots and particularly the rich Egyptian cultural heritage. "I am totally immersed in that culture," he reiterates. In fact, he is so much part of it that all of his drawings and objects carry the indelible mark of that inspiration.

However, Amin's originality lies in the fact that his ingenious mind uses traditional culture as a stepping stone to create new forms and new ideas. He seems oblivious to the dictates of designers and current trends. He follows his own instincts without fear or inhibition and melds them into something that is newer and fresher.

"Whenever I decide to produce an object, I first choose the material then I imagine where it is going to be placed. I create an atmosphere and the object I design is the visual outcome of that cre-



Sami Amin

A collection of home accessories he has created for summer houses by the seaside reflect the marine mood Amin has immersed himself into. Amin designed fish shaped lamps, mirrors framed with brass shells and used blue-colored glass. "I want an object to speak for itself," concludes Sami Amin. For more information visit: www.sami-amin.com.

