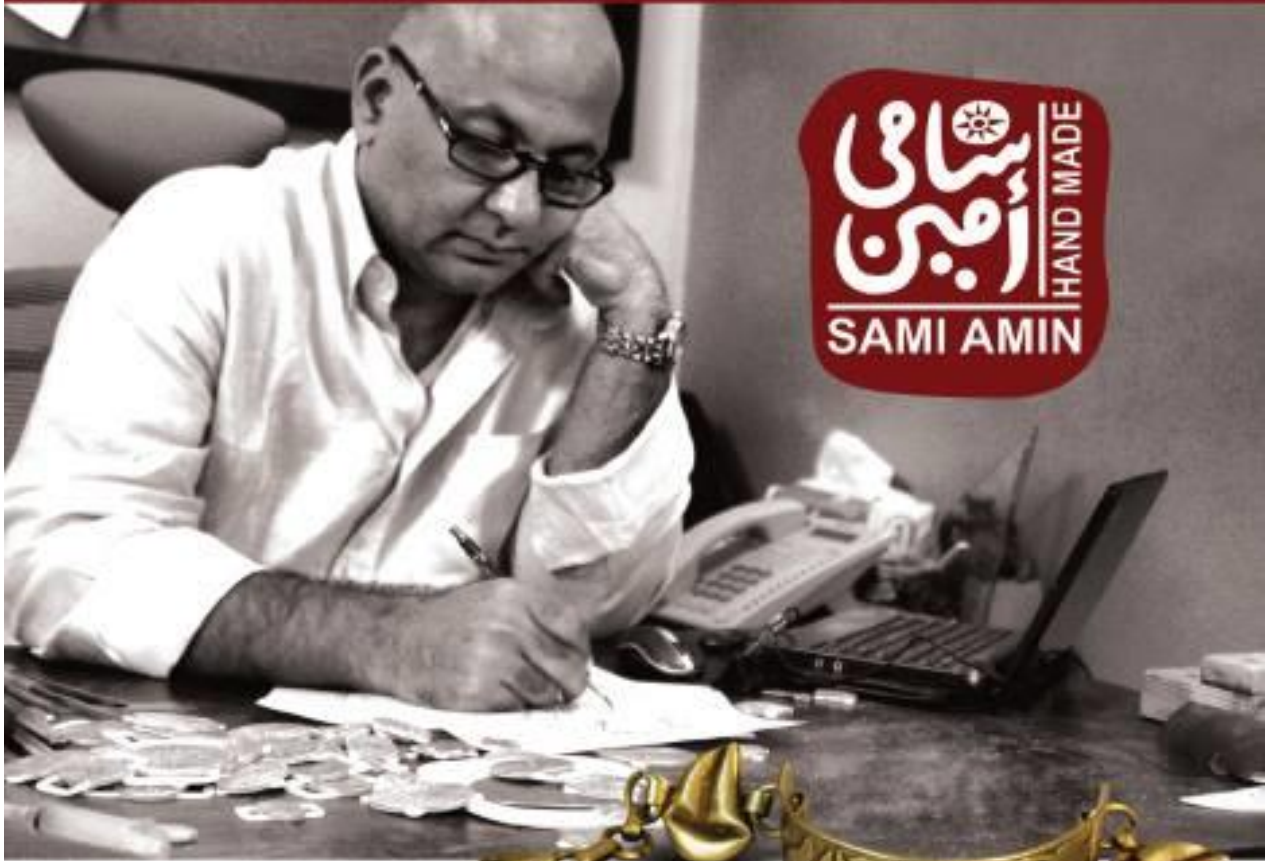


THE IRREGULAR LINE CHARACTERIZES EVERYTHING THAT IS MADE BY HAND ...



AN ARTIST EARLY ON...
ACCESSORIES, LEATHER WARE AND FURNITURE...
STRONGLY FANATIC FOR EGYPT...
DOES NOT KNOW WHAT IT IS TO BE AN EMPLOYEE...

PLEASE MEET

SAMI AMIN

A Lover of Egyptian Art...

INTERVIEWED BY
Nevien Iskandar

PERSONAL PHOTOS FOR
SAMI AMIN BY:
Soha El Joli

Would you please introduce yourself and how you started your business...

My name is Sami Amin. I am born in 1966 in Cairo. Parents were originally from Upper Egypt. I studied Fine Arts with concentration in architecture. I loved drawing since I was a child. There was no point in time when I was confused about what to choose for a living. I loved arts early on. I used to draw till the end of high school. My portraits were very good. When I started the university, I started doing handcrafts. My father

was quite experienced in working with electronics. I used to be very curious to watch him work on minute details of electronic circuits. Apparently, I caught the same interest. And since I loved drawing, my interest went into the direction of designing.

I started with designing earrings. I have a great affinity for Islamic, Coptic and Pharaonic artwork and designs. I do not copy, but I try to capture the outlines of the artwork which reflect the trend. The Coptic designs are captivating because they are primitive unlike the art of palaces and kings.

Then I started getting into leather work, just doing a belt or a bag for myself. After graduating from college, there wasn't much work in architecture like there is now with all the construction of compounds that is currently widespread. So in 1990, I opened my own workshop.



Did you have the courage to open your own business?

I had already been working while I was in the university. I had regular clients who used to order items from me. I was able to cover for a lot of my living expenses like my books, transportation and outings. For seven years, I distributed my production among different shops until 1997, when I opened my first gallery.

So you had no plans to be a regular employee?

I do not know what it is to be an employee until today. Since I graduated I have been working in my own business.

Was your father objecting to your working away from architecture?

My parents were quite mature. They used to leave me draw specially when they found me getting good grades. I got first rank in my final year in prep school. In high school, they used to worry a bit about me, but I did join a decent university. So they were not objecting sharply to my lifestyle.

So you faced no resistance in pursuit of this business?

I was actually asked by one of my friends if I was going to be an earrings merchant. I am a firm believer in what I do, and I do not care much about what people think. "Prestige" is not something that I worry about. What matters to me is to enjoy what I do and to pursue it.

Do you believe that art confuses the relationship with God?

On the contrary. What makes you say that?



Some people believe that you may have to choose either way: art or God. This is because in a way you are a creator in art.

This is pride. No matter what you do, if you realize what God does around you and in your life, this won't be the concept you live by. God has given you eyes to see and senses to perceive the creation around you. What man was gifted by God is the amazing sensitivity to light, shadow and colors which enables him to come up with a masterpiece of art. In the end, this is still an imitation of God's work.

A Lover of Egyptian Art...

Tell me a little about what you wrote on your website about nature.

I wrote this when I first opened my gallery in 1997. I said, "The irregular line characterizes everything that is made by hand". Even God himself did not create things with straight lines. Earth itself is not a regular shape. It is a bit crooked. Nothing in nature is in straight lines. Any straight line is seen to be artificial. I recently got new glasses from a decent place and I tried to use them for drinking. I was totally not impressed by them compared to the feeling that I get when drinking from my old primitive glass cups. One of the reasons for that is that man feels closer to natural irregular things, and feels a bit of estrangement with artificial things. Modern places impress us a lot, but it is uncomfortable to live in compared to more primitive places with irregular lines.



Why are you living in Egypt? Some say if you are successful here in Egypt, you would be much more successful abroad.

Egypt is a beautiful place.

If I am fanatic about anything in my life, that would be Egypt.

By the way, it is not easy to succeed abroad. The

market abroad is quite tough and competition is merciless. Now I could succeed there, but I would lose my enjoyment of life. Success is not as fun as enjoying life. One could make it, but would still be miserable.

What makes you happy?

I feel happy when I am in a place that I feel I belong to, a place where my roots are, where I can speak Arabic, where my sense of humor would be understood. Being among my friends here in Egypt is priceless.





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You are not the first person to do this kind of business. Why is your name that known in the market? Would you call this "luck"?

If all this is considered a lucky strike, this would do me a lot of injustice. I strove a lot to start this business and make it grow and continue. My business depended on creating things from scratch, unlike most of what is in the market which depended on making replicas.



The thing is you made a name for yourself.

I do not know that for fact until people actually tell me so. But I think that what gives flavor to my work is that it is inspired by the Egyptian culture.



and that makes people admire my work unconsciously. I also care about the quality of my work. You can easily have a belt of my production live for 10 years.

Another thing is that I taught myself. I did not go to a school to learn what I am doing. So, there is no reference to what I do. It is a new style of my own.

Did you face injustice in your business?

A lot of people copied my work, and some even took credit for it. I consider this to be some kind of injustice to me.

What is on your wish list?

I wish to have my designing office separate from the factory. I would like to get a new place specially for this. I also wish to join a fashion competition due to take place in the U.S. next year.



Sami, thank you for this interesting talk!