

VOGUE

ARABIA



Homespun CURIOSITIES

Lebanese product designer Paola Sakr opens the doors of her luminous Beirut atelier

Photography ALESSANDRA IANNIELLO/LIVING INSIDE Words MARZIA NICOLINI



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ATMOSPHERE of peace”

Lush plants beckon at every window and natural light filters through the glass. From this leafy standpoint, many would enjoy being in the shoes of Beirut-based product designer Paola Sakr. “Here one breathes an almost surreal atmosphere of peace,” she confides, shaking her thick dark hair off her shoulders. Sakr, who graduated in 2016 from ALBA (Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Art) in Beirut, spends most days at her atelier. She draws inspiration from a multitude of sources. “It can be either a feeling, a material, a face, a meeting, a neighborhood, or a city,” she shares.

Passionate about design, art, and photography – fields deeply interconnected – some years ago, Sakr was searching for a space to work on her university projects. “I was lucky and blessed with this place: it used to be my father’s law firm 20 years ago before he moved to a new tower,” she reveals. “Initially, I just wanted the main room where I work now, but I ended up taking over the entire space, including the long hall with five smaller rooms on both sides and two large balconies facing ancient trees.”

Located in Karm el Zaytoun in Achrafieh, Sakr comments of her atelier, “It is an extremely charming and calm area of Beirut, with many trees and old buildings with retro architecture.” When ideas are missing, Sakr takes her dog for long walks, stating, “I always find inspiration in my surroundings.” Sakr decorated her studio trusting her gut and designed it to match her personality. Her refined touch is palpable throughout. “Every person who knows me and who steps into my office comments that the space reflects who I am. There’s a lot of greenery around and inside the studio, natural light, and quiet, tangible energy.” High ceilings and large, glazed windows offer added volumes. Along with the plants, Iranian kilims offer warm, natural colors, off-setting the industrial touch, with metal and raw wood on display. Sakr deliberately kept

TOP PAOLA SAKR WORKING ON THE TOURBILLON FROM HER IMPERMANENCE VASES COLLECTION **RIGHT** THE IMPERMANENCE SET OF VASES **OPPOSITE** HER ART SUPPLIES ARE KEPT ON OPEN INDUSTRIAL STORAGE SHELVES







FAR LEFT THE HOME FEATURES EXPANSIVE VIEWS OVER THE LUSH GARDEN **LEFT** PERSONAL DRAWINGS WITH OIL BARS **BELOW** COLLECTIONS OF NEW AND VINTAGE DESIGN BOOKS ARE STACKED WITH MORNING RITUAL JARS **OPPOSITE** SAKR WITH HER COCKER SPANIEL EMMA ON ONE OF THE BALCONIES OF HER ATELIER

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the furniture simple. A large, custom-made desk takes pride of place, along with a metal storage wall unit dedicated to her art supplies. Vintage sofas and chairs come from Basta, a Beirut neighborhood filled with second-hand treasures. “Some of my own paintings and drawings are on the walls along with artworks from local artists or souvenirs from my trips.”

Her motto? “Curiosity will take you to interesting places,” she says. Over the past few years, her projects, ranging from tableware to photography, have been exhibited around the Middle East

and Europe. Among her accolades is the Rising Talent award at the 2018 Maison & Objet Paris design fair. Next spring will see the release of her collection with textile brand Kvadrat, to be exhibited at Milan Design Week 2020, post-pandemic. One of her biggest dreams is, “To make a difference and to be remembered for something good.” Sakr is steadfast that Beirut is the place to be, saying, “It’s the people that make this city, the energy, resilience, and chaos, but also the love and hospitality. You have to witness it first-hand to understand.” □

