

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY



Beirut fashion photographer Tarek Moukaddem's converted shoe factory blends old world flavour with warehouse edge

Words **DANNA LORCH** Photography **MARK-LUSCOMBE WHYTE**



In a sitting corner etchings by Hatem Imam hang on the wall above an 18th century Ottoman table. An Eames chair, a vintage kidney sofa and Damascus inlaid side tables complete the room

Opposite: On the Boomerang Table by XXe Siecle, "Yara, Maya, Zeina, Racha" Burqa dolls by Carlo Massoud. Silkscreens are by Alfred Tarazi

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Both my work and my home are organised chaos, but there is harmony hidden within,” says Tarek Moukaddem. In much the same way that the boundary-pushing fashion photographer draws out the sculptural beauty of unconventional faces from behind the lens, he recognised the potential for an old shoe factory unexpectedly devastated by a fire to be transformed into a place to call home.

The 500-square-metre warehouse is set in Karantina, the new Meatpacking District of Beirut, where an experimental cultural scene is on the rise. When a realtor first showed it to him more than four years ago, the walls were charred black, the flooring mismatched and non-load-bearing walls fully blocked out the vivacious city’s light. Moukaddem quickly converted the space into a loft-style expanse—with only his office, bedroom and an intimate living room for entertaining close friends positioned behind private doors.

The walls get a new, bold colour wash in sync with the trends of every season, often delightfully clashing with an eclectic and constantly curated mix of industrial designs, 60s retro classics and Near Eastern antiquities. “My painter is my best friend. The colour reflects my mood and trends of the season, but also has to be functional,” he says. The living room is currently a Caribbean blue, which works surprisingly well with a curving lime sofa designed with a pencil sketch by Moukaddem and executed by Atelier Zerbe.

The entire loft shifts and changes like it is a breathing organism—taking on the feel of his photoshoots with Lebanon’s designers, models and intellectuals, as well as responding to the owner’s self-proclaimed “fetish for collecting.” Moukaddem, who obsessively trawls local flea markets and souks, barter with clients for intriguing family relics and also collects contemporary pieces by regional designers like Nada Debs, refers to himself as “a treasure hunter.” He is incapable of passing up an interesting find, regardless of whether it will complement or crowd.

Tarek Moukaddem sits on a chaise-longue by Bokja
Opposite: A mother-of-pearl inlaid desk from Cairo and an 18th century mother-of-pearl inlaid chair from Damascus reveal Moukaddem’s ever-growing preoccupation with the material. A painting by his friend Alfred Tarazi hangs on the wall



An alleyway of antique Oriental carpets leads to a dining area, where a weathered slab of Lebanese cedar wood designed by Moukaddem and produced by Boisseliers du Rif, is flanked by mustard leather chairs with a 1950s aura. Political-themed collages by the first winner of The Sovereign Art Foundation’s Middle East and North Africa Prize Alfred Tarazi, a good friend, trail from room to room, adding a measure of intensity.

Visitors might tease Moukaddem about his ever-growing preoccupation with inlaid mother-of-pearl wedding chests, but he has his reasons for collecting: “I couldn’t not buy them. When the war started in Syria, we had a flood of merchandise and I honestly didn’t want these pieces to leave the region... I wanted to support a local craft that might disappear very soon since so many of the marquetry artisans have either moved to other parts of the world or passed away.”

In the bar area, an ornate Andalusian cabinet is juxtaposed with replica Saarinen tulip chairs and a matching glass-topped table which once belonged in a Hamra coffee shop and witnessed Beirut’s golden 1960s era. “I love items with stories. I have a lot of originals but I prefer these pieces because they have a lot more soul,” he says.





In a meeting space, the Cedar tree wood trunk conference table with gold leaf was designed by Moukaddem and produced by Boisseliers du Rif. A vine leaf mirror commissioned by Moukaddem's parents in the 1980s rests on the wall



In the **dining room**, Vitra Tulip chairs and table stand on top of one of the dozen vintage rugs that carpet the residence. On each side, early century Andalusian Bargueño. At the back of the room, the kitchen bar is by Ghassan Salame

Opposite: In a **lounging area**, the Clown sofa and Rhizomes tables is by Khaled El Mais and on the wall, Under The Cover images are by Moukaddem
Cover photographs by Tarek Moukaddem



The entire loft shifts and **changes** like it is a breathing **organism**

A Samaan Khawam self-portrait on an antique French Louis XV commode, near a Gio Ponti rocking chair. **On the wall**, a Joseph Hnein painting. Right: Damascus Ishani glazed Arabic fish vases and floral bowl



“I love items with stories, they have a lot more soul”



In the airy and ever-changing loft where carpets and mother-of-pearl abound, a Bokja chaise-longue and Spanish bench

