The Quirky Minimalist

Ramzi Makram Ebeid is earthy, minimalist and quirky, which all reflect in his designs, but first and foremost, his interior designss focus on functionality

Photo courtesy Ramzi Makram Ebeid

By Nadine El Sayed

Modern, minimal, functional, earthy and a little bit quirky, Ramzi Makram Ebeid's designs reflect his down-to-earth and friendly personality. The head designer and founder of Human Nature, an interior and furniture design firm he established in 2007, Ebeid received a design degree from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2006, and an international business degree from George Washington University in 2011.

His portfolio includes various commercial, corporate and residential projects like Link Development's meeting room, Accelero office and Flat6 Labs. Most recently, he worked on Osana Family Wellness center in Maadi and the first co-working space in Gouna, G-Space.

"I was lucky enough to be the chief designer for G-Space," says Ebeid. "It was a very fun project…I had to design something to make people excited to work but at the same time I also wanted them enjoy Gouna."

G-Space is a combination of a professional space complete with amazing views, a swing and a hammock. "I wanted people to enjoy the office and have this laid back and fun but professional feel…It was Gouna meets an office somehow," he adds.

The Osana Family Wellness center is as serene and earthy as Ebeid's own attitude is. A place for yoga, meditation and family classes, Osana needed to reflect the vibe of the place. "It's a daily escape," says Ebeid. "The villa where Osana is located was built in the 1920, and then renovated in 1930s, so didn't really have a character and I wanted to give it a base foundation to reflect the time it was built…so it is like Art Nouveau meets something modern."

Ebeid's designs are all based on functionality, which is the starting point for his work. "I always start everything with the functionality of the space; this space is for reading, that one for writing, and so on," says Ebeid. "The first part with the client is focused on what they're going to use the space for and the inspirational photos come later."

Although he loves art, Ebeid says practicality and functionality are key to his designs, a chair has to be solid and comfortable, and a sofa needs to be comfortable first and foremost. "I like a durable coffee table where I can leave my glass and not worry about leaving a stain; so it's got to be functional and minimal," says Ebeid. "I also like natural materials over synthetic ones…so I would rather go with a less-expensive mosaico flooring than HDF."

His design process starts with getting to know the client, his personality, lifestyle and needs and seeing how the two connect, especially with residential projects where the designer and client would be working together for two years. "It's important for the client to feel comfortable with the designer they're working with and be able to trust them. Once he gets to know them, he can customize the design to their character and needs.

What inspires your designs?
The functionality, it always goes back to it; how the clients live their life. I had a client who traveled a lot, for instance, so I wanted to give her a space to pack her bags easily. So getting to know these little details and how they work is important. That's also true for com-

mercial spaces because you need to understand the culture and each office I go to has different work environments, meetings and people working. You design for different personalities, which makes it very interesting. So it is about the person or the company's history.

Other than that most designers get inspired by lots of stuff; I go downtown and I go sightseeing a lot, I have been to a lot of oases throughout Egypt, and the small towns and the weird stuff inspire me. A detail on really funky shoes inspired me to design a table, for instance. Most designers find inspiration everywhere.

When and how did you get into the design field?
I have loved design since I was a kid. Since I was five, I was picking out the furniture inherited from my great, great grandfather. I was always designing my room, and then at 14, I designed my cousin's office, so it's always been in me. I studied business, however, first, and then I studied design, which gave me an interesting perspective. So after five years of graduating business school, I went back to the United States and enrolled in UCLA's professional certification for interior design and then started my firm.

How different should a summer home be from a home in the city in terms of design and furniture?
I am all for a nice summer home, for sure, but I feel like if you're going to be there for a few weeks or a month I wouldn't go all out. I am old school in that sense, I grew up in the 1980s so I remember Agamy and Sidi Abdel Rahman; it was very basic and we used to have the best time because it was a true escape from where we are at right now.

You're creating something that is different from your main home; it's laid back and durable so you're not constantly fretting about the kids dropping something or getting sand on the furniture or your friend spilling coffee.

So what are your key tips in designing a summer home?
For summer homes, it's about practicality and functionality. You also don't need to accessorize the whole place. What's the function? Are you always sending out invitations? Then maybe you spend a bit more money on the place. But if it's just you and your family and close friends then spend your money wisely, get a solid couch that is comfortable and will last you for a long while. Get good appliances and good windows, make sure the ceiling has good insulation. If you have the basics down—good electricity, plumbing, ceilings—everything else can come in later because for a house that's shut down for long periods of time this is very important. The little things can come in later over the years.

How would you give your summer home an overhaul?
For commercial spaces, the image is very important because you're creating something for a bunch of different clients, so being on trend and so on is important. But I think for residential homes, it's more important

to be you and have it reflect who you are, so you're actually able to enjoy it, everybody else doesn't matter. You spent your money and time on this, so just go for what you like and what makes you comfortable.

How would you go about furnishing your summer home?
For me, keep it minimal and cohesive. It's nice going from room to room and feeling you're in the same place; I don't like these spaces with very abrupt changes from room to room. I like smooth transitions, especially in holiday houses; so having a unified concept is very important. Every room has to carry the same concept and you should feel like you're in the same house at the end of the day. The concept can be very basic; it's just for you to understand which direction you're going. If your inspiration is Agamy beach house from the 1960s then always go back to this concept when you're making individual decisions and think whether it'll fit in my concept.

Where would you advice people to get inspiration for their summer homes?
There are loads of places to get inspired: travelling, browsing websites and magazines like Dwell and Habitat. But just see what you like and take it from there.

What are your favorite places to shop for summer home accessories and furniture?
We are very blessed with choices that we didn't have a few years ago, and I have been using a few shops for the past years because they're great: Caravanserai, , Design Community, Williams, Ebony & Ivory and the list can go on and on. I would go to these places and focus on buying the basics first in terms of functionality and then add stuff with time, but I believe better quality trumps quantity.

What color palette would you advise our readers to go with this summer?
It is really about you, if this is a commercial scheme, it's different, but I don't think there is anything that I would recommend in terms of a color palette for a residential house. It all depends on your personality.