



## Ziad Alonaizy

Multidisciplinary Designer

*Kuwait-born, much-travelled, and now a resident of London, England heading his own design studio. So, who better to judge "how they see us" than UK-based designer Ziad Alonaizy.*

### ZIAD ON DESIGN:

**How is 'good' design defined for you?** Three elements define good design for me: originality, quality of craftsmanship and, most importantly, longevity.

**What is the inspiration behind your designs?** I wanted to approach the design of my first collection from a new perspective free from the confines of current market trends and the expected. And so, I started thinking about how our creativity is inherently caged. 'AEGIS' collection was inspired by the concept of a bird cage being pried open by two fingers, metaphorically representing empowerment and the release of ideas and creativity.

**Describe the style of your latest collection in just three words.** Innovative. Sustainable. Eternal.

### ZIAD ON KUWAIT:

**How do you view Kuwait's design scene from afar? Who do you see as getting things right?** Every time I visit Kuwait I am truly impressed by the creative genius of the new generation and their willingness to push boundaries with frequent openings of concept stores and exhibitions. Moreover, I truly admire the recent government-funded projects in Kuwait such as Al Shaheed Park and JAAC; not only for the sympathetic approach to design but also for the inclusion of well thought out cultural experiences and activities in addition to the strong environmental message communicated throughout the design. I feel that there has been a consistent growth and awareness of design on every visit I make to Kuwait.

**Do you feel design is fully appreciated and valued in Kuwait?** People in Kuwait have a truly discerning eye for eclectic design and always seek out innovative solutions for their homes. I frequently meet Kuwaitis at exhibitions such as Salone del Mobile in Milan, Maison et Objet in Paris and even out of the way antique markets such as Les Puces de Saint Ouen. So in my opinion, there is a true appreciation and a great knowledge concerning design in Kuwait.

**What's the response you get as a Kuwaiti designer on the global stage?** People do find my story intriguing. It is not every day that you meet an orthopaedic surgeon who made the switch to the design world. Add to that my Kuwaiti origins which is rare and unexpected. However, in my experience, people first and foremost respond to my designs and the media attention surrounding my collection.

**Is it easier to live and work as a product designer in the UK? Could you do what you do if you were based in Kuwait? If not, why not?** Not at all. The market in the UK is saturated and extremely competitive. However, if you can overcome all the hurdles and establish your design



*The ethos of 'eternal elegance' sits at the heart of the design and manufacturing process for every piece of AEGIS furniture – to be loved, treasured and passed on from one generation to the next.*

studio in London then you are naturally welcomed onto the world stage. The UK is renowned for its pedigree of design brands that have been established and respected for many years with a focus on quality and heritage. To become a part of that pedigree is a great launching pad for any business. In addition, London is geographically ideal for the design industry with Europe a short flight away. I work very closely with Italian suppliers and manufacturers and frequently make day trips to source marble or check on production. It would be difficult to achieve that if I were living in Kuwait.

**What are the key ingredients required to establish a critical mass of designers in a small country such as Kuwait?**

*A regulating body.* In the UK we have the CSD (Chartered Society of Designers), the BIID (British Institute of Interior Designers) and many more. Through their membership schemes, they help to regulate the industry and promote it as well as scheduling seminars, competitions and networking events. A similar organisation in Kuwait would give the design community more legitimacy and gravitas.

*A USP (Unique Selling Proposition).* What differentiates design in Kuwait from other countries. Every country has its own USP. Italy is known for its innovation, attention to detail and craftsmanship. The UK for their pedigree and quality. Kuwaiti design needs a marketable commodity to distinguish it from the competition.

*A presence.* I have had the privilege to witness some exceptional interior and product design by local talent. Unfortunately, very little is showcased in magazines, design websites or blogs globally. I can understand clients' wishes with regards to privacy. I have the same issues with many of my private commissions which I cannot share. Yet in Europe you are constantly bombarded by images of design in all its forms. We need to advertise our achievements and accomplishments more to the world.

*A quality of craftsmanship and labour.* The most important ingredients to accomplish good design. I work closely with a family of metal artisans in Italy, who have been perfecting their craft for more than 100 years. Each one of my pieces passes through nine metal artisans, each highly trained in honing one aspect of the manufacturing process. I would never have realised my design without their expertise.

**Other smaller (and far less wealthy) nations succeed admirably on the international design and art stage. Lebanon springs to mind as one. Why not Kuwait? Why not another regional Arab country?**

**What's your thinking on how the world views Arab design as a whole?** Lebanon, in particular, is a very good example. They have been perfecting their craft for many years, in particular, wood working. Furthermore, due to political unrest and displacement, they have a foot in each: Europe and the Arab world, allowing them more visibility and cultural alignment. But it is their networking and marketing prowess that launches Lebanese designers to the forefront.

Having established my design studio, it quickly became clear that executing good design is only half the battle. Achieving market penetration is far more challenging. Networking and a good marketing strategy are absolutely essential.

In my experience there is much appreciation for Arab design. I have come across many beautiful designs from the Arab world in notable galleries in London, Paris and Milan. More can be done, however, to publicise our creativity and accomplishments.

**What advice would you give to an aspiring Kuwaiti product designer today?**

- Ignore the noise and trust your gut feeling.
- If you have seen it before, then don't do it.
- Get informed
- Make a plan:
  - Who is your target market?
  - How will you reach your target market?
  - Do your price points take your target market into consideration?
  - Invest in a good website. It is the window to your design.
  - Establish a good reliable team around you: Manufacturer, shipping company, social media / marketing team, legal team, accountant, business advisor, etc.

**About Ziad Alonaizy Design**

*Ziad Alonaizy design is a luxury-led and conceptually driven furniture atelier and design studio. The company's ethos is underpinned by a desire to create timeless and eternally elegant designs that transcend current market inclinations and provoke exceptional visual and emotional impact.*

*Founded by Ziad Alonaizy in 2018, the studio was established following the acclaimed launch of Ziad's debut collection of furniture – AEGIS. With a solid grounding in architectural interior design, the company now specialises in bespoke furniture, interior design and private commissions.*

*Driven by exceptional quality and an unwavering dedication to excellence, Ziad is passionate about a conceptual approach to his work that consistently delivers against client expectations and captures the essence of their vision. "I set myself the challenge to create a timeless and conversational design, born from my architectural background and quest for individuality.*

*"Environmentally conscious, I work hard to negate the impact of our production process and to positively contribute to the sustainable future of the design industry through our manufacturing processes and the use of sustainable materials. I donate a portion of all sales to the World Land Trust - a conservation charity protecting endangered habitats and wild life and from our sales in the Middle East, to Abolish Article 153 - a prominent human rights organisation".*



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*Ziad's design process always begins with the concept – an idea, image, model or notion that provides the basis for the story or narrative behind the design, driving an emotional connection as well as a visual response.*

