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CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

SPRING 2009



DROR SWEEPS UP

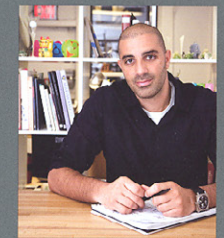
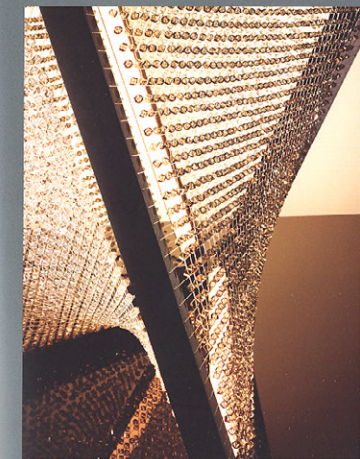


After nearly a decade in the business, the Israeli-born, New York-based designer Dror Benshetrit is finally commanding the recognition and acclaim he so rightfully deserves.

The 32-year-old wunderkind (and principal and founder of Studio Dror) currently counts Swarovski, Rosenthal, Bentley, and Bombay Sapphire among his impressive cadre of clients, and an equally notable group of prospective clients are eagerly getting in line. His most popular industrial pieces include the Swarovski Floor Chandelier, a creative take on a standard luxury item that employs his patented interlocking structure, and the award-winning Rosenthal Vase of Phases, presently in the permanent collections of museums in New York, Munich, and Tel Aviv. In addition to his successful career as a product and furniture designer, Benshetrit is—almost effortlessly—joining the ranks of internationally renowned architects. He clinched Studio Dror's first-ever international commission, to design both the residences and master plan of Nurai Island, an exclusive resort off the coast of the wealthy emirate Abu Dhabi set to open in 2010. For Nurai, Benshetrit came up with a unique (and now famous) architectural concept, "Swept Under the Carpet," an innovative landscaping device that ensures maximum privacy and distinctively framed views for residents. Regarding eco-responsibility, it comes naturally to the designer, who "has a habit of making things green without even really intending to do so." In a recent interview, Benshetrit sat down with us to discuss these topics and more in further detail.

I was chosen to be part of a sponsored group of students by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. They took me and a few other students into this really unique program that was mentored by different key artists at that time. That was an amazing experience. So I was always imagining myself as an artist. Design kind of came to me later on around my twenties when I realized my art was becoming more and more usable. I eventually got into product design and started searching for a fine art program. I found a design academy in Eindhoven, Holland, which was really great. I ended up there by coincidence, though. In fact, I came to New York first and lived here for a year. I looked at schools here and all over the States—from Rhode Island to California—and couldn't find anything I liked. So I booked a trip to Europe and ended up in Amsterdam, and a school I was visiting there recommended I go visit the Design Academy Eindhoven. They had people there that were really interested in a certain type of conceptual design that really resonated with me. And, of course, the Netherlands has been very hot in design for the past 15 years or so.

WW: Are you at all influenced by the landscape (both urban and nonurban) of your native Israel? And is the Bauhaus an influence for you? (Note: Tel Aviv houses the largest assortment of Bauhaus structures in the world, collectively termed *The White City*.)



Dror at his desk wearing his signature Hell & Ross watch, R801-SZ.



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see design as global, regarding craftsmanship and good question. It took me living in Tel Aviv. I think as a bit strange and wondered to appreciate certain things. method. It was a huge milestone touch that we're in right now.

...biggest building projects in Israel... child in Tel Aviv, for example? ... locals have complained about it ... out of place, that it obstructs key

...people like Richard Meier are building project in Jerusalem [the Bridge of... (controversial), and people were complaining the view, it's completely misplaced, it's... it doesn't belong there, etc. But the growth... chance of key players in different periods in... ally doing great projects all over the world... to have one of his pieces, same as Calatrava... But it's case-specific. In both of these cases, equate and respectful.

...se discuss the Nurat Island Project in Abu Dhabi... ping architectural concept? 'Swept Under the... ring the fierce competition, how did an industrial... get such a prestigious and important architectural

...Yes, you were probably wondering, like everyone else, how did... more who is known as a product designer who has never had an... emotional commission get to do this huge island off the coast of... Abu Dhabi where there are mostly star architects working? Well, the... commission first started as a conceptual commission where we had... been hired to design a concept for a vacant property on the ocean, it... kind of worked in stages. The first stage was to conceive an idea that... would be exciting for developers and the Crown Sheikh, and then... address the residential component later. In that first stage, we looked... at the 155,000 square feet of land for 30 to 45 residences on the island... and asked ourselves: "How do I make this private? I cannot imagine... [the residents] wanting to interact with their neighbors and structures... all around." The main approach was to create some sort of camouflage... so customers would feel like they own the island. I realized luxury... means privacy. So that's how "Swept Under the Carpet" started. It's as... if to say, "I don't want to see something, so I'll just sweep it under the... carpet." So I thought, can I simply make a huge architectural carpet... that all the villas are situated underneath? It started with building villas... on land and covering them all with green vegetation. So when you're... underwater spa – so the water washes the structure and it "gets a mas-... sage" while you get a massage. The client loved it and we got the... whole commission.

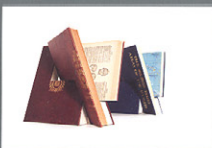
WW: For Nurat, how much was sustainability a factor in your design process?

DB: Well, architecture is now for me. And in this case, I was really more lucky than smart, and things ended up being green without my really trying. Later on I realized that things I didn't consider as green architecture but did anyway – so, shading the houses and using the rainwater – actually were. Green is also about improving the types of materials you use and improving people's well-being. For example, at some point in my career I did a project that used epoxy resin, which I'm allergic to myself, and the ventilation system I had at the time was very bad and it became an impossible work environment. From that point on, I decided I didn't want to use any more of those types of materials. And how could I design products for consumers that make me sick? It didn't make much sense. I also look hard into the types of companies I work with. Even if they aren't specifically green, if they are open-minded I can educate them on using better materials, etc.

WW: Tell us about your design for the Jfeda Swarovski Floor Chandelier.

DB: The chandelier was debated in and created for Crystal Magazine. At the time, I was working to develop this interlocking structure, which I'm still working on, in fact. I got a patent for this interlocking structure. So when the Swarovski commission came along, I was eager to debut it – it ended up being a perfect fit. The chandelier looked to me like a really beautiful object to put on the floor of a loft or something. I thought, it's really interesting to take this expensive

...n is also about improving the types of materials... use and improving people's well-being"



...crystal, aluminum material, in a corner instead of above your dining... room table. In the corner, it still looks elegant. As for the design, we... wove the crystals in such a way as to make two different parabolic... forms; it's actually 6,400 crystals woven with this cross-weave, which... keeps them in tension. Two sides are clear and two sides are smoky-



View of Phases for Rosehall (2005)



"I realized luxury means privacy. So that's how 'Swept Under the Carpet' started"



Renderings of Nurat Island design in Abu Dhabi for Zaya (2008)

