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DESIGN AROUND TOWN

THE ODDS ARE IN ITS FAVOR

The OddFish Opens Up

YOUNNA AND CHRISTIAN DJERMAKIAN ARE NOT YOUR AVERAGE COUPLE. THEY DON'T LISTEN TO MAINSTREAM MUSIC. THEY DON'T READ BESTSELLING PAPERBACKS. THEY DON'T SHOP AT GLITZY AND GLAMOROUS BOUTIQUES. YOU CAN SAY THEY WANDER OFF THE BEATEN TRACK. SO WHEN THEY DECIDED TO LAUNCH THEIR FIRST CONCEPT STORE, THEY WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY. "WE WANTED SOMETHING THAT STANDS OUT, SORT OF LIKE A BLACK SHEEP, WHICH IS WHY WE PICKED THE NAME ODDFISH AND WHY WE SETTLED ON THE PORT DISTRICT," SAYS YOUNNA.



WORDS: MAYA MADOLB, PHOTOS: ANTHONY BHAHVEI



Stacking an eclectic range of products from street wear to accessories, furniture to vintage items and limited editions, the new hole-in-the-wall kind of space satisfies the antics of the pleasantly eccentric. A mishmash of some of the finest works by indie designers from far and wide across the world, OddFish carries new forms of urban art, street culture and contemporary designs. "OddFish is a distinct room for celebrating creativity in all its forms," Christian points out. "We felt there is a need in Lebanon for a concept store that is accessible and one that mixes a bit of urban art and independent design at an affordable price," according to the husband and wife team.

The idea had been brewing in the minds of the Djermakians – both advertising professionals – for two years during which they engaged in exhaustive research to give their concept just the right amount of pizzazz. "We felt that the things we usually like and buy when we travel are unavailable here, such things as the vinyl toys, which Christian collects," Youmna says. And

so they embarked on a journey to bring home a list of their hipster art and design preferences and make them available to like-minded individuals with quirky inclinations.

The pair scoured the Internet for inspiration, deliberately steering clear from the major art and design fairs frequented by the masses. "We wanted to offer something altogether different from what's on the mainstream market, which is why the vast majority of brands that we have simply don't exist in Beirut," Christian argues.

Youmna gesticulates to a selection of offbeat carafes and decanters, wickedly smart limited edition pillows as well as charming wrist post-it notes. She goes to great lengths to explain the method behind the madness of the objects on show. She mentions that the striking paper or "Papier" bags they sell are made of Tyvek, a lightweight synthetic paper that is robust and resistant to the elements. "Star Wars, The Ultimate Action Figure

DESIGN AROUND TOWN



Collection" is not merely a book, she adds, as it was compiled by the owner of the world's largest private collection of Star Wars memorabilia and traces the evolution of each character in toy form.

A portmanteau of adorableness with a hint of the dorky, the place is what urban culture would lovingly refer to today as "adorkable". A stone's throw from Charles Helou Station, it oozes of urban/industrial appeal while being both functional and practical. Standing as a homogeneous space, OddFish blends items across its halls, as opposed to being sectioned off in categories. Hence, you'll find T-shirts throughout, as though you're browsing in a market.



The Djermakians enlisted the help of interior architect Maia Aoun Sayad who flirts with a lot of black, white and gray to maximize the warehouse feel and allow the colorfulness of the items to speak out. She also puts a lot of thought and effort into highlighting the adaptability of display. "OddFish, being a concept store where display will always change according to the items in store, we decided ...to play with the display by unscrewing or adding shelves on the main wall according to the store's needs," Aoun Sayad says. In the same vein, mobile and stackable metal and wood storage boxes were dispersed across the store, permitting the owners to change the design as they go along.



The design also retains elements from the old space, keeping the existing stairs and mezzanine and building the functions around them. Aoun Sayad also erects an eye-popping black brick wall that thoroughly redefines the space and emphasizes the concept, whereby all the functions remain hidden under the stairs.

The concept of recycling permeates across OddFish – both in terms of items on display as well as design. "So just like we sell upcycled rope necklaces and wood sunglasses, we have transformed the old warehouse metal gate into our bathroom door for example," indicates Christian, pointing to a massive table that was once in the custody of his own brother.

OddFish may be a fan of recycling but as far as concept and execution are concerned it is far from used and abused, offering something to us uber fresh and sassy.