

urbis

COSY HOMES

8 HOUSES FILLED WITH
WARMTH & WINTER COMFORTS
+
DISPATCHES FROM EUROPE'S
TOP DESIGN SHOWS



TASTEMAKERS
OUR PICK OF GLOBAL
& NZ TRENDSETTERS

HAUS CALL
UNRAVEL GERMANY'S
NEW STYLE CITY

The Tastemakers

Rufus Knight talks to Nina Yashar, Shalini Misra and Mehves Ariburnu, ahead of the fifth iteration of *Squat*, a new exhibition concept in London that combines design, art and architecture.



Nina Yashar has been called a “high priestess of modern design” and “a tastemaker for tastemakers.” It is undeniable that the globe trotter has predicted trends in interior design – like the Scandinavian wave – well ahead of many of her peers. Alongside running her Milan gallery Nilufar, Yashar also runs *Squat*, a yearly installation that combines art, architecture and design. We spoke to her and *Squat* co-conspirators Shalini Misra and Mehves Ariburnu ahead of the Mayfair event.

What are your memories of your birthplace Tehran?

NINA YASHAR (NY): I do remember that in the 60's Tehran experienced a moment of great splendour. It was the time of the Shah. Unfortunately there was

great social inequality: on one side, the rich; on the other, extreme poverty. I have a distant memory of big houses, gold-plated taps – ostentatious and magnificent things.

Rug-making is one of the most primitive forms of narrative design but also one of the most ornate and descriptive – how does this influence your outlook on contemporary work?

NY: My love for carpets, with their intricate textures and various designs, was born very early on and has always influenced my taste. In fact, my father was a carpet dealer, and my very first exhibition was called *La Rosa nel Tappeto*, a study of the rose motif in carpets from different countries. The carpet is a fundamental element on which I place the furnishing; a virtual room without walls, it delimits space. There is some form of carpet in every exhibition I curate.

What is it about the dialogue you create by pairing old and new, or local and exotic, that excites you?

NY: I see it as a musical composition. I always try to combine different pieces in a conversation to create my personal language, and the final result is always different from the previous one.

You have said your selection is ‘wide but severe’ – when do you feel disconnected to a work?

NY: When the designer pays more attention to the process of making and less to the final piece.

How important is context for the appreciation of a work? Can this be influenced or changed when mixing styles and eras?

NY: Context is fundamental. In fact, I like to show objects and furniture in a series of rooms because this lets people dream that any space could be a portion of their home. In projects like *Squat*, I can transform an empty room, filling it with



Previous page. Nina Yashar (*foreground*), Shalini Misra and Mehves Ariburnu are co-directors of Squat, a yearly exhibition combining art, architecture and interior design.

This page. Images from past and upcoming iterations of Squat. The events have taken place in Beirut, Milan (*far left*) Paris (*left and directly above*) and will take place in London's Mayfair on 6 June 2016. The London event will include the Chaise Maurice armchair by David-Nicolas (*below*) among other pieces.

my pieces from different geographical areas, and create a synergy between them. This is my final vision: people can consider the objects in relation to their real lives.

Do you have any rules for how Squat exhibitions are composed?

NY. I like continual conversation and synergy between objects and people, who have to feel like they inhabit that space. I delight in creating visions, atypical conversations between pieces of furniture. I like things that clash and don't follow a precise formula.

What will make Squat 2016 distinctive? Which artists, architects and designers have you collaborated with?

NY. There will be historical works by design masters such as Gio Ponti and Ico Parisi, and creations by leading contemporary and young talents, such as Patricia Urquiola, Martino Gamper and Bethan Laura Wood.

Tell us more about the apartment you chose for Squat.

SHALINI MISRA: The South Audley Street apartment is a contemporary, luxe

220m² space in the heart of Mayfair. It's on the first floor of one of the period feature-rich, terracotta, Victorian buildings that give Mayfair its distinct, historic character. The design respects original features, with fireplaces and cornices retained, but has been updated for the comforts of modern life.

What is the criterion used to select the pieces of art for this event?

MEHVES ARIBURNU: A barrier is breached when an art collection inhabits a domestic setting, a living environment alongside everyday design items. I believe that works of art speak strongly in interior settings. A contagion happens between architecture, furniture, design items and works of art - they start to highlight each other. When a collection of art inhabits an interior landscape, the slightest change in lighting, the geometry of spaces, colour contrasts, surfaces of fabrics, and materials start to play each other like music. This is the experience I wanted to share through the selection of artworks exhibited at Squat.

For a full interview, see urbismagazine.com.

