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Bethan Gray uses craft to tell stories about culture



Bethan and Shamsian review cabinet components

Award-winning Welsh designer Bethan Gray is launching new colours, finishes and materials for the Shamsian Collection of furniture, inspired by the fort at Nizwa and traditional Dhow boats.



4 Door Monochrome Dhow Cabinet on Omani beach with shipwrecked Dhow sailing boat

Bethan says: 'Dhow sails are made from cotton and sewn together in strips, then bound to the hull using coir ropes creating a distinctive curved pattern.'



3 Door White Dhow Cabinet on Omani beach

'My family heritage and my own travels and research continually draw me back to Middle Eastern art and culture as a source of inspiration.'



3 Door Jade Nizwa Cabinet in Omani fortification

The Shamsian Nizwa Collection was inspired by the rounded castellations of the Nizwa Fort and the ombre colour effect caused by sunlight falling across them.'



Cabinetry showing brass and copper finishes

I love working with Omani craftspeople - their techniques are incredible. Reinterpreting what they do for a contemporary and global audience offers a rare opportunity to champion skilled craftsmanship.'



3 Door Monochrome Nizwa Cabinet in Omani fortification

'All of my designs start with a story. I love to travel and I'm often inspired by the art and culture of the places I visit.'



Craft elements of the Nizwa cabinet showing marquetry techniques

'On my travels I come across so many incredibly skilled artists and makers in industries that deserve to be nurtured, celebrated and supported.'



3 Door Monochrome Nizwa Cabinet in Omani fortification

'Oman is an incredible place - the fort at Nizwa really captured my imagination.'



4 Door Monochrome Dhow Cabinet on Omani beach

'Even the most complex pattern becomes calm, balanced and harmonious when you get it just right. I think my instinct for geometry comes from my ancestor's travels through India, Arabia and Persia.'



Craft elements of the Nizwa cabinet showing marquetry techniques

'Using natural materials means that every piece is different, and because they are hand crafted, you can really see the human touch in the end result.'



3 Door Jade Nizwa Cabinet in Omani fortification

'Photography is an important part of my creative process and I try to really pay attention to the colours I capture.'



Bethan Gray has an extraordinary background: born to a Scottish father and Welsh mother, her maternal family descends from a nomadic Rajasthani clan that migrated across Arabia and Persia over centuries. Inspired by her heritage and fuelled by a deep-seated curiosity about global art and culture, Bethan has travelled to many of the places they passed through, developing an innate sense for the geometric forms common to many of these regions. Today, her creative and technical expertise lies in bringing contemporary relevance to traditional techniques – keeping both cultural narratives and crafts skills alive.

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