

## AUS students shortlisted at Design Days Dubai

by a staff reporter

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SHARJAH: Developed in a College of Architecture, Art and Design (CAAD) lab at American University of Sharjah (AUS) by students Merehan Kika, Maryam Sherif and Sultan Alqasimi, the Luminous Waves design collective has been shortlisted for the Middle East Emergent Artist Prize 2015. The prize is presented by the High Jewellery Maison Van Cleef & Arpels, in partnership with Tashkeel and Design Days Dubai. The winning design will be unveiled at the Van Cleef & Arpels stand during Design Days Dubai on March 15, 2015.

"AUS helped us a lot. The CAAD labs gave us a chance to test our ideas, and the environment where the studio is set was rich with openness to new ideas. The university provided us with the tools needed to make our project a success," Sherif said.

The project began as a ceiling installation in Assistant Professor Emily Baker's fifth-year architecture studio in CAAD. "We tried to create a cost-efficient design as well as an innovative and easily installed feature. Basically, the design consists of sheets of plywood, which are cut in a pattern creating a continuous loop, allowing a 2D sheet to expand and become three-dimensional. This allows us to create light covers in this ceiling feature, which allows light to flood through the cuts created as the sheet is pulled apart using steel frames, which help maintain the desired shapes in place," said Sherif.

Now an alumna also explained some of the challenges they faced in the creation process, such as the type of wood they used and the pattern's size. "As with the plywood, the glue in between the sheets allowed for more of a tensile quality to the sheets, more than any other type of wood. Also, as we tested different setouts for the pattern, the final shape was dictated by how close the cuts were, as that allowed for different sized openings," she added.

The challenges were nevertheless overcome through "the realisation process, as opportunities were opening up, allowing us to further strengthen our ideas. This studio was our last design studio in our architectural undergraduate studies, so creating something at a 1:1 real scale was a thrill and a challenge on its own. It helped give us a taste of how the designs transform in the work environment," Sherif noted.

She also encouraged all graduates to be open to trying new things without preconceptions. "While you apply what you learned in school after graduation, you learn much more. By applying to such awards, you learn new things that are unique to such events. Every experience is a learning experience," she said.

Sherif currently works with the Abu Dhabi-based Ateliers Jean Nouvel, and Kika is currently with L+B Design Group in Dubai. Alqasimi now serves in the UAE military as part of his national duty.