

DESIGN DAYS 2015

DAWN OF DESIGN

Diversity, creativity and originality come together under one roof as we get ready to savour remarkable innovations at Design Days Dubai

WORDS CHARLOTTE BUTTERFIELD

It may only be celebrating its fourth edition, but in that time Design Days has firmly embedded itself into the design landscape of Dubai. At the time of the launch of its first fair in 2012, a deep appreciation for collectible, limited-edition pieces was spreading and we witnessed a very real shift in the way regional consumers were starting to view iconic furniture design as art. Cyril Zammit, fair director, says, 'The understanding and appreciation of limited-edition design has definitely increased. Our audience realises the amount of work and dedication designers and galleries pour into the objects. This in itself develops a culture and therefore an appreciation of Design Days Dubai.'

The fair has always been billed as a global gathering, with 20 countries represented, making it one of the most diverse design fairs in the world, but

interestingly – and encouragingly – 16 of the 44 exhibitors this year are galleries based in the UAE or wider GCC. David/Nicolas is a Lebanese dynamic duo presented by Art Factum Gallery; Tashkeel is representing four local designers and Nakkash Gallery, Cities and Fadi Sarieeddine are all flying the flag for regional design.

One of the most exciting young talents is based in Dubai, as Cyril explains: 'This year we welcome Aljoud Lootah, an Emirati designer who started her career in design a few years ago. She is debuting her first full series at the fair and this is a very proud moment, having an Emirati designer amongst world-leading design galleries.' (For more about Lootah's work, see page 100.) Proof at last that innovation in design is alive and well – and living in the Middle East. ▶



'THESE CAPTIVATING WORKS PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF DESIGN AS WE KNOW IT, AND WILL AWE BOTH DESIGN AFICIONADOS AND ENTHUSIASTS ALIKE'

Cyril Zammit, fair director, Design Days Dubai



Top right Déchâinements single pendant chandelier in polished brass and blown glass is designed by Vincenzo de Cotiis and shown at Beirut's Carwan Gallery. **Above left** Smica lamp in pure white gypsum with a contrasting bronze stand by Cmmnwlth + Studio Job presented by Chamber NYC. **Above right** Ingrid Michel and Frédéric Pain met studying wood carving in Paris, going on to establish their studio Binôme. The Acari chair, in rubber resin with oak legs, is one of their designs.



A DECADE IN DESIGN
THE RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION TO CELEBRATE NADA DEBS' 10TH YEAR IN DESIGN WILL SHOWCASE BOTH HER ICONIC CREATIONS AND UNVEIL HER NEW LIMITED-EDITION PIECE, THE DISTORT ARABESQUE CHAIR.



INVESTING IN DESIGN
Tempted to buy? Design Days Dubai fair director Cyril Zammit passes on these tips...

Think long-term. Designer pieces are not only going to be with you for a few years: these are investments that may become heirlooms, so take that into consideration.

Understand the story. Talk to the gallery owner and find out about the manufacturing process, the prototypes, the materials used and so on:

know what you're buying before you dive in.

Find fresh talent. Watch out for up-and-coming designers who show real promise. Their work may well have a few more zeros attached to the price in a few years' time.

Count the numbers. Limited-edition pieces are usually released in a series of 12, never more than 25, so always check that your piece is numbered and you are given a certificate of authenticity.

Buy what you like! A limited-edition item must always speak to your heart before speaking to your wallet, so don't buy what is cheap, buy what you love.

Talent Forum
An important initiative is instrumental in putting the region's designers on the map

Tashkeel is a Dubai-based contemporary art organisation set up in 2008 by Shaikha Lateefa Bint Maktoum, who identified a real need for a support network for artists in the UAE. Through offering studio facilities, artists' residencies, international fellowships and a programme of exhibitions, events, talks and workshops, it has been instrumental in harvesting a creative community in the region.

Each year a panel of internationally established contemporary design experts select four UAE-based designers from an open call to represent Tashkeel at Design Days. They are given the opportunity to create products that capture the design, style and production processes innate to the UAE. This year the designers are Talin Hazbar, Rand Abdul Jabbar, Saher Samman and Latifa Saeed.

'The UAE's contemporary design scene continues to grow and evolve, becoming an important contributor to the country's creative economy,' explains Tashkeel's project coordinator, Khalid Mezaina.

'We strive to contribute to the design community with our Design Programme, commissioning new designers every year to conceive projects, and provide them with the necessary platform and exposure. I am ecstatic to see... the creative talents emerging.'

A LIFE IN DESIGN:



Nada Debs

The Lebanese furniture and accessories designer expresses her love of craft

You are celebrating a decade in design, how would you define this time?

Over the past 10 years, I feel I've been able to change the mindset of the people in the Middle East by taking their heritage and their craft and modernising it.

The Dubai design scene has evolved enormously in that period – how would you describe that evolution, and how has it felt to be part of it?

I think that with the awareness of art and design, people have become much more design savvy and knowledgeable.

Various exhibitions and events such as Design Days Dubai and Downtown Design have helped accentuate the importance of design to the public.

For me, showcasing and exhibiting in Dubai has been extremely important. Through craft, people have been able to feel the soul in my work.

You've experimented with mother-of-pearl inlays, wood and, more recently, cement in your V&A exhibit. What is your favourite material and what's next?

I love wood because it is a live material, and not one piece is the same as another. I like to play around with wood using treatments such as staining and acid treating.

I'd like to expand on the materials I've used in my designs by applying new craft and techniques, and adding materials such as brass, stone and terrazzo.

You are showing a new limited-edition piece at Design Days. Can you tell us about that?

It's called the Distort Arabesque Chair. It's a play on one of my iconic pieces that is stretched in an undulating form, making it into a lounge chair.

What kind of designs can we expect from you in the future?

I want to make people much more aware of the beauty of handmade products and highlight the importance of craft. I would like to push the boundaries and create more contemporary pieces that will be desirable. I truly believe we have a lot of beautiful craft that needs to be appreciated.



The Tripode bookcase is designed by Ingrid Michel and Frédéric Pain for Burgundy-based Binôme. **Above left** Iwan Maktabi presents Jan Kath's art-inspired carpet, Wool&Silk&Nettle. **Left** Ranging in height from 42cm to 86cm, the Tropical Noire wood vessels are by Simone Brewster at The Crafts Council. **Below left** Broached Commissions are showing the Birdsmouth table by Adam Goodrum.

FIVE DESIGN DAYS HIGHLIGHTS

There's so much to see at this event. Here are a few of the best in show...

1 The sustainable designs of South African designer David Krynauw are a beautiful blend of contemporary styling with traditional craftsmanship. The eight-lamp chandelier, Haywire in Black Ash, is presented at the show by Southern Guild.

2 The organic sculptural forms of Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid are on display around the fair; London-based David Gill Gallery is showing her Liquid Table while a new series of vases will be presented by Wiener Silber Manufactur (see Final Edit, page 130).



3 The world premiere of Cloud by Commonplace Studio (Netherlands), showcased by Victor Hunt Design Art Dealer (Brussels), conveys the form and feel of a cloud through 28 suspended pendant lamps, which have moving images projected on to their inner surfaces.

4 Metallics are big news, with two stand-outs being Studio Markunpoika's steel cabinet for Gallery Fumi and the aluminium Bhanga unit by Vincent Dubourg for Carpenters Workshop Gallery.



5 Posa Project is a homage to the Emirati culture of falconry, by Carwan (Beirut/Dubai), which shows luxurious perches by Massimo Faion (Italy). A live presentation recreates the Iranian New Year ritual (Nowruz) of the setting of the table 'Sofraye Haft Sin' by Iraqi/Dutch designer Hozan Zangana. ▶



The colourful Prän pendants in aluminium and copper by Position Collective are shown by Hungarian creative centres Design Terminal and Hybridart.

EXHIBITOR IN FOCUS:

Gallery All



Xiao Lu, gallery director, is bringing her Beijing-based gallery to the region to showcase her striking contemporary designs to a wider global audience

How would you describe Gallery All?

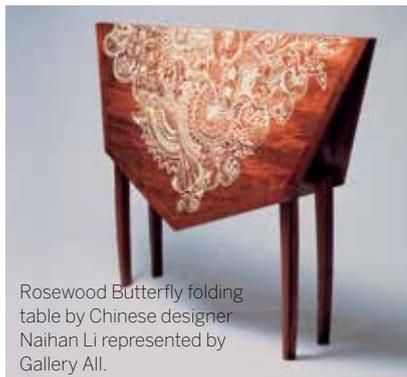
Gallery All is one of the first galleries in China dedicated to exhibiting collectible designs. There are many extraordinary design works from around the world that haven't been exhibited in China, and there are also many promising Chinese designers who haven't shown to the world. Gallery All would like to be that bridge.

Why did you choose to be part of Design Days Dubai?

We think it is an interesting opportunity to explore the market in the Middle East – we have sold our works to Dubai clients before – and Design Days Dubai is one of the best design fairs in the region.

You are showcasing the work of Zhoujie Zhang and Naihan Li – why did you choose to bring these designers to the Middle East?

They are both very celebrated designers in China. Their designs are fresh, and we believe they could be interesting to a Middle East audience. We also bring



Rosewood Butterfly folding table by Chinese designer Naihan Li represented by Gallery All.

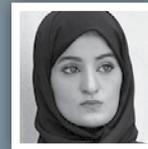
Aranda\Lasch's works (this is an architect-designer duo based in New York City) to the fair. Renowned in the design world, they have been shown at Design Miami every year. This is the first time two of their works are being shown to the public.

Is it true art and design is becoming so globalised, it is almost impossible to pinpoint where an artist is from, or are there still specific characteristics a Chinese designer has?

The work and design approaches of the two Chinese designers we are representing – Naihan Li and Zhoujie Zhang – are quite international. But both Naihan and Zhoujie have already planned to use new approaches and concepts to revitalise traditional Chinese designs and materials, including Beijing Cloisonne, Chinese rosewood, and so on, which is an exciting prospect.

ONE TO WATCH

Aljoud Lootah



The Emirati designer behind the Niftee brand talks about her inspirations and being part of Dubai's rapidly evolving art scene.

When did you first realise you were interested in design?

I come from an artistic family and have a background in graphic design, so design seems natural to me. When I was little, I remember being fascinated by the traditional mechabbeh – a large cone-shaped object used to cover a big tray of food before and after meals. It was made out of khous (woven palm fronds), and I found the delicate patterns in the weave and use of colours captivating.

Tell us about the Oru range you're exhibiting at Design Days.

The Oru Series is an exploration of form and function. The collection consists of geometric furniture and decorative objects, which take inspiration from origami forms. The name Oru originates from the Japanese word for 'to fold', and the idea behind the designs is to show that folding a flat, two-dimensional sheet of paper can create aesthetically appealing and functional three-dimensional forms and objects. The products, with their faceted design, look like complex folds but with sophisticated simplicity: a modern interpretation of an ancient form of art.

What has it been like to be part of the evolving design scene in Dubai?

It's been a positive experience for me, having been in the Design Road Professional programme, establishing my own design studio and debuting the first full series. Initiatives such as the Shaikha Manal Young Artist Award, and Van Cleef and Arpels Middle East Emergent Artist Award give the opportunity to designers to catapult into the world of design. I am so grateful for the support and am looking forward to welcoming an international audience. ■

