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Printed by United Printing Press

Subscribe online at www.itp.com/subscriptions

Audited by BPA Worldwide
Average Qualified Circulation:
6,168 (July-Dec 2012)

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Moving on up



Last month was certainly a busy one for the region's design industry. The big event was, of course, Design Days Dubai, the subject of our cover story. The 2013 installment was even better than last year's inaugural show, with some absolutely stunning pieces on display.

My personal favourite was an incredible installation called Analog Project by Italian duo Andrea Mancuso and Emilia Serra. On first glance it appears to be sketch of iconic furniture pieces, but is in fact a computer generated composition with black woollen nylon wires. It really makes you take a step back and ask 'how did they do that?'

Speaking to CID, show director Cyril Zammit emphasised how Design Days is more than a furniture show, with many items closer to artworks, hence the tie-in with Art Week.

Attending the various arts events in Dubai, from Al Serkal Avenue to DIFC, it's clear there is a passionate creative community that is highly active. The creative vibe is certainly more palpable than when I first came to Dubai almost five years ago, signalling that the emirate has a growing appetite for good design.

Showcases like Design Days Dubai pull the industry together, and this will continue with Cityscape Abu Dhabi in April and Index the following month.

In addition, we are putting the finishing touches to our coffee table book *Objects of Desire*, now in its third year. This time around we've discovered so many innovative pieces created by local designers that we're spoiled for choice. However, if you'd like your creations to be considered for inclusion please do get in touch with the team at *Commercial Interior Design*.

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Design Days
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Days to remember

ONE OF ART WEEK'S MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS, THE SECOND DESIGN DAYS DUBAI WOWED THE CROWD WITH ITS QUIRKY PIECES, INSTALLATIONS AND LIVE PERFORMANCE



It was difficult to miss the colossal white tent stretched across Downtown Dubai with the Burj Khalifa looming as a backdrop, but missing what was inside would have been an even bigger loss.

Back with its array of collectible design pieces along with newly featured installations, live performances and public talks, Design Days Dubai managed to create a bigger hype compared to its launch last year.

1 Southern Guild gallery.
2 Headless horses by Khalid Shafar.

"Last year was an introduction; we had just opened the door," says Design Days Dubai director, Cyril Zammit. He explains that there had been a major misunderstanding of the fair's purpose in the region, and this year aimed to set that record straight.

"This is not just a furniture exhibition, the pieces are more design objects," Zammit clarifies. "They do of course have functionality, but there is a greater design aesthetic."

Zammit mentions that many were surprised to find that the objects were for sale, but stressed that Design Days Dubai is, in fact, a commercial design fair. "There is a difference between the pieces here and the mass production that is going on; there is actual

craftsmanship which gives the pieces its value," he says, while adding that this year has resulted in "strong sales."

He continues: "Since the announcement of Design Days Dubai, two new design galleries have opened in Dubai, both bringing fine and rare collectible design to the market, choosing to stock modern design pieces and classic icons of the 20th century."

"Their success indicates how much the market is now ready to welcome high-end design, with many items being closer to works of art than furniture."

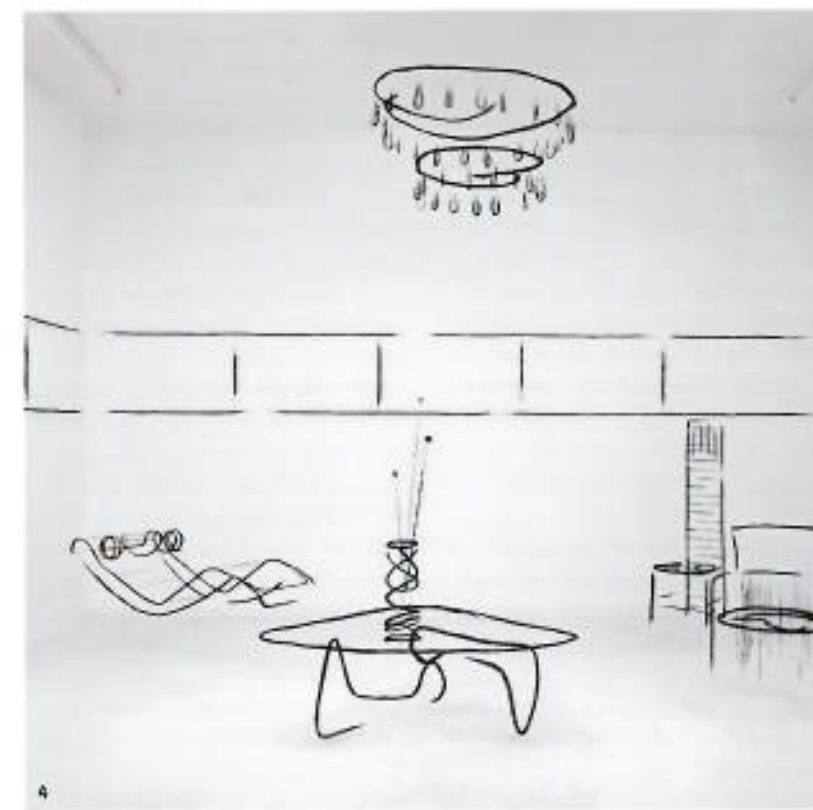
Although less of a surprise than last year's launch, the 2013 edition held hard-to-find objects and one-off installation pieces all under one roof. With classic objects such as Oscar

Niemeyer's benches to today's 'it' technology, 3D printing, Design Days Dubai was without question a must see for all; whether design enthusiasts, collectors or interior designers and architects.

Many of the pieces and installations for this year's preview were exhibited especially for Design Days Dubai, granting the fair greater exclusivity.

One such installation called 'Time Dubai' by Humans Since 1982, was presented by Brussels firm Victor Hunt Designart Dealer. Made from 288 special two-handed analog clocks and powered by 576 electrical engines, all clocks housed together make what appears to be a giant digital display, creating a choreography of 576 rotating hands to form extensive texts beside elaborate customised patterns and graphics.

Another installation, and one of the highlights of the fair, was from 'The Analog Project' series by Italian duo Andrea Mancuso and Emilia Serra, the first of its kind in the region. The installation appears as a sketch but is in fact created through a computer grid with the use of simple black merino woolen nylon wires built by hand, merging software with craftsmanship. Aiming to pay homage to the origins of modern design,



the installation features pivotal pieces including a Le Corbusier chaise lounge, a Mackintosh chair, a Noguchi table and a Frank Lloyd Wright chair.

The visual impact of the three dimensional 'sketch' is set to challenge conventional spatial representations. Additional architectural elements of Middle Eastern culture are also integrated with the inclusion of chandeliers, fashioned in the traditional Islamic style seen in mosques.

Using the Middle East as an inspiration could be observed throughout the fair, with many galleries exhibiting pieces that evoked direct nods to the UAE as well as more loose concepts based on the region.

One of these pieces called 'ja-ri' by designer Jihoon Ha presented by Korean _Croft Gallery is an organic sculpture based on a traditional Korean mat made from ABS forms and painted in coral, giving the viewer the feeling of sitting on a ridgeline of the desert.

- 3 Construction series.
- 4 You Fade to Light.
- 5 The Analog Project series.



La Galerie Nationale, a gallery based in Dubai and located in Al Serkal Avenue, featured Italian designer and monumental artist Helidon Xhixha, who exhibited in the Middle East for the first time.

Displaying his many sculptures of stainless steel, the bookcase called 'Desert Dunes' made from Cor-Ten steel was created especially for the exhibition, taking its inspiration from the beauty of the desert.

"I visited Dubai for the first time in 2011, and during a road trip to Ras Al Khaimah I noticed the shapes of the dunes and the way they look when the light is cast upon them," says Xhixha.

His technique involves capturing and sculpting light through an intervention by folding and turning the steel inside out. In 2012, Xhixha's first monument, the 'Elliptical Energy' was installed in the UAE at the entrance of the Melia Hotel in Port Rashid Melia, inspired by the night lights of Dubai.

Commenting on the design fair, the designer says that it was "fantastic" and "very well organised."

6
Desert Dunes by
Xhixha Helidon.

7
Oscar Niemeyer
bench.

Closer to home, Emirati designer Khalid Shafar displayed many collaborations that promoted Emirati culture and traditions, working with French cabinet-making brand Moissonnier. He produced two cabinets

entitled 'Headless Horses' to tell the 'tales' of two legendary horses that had achieved victories at the Dubai World Cup but tragically died. His other collaborations included carpets inspired by Talli embroidery presented by Tai Ping, as well as a live performance called 'Illusion' to display the pearling industry in the UAE.

Another Dubai-based gallery, J+A, located in Al Quoz and a first time exhibitor at Design Days Dubai, previewed an interesting proposition for the city itself. The project is called 'OszoTMS - Vision' by Leipzig-based new media artist and designer Ritchie Riediger. The object, made from glass and steel, represents a horse — the glass makes it a three-dimensional object, signifying the duality of surface and reality. The design firm's plan is to erect this lighting piece as urban decorative art in Dubai, with the horse representing a vital part of Bedouin history.

Partner at Carpenter's Workshop Gallery, Julien Lompbrail who exhibited last year, calls the Middle East the 'new world'. He adds: "I love the energy, it's really going up in the region. In the 'old world' [Europe], things are slowing down but here it's all so fresh. It's great to share this enthusiasm."


Last year, Carpenter's Workshop

displayed an assortment of entertaining interactive lighting features with this year's preview leaving us just as satisfied with rAndom International's piece 'You Fade to Light,' which is both an art piece as well as a functional mirror and a light source that could be dimmed using a remote control.

The fusion of technology and craftsmanship is one of the trends for this year's show as well as using simple materials in a new way.

"There have been two main materials this year," says Zammit. "One of them is wood which is always being recreated. I was, for the first time, introduced to something called black Tasmanian wood. Also copper such as silver cast and bronzed which can be seen in Based Upon gallery."

Sustainability also played a major role with the live performance 'Construction Series' by Studio Swine presented by Thompson Reuters in collaboration with Brazilian gallery +Coletivo Amor de Madre. Using materials from construction sites in the city, the aim was to convert construction waste into a furniture collection live at the fair.

Judging by the sheer number of enthusiastic visitors at the second edition of the event, it can now be said that the region is opening up to the myriad possibilities of great design. 

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TOP 10 Design Days Dubai

CID picks the showstopping pieces that caught our eyes at Design Days Dubai 2013



Time Dubai by Humans Since 1982

This installation, specifically designed for Design Days Dubai, was the introduction piece to the exhibition by Victor Hunt Designart Dealer, located at the very front of the fair. The installation is made of 288 special two-handed analog clocks, powered by 576 electrical engines. All 288 clocks together form what appears to be a giant digital display, creating a choreography of 576 rotating hands with extensive texts beside elaborate customised patterns and graphics.



Sushi II by Fernando and Humberto Campana

Nicknamed the 'Brazilian green one', the Sushi II chair by Brazilian Campana brothers, exhibited by Perimeter Art & Design, is a piece from the designers' Sushi collection which contains rings that are reminiscent of the food in its name. The piece itself is made up of felt, textiles, as well as synthetics that are rolled into concentric rings welded onto an iron structure.



Audrey by Porky Hefer

Exhibited by Southern Guild gallery, this interesting item is inspired by an angler fish, suitable as both a lighting piece as well as a seating nest. For Hefer, who usually designs similar nests for animals, this is his first interiors piece. The product is made up of a steel substructure, covered in leather, net and sheepskin. The net is woven by one of the last fishermen net weavers, whose name, Audrey, was given to the piece as a tribute to her craftsmanship.



Dodai by Peter Marigold

The Dodai bench by Peter Marigold is made in collaboration with Japanese furniture company Hinoki Kogei, created from a log split into two pieces which are each opened up and set opposing each other. Exhibited by Sarah Myerscough Fine Art, it includes a covering from woven grass called 'igusa' and wooden rods. The covering can be rolled back and the interior space used for storage. The piece is held together with coloured bungees stretched over dark hardwood turned knobs. The wood used is a type of Japanese Cypress called hiba. 'Dodai' means 'base' in Japanese, and it loosely references architectural beams laid on house foundations.



Milk Drops by Jeff Zimmerman

Illuminated sculpture Milk Drops, by glass artist Jeff Zimmerman and exhibited by R 20th Century Gallery, is a beautiful three dimensional installation that feels almost alive when in the midst of it. Made from hand blown glass that is mirrored, Zimmerman's work takes inspiration from nature. He describes the process of blowing glass as "a frozen moment in nature". Milk Drops is a creation that is inspired by the forms in nature, reflecting the way things grow. Its delicate simplicity is what makes this piece truly incredible.

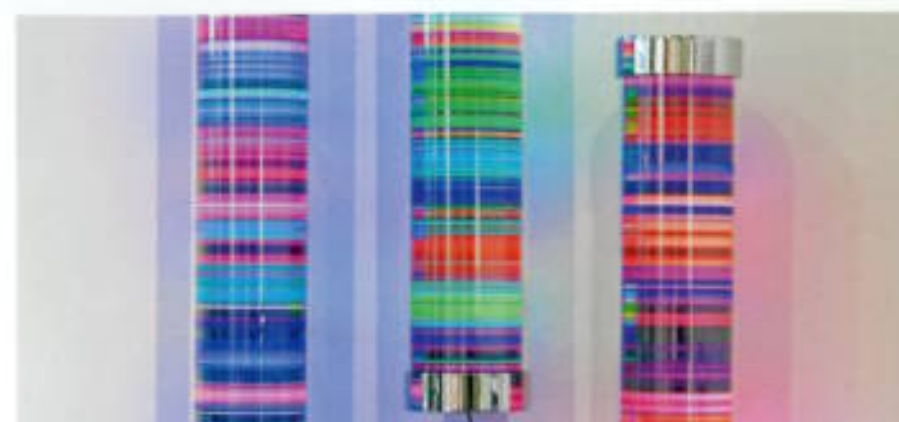


Molecular chair by Antonio Pio Sarachino

Industry Gallery exhibited the Molecular chair, designed by Antonio Pio Sarachino, which has now become somewhat of a pop culture icon, gracing the covers of countless magazines. The piece itself is what the designer calls "a fun object" which plays on the Baroque chair. Composed of an iron frame, every recycled wool ball is hand sewn onto the structure, produced through a felt process. Although it has a somewhat futuristic feel while displaying the 'scientific' structure of the chair, it is made in true Italian fashion with traditional craftsmanship.

OszoTMO- Fire by Ritchie Riediger

Dubai-based J+A Gallery displayed the work of Leipzig's new media artist and lighting objects designer Ritchie Riediger. This colourful lighting piece is created through the recording of burning wood which was then converted into frequencies signified by the different colour rings. The lighting fixture, reminiscent of a lava lamp, changes colours and is hand made from Borosilicate glass tubes, acrylic glass, chrome-plated brass, including electrical parts. Every tube is individually manufactured by the artist.



City Lights by Frederik Molenschot

Second time exhibitor at Design Days Dubai, Carpenter's Workshop presented the City Lights wall light created by Frederik Molenschot, which combines a bronze structure with LED lights shooting upwards. The name of the fixture mimics its inspiration which aims to re-enact the ambiance of driving past street lamps at night or looking over a city while in an aeroplane.



Prickly lamp by Lucy McRae

Made up of 100,000 tooth picks dyed in natural vegetable dye, creating six shades from grey to black, Australian artist Lucy McRae's Prickly lamp, exhibited by Broached Commissions gallery, creates a physical emotion of living in a deeply harsh environment. In this case, the living conditions of Australian women during the colonial period provided the inspiration. The pointy body of the lamp evokes a protective skin, serving as a metaphor for the women's lives. The striking design piece includes other materials such as wood, brass, as well as steel. Through its texture and form, the lamp has an anthropomorphic



Ja-ri by Jihoon Ha

The Ja-ri exhibited by Korean _Croft Gallery, which can be used as a lounge chair, is made up of an ABS form and painted in coral. Using the idea of a traditional Korean seating mat, the organic forms give the viewer the feeling of sitting on a ridgeline of the desert. An unexpected plus is that it is surprisingly comfortable.