



Cyril Zammit

# DESIGN DAYS DUBAI DIRECTOR'S CUT

After years of working in the arts, first at the Institut Francais in Prague, then, for the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland, and last, at TDIC's cultural department in Abu Dhabi, the Parisian born Cyril Zammit is confident that there is a natural place for design in the creative and forward thinking UAE.

By Samantha Sery

His vision is valid, as the design scene has already been set in motion, and will only continue to grow from here. So, when he was approached by co-founder of Art Dubai to start a fair entirely dedicated to collectible and limited edition design, naturally, Zammit, a creative man of culture, willingly accepted the offer. Design Days Dubai was initiated in August 2011, and the rest will be art history in the making this 2012, March 18 - 21. As the first design fair of its kind, "Design Days Dubai will focus on rare and limited edition design, offering a new dimension to how we understand design, addressing the growing demand for investment choices in art and design through its showcase of exclusive collectibles," says Zammit. The dedicated design director also shares what's been on his mind concerning the very best in outstanding UAE art and design these days.

1. There are great cultural offerings in the UAE: Museums in Sharjah, world-standard exhibitions in Abu Dhabi, art galleries in Dubai at either the DIFC Gate Village or in Al Quoz. I also enjoy visiting The Pavilion or Shelter in Dubai or Sharjah, for the relaxed atmospheres.

2. In Abu Dhabi, it's nice to spend the afternoon at Manarat Al Saadiyat. We definitely need more of these places. It is important to create cultural cocoons where art aficionados can mingle and exchange ideas and projects.

3. I recently discovered the College of Art, Architecture and Design of the American University in Sharjah. The students make use of the best equipment in the region, their 3D printing is breathtaking.

4. The most recognized product designer in the UAE is Khalid Shafar. He's had exhibitions in Qubique (Berlin), Tokyo, and just closed a solo show in Dubai. He is also represented by the Beirut-based gallery, Carwan, which will participate in Design Days Dubai.

5. I never approach design with a pre-conceived mind. I allow myself to be surprised by the object or technology used. That being said, I like the designers that reinvent themselves, and often. Designers that dare to use different materials. I am very pleased to welcome Kwangho Lee this March. He is the perfect example of what I've mentioned. For his first visit to the Middle East, he will conduct a public workshop during which he and the participants will work with Emirati products, fabrics, camel leather strips...

6. In design, as is the case with art, let your heart speak first. Unless you are specifically looking to invest or develop a collection. Always look for craftsmanship and detailing behind the design, the quality of the material, and the number of objects produced. There are experts who can support you in your choice and indicate the trends in the market for you. During Design Days Dubai, we will host a seminar on Investing in Design led by London-based Rabih Hage, creator of DeTnk and the Design Index.

7. You must visit Design Days Dubai with curiosity. Do not merely take a picture and move on to the next booth. The design world is full of surprises and one should never hesitate to ask how a piece was made, the process behind it, the time of creation. The pieces represent a new form of art and are great investments as well. I see Dubai as a catalyst for the regional and international design talents. Now is the perfect time to launch a major, new event dedicated to contemporary design. ■

[www.designdaysdubai.ae](http://www.designdaysdubai.ae)



Kwangho Lee



Manarat Al Sadiyat



Rabih Hage - credit Jonathan Root