

Design Days has a new section. **Discover, in cooperation with Institut Français, will showcase four emerging galleries from one country.** This year, it's France, featuring Gallery S Bensimon, NextLevel Galerie, Ymer & Malta and Galerie Gosserez

Gateway to a crafty new world

Thirty five galleries will show at Design Days Dubai in March next year. The line-up features a host of new countries and design studios that will be showcasing their work. **Anna Seaman** finds out more

As a professional architect who has a vested interest not only in design but in the long history of traditional craft in his homeland of Pakistan, Salman Jawed was delighted when he visited Dubai last March to attend the second edition of Design Days Dubai.

The city's dedicated design fair showcased quality products of furniture and interiors from some of the best designers, both internationally and regionally, and Jawed set himself a simple goal: to one day have his own designs displayed at the fair.

It took him less than 12 months to achieve it. For the 2014 edition, Jawed and his collective of architects and designers, Coalesce Design Studio, are the first Pakistani designers to appear at the rapidly expanding event.

"Honestly, it was a dream come true for us to be accepted onto the programme," says Jawed. "It is an honour to be the first Pakistanis there and we know that Dubai is a gateway to a lot of things."

Coalesce Design Studio was founded five years ago in Karachi. Jawed, the principal architect, pooled his ideas with five others and they teamed up with local interior designers to come up with different concepts for furniture lines.

Perhaps the most successful was Bhaitt – a collection of eight unique furniture pieces that fuse the clean lines of contemporary

modern design with the artisanal craft of the Sindh province.

Take the Teh chess table as an example. The tiles are made of exquisite, hand-painted blue pottery that originated in the town of Hala, famed for its ceramics. The tiles are set in shisham wood, a provincial tree of Pakistan that is also the material used for the playing pieces and the whole structure is floating on a square base that gives it elegant poise. The Waadh table is equally stunning with its wooden top resting on a stem of wooden spheres with parts of it tinted teal to resemble the Hala pottery.

"The idea was to explore the crafts of Sindh, which are here in abundance, so much so that people take them for granted," explains Jawed. "We took the usually ornamental tradition and brought



Above, the Gregoria lounge by Ito Kish is from Nakkash Gallery, one of six from Dubai that will be at Design Days. Below, the Waadh table by Coalesce Design Studio from Pakistan. Courtesy Nakkash Gallery; Coalesce Design Studio

them in line with our minimal-contemporary school of thought and came up with our designs. The key was to create something totally original."

And according to the experts, this mandate has most certainly been met.

"These pieces are fantastic," says Cyril Zammit, the director of Design Days Dubai. "It is really exciting for us to be presenting design from this part of the world."

Coalesce is part of a host of first-timers set to take part in the March event. Of the 35 galleries and design studios that have been confirmed, six new countries are represented. From Jordan comes Naqsh Design House, a boutique operation run by two sisters with a mission to celebrate Palestinian culture through cutting-edge design. From China there is Wu-hao design shop, which features seasonal installations in an ancient Chinese courtyard garden

in Beijing, and from Hong Kong comes ilivetomorrow, a creative space dedicated to experimental design. Also new are ShowMe Gallery from Portugal and Wiener Silber Manufactur from Austria.

A coup for the fair is the presence of Yves Gastou, a French gallery that focuses on avant-garde and postmodern designs. They rarely participate in design fairs and Zammit points out that their presence will raise the bar of an event that is still only in its third edition.

From the UK, the Crafts Council will return with the results of an open call that they conducted for UK-based designers who will present their creations at the fair and there will be a strong Middle Eastern presence with six galleries from Dubai, three from Lebanon, one from Kuwait, a university from Qatar and the aforementioned Jordan design studio.

According to Jawed, the presence of so many international and non-western brands is vital for him as an emerging brand.

"It is unfortunate because, especially in the design world, there is a tendency to always follow foreign trends, so if you think of design, you still think of Italy and Murano glass or Cappellini designs. What this fair does is gives us a chance to show the world that even though you may not associate Pakistan with design, we have a lot of talent, a long tradition of craft and some interesting materials.

"Our approach is to turn those things into pieces that we can show the whole world and show them what we are capable of. Our primary goal is to show a different side of Pakistan and Design Days will allow us to do that."

● **Design Days Dubai will take place from March 17 to 21 at The Venue, Mohammed bin Rashid Boulevard, Downtown Dubai. For more information, visit www.designdaysdubai.ae**

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