



VISUAL ARTS

ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

PERFORMING ARTS

LIFESTYLE

TRAVEL

EVENTS

QUICK LINKS

Design Days Dubai Brings Regional Craft to a Global Setting

by Anna Kats 19/03/14 1:27 PM EDT

Like

4

Tweet

13

Share

g+

0

Share



[View Slideshow](#)

Arne Faerber's "Equilibrium, Audio System," 2012 at the J&A Gallery booth at Design Days Dubai.

(© Arne Faerber)



Jan Kath's "Serapi Queensbury Double Sky" 2014. Courtesy Stilwerk Limited Edition Design Gallery

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Billboards across Dubai that label the emirate the “Capital of the World” might sound exaggerated, but the city-state is, at least, the world’s construction capital. The sheer proliferation of luxury high-rise apartments — new towers are erected every month — has created a market for more than high-end real estate. Design, too, has benefited from the building boom, with the local market for collectible furniture expanding rapidly; after all, these new apartments must also be decorated.

The Design Days Dubai fair, now in its third edition and running March 17-21, testifies that both a local and global clientele are looking to the Middle East’s premiere design event to discover contemporary talent that simply isn’t available anywhere else —

and to acquire pieces by established and emerging names from around the world.

“I’m very proud to say that it’s also the way Dubai is. We really welcome the world here,” said fair director **Cyril Zammit**. “It’s a strong focus on contemporary design and a diversity of origins.”

While many fairs cater to a market more interested in post-war modernist design, Design Days Dubai provides a platform for emerging designers from across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia region, with relatively new national design practices like those of Pakistan, represented by Coalesce Design Studio from Karachi, and Algeria, represented by the Algerian Agency for Cultural Outreach from Algiers. A number of these designers are being exposed to the wider market for the first



time here. Galleries from Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, and several from Dubai and Abu Dhabi are also among the 40 international exhibitors at Design Days Dubai.

Some of the fair's most varied and impressive objects reflect the emphasis on regional crafts: Carpets represent the most prominent trend at this year's fair, with exhibitors like Beirut's Iwan Maktabi, Abu Dhabi's Fatema Bint Mohammed Initiative, Hamburg's Limited Edition Design Gallery, and Dubai's own J+A Gallery displaying an array of woven formal programs.

Mohamed Maktabi's Tamreen Vendetta carpet at Iwan Maktabi's booth depicts gold-tone Kufic script that fades into a gradation of yellow hues, playing with Islamic iconography to produce traditional handicraft. In the same booth, German rug designer **Jan Kath's** pieces, taken from his Erased Heritage series, feature modernist geometric forms superimposed upon Turkish motifs — the production of these pieces required “teaching the weavers that are used to making traditional carpets to make the modern design,” explained gallerist **Shirin Maktabi**. Kath's work is also on view at Limited Edition Design Gallery, where a piece from Erased Heritage hangs near a silk rug designed by **Herman August Weizenegger** and hand-knotted in Nepal. A rich gradation of blue tones that imitates the appearance of rippling water, the piece offers a decidedly contemporary interpretation of the carpet. **Michele Evans's** rugs, displayed with Dubai's J+A Gallery, also offered an alternative to traditional motifs by focusing on representation. Her “City Landscapes” series pictures women in urban settings — each rug is named after a different city. The increase in carpet offerings reflects a growing interest in weaving and textile design, updated to address contemporary aesthetic agendas and displaying regional and global influences.

International design galleries also offered a plethora of contemporary design objects with a focus on national and regional traditions. “I think that the ethos of South African design appeals to the buyers here... there's a whimsical sense of humor, there's layering and narrative,” said **Trevyn McGowan** of the Johannesburg-based gallery Southern Guild, who brought pieces by South African designers for the third year. A chandelier by **David Krynauw** made of rare wood was the gallery's first piece sold at this year's fair, and McGowan predicts a successful run.

Benjamin Graindorge, a young French designer who showed with Paris-based gallery Ymer&Malta, was another highlight. His “Fallen Tree” bench, sculpted from an oak tree with branches extending past the seating, is a one-off made specifically for Design Days Dubai.

The only American gallery at this year's fair, Los Angeles-based Industry Gallery, brought chairs by British designer **Thomas Price** and his monumental tree made of polypropylene pipes that straddles the boundary between design and sculpture. The all-white plastic flora drew nearly every fair visitor under its branches, evidence of the high demand for design-art in Dubai.

This year's iteration of Design Days Dubai comes as the emirate's design industry plans for expansion. With the construction of Dubai Design District underway near the Burj Khalifa, where Design Days has set up in a makeshift tent, the fair will receive a more permanent home by an estimated 2018. Developers imagine the site as a year-round hub for local and global designers. In the meantime, the growing demand for Middle Eastern design and for global design in the Middle East is drawing gallerists and buyers to Design Days Dubai 2014 in droves. As Shirin Maktabi sees it, the burgeoning fair portends great things to come for design and craft in the region. “Design Days is happening, Dubai is happening, and we like to be where the buzz is,” she said.

[Click on the slideshow to see images of pieces at Design Days Dubai.](#)

[View Slideshow](#)

Like Tweet Pin it Share 

TAGS [News](#) [Design](#) [Architecture & Design](#) [Anna Kats](#)

