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Design Days Dubai 2014

Constantly searching for young talent, also international, the third edition of the fair led by Cyril Zammit has expanded in terms of both the quality and number of galleries and establishes its position as a benchmark for contemporary design not just in the Middle East.

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The Design Days Dubai “design tent” is back, in the heart of the city in the United Arab Emirates that is permanently under construction. The third edition of the fair led by Cyril Zammit has expanded in terms of both the quality and number of galleries (over thirty this year) and establishes its position as a benchmark for contemporary design not just in the Middle East.



Top: India Mahdavi_Landscape Serie Table #1. Above: Philippe Malouin, Extrusion

“We are delighted with the results achieved in these first two years; design is a reality here in the United Arab Emirates and there is a growing interest also on the part of public bodies to actively support it thanks to major investments at various levels, not least in training and education” comments the director of the fair. The patronage of the Crown Prince of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and the involvement of the Dubai Culture & Arts Authority have further consolidated and confirmed the strategic role of design within the region's creative panorama (strengthening not only the design industry but also art, literature, cinema and performing arts) and the constant search for young talent, also international. This partnership with the fair reveals how design and culture can be an important driving force for this country”.



The galleries present at the third edition of Design Days Dubai are not just from the Middle East: the Coletivo Amor de Madre from Brazil presents a project by the Chilean studio based in Santiago gt2p (Great Things to People's) entitled Less CPP – A Catenary Pottery Printer, in other words an analogue machine in wood with a thin canvas shell anchored at four sides for creating various kinds of ceramics (lamps, crockery or candle-holders in stoneware, ceramic or porcelain) by pouring the material through a cotton sheet. A reflection on the making of standard machines able to generate non-standardised objects, in real time and with the physical variabilities dictated by chance through gravity, the pattern and tension of the fabric, the weight and viscosity of the material. In the digital era, marked by repetition, hand-working still makes a difference: Less CPP invites us to be more parametric and less digital,

creating a dialogue between the academic world and the artisan community.



Dokter and Misses, Kassena Server Slate, 2013. Photo courtesy of Southern Guild

Carpenters Gallery appear in a central position with a vast installation and works by Maarten Bass and Studio Job; Southern Guild from South Africa and Clear Gallery from Japan; the Italian galleries Sabrina Landini Atelier from Pietrasanta and Erastudio Apartment Gallery with pieces by Gunjan Gupta. The French gallery Next Level comes to Dubai with Bina Baitel. From Beirut the gallery Art Factum presents oblique candelabras in marble and copper by Karim Chaya called Triplette and Simplette while from the Netherlands the Judy Straten Gallery shows work by Studio Rolf, tables cut in half and ceramic teapots set inside blocks of concrete with a geometric appearance.



Michael Anastassiades, Miracle Chips 1

Special guest at this edition is Paris-based Iranian India Mahdavi who in a lengthy talk described her approach to treating spaces using colour and pattern combining original textures with contrasting tones. A long and fascinating selection of her more recent projects (from Café Germain in Paris to the Connaught Hotel in London) illustrates her particular hyper-decorative style that combines masculine materials with feminine forms (or vice-versa) and the “inevitable game of black and white” as Mahdavi herself puts it. Her “small but explicit details” as she calls them, are on show both at Comptoir 102, a gallery-concept store, and in the fair at the Carwan stand – one of the most interesting galleries at the moment based in Beirut, that presents Landscapes, two tables with geometric and irregular shapes, mosaic tiles in contrasting colours for the tops and bases in pure bronze.



Marc Baroud, Tessera Lounge Chair

The fair also includes various workshops: from stencils created for the occasion by Swiss designer Francisco Torres based in Mexico City with Ediciones Jalapa and promoter of the festival Abierto De Diseno to three-dimensional puzzles by Moto Elastico, an architecture studio with an office in Seoul.



Marc Baroud, Tessera Lounge Chair

Close to the fair is the Emaar pavilion, protagonists in the construction of the new Opera House – due for completion in 2016 – with the form of a large ship that looks onto the dancing fountains in front of the highest building in the world, the Burj Khalifa: this part of Downtown Dubai now bears the name “The Centre of Now”. Design seems to have truly captivated the entire city: a new neighbourhood is under construction not far from the fair called 3D, dedicated to housing galleries, showrooms for top international design brands and spaces devoted to creativity while even the Sikka district is under the influence of Design Week with presentations in a series of small rooms inside the maze of narrow passages typical of Middle-Eastern cities. There is also the installation *Voice for 2020* – formed by a wall of tickets with the shape of an ear and collective wishes from the 2012 Expo – also worth a mention is the project *Design House for Sikka*, curated by Mobius Design Studio (a women’s collective) and Faysal Tabbarah that examines what is known as “inward design” as a concept of resistance against the alarming sense of homogeneity that continues to pervade all design and culture as a result of globalisation.

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Marc Baroud, Tessera Lounge Chair

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