



Cyril Zammit

Marcel Wanders



Aljoud Lootah



Ranim Orouk, Anjali Srinivasan, Michael Rice and Marta Krivosheek



Fadi Sarieddine



Abdulla Al Awadi and Haidar Hindi



Amer Aldour

## Defining design

Fair Director Cyril Zammit celebrates the fifth year of Design Days Dubai, the unparalleled catalyst for the success of local designers.

TEXT: JOANNE MOLINA

**This year's Design Days Dubai** (14-18 March at The Venue) marks a milestone. Half a decade has passed and the only fair of its kind in the MENASA region is still taking the design world by storm, with limited edition furniture and design objects from galleries, workshops, installations and live performances. This year Dutch design legend Marcel Wanders will make his debut with the opening keynote, 'On the Crossroads between Art and Design', and show his Personal Editions collection. But most importantly, the fair has been a platform for regional talent to shine. Zammit explains what it takes to be a success story.

### What have been the most inspiring moments during the five years?

Besides seeing Dubai embracing design as one of its new key assets, it's seeing the local design scene grow. It is our mission to be a fair of discovery and a 'talent incubator'.

### How has the fair helped local design talent to thrive?

First and foremost, as a benchmark. I remember several designers willing to exhibit the very first year and I declined their registration. Once their frustration subsided, I explained what motivated my decision. I wanted them to see what the show was about, how high the benchmark was and how I was trying to protect them from a tough comparison. Their work has since developed and matured, with a great focus on quality.

One of our success stories is Aljoud Lootah who dropped her work as graphic designer to turn into a full-time designer. She presented her first collection ('Oru') at Design Days Dubai last year, to great success – both in terms of international media recognition and also from her peers. The National Gallery of Victoria [Australia] acquired two of her pieces. She is the first Emirati to have work in the permanent collection of an international museum.

Art Factum Gallery started as an art gallery with just one design show per year, made its international design fair debut at Design Days Dubai, and has gone on to exhibit around the world.

### What design trends have influenced the fair over time?

For the inaugural edition, we offered 'vintage' pieces with contemporary design. We immediately noticed that the region's interest leans heavily toward contemporary design. I am confident that a taste for modern design will develop here, but it will take some time. We also noticed that some materials are often not considered as noble. But the *Aqua* table by Zaha Hadid should not be considered as 'cheap'!

### What are the criteria used to spot fresh talent in the region?

Hard work is key. Fresh talent will dedicate his/her time to progressing, and never stop looking for new options or ideas. There is already a new generation of design talents to sit beside Khalid Shafar or Aljoud Lootah – from Fadi Sarieddine, who has a very aesthetic answer to practical design, to Latifa Saeed, Talin Hazbar, Rand Abdul Jabbar and Studio O4. Tashkeel does a terrific job with its design programme, as does 1971 Design Space in Sharjah, which offers non-commercial spaces for young designers.

### How does reciprocity between local and international designers reinforce long-term success?

Like the family model, whereby you learn from your elder siblings and you create your own identity out of it. Building bridges between professionals is crucial. We offer three daily workshops with designers. In two hours, our participants learn a technique and have a direct connection with a designer – but at the same time, it's a strong learning opportunity for the designer leading the workshop too. We also organise mentorship sessions during the fair, giving students the chance to review their portfolio with an established designer for 20 minutes on a one-to-one basis.

### What is your advice to young designers in the region?

Be true to yourself. Work hard, try to document yourself as much as you can, travel if possible. You may be sure you have a great idea but someone on the other side of the planet may have had it before you. Go out, network and identify who in your country could produce what you want to create. Once you know what and how to produce, visiting a fair like ours will give you the chance to meet your peers from other parts of the world. My final advice: remain humble; ambitious, sure, but always with a touch of humility and modesty.

### What does the future hold?

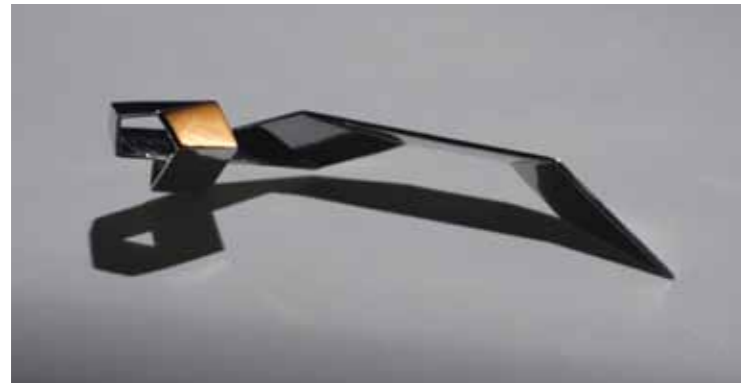
Design Days Dubai 2017 will definitely change a lot. We decided that the strategy for the first five years was to consolidate the market; the sixth one will be the one for us to renew, to potentially refresh, our offering, the format and the location. There is a lot in store for the region, Expo 2020 is right around the corner, so we all have to take this moment to confirm Dubai as the most dynamic design city.



Futuro armchair by Vick Vanlian



Artist Zuleika Penniman designs for Tanween by Tashkeel



Monogram, Sculptural Collection, 'Waw' Escaping Flatland



King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture



Kundel by Orient 499, Iwan Maktabi



The Hidden bookshelves, Carrara marble and brass, by Loulwa Al-Radwan

**Love for the local**

**The ones to watch**

This year features fresh voices and unprecedented participation by regional designers. This year's show will feature new talents from Kuwait, including Loulwa Al-Radwan and Samovar, while Aisha Al-Sowaidi will represent Doha. Other designers from the GCC include: Tanween by Tashkeel, KALO

(Sharjah), Monogram, M.A.D Gallery (Dubai) and King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Dammam). There will also be a special exhibition, 'WASL', featuring the best of UAE design.

Lebanese talent includes Art Factum Gallery, Iwan Maktabi, Georges Amatoury Studio, Squad Design and Vick Vanlian. Vanlian will create a sensational exhibition portraying limited edition pieces, entitled 'L.P.C: Love,



To Poseidon, Xia Hang, M.A.D Gallery



Mickhan Emerald Green, Aisha Al-Sowaidi



Square One, Tarek EL Kassouf, Squad Design



Green Pompeii console, or Nature's Revenge on Urban Sprawl, Georges Amatoury Studio



Carpets of Love collection, Samovar (Kuwait), Abdulla Al Awadi



David & Nicolas chandelier, Art Factum Gallery

Power, Copper', which will include two collaboration pieces with Bokja Design and two pieces designed by Rayxander.

This year's Urban Commissions asked local talent to design a public shelter to be placed within the Dubai Design District (d3). The three finalist submissions came from Hinjal Kumar, Atef Khedhir and Zyed Ben Cheikh, and Fortune Penniman.

The Middle East Emergent Designer Prize from Van Cleef & Arpels celebrates

four top-tier finalists, Marta Krivosheek, Ranim Orouk, Michael Rice and Anjali Srinivasan, who responded to the theme of 'Nature'.

Cities Boutique's exhibit, 'Orientalism Reinterpreted', will feature new designs by Lebanese designer Khaled El Mays, the art installation 'L'Ouvert et L'Horizon' from Lebanese group Hawini, and the *Enxoval* cabinet from Portuguese creators Alma de Luce.



Strata Shade, Sarah Angold and Neil Musson, Crafts Council



Launch chair by Kas Oosterhuis, Dutch Creative Industries, presented by VAA.ONL



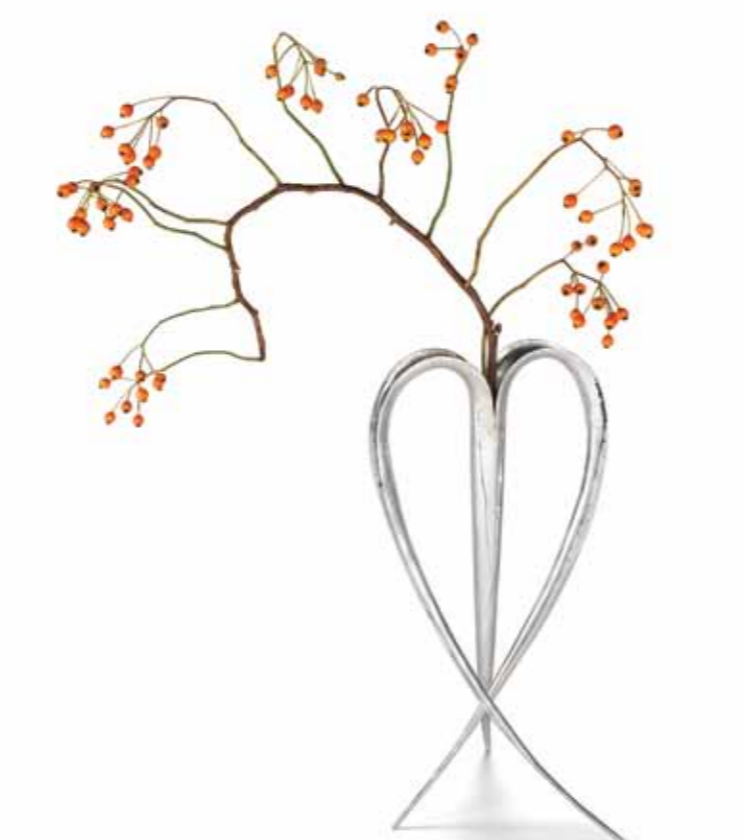
Marble lamp by Veronica Todisco, Camp Design Gallery Adaptations



Limited Moths (Catocala conversa) by Mischer Traxler, Victor Hunt



Cosmos decorative screen by Aurelia, JCT Gallery



Ted Muehling vase, Wiener Silber Manufactur

**Go Dutch**  
**Passport for global talent**

Design Days Dubai is the world's most diverse design fair, and so key industry experts come ready to invest in new talent from around the world. Camp Design Gallery (Milan) and Gendras Regnier (Paris) are showing internationally for the first time. Other new exhibitors include Barcelona Design Gallery, Dutch Creative Industry, and JCT Haute Couture Interiors (Paris).

At the forefront of the global design trend, Dutch design will be taking

the international spotlight this year. The Netherlands will be presenting a strong selection of 13 emergent designers and designer Lex Pott will be doing a live performance.

Sponsored by the Dutch Creative Industry (DCI) initiative, which aims to give an exciting overview of Dutch design talent, emerging and established exhibitors will include: Studio Their&vanDalen, Studio Roex, Niek van der Heijden, Atelier Rick Tegelaar, Stephan Siepermann, Kas Oosterhuis and Studio JSPR, and Maja Kozel will exhibit alongside Studio Dirk Vander Kooij, Studio Rolf.fr, Studio Mieke Meijer, Ilona Lénard and Mischa van der Wekke.

Dutch designer Marcel Wanders will be present at Design Days Dubai 2016, where he'll present his *Personal Editions* collection...



Clockwise: Gold Blossom crochet lamp; Bon bon chair; Fragile Fingers on a Grand Piano; Rijks Masters of the Golden Age - book; One Minute Delft Blue vases

*“With this collection, in this region specifically, I wanted to include work that celebrates humankind and highlights durability, warmth and imperfection. Handcrafted techniques and a sense of ornamentation dominate this collection and offer more surprises for both myself and those who experience it.”*

*- Marcel Wanders*