

TAKE TWO



Lauded as a pivotal addition to the growing regional art scene, Design Days Dubai returns this March with 29 participating galleries. **Hawazen Alnuweiri** previews the region's first design fair in its second instalment.

With estimated sales of over \$3.5 million made during the first edition of Design Days Dubai (DDD), over 70 per cent of galleries that participated in the inaugural fair are returning for its second incarnation, with high expectations of the region's potential to foster an interest in design. Fair Director Cyril Zammit is confident about the progress and development of DDD – the first of its kind in Asia and the Middle East – and is equally pleased about its chosen location: “Dubai is extremely diverse and it has become a magnetic hub for international travellers with artistic eyes. We are the only design fair in the world bringing galleries from six continents and we trust Dubai's ability to connect different people, styles, cultures and tastes.”

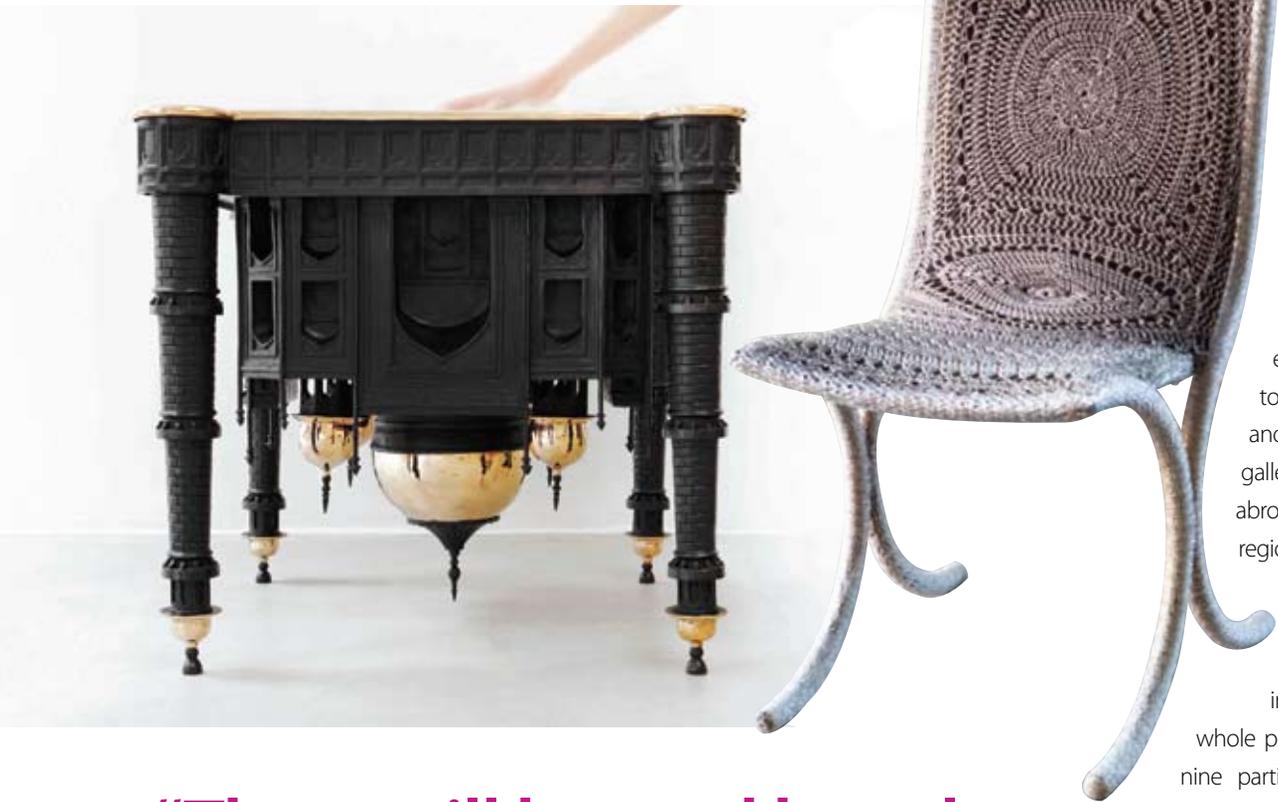
FORM AND FUNCTION

Joining Dubai's Art Week circuit last year, DDD's 2013 edition boasts 29 participating galleries – up 30 per cent – and will again be held in its specially designed space in Downtown Dubai. Zammit notes that although some galleries – such as New York's R20th Century and Kuwait/London-based Mariam Al-Nassar 20th Century Decorative Arts – will present iconic and classical pieces, he wants to focus on increasing the presence of Contemporary designs that “seem to be of more interest to Dubai audiences”, which actually make up 80 per cent of the works on show. The majority of last year's sales were by contemporary designers found in, among others, South Africa's Southern Guild – which sold its entire booth – and Belgium's Victor Hunt Gallery, which reported good sales and was later commissioned by Dubai's Jumeirah Creekside Hotel to create bespoke furniture. This year, DDD highlights will include contemporary pieces such as *Eiffel Tower* by Studio Job for London/Paris-based Carpenters Workshop Gallery, the *Tessera* series by Marc Baroud for Beirut's Carwan Gallery and *Prickly Lamp* by Melbourne's Broached Commissions.

Above: Vincent Dubourg.
Double Buffet Nouvelle Zelande.
2010. Steel. 140 x 306 x 37
cm. Edition of eight plus four
artist's proofs. Image courtesy
Carpenters Workshop Gallery,
Paris/London.

Facing page:
Left: Studio Job. *Taj Mahal
Table*. 2012. Bronze. 63 x 69 x
69 cm. Edition of eight plus four
artist's proofs. Image courtesy
Carpenters Workshop Gallery
Paris/London.

Right: Loredana Bonora.
Chakra. 2010. Transparent
PVC. 58 x 41 x 84 cm. Image
courtesy Erastudio Apartment
Gallery, Milan.



link between art and design." This sentiment is echoed by Carpenters Workshop's Julien: "With us, artists or designers have the means to really express themselves further than in an industry that is just based on aesthetic value or functionality," she explains. "Our designers are able to fuse both traits."

The second edition of DDD is expected to surpass last year's 8500-visitor mark and Zammit hopes to attract and educate audiences on designers and galleries not just in the Middle East, but also abroad. "Although my aim is to promote the region through a public programme of talks, presentations and workshops in association with the Dubai Culture & Arts Authority (DCAA), showcasing inventive and creative designs is the whole point of this fair. Still, this year we have nine participating Middle Eastern galleries as opposed to four last year," he says.

DDD has inspired the DCAA to launch *Design Road Professional*, a programme aimed at fostering the talent of aspiring Emirati designers – Khalid Shafar, Aljoud Lootah, Zeinab Al-Hashemi and Saleem Al-Mansoori, trained in Dubai, London and Barcelona for six months and who will showcase their new designs this year. Lootah, who will present a stool made of ash wood inspired by Arabesque patterns, is a strong supporter of the design fair: "It provides global and Middle Eastern talents with the right exposure, which benefits them immensely." The fair will also include a wider *Bespoke Design* section, and its mentorship programme, held in coordination with the DCAA, will also return this year, and will be held in conjunction with the four-day programme of talks, presentations and workshops.

As the worlds of design and art become more interconnected, Zammit believes that a design fair in the region can grow to be just as successful as its art counterparts. "Art buyers are very sensitive to the aesthetic value of things and this design fair should be of interest to them – it is not only functional but also innovative and creative, not to mention unique." 

Design Days Dubai runs from 18–23 March. For more information visit www.designdaysdubai.ae

“There will be, and has always been, a very strong link between art and design.” Cyril Zammit

Among other returnees are Dubai/Paris-based La Galerie Nationale and the aforementioned Carpenters Workshop. Directors at both galleries aim to remain true to their spaces' identities and styles, but also want to appeal to Dubai buyers. Aurélie Julien, Director at Carpenters Workshop, confirms: "Dubai is a young market, we have to get the attention of new and young collectors very quickly and strongly, so we must choose designs that will be more contemporary and innovative." The former will showcase furniture pieces by French designers Arnaud Rivieren and Philippe Buisson, Italian Helidon Xhixha and Dubai-based Kuwaiti/Iraqi Sarmad Al-Mussawi, while the latter will introduce the designs of Studio Job, Robert Stadler, Vincent Dubourg, Ingrid Donat and Fredrik Molenschot. "The city [Dubai] is open to art, sometimes more so than New York and London and actually Europe in general," says Guillaume Cuiry, Director of La Galerie Nationale, who opened his Dubai space last March to coincide with the launch of the fair. "The first edition was incredible, so professional,

with great exhibitors and visitors," he says. "I'm sure we will be back for the third, fourth and fifth DDD."

Among the newcomers this year are London's Based Upon and Milan's Erastudio Apartment Gallery, with the latter displaying furniture pieces by Loredana Bonora and Vincenzo De Cotiis among others, and selling pieces at between \$7000–\$45,000. Its owner, Patrizia Tenti, says the art scene in Dubai "is a pool in continuous evolution and it is open to new visions."

HIGH HOPES

With galleries from countries such as Brazil, Korea and Australia, DDD has quickly established itself as one of the most diverse design fairs in the world and turned eyes towards Dubai. "There has been an increased interest in design in the region and I think the functionality of design makes it more understandable to a larger audience very quickly," says Zammit. "We are showing a new form of art and there will be, and has always been, a very strong