

GLOBAL TOP 100 COMPANIES

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Forbes

Middle East

BARWA BANK

THE FACE OF ISLAMIC
BANKING IS CHANGING.
JUST ASK H.E. SHEIKH
MOHAMMAD BIN
HAMAD BIN JASSIM
AL THANI

THE ARAB WORLD IS
IN GOOD COMPANY
WHEN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION CALLS,
THE REGION'S ENTERPRISES RESPOND

**TOP 500
COMPANIES**

**TOP 100
MAKING AN IMPACT**

UAE.....AED 30
SAUDI ARABIA.....SAR 30
BAHRAIN.....BHD 3
KUWAIT.....KWD 2.5
QATAR.....QAR 30
OMAN.....OMR 3
OTHERS.....\$8



CULTURE CURE

Already established as a financial hub of global renown, Dubai has its sights set on an altogether different status as Design Days Dubai, arguably the world's most diverse design fair, catapults the emirate to new cultural heights.

By Nina Glinski



Cyril Zammit, the Director of Design Days Dubai, which showcases contemporary functional art, is deeply pleased with the fair's 2013 results.

When you picture Dubai, the vibrant art scene does not immediately spring to mind. But once a year, the city of skyscrapers is positively abuzz with creative and cultural energy. The highly anticipated (and advertised) annual Art Week, which took place this year at the end of March, brought some of the world's foremost designers, artists, collectors and creative minds to the Arabian Peninsula.

Among the coinciding events run during the course of the week was the second annual Design Days Dubai, held at a temporary hangar-like venue in the shadow of the Burj Khalifa under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

Cyril Zammit, the fair's incumbent director, described the opening as "emotional."

"In just two years, Design Days Dubai has become the most globally diverse design fair in the world," said Zammit at the press preview, held on 18th March. "For the last 12 months my wonderful team and I have scoured the globe and met a lot of design gallery owners, artists and collectors...you will see some of the most fresh, innovative and compelling works," enthused the Frenchman.

Building on the momentum of 2012, the event's inaugural year, Design Days 2013 added 30% more galleries, reaching total of 29. The increase in visitors matched the growth, with a total of 10,850 in attendance, up 28%

compared to last year. A final feather in Zammit's cap: total sales amounted to an estimated \$4.2 million, up 25% from 2012.

The fair showcased the works of 135 designers hailing from countries across six continents, from the UAE to the far reaches of Mexico. The range of items on display was intended to appeal to a broad range of collectors, explains Zammit, "from families buying works for their homes to longstanding collectors looking to invest early in the design stars of the future."

Following the close of the event, the director reflects on two years of progress and evolution. "We had a lot of more mature visitors in terms of buyers and collectors coming, specifically from Jeddah, Kuwait, Lebanon as well,



The 2013 fair featured 29 galleries from six continents. Total sales of the exclusive pieces amounted to \$4.2 million, up 25% from 2012

to purchase their pieces," he says. While last year served as an introduction to the fair and its aesthetics, this year attracted serious buyers and aficionados, as well as museum curators from Italy, Zurich, the US and China.

The selection of contemporary limited edition items were scooped up for prices reaching six figures. Among the most expensive pieces that were sold to buyers are a wooden bench by Seoul-based Gallery SEOMI, which fetched \$145,000, and an interactive mirror by Carpenter's Workshop Gallery from Paris, which sold for over \$200,000.

Among those showcasing Middle Eastern designers, Lebanese galleries Art Factum and Carwan fared well, selling "almost everything," according to Zammit. He adds that the four Emirati designers who showcased their work

also received a lot of requests (though their items were only on display, not for sale). This, explains the director, is a positive step for the region's emerging talent.

Design Days Dubai may present an opportunity for both emerging and established artists to clinch sales, but the priciest work of functional art will not necessarily claim the title of biggest ticket item.

Part of the fair's draw is its ability as an artistic match maker. The dialogue between galleries and patrons of the arts leads to handsome commission work for some. One of the marquee designs featured at the event was "A Million Times," an installation that welcomed fair visitors after they sauntered down the red carpet into the tent.

The Swedish work, by Humans Since

1982, features 288 clocks synched to relay messages and create whimsical visual effects. According to Zammit, there is a "very serious buyer in the region" thinking about commissioning a grand-scale project of the same sort for a new property.

Cyril Zammit pressing forward for 2014. Numerous galleries have confirmed their attendance for next year, and Zammit is heading to Milan to scout the next special installation project. "We definitely want to really reaffirm the positioning of Dubai as the only fair so far, who's concentrating on contemporary design," he asserts.

With two years of solid growth under its belt and a blossoming reputation, Design Days Dubai promises to be come back in a year's time with even more covetable contemporary works.