

# Abwab

## A CULTURAL JOURNEY

For the third edition of Dubai Design Week, Abwab highlights select talents from across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia



The region's most extensive design event of the year, Dubai Design Week, commences from November 13 to November 18, with key exhibitions held at Dubai Design District including the luxury trade show Downtown Design and the Global Grad Show for young designers, plus talks, workshops and installations across the city.

One of the most culturally interesting highlights, Abwab, returns with 46 exhibiting

designers from across the MENASA regions, showcasing – and in some cases launching – new ideas and products that explore materials, manufacturing, innovation, traditions and culture, giving a platform to old and new crafts and a voice to the countries they come from. This will all be housed within a striking, sustainably-made pavilion constructed from thousands of recycled mattress springs. Rawan Kashkoush, head of programming for Dubai Design Week, tells us more:

### How did the editorial board select the submissions?

Not only were the designers expected to represent a place but also an idea that is current and relevant to their respective country. We also assessed how they presented this, through traditional manufacturing, or a cultural reference, for example.

### What traditional techniques will we see explored?

From Morocco, Sara Ouhammadou mixes traditional weaving with sustainability using recycled rubber converted into a thread and age-old embroidery techniques from the northern Tetouan region. Mounia Meftah's Arabesque brass table lamp, Unité, is made from a delicate interlocking system inspired by jewellery



**Above** Anthony Chahwan will showcase the "craft cool" skills Beirut is known for with Light Slit, a perforated copper and wood lamp. **Far right** Reaching beyond a self-contained object, Quiver Vessels, from UAE-based designer Anjali Srinivasan, are interactive, reacting to the surfaces they meet and responding to touches and even ripples in the air from breathing.



**Above** Coalesce Design Studio explores the traditions of Pakistani carpentry with Ralli, a walnut chair inlaid with shisham wood in a ralli-inspired pattern. **Right** The intricate metal lacing of Studio MEFTAH's table lamp Unité took 1,500 hours to forge in MEFTAH's workshop in Agadir.



making. Both designers reflect the essence of Morocco yet in a contemporary way.

### Are there any new ideas you're excited to see?

I am proud to say that Ammar Kalo will debut his LED light Ripple, which uses a unique thermoforming process. He's responsible for a fabrication lab at The American University of Sharjah, so he has the tools in front of him to explore materials. Dubai-based Anjali Srinivasan uses silicon instead of her favoured material glass with Quiver Vessels, which I am looking forward to seeing. Able to collapse and return back to its original shape, it's a hybrid object, both functionally and culturally.

### Which product stands out as representing the UAE in a unique way?

Loci Architecture + Design will launch a screen called (Secrets) - Sr, which represents the traditional mashrabiya, creating a veil between two spaces. Enclosed between polycarbonate sheets, sand cascades beautifully, allowing light to penetrate while making a modern reference to the desert.

### Has there been any interesting developments that you've seen in the course of compiling Abwab?

It's amazing to see how many designers are making the items themselves, and this is where we are really closing the gap between manufacturing and the designers. Nineteen-year-old Kawther Al Saffar has made contemporary bowls from melted metal. I had not imagined that a young Kuwaiti woman would be spending so much of her time in a factory with metalworking artisans. Palestinian designer Dima Srouji is now learning glass blowing thanks to the artisans she has met making her glass object series Hollow Forms. This is a lovely relationship that has come from collaborating.

### Are the 46 pieces available to buy during Design Week?

Yes, and all of the designers can be commissioned to make more items, and some products will be mass-produced, depending on the complexity of the production techniques.

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