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DUBAI DESIGN WEEK

YEARNING FOR IDENTITY

The Dubai Design Week is the largest design festival in the Middle East. Although the majority of the participating companies and creators are from Europe. The festival becomes becomes more and more a hub for local designers.

In Dubai, everything proceeds a little faster. Not only individual towers shoot out of the desert ground, but also entire neighborhoods. The city authorities pay attention to settle companies from related industries in the same areas – a principle that also applies to the field of design. A new business center in the east of downtown and the all towering Burj Khalifa forms the Dubai Design District d3 dedicated to architecture, design and photography studios. Many furniture companies opened their showrooms within the area that also serves as central hub for the annual Dubai Design Week.

Since its launch in 2015, the festival has become to the largest in its kind in the Middle East. 75,000 visitors came into the Dubai Design District during this year's November edition. The main attention has been attracted the Downtown Design fair. 175 brands showcased their products in a large white tent, erected opposite the district along the river banks of the Dubai Creek. The section Downtown Editions showcased limited-edition and bespoke design from 40 designers from Middle East – the fair's strongest focus on regional talent to date.



Abwab, Beirut Pavilion, DXBDW 2018

Ayah Al Bitar, a Saudi Arabian product and furniture designer with her studio based inside the d3 district, exhibited a monochrome living room interior in a warm, earthy tone. Designer Aljoud Lootah showcased trunks and boxes made out of woven camel leather. Lithuanian designer *Loreta Bilinskaite-Monie*, based in Dubai since 2003, translated the patterns of shemaghs – the traditional headdress worn by Arab men – into three-cornered tables. The Czech glass manufacture *Lasvit* participated for the second time presenting a collaboration with a local designer. *The Flow* is a lighting object by Dubai-based design studio Albal. It consists of pendant glass shades with colourful

shimmering surfaces that are illuminated by irregular rounded metal frames with internal LED strips.

The festival also gives space to design schools. The *Global Grad Show* featured 150 projects from universities across the world, selected from more than 1000 submissions. Since 2015, the exhibition has been curated and directed by American journalist and writer Brendan McGetrick, who also organized the conference 'Belief in AI' looking at creativity in the age of Artificial Intelligence and automation. Among the shown works was 'BioFidget', a biofeedback system that integrates physiological sensing and display into a fidget spinner for respiration training. The project helps to indicated and to reduce stress for the human body and has been developed by Rong-Hao Liang, Bin Yu, Mengru Xue, Jun Hu, Loe M. G. Feijs from Design Academy Eindhoven.



Jameel Arts Centre. Installation view of Departure 2018 in Artist's Rooms. Chiharu Shiota at Jameel Arts Centre

Also *Livia Eberlin* from The University of Texas at Austin merged the fields of chemistry, engineering, medicine and design. Her 'MasSpec Pen' provides surgeons with a method of identifying cancer in only ten seconds. Instead of removing body fabric and examining it under a microscope, the pen releases a tiny drop of water. Chemicals inside the living cells move into the droplet which is sucked up by the pen. The instrument is then plugged into a mass spectrometer, which produces a chemical fingerprint that tells doctors whether they are looking at healthy tissue or cancer. The graduate works have been presented in an installation by New York-architecture firm SO-IL who created a mountain scenery made out of painted fabric inside an atrium of the d3 district.

Spacial experiences from five communities in the Middle East were shown at the 'Abwab' exhibition – an Arabic term for 'doors'. The UAE-based studio Architecture + Other Things designed one pavilion for each region made out of natural material like fallen twigs and timber and coated in recycled and dyed paper pulp. The pavilion of Kuwait City for instance explored methods of gypsum-moulding and sand casting with foam, while the pavilion of the Eastern Provinces of Saudi Arabia let visitors experience the meditative qualities of traditional songs of pearl divers and fisherman.



Jameel Arts Centre



Oasis Stand designed by Roar

The design festival marked also the inauguration of the city's first contemporary arts institution, the Jameel Arts Centre, at the Jaddaf waterfront on the Dubai Creek. The 10,000 square meters building, designed by UK-based Serie Architects, is not a hermetically sealed capsule. Ten gallery spaces alternate with seven desert gardens, allowing the visitors to oscillate between inside and outside spaces. Past and present, local and global are constantly interwoven at this place, that is more than an expression of Zeitgeist. Like the festival itself, the yearning for identity becomes crucial for an area were little traces from tradition have been left.

www.dubaidesignweek.ae (<https://www.dubaidesignweek.ae/>)



Ballerina Flower Vase by In Doi studio



POWDER, Amann Design

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Norman Kietzmann, born in [View Profile \(https://www.damnmagazine.net/author/norman-kietzmann/\)](https://www.damnmagazine.net/author/norman-kietzmann/) Berlin in 1979, studied industrial design at Kunsthochschule Berlin Weissensee (KHB) and at Ecole National Supérieure de Création Industrielle Paris. Since 2003 he has been working as a freelance journalist covering architecture, design and fashion for publications such as Baunetz, Designlines, DAMn°, Domus, Quality, Rondo and Handelsblatt among others. In 2011, Norman Kietzmann was awarded the prestigious "COR-Preis Wohnen und Design" for young journalists. He lives and works in Milan.

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