

'THE PEOPLE WE SPEAK TO IN THIS ISSUE HAVE ALL WORKED HARD TO FIND THEIR VOICES'



Whether it is fashion designer Victoria Beckham, artist and Turner Prize-nominee Helen Cammock or singer Omar Kamal, the people we speak to in this issue have all worked hard to find their voices.

Beckham famously transitioned from 1990s pop sensation to respected fashion designer – although there were plenty of naysayers along the way. Eleven years after launching her eponymous fashion label, Beckham is expanding her empire to include beauty products, focusing on clean formulas and sustainable packaging, sold online at an affordable-luxury price point. It feels like the start of a new chapter, she tells us on page 20, while also sharing the best advice she's ever been given (from Diane von Furstenberg, no less)

and convincing us that every woman needs a good tuxedo jacket in her wardrobe.

With the launch of his second album *Show Me the Light*, Palestinian singer Kamal has also found his voice. The crooner's smooth baritone and jazz approach had him initially typecast by the music industry as the "Palestinian Frank Sinatra", but there's more to him than that, he tells Saeed Saeed ahead of his December 15 performance at Dubai Opera. "You owe it to the audience that believes in you to give them something that's actually different at times," Kamal says on page 50.

Cammock was a social worker in Brighton, England, until the age of 35, with little thought of joining the art world. The British-Jamaican artist is now a Turner Prize nominee, and last year won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women. She incorporates video, spoken word and photography into her powerful projects, and her work often focuses on the oppressed. In finding her own voice as an artist, she has been able to give a voice to those who have none.

Luc Jacquet does a similar thing through the medium of cinema. The Oscar-winning director, best known for his 2005 documentary *March of the Penguins*, has dedicated his career to chronicling the natural world. His latest film, *Cashmere: Origin of a Secret*, was created in partnership with luxury fashion brand Loro Piana, and offers a fascinating snapshot of the lives of goat herders – and their flocks – in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. It is an invitation to consider where our luxury products come from, but also a reminder of the creativity and tenacity of man, and the unending generosity of Mother Nature.

"I think we will have a future on this planet if we are connected to this planet, emotionally," the director says on page 26. "If this film can help people to see we are living in a very precious world, maybe I will have achieved my goal."

Selina Denman, editor

OMAR KAMAL: MARTIN CHUM



STARRING

Ahead of his concert at Dubai Opera in December, Palestinian singer Omar Kamal tells us why his second album is a more authentic representation of who he is; **page 50**

TRENDING

- 10,000 Years of Luxury at Louvre Abu Dhabi
- Speaking to China's only couturier, Guo Pei
- The Arts Club is opening in Dubai
- Giorgio Armani to bring cruise 2021 show to Dubai

For more stories like this, visit www.thenational.ae/lifestyle

ON THE COVER

Preciosa will present its Carousel of Light, a canopy of 8,000 glowing orbs that respond to human interaction, during Dubai Design Week. For other show highlights, see **pages 40, 51 and 54**



LUXURY IS ...

"[Being] in London with my family, having Sunday dinner. Which we do every Sunday, all six of us."

Victoria Beckham, designer, page 20

FINE FORM

Old and new; local and universal. Intriguing juxtapositions abound at this year's Dubai Design Week, writes **Selina Denman**

In a 2013 interview, Khalid Shafar, a pioneer of the UAE's then-fledgling design scene, outlined his aspirations for the industry for me. "The challenge is for us to compete with international designers, expose our culture on an international stage and tell them: 'We have something here.'"

At the time, Dubai was still wowing with its daring skyline – imported architecture designed to capture the attention of the world. There was a limited amount of home-grown design coming out of the region.

Much has changed in the interim. This year's Dubai Design Week (DDW) kicked off this week, reaffirming the emirate's standing as the design capital of the Middle East. The event has been instrumental in cultivating the region's design scene, giving Middle Eastern creatives a much-needed platform to present their ideas, but also a forum where they can collectively strengthen their voices.

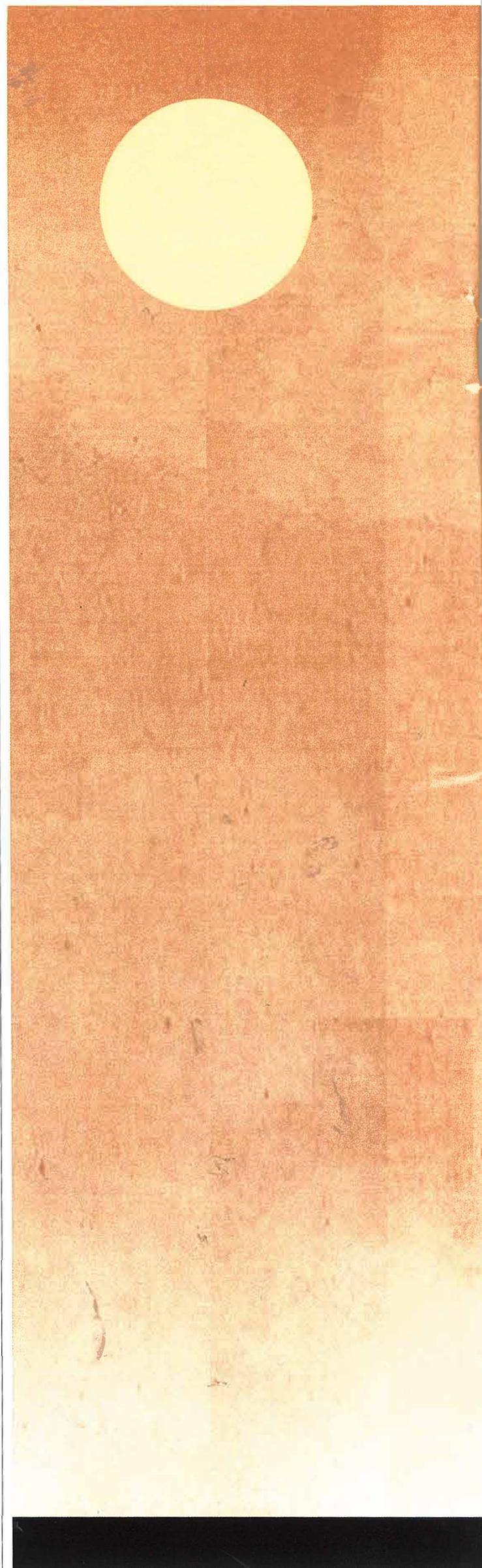
As part of this evolution, designers have had to reconsider what this region has to offer: its culture and idiosyncrasies; its crafts and manufacturing capabilities; and the materials that are readily

available here. Designers have also had to confront the quandary that sits at the very heart of the UAE: how do you juxtapose the old and the new, to create something that is true to this region but still relevant to a global 21st-century audience?

This year's DDW sees that question answered in a number of intriguing ways. Made from recycled, corrugated cardboard and a lightweight, unfinished aluminium, the Barjeel installation presents a contemporary take on the UAE's traditional wind towers. It is the brainchild of Istanbul's Mas Architecture Studio, which wanted to create something that "belonged to the vernacular of the region, but engaged with a broader theme in the architectural discourse".

"I'd been to Dubai many times and seen these wind towers, but I had no idea that they were actually used as pre-air conditioning environmental cooling systems," says Kerim Miskavi, founder and design lead at Mas Architecture Studio.

"Dubai is known for its vertical landscape – the silhouette of Dubai has become iconic throughout ▶

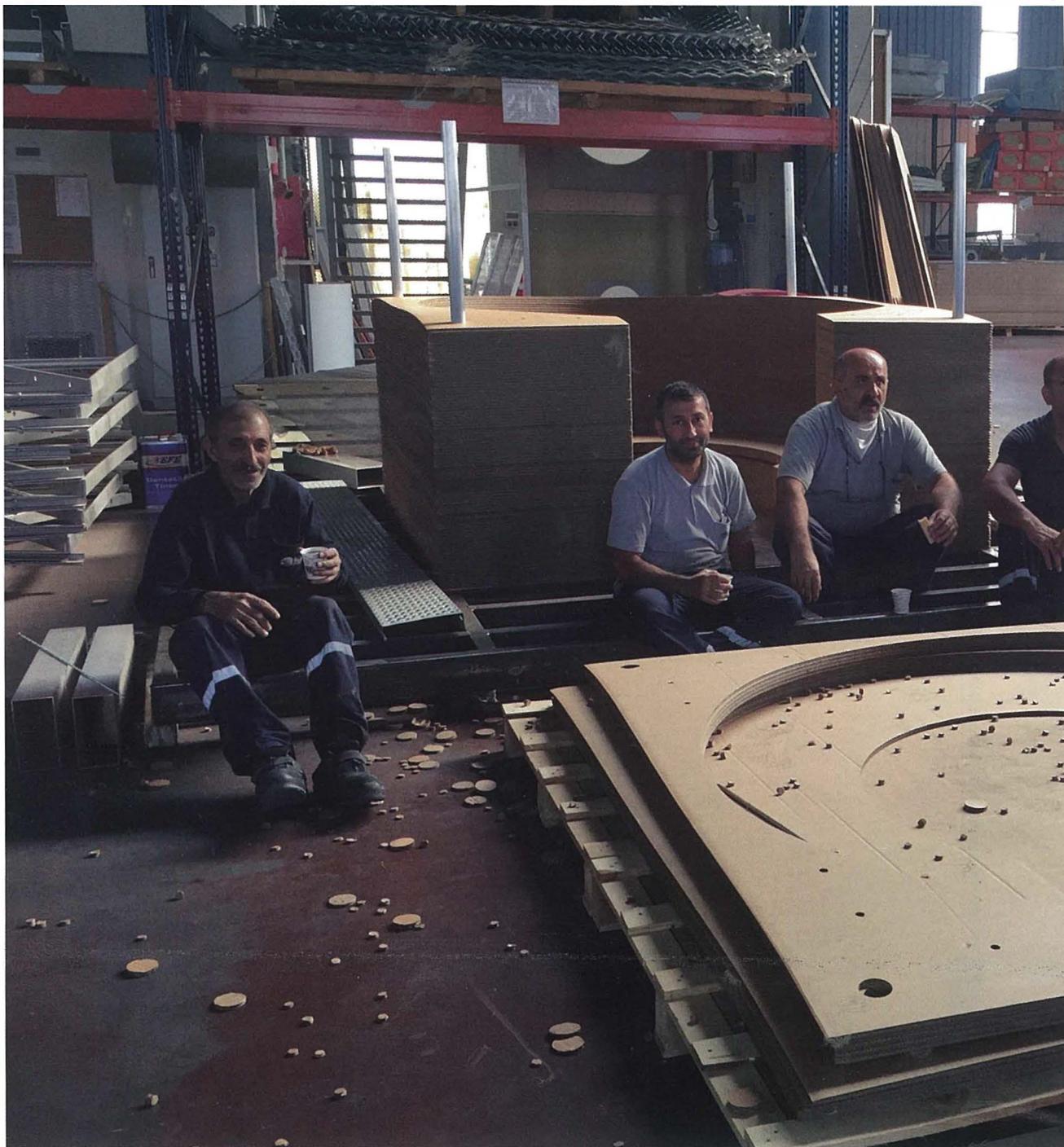




Crafted from recycled cardboard and unfinished aluminium, Barjeel offers a modern take on the traditional wind tower

MAS ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

Clockwise from right, constructing Barjeel; Shahad Alazzaz worked with traditional weavers in Saudi's Eastern Province; the architect's Abwab pavilion consists of varying woven styles and textures; and Barjeel's wind tower, as seen from the inside



► the world – but when you think about it, the first tower in Dubai was probably a wind tower. This was something that really fascinated me – the idea that the first tower to appear in Dubai was a purely performative, sustainable, low-cost but very effective environmental architectural device.

“We wanted to really embrace that by giving it a new voice – by trying to use the typology in a way that it still works, performance-wise, but is adapted to today with new materials and new technologies.”

Mas’s Barjeel consists of a 6.5-metre cardboard tower, structurally reinforced and weighted with aluminium, with a square-shaped outer perimeter that measures 2.2 metres by 2.2 metres. Envisaged as a contemplative space, inside, a circular void with a diameter of 1.8 metres presents space for four people to sit comfortably.

And so, one of the UAE’s oldest architectural features is given a modern-day update; but Barjeel also acts as a reminder that the past and present are not as disconnected as we might like to think. As Miskavi notes, wind towers were inherently practical structures that gained symbolic power over time, much like the skyscrapers of today.

“Even though it may be born out of land values or economic considerations or today’s dense urban requirements, the tower also has a symbolic presence that becomes very important,” Miskavi points out. “In a Dubai context, the tower is very much a symbol of modernity. Being able to build a tall tower in any city is, at the same time, a feat of engineering and also a

way to announce the city to the rest of the world as a place of wealth.”

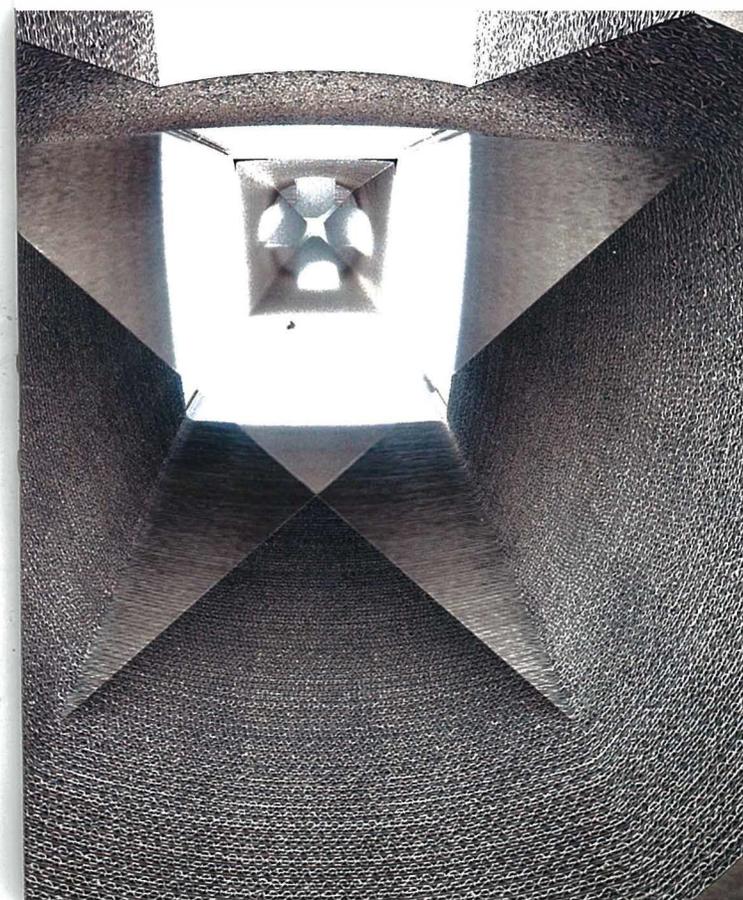
When Saudi architect Shahad Alazzaz was approached to submit a proposal for Abwab, the annual DDW exhibit dedicated to displaying work from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, she also wanted to explore the idea of connecting the old and the new.

For her pavilion, which represents the Eastern Provinces of Saudi Arabia, Alazzaz came up with Sa’af, a research-led project that aims to safeguard the craft of palm-frond weaving. A giant suspended surface is composed of varying woven styles that play with colour, scale and texture. Visitors are invited to wander through this palm-frond-enclosed cocoon and examine the craft up close.

“The challenge was finding the people to make this project into a reality. The preliminary stage was really about conducting extensive research, reaching out to authorities, reaching out to people, walking around markets, trying to find that segment of society that still produces these crafts,” Alazzaz says. “Everyone I found who had any connection to such crafts always mentioned Al Ahsa, an area in the Eastern Province.”

So Alazzaz, founder of Azaz Architects, made her way there, and did indeed discover local artists and artisans specialising in palm-frond weaving. But she found herself having to explain the logic of her very modern, ambitious, architectural design to the elderly craftspeople. “It was a meeting of two different disciplines: a relatively young architect merging

‘We are bringing a new face to a traditional Saudi Arabian craft’



knowledge with very traditional artists, who have incredible capabilities. I think this is what architecture is about, creating an open source for disciplines to meet," the designer says.

While many in Saudi will be familiar with everyday objects such as bags, floor coverings and trays that are moulded out of woven palm fronds, the Sa'af pavilion sees the craft being upscaled, and becoming a structure in its own right. While the artisans are accustomed to making baskets or trays measuring no more than 1 metre by 1 metre, here they were tasked with creating weaves to cover an area of 13m by 4m, with a height of 3m.

And while traditionally this form of weaving favours the natural hues of the fronds, with only a few streaks of colour added, Alazzaz opted to exaggerate the use of pigmentation "to give it more of a modern vibe". At the same time, she wanted to ensure that the purity of the actual technique was retained.

"We really challenged the limits of such crafts. I hope people get to see how vibrant the pavilion is, and I hope that we've given a hint of the beauty of this craft, without repeating the same traditional products that we've all seen before. We're bringing a new face to a traditional Saudi craft."

A similar endeavour is under way at Sharjah's Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, an affiliate of the Nama Women Advancement Establishment that was launched under the patronage of Sharjah Ruler Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, and is chaired by his wife, Sheikha Jawaher. Irthi debuted its

first line of luxury products during the recent London Design Festival and is presenting select items from that landmark 78-piece collection, which includes home decor, furniture, jewellery, perfume bottles and handbags, during Dubai Design Week.

The collections are the fruit of two projects: Design Labs and Crafts Dialogue. The former displayed eight collections at the London fair and were the result of female trainee artisans from Irthi's Bidwa Social Development Programme partnering with famous international artists and designers. Architect and designer Dima Srouji taught budding creatives the complex craft of Palestinian glassblowing to produce a collection of glass forms, including perfume and oud bottles, as well as midkhans (incense burners). Jennifer Zurick, an artist from Kentucky, lent her decades of weaving knowledge to local trainees to create a range of sculptural handbags, using traditional palm-frond weaving techniques to braid strands of camel leather.

"We tried to mix both cultures, getting Emirati designers to work with up-and-coming international designers, where you're using different materials with the same technique to build a product," Reem Bin Karam, director of Nama Women Advancement Establishment, explains.

"With the product line, we wanted to introduce Emirati art to the younger generation because we have a lot of dying crafts that we're trying to revive. We want to make it more viable for both their own taste and the international market at the same time." ■

MAS ARCHITECTURE STUDIO; AZAZ ARCHITECTS

DH240,000

... is the price of this limited-edition mirror, currently on show at Dubai Design Week. Here's what makes it one-of-a-kind

Fernando Mastrangelo debuted the Capital Collection this week at Downtown Editions, Dubai Design Week's platform for collectible and bespoke design. Drawing inspiration from Dubai's natural resources, Mastrangelo used hand-dyed sand and powdered glass to create the trio of limited-edition mirrors: Aurora, Marina and Sahara. Sahara references the sun and climate; Marina alludes to the impact of waterways and steel; and Aurora (pictured) pays homage to Dubai's sunsets. All three are currently on show on D3's Waterfront terrace.

"Interpreting the landscape, history and essence of a unique region through my sculptural language is integral to my artistic process," says Mastrangelo. "I'm incredibly humbled to have that opportunity with Dubai and with this special series. If I have at all been able to capture or translate a fraction of Dubai's intensity and beauty, I would consider that a success."

The pieces are a creative continuation of the New York artist's Drift series, a sculptural mirror, sofa, bench and side table that capture the stark beauty of glaciers and natural Earth formations. Drawing on voyages to the Grand Canyon and Patagonia,

Mastrangelo used topographical views of glaciers breaking over the surface of the ocean to inform the collection. There is an interplay between meticulously polished elements and surfaces that retain an exquisite ruggedness – the mirrors mimic the calmness of the sea, while cast sand captures the irregular beauty of glacial formations. The Drift mirrors were a clear precursor to the Capital Collection.

Best-known for his collectible design pieces, Mastrangelo, who lives in Brooklyn, also experiments with large-scale sculptures and experiential installations. All of his creations are sculpted by hand from natural or repurposed materials – whether sand, salt, silica or crushed and powdered glass. His concern with ecological issues is a defining feature of his works, which are to be found in private collections around the world, as well as the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum and Cooper Hewitt Museum.

Mastrangelo completed a BFA in Sculpture at Cornish College of the Arts in 2002 and completed his MFA in Sculpture in 2004 at Virginia Commonwealth University, before setting up Fernando Mastrangelo Studio (F/MS) in 2006.

