

[compasses] plus

the middle east **architecture & design** international magazine

Special issue for

dxb

DUBAI DESIGN WEEK 2021

**NATURE
THE NEW CREATIVE
SCIENCE**

Talking to
Mette Degn-Christensen

Wael Al Awar
Ahmed El Sharabassy
Omar Nakkash, Dateform



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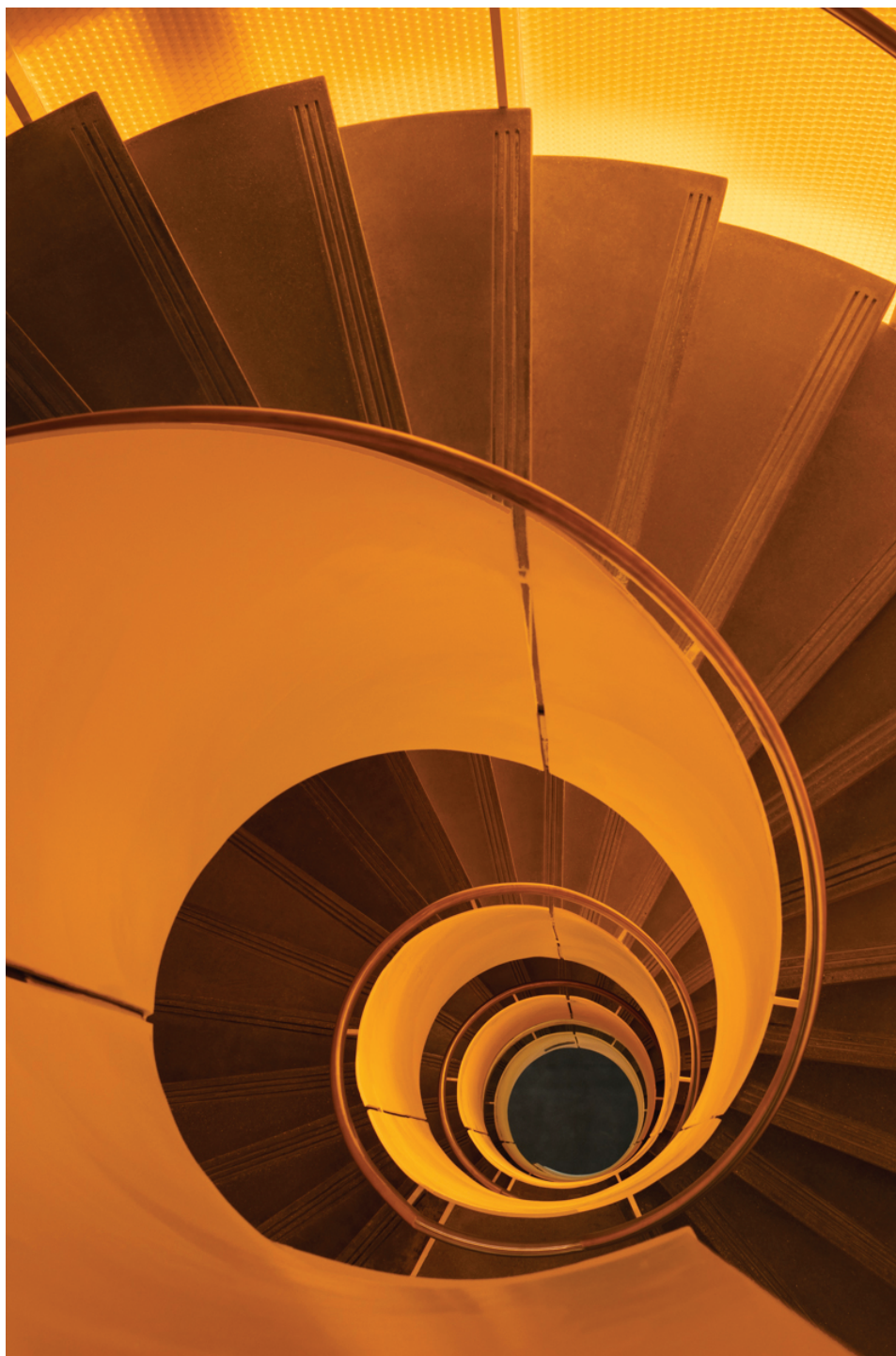
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[editorial]

Emanuela Corti
Ivan Parati

The Nature of Design

This edition of C Plus is dedicated to Dubai Design Week 2021; Compasses have been a media partner of the event since its first edition in 2016. The platform never closed its doors to the public, and even during the most difficult times of the pandemic, an alternative way to support the design community with a creative engagement was found, and certainly, because it is an event made by the design community, the manufacturers, the retailers, the institutions, the district, for the city, its people and the general public. It's Golden Jubilee for the Arab Emirates, which federation was established in 1971, and several international endorsements have been obtained; the Country is celebrating a leap forward with blossoming historical milestones such as EXPO 2020, space missions, Mars desert simulations, futuristic museums, conscious tourism, awarded participation to biennials but also a new consideration for the people that made this country's success, with new visa regulations. We would like to praise the capability of this young country to channel with confidence all the energies of a multicultural effort and for being finally able to sense the essential themes which will change the sort of our planet. This is what we need right now, a shared effort among emerging and developed countries to balance innovative perspectives and vernacular solutions. A convergence of intents brings together diverse disciplines as well, therefore collaborations are multiplying across domains with projects that often enclose artists, innovators, and scientists. The perception of luxury as excessive décor, oversized and extravagant elements, which was characterizing the country till a while back, is slowly shifting to a more balanced opulence, which blends technology and nature.

In this issue, we are mapping some of the most important experiences happening right now at the edge of design, material science, culture, architecture, interior design, and product with a focus on what Dubai Design Week 2021 has to offer. Materials from waste as a new vernacular form of construction tradition, sustainable installations mimicking natural dynamics, while incorporating vegetation, furniture that dissolve in the outdoor while regenerating the soil with nutrients and seeds, graduation projects that find a fresh perspective on the theme.

This issue doesn't want to be a guide, a manual, or a catalogue, this issue just wants to remark once more the importance of addressing the sustainable agenda within a manufacturing, financial and social system that is part of our daily life much more than what we can perceive, and sense physically. We believe that through our conscious choices we can contribute to this dialogue and we can make this planet a better place. Please enjoy... responsibly

Dateform. Compostable food packaging solutions made out of date seeds.



Mette Degn-Christensen & Fatma Al Mahmoud

What a great time to be in the UAE, between the long-anticipated Expo 2020, the UAE pavilion receiving the Golden Lion in Venice and the jubilee of the UAE, the market is very much open for business.

The programme

Dubai Design Week is back with its most extensive programme of free-to-attend exhibitions, installations, engaging activities and pop-ups, talks and workshops to date, accessible for visitors at all levels.

With a line-up of 200 and more activities, visitors to the festival can enjoy a diverse line-up of impactful experiences; from taking a look into the future through a multi-media architecture exhibition that will teleport us through the next 20 years of Dubai and meeting the brightest minds coming out of the region's universities, showcasing ideas and solutions that will improve our lives; to discovering the latest in international design trends, with more than 130 leading brands and designers exhibiting at Downtown Design, the region's largest fair for original and limited-edition design.

This year, we have an emphasis on human-centric, community led experiences and visitors of all ages and skill sets can participate in a series of over 80 hands-on workshops and masterclasses providing the opportunity to experiment with a wide range of activities and attend the daily talks programme featuring regional and international industry leaders exploring topics related to the rapidly evolving design landscape. It is also possible to meet the region's artisans, creatives and small businesses offering a curated selection of original and high-quality products at the weekend outdoor market and, finally, bring the kids for a host of activities from pottery to tree planting.

We will have a key focus on supporting the creative community in Lebanon this year, with rising and established Lebanese design talent will be highlighted throughout the festival's programme; from architectural installations and product design, to artisanal Lebanese delicacies and outdoor music sessions.

Current trends

The times we live in has caused an urge for attention to solving crisis, emphasis on smart design that actually improve our lives and positive narratives for mental health and quality of living.

People and the planet are at the centre of creative solutions which we see both in product design, architecture and urban planning. I think makers, craftsmanship and artisans will be making a breakthrough, in line with innovation, material exploration and circularity but it takes time, respect, insight and preservation.

Highlights

With such an array of events and activities it is of course difficult to choose one highlight. Downtown Design is back this year and has a lot of creative showcases and group exhibiting talents from around the region; 2040: d3 Architecture exhibition will be very interesting for all visitors and the MENA Grad Show, which is always truly inspiring to explore.





Dubai Design Week 2021 will present *Meet the UAE Creatives*, a new hybrid programme that will highlight the UAE's thought leaders through an engaging series of dialogues and design stories, curated by Fatma Al Mahmoud.

After earning a BA in Visual Arts at the Department of Art and Design, College of Art and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University, Al Mahmoud worked as a graphic designer at the Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq), before becoming a permanent member of the Maraya Art Centre in 2016, where she has since been responsible for setting the programmes and workshops for both the centre and 1971 Design Space.

An active member of the UAE creative community, Al Mahmoud also chairs the Shurooq Corporate Youth Council, manages the Jedariya street art initiative, and is managing partner at the Dubai-based art and design management studio Hamzat Wasl.

Fatma speaks to *Compasses* about her curatorial role at the Dubai Design Week 2021.

«*Meet the UAE Creatives* will provide designers and creatives based in the UAE with a platform to explain their work within their local creative scene, held across activated spaces in Dubai Design District (d3) with a different creative offering insight into their work each day throughout the week-long event.

Collaborations and dialogues through platforms such as Dubai Design Week are essential to identify what design and designers in the UAE need to focus on. The aim of the *Meet the UAE Creatives* programme will be to overcome current obstacles faced by the creatives, highlight achievements and key efforts made in the field and have productive discussions to enhance the design scene in the UAE; and I look forward to being part of that exchange.

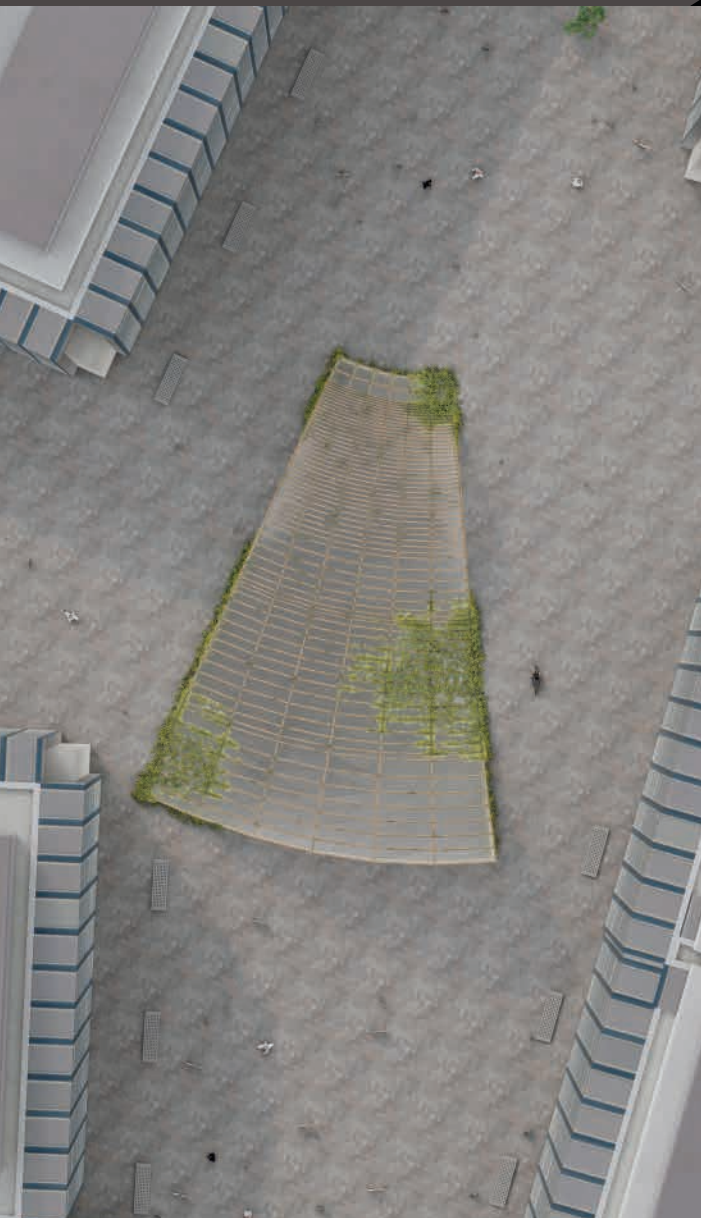
The programme will bring together both emerging and leading designers, architects and creative industry experts in the UAE, giving insight on a variety of cross-sector topics that will include Design Production and Funding in the UAE; Design Education, Urban Planning and Architecture in the UAE; Creating Graphic Design Content; Sustainable Design Applications; and Designing Experiences in the UAE.

The design and format of *Meet the UAE Creatives* was inspired by a traditional Emirate format of majlis known as a Barza, similar to that of a council setting, but with a contemporary twist. Through the hosting of venues within d3, the programme will be presented within a more engaging setting, with greater interaction between the speakers, moderators and the audience».

[focus]

The green dune

Ivan Parati



The Abwab initiative is one of the highlights of the Dubai Design Week since its inception in 2016. It was previously a curated commission of a pavilion that would shelter a selection of the regional talents' products, a foreword of the creative agenda in the Middle East, for the coming season. Looking back at precedent editions, we could point out a special care for the environmental aspect of the project. While this is rather obvious in any other context, in UAE this should not be given for granted, considering that, just a few years back, the local sensibility towards “green” issues was quite contrasting with its longing for glamorous stuff of luxury and excesses. In the 2006 WWF's living planet report, UAE was the country with the highest ecological footprint per person, at almost 12 global hectares. For a country that prides itself on excelling in many fields, this particular Guinness World Record – being listed among the most wasteful populations – was a stain to remove at any cost. Since then, many steps ahead have been taken by the government to curb the ignominious primacy, working with Global Footprint Network, the promoter of the above-mentioned index, to draft the roadmap that, in the following years, could steer the country toward more sustainable practices. According to the latest available statistics in 2017, the index was already below 9 global hectares and nowadays you feel that there is a public interest towards sustainable practices, becoming the latest cool things along with fitness, veganism, electric alternatives of anything, and other healthy practices. But still, there is a lot to do.

After being among the countries with the best response to the global pandemic, the United Arab Emirates is approaching a new season of resuming international fairs and events, attracting people from all around the world to flood quantities of events, with a consequent strong ecological impact. Some events will last just for 3 days and host humongous pavilions from multinational corporates that end up in the landfill at the end of the event. I was always concerned about this impact, always incorporating sustainable objectives in my courses of exhibition design at the university. My direction usually involves modular and collapsible structures to extend the life of the stand that could be dismantled and stored very efficiently, repaired, upgraded with new graphics, and utilized to participate in a new exhibition.

This year the winning proposal of the 2021 Abwab commission, *Nature in Motion* is going to be the most closely related to sustainable practice. For a few years, the pavilion design is bounded to an open call, and designers are pitching their ideas responding to a theme embedded into the brief. This year, regenerative architecture and restorative design were the focus, and responders to the call were asked to implement biophilic design, circular economy systems, and biomimicry in their proposals and investigations, by incorporating nature as a central component. Ahmed El Sharabassy, the author of *Nature in Motion* is not new to winning competitions, his first success was when he was just 19, when he envisioned a pedestrian bridge that was defying the common notion of static architecture. Moving forward with his career he always maintained a similar disruptive approach with a range of projects that seems to reconcile rigorous tradition and dynamic organicism. Ahmed is leading a prolific architectural practice with a presence across the Middle East and North Africa, but he never abandoned his original marvel in front of the wild creative dreams of children, that he channels through his widespread educational programs.

As expected from an attentive creative, his design for the Abwab pavilion takes inspiration from the context, referencing the constant everchanging dialogue between the desert and the inhabited city. Rather than addressing the struggle of the local community to overcome the hostility of the extreme climatic conditions, it celebrates through a dynamic still frame the evolutionary wave of the city, from a bunch of nomadic settlements to a global display of modernity and efficiency.

The structure is an organic fragmented mesh built with recyclable materials of sustainable sources, bamboo is indeed one of the most renewable construction materials, certain species can grow at an

incredible rate of almost 1 meter per day, its wood is particularly suitable in a moist environment, and it surpasses steel in tensile strength. For all these reasons it is clear why bamboo is still in use across the whole tropical area as a preferred material for scaffoldings and building purposes. In China, it is not rare to witness high-rise buildings being scaffolded in bamboo. The choice is wise and would be even wiser if bamboo would have been sourced locally. The posts are even used to integrate nature in the design with climbing plants attentively selected to stand the local climate.

The fabric implemented on the top of the construction is light and durable as well as sustainably sourced with special attention to balancing its performances. This «translucent cotton canvas» has to shade enough to create a comfortable microclimate, but its density can affect the weightage, and also it could act as a wind sail making it unstable especially during November showers. All of the above warns about the structural capabilities of the pavilion, that the designer was able to address with unexpected mastery.

In conclusion, it ticks all the boxes of *Nature in Motion* and its Instagramable appeal goes well with the tone of the festival, but it is not going any further beyond D3 premises, it certainly won't be a model for the event industry in the region, especially considering the challenges to implement it at industrial scale. Building with bamboo takes time and certain craftsmanship expertise, and if construction takes longer than operational life then it won't be that sustainable anymore. It will be desirable, as part of the initial brief, that the design is kept on-site for a time longer than the festival, to balance its embedded energy, and, if left to its course with the plants populating the whole structure like a massive pergola covered in foliage, it could become a well-shaded multifunctional space. Let's see if it could stand the proof of time, kids climbing capabilities and...November showers.



[essays]

Emanuela Corti

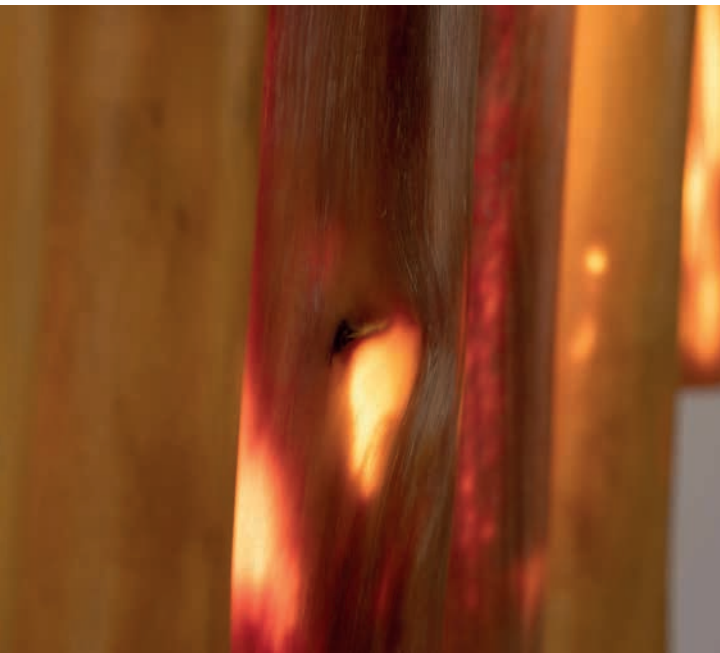


Towards a Sustainable Luxury

The area of the Arab Emirates was known as an important regional trading center until the late 19th century but, with the acquisition of oil wealth, the Arab Gulf state saw a rapid economic transformation and in 1971 the federation of the seven Emirates was founded. Since then the country has seen massive and rapid development; Dubai especially is known for its construction projects and the real estate market. In fifty years, the whole region changed completely and people came from all over the world to participate in the development.

2021 marks a very important year for the Arab Emirates: besides being the year of Expo 2020, which sees light after a long wait due to the pandemic, it's the Golden Jubilee of the Union and expectations grow. In 2010, at the closing of a Cabinet meeting, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, launched UAE Vision 2021, which aimed at making the UAE among the best countries in the world. In order to translate the Vision into reality, its pillars have been mapped into six national priorities which represent the key focus sectors of government action and in the last decade, a lot has been done to achieve the vision. Challenges related to economy, national identity, health, education, environment, and wellbeing. Although significant improvements in environmental management have been made, in 2016 the World Wildlife Fund estimated that the United Arab Emirates is still amongst the countries with the highest ecological footprint in the world (World Wildlife Fund, 2016).

The objectives of the more recent Vision 2030 of the Government are aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and UAE is taking several steps to achieve them. New strategies focus on infrastructure, transportation, environment and the industry.



Oud by Khawla Mohammed Al Balushi. Lighting fixture made out of Ghaf wood. Image courtesy of Tashkeel.

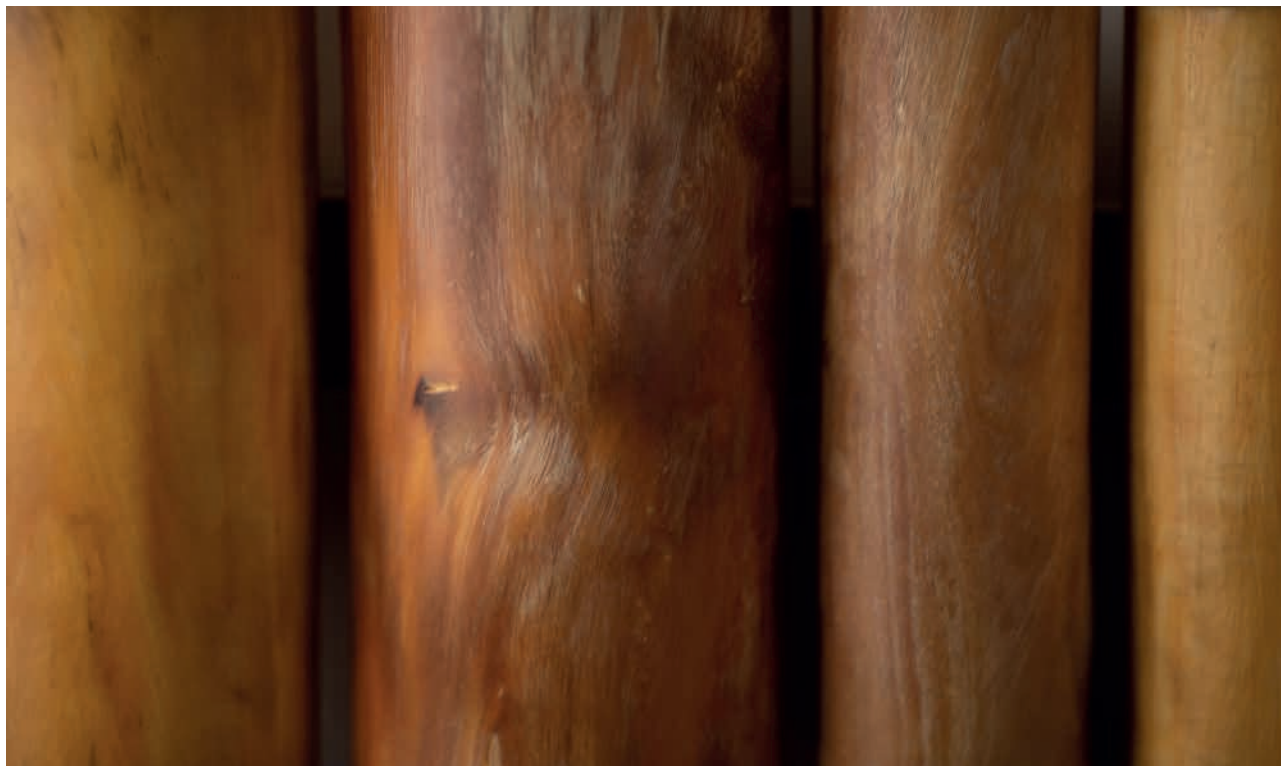
Material research at the New York University Abu Dhabi Division of Engineering AMBER Lab Image courtesy National Pavilion UAE La Biennale di Venezia and waiwai.





Among many initiatives, the Industrial Strategy 2030 was set to elevate Dubai into a global platform for industries based on knowledge, innovation and sustainability. Although most products are still imported and the industrial production is minimized despite the Government's vision. Perhaps someone is paving the change. As we have seen in recent years things can move very fast in the Emirates and we hope all goals could be achieved even prior to 2030.

In recent years, we have seen a new generation of homegrown designers eager to explore sustainable indigenous material, products developed through unexpected natural resources or reprocessed waste. A good example is Ammar Kalo, whom completed several commissions for Bee'ah, the UAE's leading waste management company. Sustainability and circular economy are important aspects of contemporary design, and regional designers are very well aware of the importance of integrating those aspects in their projects. The curious aspect is that they are introducing locally sourced material, giving sustainability an unexpected Middle Eastern twist. The UAE pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2021 is the perfect example of a new scientific approach: the installation has been awarded the Golden Lion, for being «a bold experiment that encourages us to think about the relationship between waste and production on a local and global scale, and opens us to new construction possibilities between craft and high-technology», as Kazuyo Sejima, President of this year's jury, said during the ceremony. Curated by Wael Al Awar and Kenichi Teramoto, Wetland presents a large-scale prototype structure created from an innovative, environmentally friendly cement made of recycled industrial waste brine which could reduce the climate impact of the construction industry.



Dateform. Compostable food packaging solutions made out of date seeds.

A sample of treated Ghaf wood.

Oud by Khawla Mohammed Al Balushi. Lighting fixture made out of Ghaf wood. Image courtesy of Tashkeel.

'Pulp Fusion' by Bits to Atom.

A detail of 'Pulp Fusion'.

Lab tests. Image Courtesy National Pavilion UAE
La Biennale di Venezia, photography by Dina Khatib.



The impression of Wetland is certainly going to impact future generation's designers, although we see that those themes are already close to emerging designers in the region, working on projects that define a sustainable future.

The Abwab Pavilion at the Dubai Design Week 2021, features an exhibition called Pulp Fusion, which explores a fully compostable material made out of recycled paper and organic materials by Beirut-based architecture studio Bits to Atoms: their long-term research project consists of a material made out of a pulp of papers mixed with seeds and nutrients, that would blossom with water. The aim of Pulp Fusion is to abolish plastics: instead of harming the environment when products are no longer in use, this eco-friendly version would sit in nature for a little while until moist enough to degrade and nourish the soil, providing along with its deterioration, new growth, and new life.

Bits to Atoms has been experimenting with the recycling of paper to develop a sustainable recipe, and to find the right production process to create a chair that is both sufficiently structurally resistant, yet entirely compostable.

Similarly, Dubai-based startup Dateform is committed to reducing plastic pollution, developing compostable food packaging solutions made out of date seeds, a nutrient-rich natural resource widely available due to its high consumption and production within the region. Date seeds can be an effective catalyst for social, economic, and environmental sustainability according to Dateform co-founders (Alhaan Ahmed, Heba Naji, and Abdulaziz Al Zamil) who also hope that their innovation will encourage designers to rethink how natural resources and locally-produced waste by-products can be repurposed to help move the world towards a circular economy and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12: Responsible Consumption & Production.

The Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi announced a policy to reduce the amount of single-use plastic material and mitigate its harmful effects. The policy aims to keep plastics out of the environment and eliminate the use of avoidable single-use plastic materials by 2021 through fostering a culture of recycling and re-use and encouraging more sustainable practices in the community. Unfortunately, not an easy task, since certain habits are rooted in the middle eastern way of living but we believe that Dateform is going to support the change through a product that carries cultural values and iconic symbols.



Indigenous natural resources are also the core of UAE-based Nuhayr Zein Elmessalami's work. The Egyptian architect and designer who focus on a symbiosis between nature and design, is developing a plant-based leather alternative material for furniture and other products, using non-processed local dried plant pods. Nuhayr's practice is rooted in culture and identity, drawing inspiration from the surrounding natural context to create environmentally responsible designs and material solutions. To the designer, the Arab region has seen a positive shift towards a design style that responds to its context in terms of the environment and culture, raising awareness among people about the importance of identity, which was a push for designers to work along with local materials and manufacturers.

Nuhayr's latest work, the Seeds, presented at the Dubai Design Week 2021, is developed within Tanween, a professional training program by Tashkeel, which aim is to help new creatives enhance their research capabilities, knowledge, and understanding of sustainable and problem-solving design, through the support of UAE-based engineers and scientists. The Seeds Series represents Tashkeel's commitment to developing innovative, sustainable, contemporary product designs informed by the heritage, identity, and natural environment of the United Arab Emirates. Nuhayr aims at creating a balance by fusing machine-made with nature-made, modern with traditional, and present with past in one intricately made piece. This duality is reflected in the choice of materials used, where digitally carved oak wood is contrasted by Leukeather, a sustainable plant-based and naturally textured material developed by Nuhayr as an alternative to exotic leather. Ottoman from The Seeds Series draws inspiration from the familiarity and complexity of trees, resulting in a familiar ottoman design, rich with intricate digital and natural textures and patterns.

Identity is the core of Emirati interior designer Khawla Mohammed Al Balushi's work, whose work is inspired by the natural environment and the Emirate's culture. Khawla's work is currently focusing on indigenous techniques with the aim of integrating them into contemporary design products through innovative sustainable processes. Her most recent work, also developed within Tanween Program, is based on the Ghaf tree (*Prosopis Cineraria*) also known as 'Shami' or 'Khejri', which was declared the national tree of the UAE in 2008. A popular Emirati saying goes, "Death will not visit a man, even at the time of a famine, if he has a ghaf, a goat and a camel, since the three together will sustain a man even under the most trying conditions." An integral part of the natural food chain, ghaf provides food and shelter for wildlife and livestock. Historically, it was an early source of nourishment, building material, firewood, and medicine for communities. Now protected by the Government, waste Ghaf has been collected by the Dubai Municipality for this study.

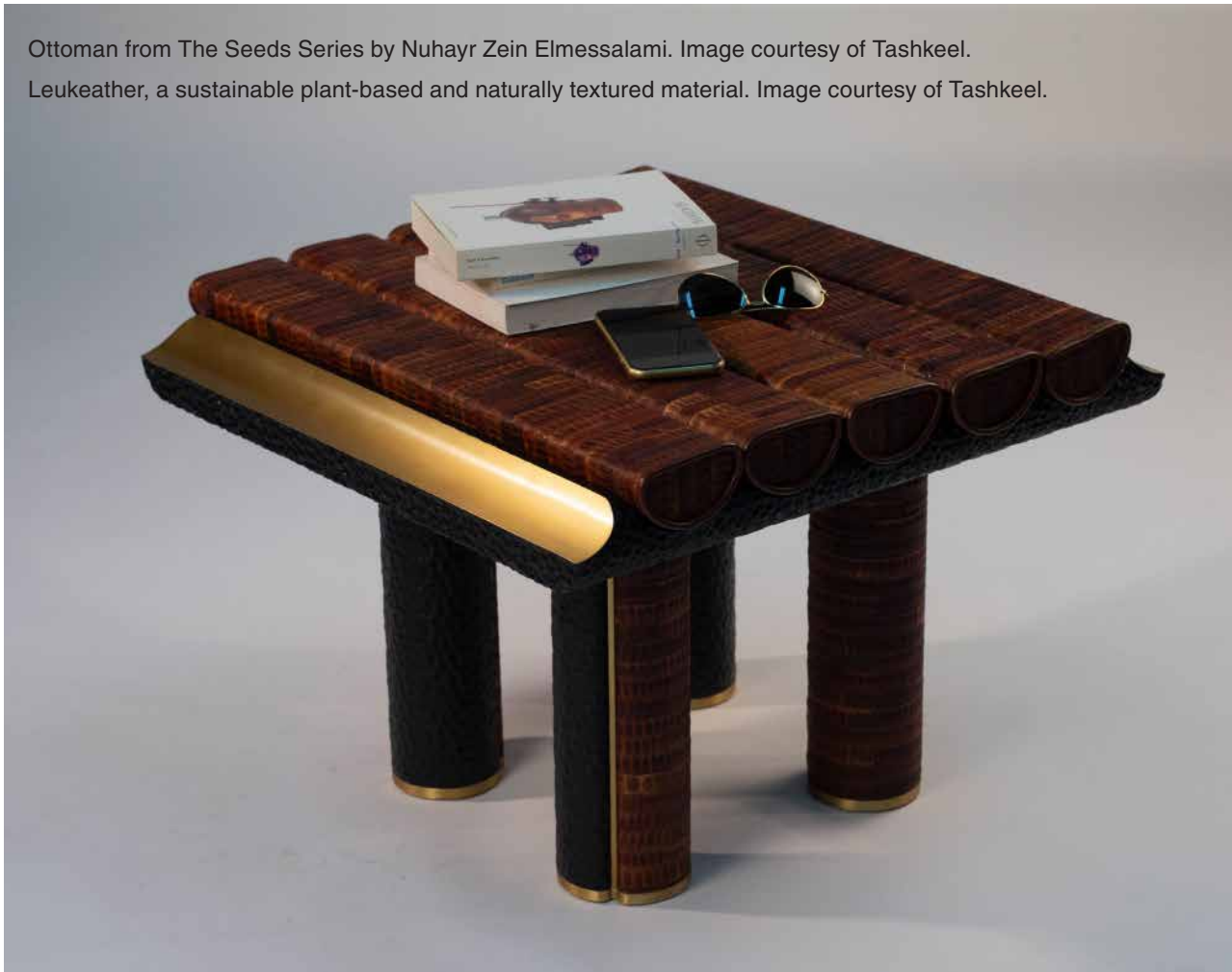
Khawla worked along with scientists to make the Ghaf tree stronger and translucent and produced a lighting fixture called Oud (which in Emirati dialect means a group of Ghaf trees combined in one area) that is going to be presented during the Dubai Design Week 2021.

In order to preserve its biodiversity and protect and restore the natural habitats of its local plants, the UAE created a database of local plant species and made it available to the public through an app titled Gherasuae. In line with the 2021 Vision, the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi (EAD) is set to document and preserve plants by establishing Abu Dhabi Plant Genetics Resources Centre.

Identity goes through different aspects of society and young designers are keen to explore opportunities that the country is offering. Industrial production might be at its dawn but Vision 2030 is expected to support through several initiatives' new technologies and sustainability and we are set to see what new generations can bring. Certainly, a fertile ground for innovation that the Emirates are offering opportunities that we believe designers will embrace.

Ottoman from The Seeds Series by Nuhayr Zein Elmessalami. Image courtesy of Tashkeel.

Leukeather, a sustainable plant-based and naturally textured material. Image courtesy of Tashkeel.



[young designer]

Ciara Phillips

Nakkash Design Studio

Work

Jade Stone Headquarters

Client

Jade Stone

Location

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Project Year

2021

Architecture and Design

Nakkash Design Studio

Additional functions

Fit out contractor: I-One Interiors

Image credits

Oculus Project



Nakkash Design Studio brings rural Africa to corporate Dubai

Nakkash Design Studio's brings rural Africa to the heart of corporate Dubai with its first office design concept, a welcoming earth-toned headquarters for Lebanese agrotech company Jade Stone in Dubai's Jumeirah Lake Towers, a district crowded with steel and glass high rises.

The Dubai-based studio transformed the lackluster dry corporate fit-out using a palette of sun-bleached, earthy colors and tactile, natural materials like sisal and bronze, stucco paint blended with hay to mimic the color and texture present in the rural landscapes of East and West Africa in which the organization operates.

The client, Jade Stone, which initiated the project after deciding to move its HQ from Lebanon to the UAE, worked remotely with Nakkash Design Studio's founder and design director Omar Nakkash, one of Dubai's most exciting designers known for his rigorous 360-degree and human-centric approach. Nakkash oversaw every aspect of the project, from finding the new office location to creating the layout and choosing the original artworks sourced from Moeshen Art Gallery, Nigeria. «Before responding to a client brief, I like to get to



know each client: from the business in which it operates, the people that work there, their working environment needs, as well as their personal likes and dislikes. Jade Stone is in agrotech with most of its business in Africa so we looked to that continent for reference – sourcing antique agricultural tools and objects, art, colours and textures – and sought to recreate a natural environment in a work environment», said founder and design director Omar Nakkash.

Before Nakkash Design Studio began working, the office space was a standard corporate fit-out: 245-square-meters of acrylic carpet tiles, false ceilings and glass partitions. The Studio reordered the space to create better circulation throughout the office and a mix between an open-plan office space, for the employees who work in different departments to collaborate on common tasks, and closed office spaces for meetings, sensitive work (such as accounting and procurement) and a CEO's office. «When fit-out began, a major obstacle was the outdated lease outline drawings provided by the landlord, such as columns that weren't in the initial drawings and a lot of unforeseen MEP issues came to light. As a solution, we hid columns between walls which served to create a less stiff, more intimate atmosphere. Then we placed all the MEP machines above the closed offices allowing for the height/ >





volume in the common area to be maximized and sight-lines between the various zones improved», said Omar.

Visitors are welcomed to the office at a reception desk clad with sisal panels and framed with olive green-stained walnut. The antique agricultural objects that dot the space were carefully sourced by Nakkash Design Studio, as were the artworks by Nigerian artist Bob Nosa on the walls.

Beyond the reception, a central open-plan space with two boardroom tables sits at the heart of the office, while six offices for both quiet and collaborative work, a pantry, an IT room and a meeting room line the perimeter of the floor plan. Throughout, the interior feels warm and welcoming; more akin to a residential environment than a corporate one thanks to thoughtful details such as sisal wall panels, integrated greenery, weathered timber plinths and benches made from Cambodian door frames that are used to display sculptures.

Floors are finished in a neutral-coloured micro cement while stucco paint blended with hay was applied to the walls to create a tactile and uneven finish. These surface finishes were applied to mimic some of the textures present throughout Africa, such as its traditional clay building techniques, but also to soften the corporate-formal and angular lines of the office's steel and glass skeleton.

Undulating panels with soundproof insulation were also inserted around the base of the glass partitions in some of the offices to further soften the spaces while providing more privacy in meeting rooms.

A sculptural table with a walnut top and an oval-shaped void in its weighty solid walnut base sits at the center of the office's pantry. It is surrounded by olive green-stained veneer cabinetry that houses the company's huge archive with spotlight niches for displaying artworks to break the monotony. Overhead, a stainless steel lighting fixture mirrors the shape of the table bringing the focus to the center of the room.

In the central open-plan office portraits by Nigerian artist Slam Austin are inset into the walls creating a gallery-like atmosphere. The bronze trim floating frames that surround the wall-mounted artworks were created by skilled craftsmen from neighboring emirate Sharjah who work with the galleries in Dubai's art district, Alserkal Avenue. A long walnut boardroom table with an in-built planter at its center stretches the length of the space and is set with white Sayl chairs designed by Yves Béhar for Herman Miller that provide a sleek foil to the office's more rustic elements.

Concludes Omar, «we're delighted with the result of our first office project. Jade Stone's HQ stands out in a city filled with lack-lustre dry office fit outs. We hope this level of detail and care for all those that come into the space on a daily basis, unique corporate environments such as these will be the future of office spaces post-Covid and will encourage more employees to return».





[interview]

Cristiano Luchetti

Material. An interview with Wael Al Awar



CL: I must kick off by offering the warmest congratulations for an exceptional result. The Golden Lion at the Architecture Biennale indeed represents one of the most coveted awards in the architectural profession. I believe that the prize holds even more value because it coincides with the first time the UAE pavilion's curatorship is assigned through an open call. I assume that the celebrations are now over; therefore, I ask you, with a cold head, what are your thoughts on this year's Biennale? How did you experience the various phases that characterized such an uncertain and peculiar edition? Did you have time to reflect on the whole experience?

WAA: That is a great question, actually. The UAE pavilion gave the chance to participate in the call to architects within the UAE or representing the UAE. The call offered an equal platform for all to submit their ideas. My Japanese partner and I were already working on the proposed research because we are practicing architects. You may be familiar with some of our buildings and works in Dubai, ranging from Al Warqa mosque to Hai D3, the container project in Dubai design district, to the Jameel Art Center and Al Jaddaf waterfront public space. As practicing architects today in the 21st century, knowing about the climate emergency, an alarm that is beeping so loud, we feel that we have to respond to that. We can no longer say this is not our problem, not our responsibility. As designers, we have to be held responsible for the materials we use and their ecological impact on the environment. Unfortunately, in the UAE, we are limited in terms of material palettes. The available palette exists mainly for the modern material available in the market: cement, steel, glass, etc. However, it was always difficult for us to find something we could relate to the vernacular. In this time of such climate crisis, many architects worldwide, including fellow curators, like those of the Nordic pavilion or the Philippine pavilion, are turning toward vernacular material present in their original territories to stop using modern materials that are harmful to the environment. In the UAE, we cannot do that. We were looking for what we could turn back to. For instance, Arish, the palm frond leaves; it is not a material that can be used in construction to a modern scale or level. One could build a wooden house or even a multi-storey building, but I still doubt turning to vernacular as the primary sustainable strategy. With the increasing world population from 7.5 billion to 10 billion by 2050, we have to house two-point something billion people in the next 35 to 40 years.

How will we do that? Recently, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation issued a report about this issue. Their report states that we will have to build the equivalent of one New York City every month for the next 40 years to meet this growing population by 2050. The UAE now has a population of 10 million, and the projection is to become 20 million by 2050.

So how do we build for these people? In a way, we have the research agency already in place. We are looking at these issues and thinking, how can we address these subjects and build our future cities concerning our planet, making sure we have a world to live on at the end of the day? Because I think the way we are going, we will not have a planet at the end of it. As I said, we were already exploring this ongoing research. The open call came, and it was an opportunity for us to address some questions. One of them was: we have a construction system, but we need a new system, the one we have does not work. What could be this new system in the Gulf, specifically in the GCC? I mean, if other countries can turn to their vernacular, to their other sustainable methods, the Gulf does not have that luxury. So, we thought about the idea of looking at industrial waste as the new vernacular. Even if we had a vernacular to turn back to, the process of extracting material would still consume resources.

Then, why not looking at industrial waste? That was the proposal we submitted to the open call, specifically looking into the reject brine of desalination water.

We knew that this highly saturated salt material might offer us a solution. We knew that some regions use salt as their vernacular, such as Siwa on the border of Libya and Egypt or Chatt Al Jerid in Tunisia. Lars Homstead in Star Wars is built from the local salt flats / Sabkhas. We knew that salt flats existed in the UAE, and we thought we could start looking into that, but we could equally look into other industrial waste.

In essence, this was our proposal for the Biennale. >





CL: From the very beginning, I was very interested in knowing more about your research and its possible outcomes. The subject of the investigation perfectly aligns with the theme chosen by the curator of the Biennale (How we will live together). In addition to proposing a critical reflection on the use of materials and their environmental impact, I believe that the UAE pavilion stimulates a discussion that extends to the entire notion of architecture. Because, for me, it questions the very concept of what architecture is (or could be) in the contemporary world. I will try to explain.

While, in other fields, research informs innovations that follow one another at ever-higher speeds, the technological processes applied to architectural construction methods, and material production seem to evolve slower. After many years of in-lab or small-scale experimentation, the applications of digital technologies are becoming reality. They mainly concern parametrically generated structures or envelopes, sometimes entirely 3D printed buildings, not only components as in the recent past. However, it is indisputable that when touring cities around the world, construction sites still appear, at least from the outside, very similar to those of 50 years ago. Furthermore, despite years of discussions, even if the awareness of traditional construction methods' impact on the environment is now higher than in the past, fully sustainable solutions are yet to become conscious and shared practice. A generalized effort to convert the most polluting construction processes and rethink the sustainability of their materials is still to become a reality. Therefore, your research is definitely contemporary. It fits into the abacus of human actions that we must now peremptorily deem "necessary": On a closer look, though, the installation inside the pavilion seems to have stopped its development immediately before facing perhaps the most difficult challenge. That is, to reach the status of a phenomenological spatial entity, a unique morphological datum generated by the specific properties of the material, the desalination's waste turned into a new kind of concrete. To better explain my point, I could mention, for example, how the ancients thought about and built vaults. They are structural types generated using discreet elements such as bricks or stones. Alternatively, from the spatial point of view, we can define them as forms achieved by exploiting the physical opportunities offered by their own materiality.

Therefore, do you think that the installation in this year's UAE pavilion achieves the status of an architectural statement? In other words, is the production of new material, however sophisticated, innovative, and sensible to the environment, sufficient to identify and define an architectural concept? If so, what is then the difference between architecture and materials science? Ultimately, when and how do you think materials become architecture?

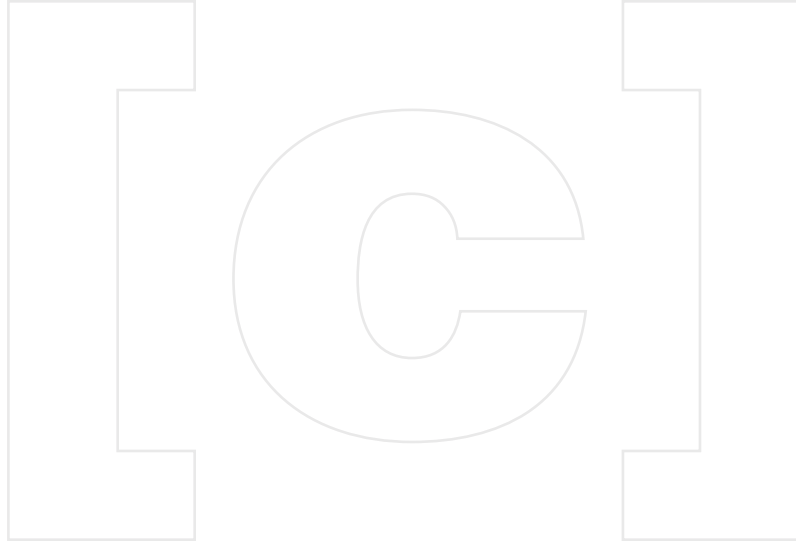
WAA: Yes, I think that is a great question. As I said before, we had a system that was definitely not working; therefore, we had to rethink it. Once you do that, you also have to rethink the production of space. I am trying to say that yes, we do have a cementitious material that we cannot use in the same way we use Portland cement; it is not possible because of many factors. Together with the production of the prototype, we raised many questions: what is the architect's role today? How do we produce space in the 20th century? How do we bring back culture and identity? How do you bring specificity and context in the meaning of a building?





[exhibition]

edited by Ivan Parati



Everchanging Country

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Dedicated to architecture, the 2040: *d3 Architecture Exhibition*, aims at gathering Dubai Design District (d3), Dubai and regionally based architecture firms, studios and visionary architects, who are practicing in the MENA region, around a central theme by making d3 the launchpad of their proposals and ideas.

Projects by firms and architects, envisioning the future of the built-space inspired by their direct environments, cultural contexts and accumulated experience of working in the region will be presented in the exhibition using innovative mediums and formats in a multi-dimensional space at the heart of d3.

Plans of mega cities are being set today and construction is underway, but how are those future living spaces planned and are they human centered? Architects will be able to engage critically and creatively with concepts and notions of sustainability, locality, contextualization and how they are transforming the next 20 years of the region through the urban development of the cities and the role of architects to anticipate those future changes and set the foundations today.

The exhibition will be divided into four main themes, in accordance with the goals of *The Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan* for a sustainable urban development. At the heart of the proposals, architects are invited to contribute to their vision of enhancing people's happiness and quality of life while investigating four themes in-depth: Mobility and Transportation, Public and Recreational Spaces, Accessibility to Infrastructure & Eco-Tourism.

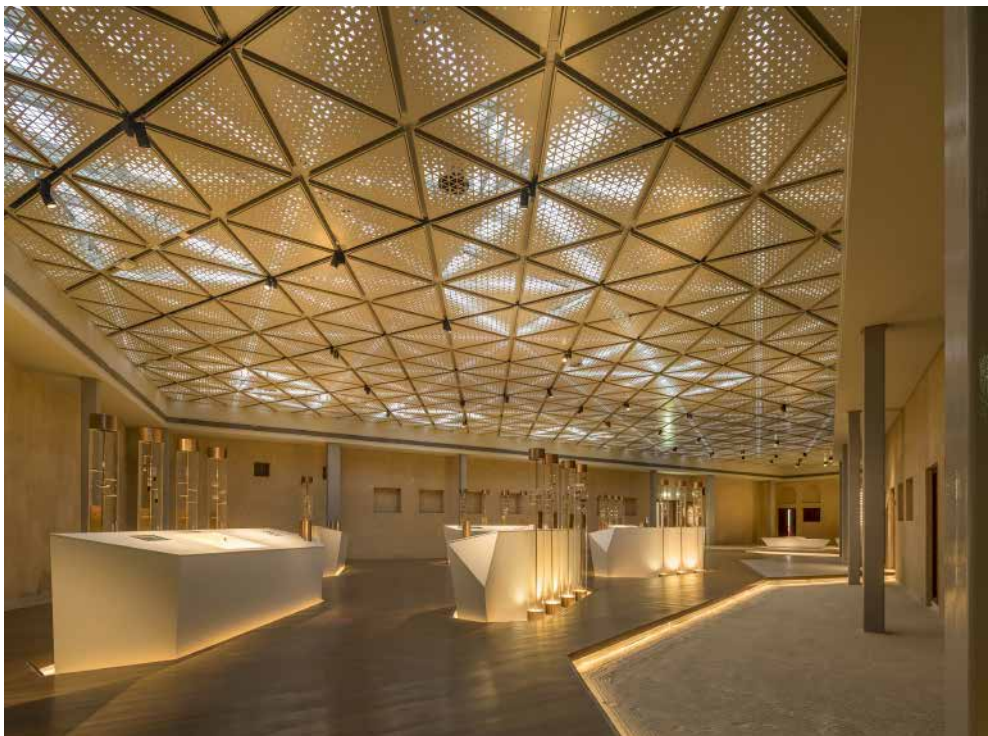
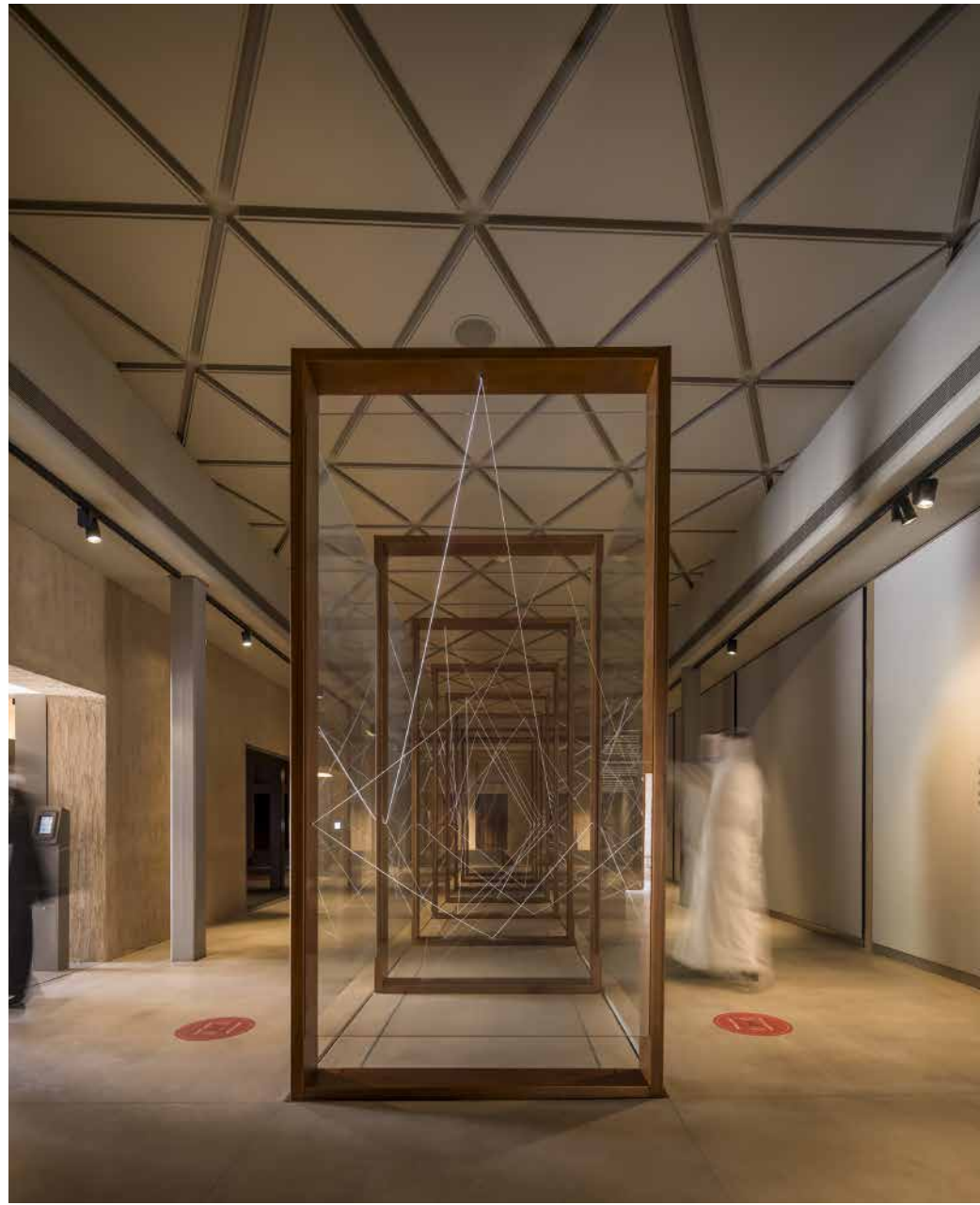
Curating architects are Beyrac Architects, Dabbagh Architects, RMJM Dubai, Tariq Khayyat Design Partners (TKDP), ROAR with participations and collaborations from a variety of stakeholders in the architecture and urban planning domain including: American University of Sharjah (AUS), Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation (DIDI), Mobility in Chain, AESG, FUTURE\CITY, DesertINK Architects, XArchitects, ARDH Architects and Grimshaw Architects.

The pictures are illustrating two projects by X Architects, that are part of the exhibition. In this pages, Wasit Wetland Center. In the next pages Shindagha Historic District.









[exhibition]



Jump Starter

edited by Emanuela Corti

The second edition of the MENA Grad Show will bring together social impact innovation projects in the fields of technology, science, and design from universities across the region.

The exhibition, a key component of Dubai Design Week, will showcase some of the most exciting social impact innovation projects from students in universities across the Middle East and North Africa region. It will spotlight projects focused on improving and transforming lives and the planet, in the fields of technology, science, and design.

The MENA Grad Show is held under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Chairperson of Dubai Culture & Arts Authority and member of the Dubai Council, and is in partnership with A.R.M holding and Dubai Culture & Arts Authority. Global Grad Show is an initiative by the Art Dubai Group. It provides year-round programming for graduates and universities working on Social Impact Innovation projects. Since 2015, Global Grad Show has built a community of over 300 universities across the world that includes the leading international institutions alongside those from developing countries. The programme offers students the opportunity to showcase their work on the global stage, connect with like-minded people and take part in an entrepreneurship route supporting the development of their projects.



Sleeye

by Farzaneh Mangelian Babaki, Tehran University of Art, Iran

More than 80% of blind and 33% of visually impaired people suffer from non-24-hours sleep-wake disorder (N24). Blindness and vision impairment could cause individuals to feel less outdoors and experience extremely low illumination, which leads to the internal master clock continuously shifting in and out of alignment with the 24-hour day-night cycle, resulting in cyclical episodes of poor sleep and daytime dysfunction. The recent results confirm that even in blind subjects who have no perception of light, exposure to short-wavelength blue light (460-480nm) suppressed melatonin and causing alertness. SLEEYE aims to enhance the sleep quality of sightless individuals. As they contact the physical world better, we designed a product that is a bridge between physical and virtual worlds. Once the user's phone is on the platform, it is controllable by the buttons.

This product includes four items that can secure a healthy sleep habit: A Light therapy box; A platform that concretizes the app features; A mobile app; A strip set to put the bed to track sleep and prevent falling asleep at the wrong time.



Treated Medical Waste Concrete

by Ahmed Salah, University of Buraimi, Oman

The idea of our project is to get rid of medical waste by replacing cement in concrete to reduce the pollution due to the cement industry. Certain percentages of cement content are replaced by treated medical wastes, both of strength and workability of concrete are tested to study the effect of this replacement. A good improvement is obtained where the strength of concrete rises at a certain percentage of replacement.



Wastology

by Sana Mohamed / Dalilah Mansour, Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation, United Arab Emirates

"Wastology" is a product that allows you to repurpose organic waste by composting it in the comfort of your kitchen. The compost created by using your daily organic trash is then used to nourish and grow the plants placed at the top of your "Wastology" compost pot.

Humidity and oxygen sensors monitor the state of the compost as it is developing, and the results are displayed on an LCD screen. A mixing blade placed at the bottom of the container rotates the compost as needed. Whenever the compost is ready, the user is alerted by a message on the LCD screen and the phone application.

The top part is the tray in which the pipes provided to us are placed. The main thicker pipe is the one in which the user places the organic trash for it to get to the compost pot. The other pipes can be used in 3 different ways: the user can lift the tray, grab some compost, and place it in the pipes along with some plants to cultivate. The user can also add water to those pipes and add fruit and vegetable ends to allow them to germinate then transfer to the compost, or immediately use the compost to plant seeds. The plants will be watered automatically by filling the extrusions on the pipe that was once for the LED lights and drilling small holes that will allow the plant to always get just the right amount of water.



Beyond Bread

by Hind Rais, Zayed University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Beyond bread merges my passions for baking, Graphic Design, and Innovation. As the world is trying to pave to a better, sustainable future, I thought of rethinking the packaging material used by local bakeries. After many and many failed attempts, I proposed a prototype that contributes to the circular economy. The design yields edible and biodegradable packaging made from bread ingredients (flour, water, and sugar). It provides a wasteless environment as it goes through a loop of production and bird consumption.



[ideas&trend]

The novelties of Talenti, the outdoor brand that has conquered the Middle East

Talenti, the iconic Italian brand that has revolutionised the concept of high-end outdoor furniture, presents a preview of the new 2022 catalogue. An explosion of style, elegance and refinement that has already won over the international public at Milan Design Week and promises to do the same in a market that is historically very sensitive to luxury, such as the Middle East. Sofas, tables, chairs, sun loungers, but also lighting and accessories: these are the ingredients of the Cameli family brand's offer, which shows that it has clear ideas about its idea of outdoor furniture.

Malé Collection an Argo Alu by Ludovica+Roberto Palomba

From marked geometric shapes, elegant and light, comes Malé, a collection that offers maximum comfort by focusing on a low seat with a rigid and squared structure, just like a shell. A hymn to versatility that rises thanks to the upholstery that combines with the many solutions made possible by the study of volumes and modules. A desire for research that is also found in Argo Alu, a project that develops the theme of the box which, after playing with wood, now reinvents itself with aluminium. Inspired by very interesting historical precedents, such as those of Sottsass or Scarpa, it speaks a rigorous and clean, geometric and informal language.

Reef Sunbed and Leaf by Marco Acerbis

With Reef, Marco Acerbis has created a seat that, while having a reassuring stability and visual balance, is somewhat reminiscent of sea waves. Every curve and every joint has been studied in detail so that comfort is maximised by exploiting the advantages of the typical rotational sunbed. The Leaf collection is also inspired by nature. The lightness of a flower's petals and their elegance have been the incipit for a proposal where the careful but generous proportions are combined with the comfort of a very soft and sensual cushioning. All these details and sensations can be found throughout the entire collection, which also includes tables, coffee tables and chairs.





George Collection by Ludovica+Roberto Palomba

A project that was created with the aim of combining lightness and comfort in life in the open air, redesigning situations that convey feelings of intimacy and relaxation, always with the utmost respect for balance but above all for proportion.

The stainless steel structure is the fil rouge of the project, totally covered with a slightly padded rope weave. An enveloping design whose materials are reminiscent of the nautical world. The visual lightness of the woven structure is counterpointed by generously padded seat and back cushions.

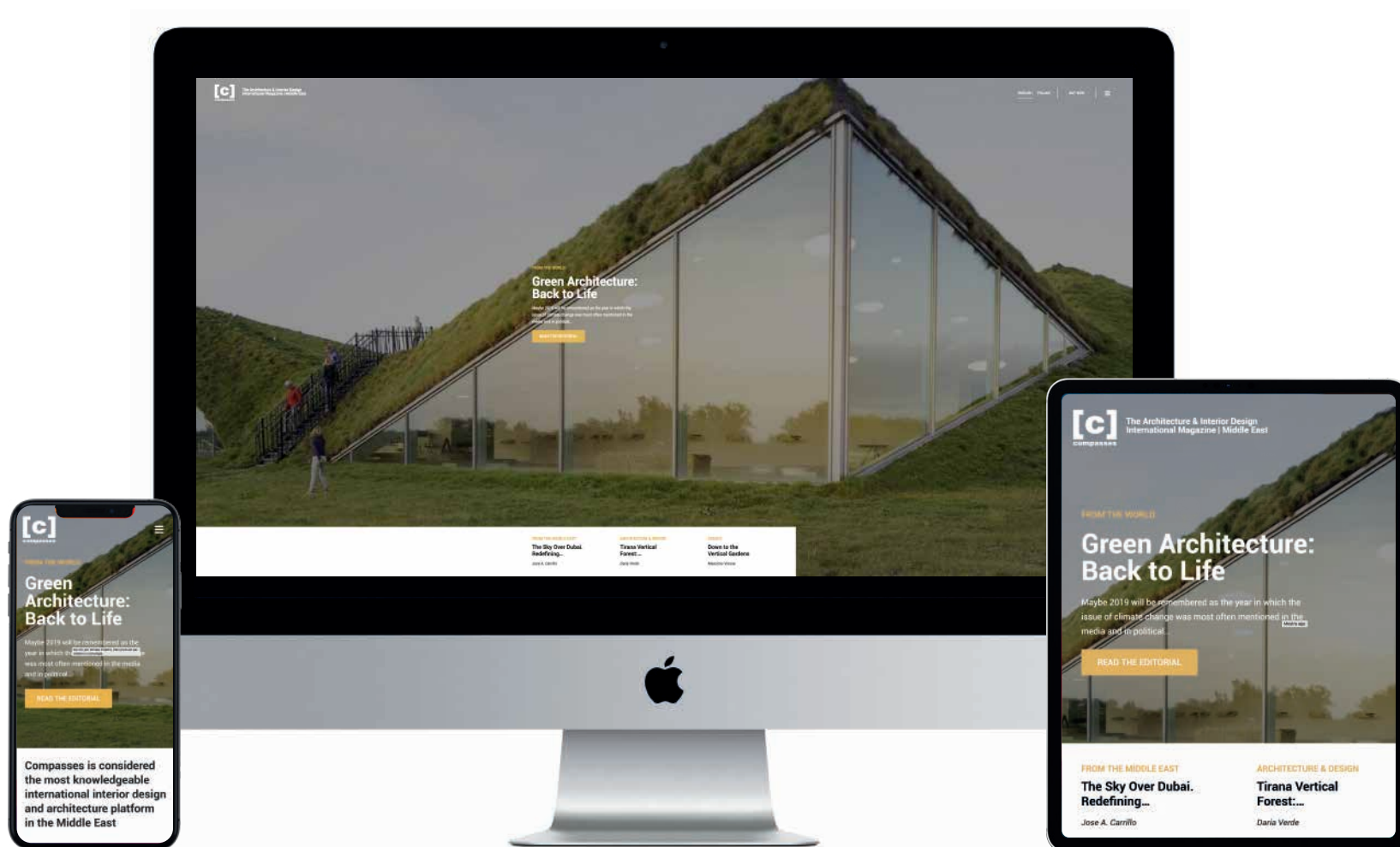


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