

Design Days

CYRIL ZAMMIT, FAIR DIRECTOR OF DESIGN DAYS DUBAI, ON THE CHANGING CULTURE OF THIS REGION

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There are perks to any job. One of the biggest ones in mine is being able to travel extensively around the world, hunting for fantastic pieces of furniture.

During my trips, I am fortunate to have been welcomed into many private homes to witness some rather inspirational pieces or personal collections. Interestingly enough though, during the six years that I have been living in the UAE, sparingly have I had the opportunity to enter a typical Emirati house.

During my trips to Lebanon or Kuwait, I am often invited into homes as a dinner guest and therefore have the opportunity to marvel at the host's home collection. My experience differs, however, in Qatar or the UAE, where most of the hosting tends to be done in a majlis.

There is an obvious pride that comes with welcoming guests into a private house, and sometimes being house-proud can often come off as presumptuousness or can be mistaken as being arrogant. But, as I came to understand, it is all a matter of cultural diversity.

Once in Saudi Arabia, I was invited for a dinner in an exceptional, one-of-a-kind house. Any design enthusiast would have been rendered breathless by its mix of contemporary and modern design, exquisite balance and perfect hideaway location for its owners. I dared ask the owner if I could bring his fine residence and collection to the knowledge of the international press, and his answer was a clear and definite 'no'. Private homes remain private.

This is in stark contrast to the US market where, every December, during the Design Miami fair, collectors famously open their houses as part of the 'VIP Programme'. This allows people to wander through houses, admiring the host's position as an arbiter of good taste. Although, personally, I think it is quite curious to open your home for 300 people to wander through, openly judging your tastes in art, design and furniture!

While cultural factors play a role within all societies and should be respected, it led me to wonder to what extent different cultures view design, and to what extent they will spend on pieces for their private home, compared to a flashy car that they drive, for instance.

It must be said that for every example I state there may be a tendency

WOOD HEART BY MICHAELA SCHLEYPEN FOR SAMOVAR CARPET
A perfect conversation-starting piece for a bachelor pad. From above, this carpet looks like the trunk of a tree.

Fair play

OUR PICK OF THE BUNCH FROM MORE THAN 40 EXHIBITORS AT DESIGN DAYS DUBAI

LAUNCH CHAIR BY KAS OOSTERHUIS, VAA.ONL STUDIO Your eyes can't help but be drawn to this piece. It's made from 28 unique laser-cut components. The architect/designer took inspiration from the beautiful Liwa tower in Abu Dhabi.



to generalise — and perhaps I can be proven wrong — but from my experience, I noticed that in the southern Arabian Gulf, the acquisition of personal 'high design' pieces seems to be led by a younger generation.

Since the start of Design Days Dubai five years ago, I have noticed the birth of a new and young generation of design buyers in the UAE who are likely to develop into design collectors. They are very aware of what to purchase, knowledgeable about who to follow and what to collect. What is also interesting is that people are becoming increasingly involved in conversations about the region and the development of the field.

On seeing this development, it led me to amend my previous view. Just because a culture is less open to welcoming people behind its doors, it doesn't mean that their desire to purchase design pieces is any less. Perhaps the region's new interest in collecting is much more for personal pleasure than for the show and display seen in other parts of the world.

After all, your home is not a museum. Design Days Dubai, March 14-18. designdaysdubai.ae



STRONG CHAIR BY ATELIER VAN LIESHOUT FOR CARPENTERS WORKSHOP GALLERY

A Beauty-and-the-Beast piece from this talented Dutch design company. The rough frame of steel counterbalanced by the soft fabric. I admire the pattern of the frame that looks similar to the work of a silversmith working on metal.



ADAPTATIONS BY VERONICA TODISCO FOR CAMP DESIGN GALLERY

Upscale your sunbathing with this rework of the classic foldable deck chair in Carrara marble and brass. This one is for the lucky few in a limited edition of 25.

UP CYCLE

MB&F OPENS A MECHANICAL ART GALLERY

You'll never be able to look at a heap of scrap metal the same way after visiting the newly opened M.A.D. Gallery Dubai in Al Serkal Avenue.

The Mechanical Art Devices (M.A.D — see what they did there?) gallery will showcase cutting-edge mechanical and kinetic art, with the exhibits being carefully chosen from around the globe under the guidance of Maximilian Büsser, founder of the boundary-pushing watch company MB&F.

All pieces of art are inherently intricate in detail, unique in concept and display exquisite craftsmanship across the field of kinetic art. Take, for instance, the mechanical art from Japanese engineer Chicara Nagata, of which



APESANTEUR BY QUENTIN CARNAILLE FOR M.A.D. GALLERY

A hypnotic piece made of thousands of vintage watch components suspended in the air by a zero-gravity effect. A powerful magnet makes the components apparently turn by themselves — magical.

every piece of his award-winning *Road Machines* exhibition takes over 7,000 hours to construct. It's enough to make you think twice before throwing anything electrical away again. mbandf.com/mad-gallery



Cyril Zammit in Dubai