

Ota Shokola for Borema
50x40 | Hand-blown crystal
with coating silver stainless steel
fining. At Downtown Design.
Image courtesy of the designer.
Photography by Salim Isha

At times it's rethinking the traditional elements and techniques that make a design fresh. Nikhil Paul of Paul Matter Studio speaks of their debut collection TANGO being born from a playful experiment with vintage lighting components. The Kuwaiti furniture designer, Jassem Alnashiri, who presents a beautiful wooden chair with stitching reminiscent of a musical instrument or handmade boat, is another case in point, although he mentions that traditional craft needs to remain relevant via the latest technologies.

This is advice that Emirati designer Khalid Shafar has taken on board, as he presents the ambitious *Silent Call*, a project done in collaboration with LAGWT. This kinetic light installation signals the five daily calls to prayer in an eloquent example of making tradition more accessible and up to date. Though *Silent Call* is adaptable to any customised schedule, Islamic architecture is the visual anchor, the surface a sequence of 60 glass domes taken from five mosques. Shafar's approach to design has always been through experience, emotion and storytelling. Working with movement was a natural transition for him, "light is connected to time and city zones" he says. "We use alarm clocks, but why not create an indication through light

instead. The project then shifts from pure audio to visual movement, from being an object to an experience that integrates all your senses."

Alongside homegrown talent are internationally known brands and experts, such as Paula Zuccotti, an ethnographer and trend forecaster in global consumption, who brings *Everything We Touch*, a 24-hour inventory of our lives to DOW, an object-based sensory journey through our daily interactions. Other commissioned installations include the monumental work *Prologue*, presented by Swarovski with Fredrickson Stallard. The trade fair Downtown Design doubles in size this year, offering a Portuguese Pavilion for the first time, together with many Middle Eastern debuts for international design brands such as Vondom.

Salma Lahtou, curator of Iconic City - previous editions were on Beirut and Cairo - has gone for a narrative, exploratory approach this year, having commissioned the illustrator Aicha El Beulou to translate her native city of Casablanca into a graphic mural landscape. Here, snippets of the city's life and history will be told via sound art, film, photography and weaving.

Also drawing from the urban framework is the collaborative design studio Apical Reform in the form of a new sculpture that is inspired by Riyadhul, an open call to create a social media biography of the city. "Design should be democratic - its first call, apart from function, should be that it is seen," says founder and principal Amrith Patel. "Public art also connects the community". Their *Sonoloco* installation was a hit at Design Days in March and this month sees the launch of All Gallery in d3 with *Days of the Earth*, a curated collection of designs addressing global warming and climate change.

There are plenty of other DOW projects offering interesting, eco-friendly architectural solutions, such as BETTAH-House by SUPERFUTUREDESIGN, demonstrating the importance of clean air to healthy lifestyles.

These forward-looking trends are most discernible in the designs showcased at Global Grad Show this year, where 200 innovative projects by



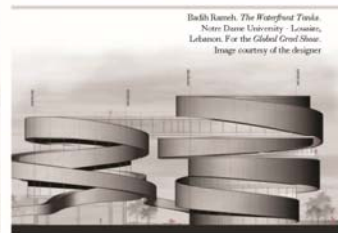
Zineb-Arabi, Digiya, 2017.
For Iconic City 2017, Leaning - Cairo.
Image courtesy of the artist



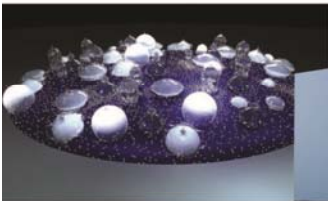
Roberto Naboni, Tribonacci Tectonics
ACTLAB at Politecnico di Milano,
For the Global Grad Show.
Image courtesy of the designer



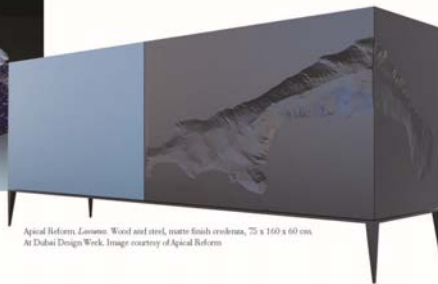
Zineb-Arabi, Digiya, 2017.
For Iconic City 2017, Leaning - Cairo.
Image courtesy of the artist



Balith Ramleh, The Waterfront Tanka,
Notre Dame University - Lebanon,
For the Global Grad Show.
Image courtesy of the designer



Lavit, Khalid Shafar, *Silent Call*. A kinetic light installation. At Dubai Design Week / Around the City. Image courtesy of the designer and Lavit



Apical Reform, *Lumina*. Wood and steel, matte finish, chrome, 75 x 160 x 60 cm. At Dubai Design Week. Image courtesy of Apical Reform

students from 90 universities are presented as a barometer of today's design climate. "It's the breadth of it all that's fascinating" explains curator Brendan McGettrick. "On one hand you can experience an absolute future that isn't even available yet, while on the other you see proposals to improve traditional ways of life with tasks that can be done in a healthier, more efficient way. You are spanning many centuries in the subject matter that the students are responding to." Due to outreach, there are more regional schools than in previous years. From the projects that seek to preserve heritage, there's *The Lost of Winds* by Samia El-Naggar from Cairo, an online space for preserving languages that are in danger of disappearing. Resilience is a common theme, an important aspect of sustainability being the reutilisation of resources that are not being used effectively. Examples come from opposite sides of the globe. *Gum* is a set of household objects created from discarded tyres by a student from Mexico, where 91 per cent of old tyres are abandoned. *The Waterfront Tanka* by Balith Ramleh from Lebanon uses vacated oil silos to create alternative public spaces. Experimental approaches to architectural techniques emerge from students at Politecnico, Milan. In new addition this year, such as *Tribonacci Tectonics* from Roberto Naboni, co-founder of the Architecture Computation and Technology Laboratory (ACTLAB), which

proposes a lightweight system that mimics nature's evolutionary approach to design - such as the structure of our bones.

It's particularly timely for architectural practice to be high on the agenda in Dubai. Atterial Avenue sees the launch of the first Architectural Biennale next year, previewing as ARCHSEASON and spearheaded by SVENM. At Concrete's warehouse space, *White We Wait* by Palestinian architects and designers Elias and Yousef Anastas will be set up. Commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum, it's a poignant example of how a structure can represent the plight of a people. DOW's keynote speaker is David Adjaye, whose unique approach to architecture has always had a social agenda. With major architectural practices committing to offices in Dubai and plans for Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation taking shape, DOW is a welcome moment to consolidate, brainstorm and showcase current trends. As Tanq Khayyat, the head of the Middle East for Zaha Hadd Architects, tells us, "DOW effectively encourages the sharing of knowledge and creativity to promote innovation and growth within the city's creative industry." [8]

Dubai Design Week runs from 13-18 November and Downtown Design runs from 14-17 November in d3, Dubai's design district.