

Rona Meyuchas-Koblenz to bring '**Designers in the Middle**' - the critically acclaimed discussion project - to ICFF, New York on Wednesday 24 May 2017, 11.45am

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Above left: Rona Meyuchas-Koblenz, Khalid Shafar, Taher Asad-Bakhtiari, Jerry Helling

As part of **ICFF 2017** Talk's Programme, **Rona Meyuchas-Koblenz**, founder and creative director of **Kukka**, will present the panel discussion '**Designers in the Middle**' that examines the experience of designing in or from the Middle East during ICFF on **Wednesday 24 May 2017 at 11.45am** at the Javits Center, Manhattan, New York City.

'**Designers in the Middle**' was originally curated by the Design Museum London in 2016 during London Design Festival, to great acclaim, and was this year chosen by the organisers at ICFF to bring the discussion to New York, the first time in the US, with a refreshed panel line-up.

Chaired by **Jerry Helling**, President & Creative Director of Bernhardt Design, Rona will be joined by an expert panel, including designer **Khalid Shafar** (UAE) and **Taher Asad-Bakhtiari** (Iran), to explore how the region's craft, heritage, daily life and industrial reality affect the work and lives of its designers.

*"I approach 'Designers in the Middle' from two angles that interest me the most. Firstly, designers operating in and from the Middle East and secondly, designers who find themselves in the middle between the manufacturing and the political constrains.*

*The content of 'Designers in the Middle' is not political at all. That is also one of the reasons why the word "East" is not mentioned after the word "Middle". What interests me is to bring out the person/designer behind its work. I am hoping you will find the beauty behind it."*

*- Rona Meyuchas Koblenz, Designers in the Middle, Founder*

Positioned right on the show floor, ICFF Talks features panels of industry leaders discussing changes, new introductions, materials and trends in the interior design world. An audience of over 150 architects, interior designers, developers, and visual merchandisers join in to listen and learn about what is happening in their industry.

For more information about 'Designers in the Middle', please visit the dedicated site:

<https://www.designersinthemiddle.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/designersinthemiddle/>

For more information about the ICFF 2017 Talks Programme, or to book your ticket to the event, visit <http://www.icff.com/conference/icff-talks/>

For more information or to view Kukka's full product portfolio, please visit [www.kukka.co.uk](http://www.kukka.co.uk).

For more details about Kukka™, visit [www.kukkastudio.co.uk](http://www.kukkastudio.co.uk) or contact David Ryan [david@kukka.co.uk](mailto:david@kukka.co.uk).

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Kukka**

Established in 2010, Kukka™ is a British design house founded by designer Rona Meyuchas-Koblentz. The products are made from sustainable materials and cultural behaviors; these are taken into account during the design process; Kukka admire craftsmanship, aesthetics, and functionality.

All this is reflected throughout the production, technology methods, minimising of materials and components used for both products and packaging.

The products are designed and made from actual day-to-day living experiences; as we observe, listen, feel as well as innovate, any Kukka™ product with confidence.

### **About Rona Meyuchas-Koblentz**

Born in Tel-Aviv, internationally acclaimed designer, graduated in 1999 with a Master degree from the Scuola politecnica di design in Milan. Rona has started her career where she worked in different design consultancies in Milan and then moved to London where she worked in Isometrix lighting and design.

Rona's professional experience in design and manufacturing motivated her to create products under her own label, Kukka Studio. The first collection was released in Milan during Salone del Mobile 2007 at Spazio Romeo Gigli, the following year she was approached by the British embassy in Milan to exhibit selected products at The Galleria d'Arte moderna in Milan, an exhibition curated by Sir Paul Smith and Moroso.

A few years later Kukka™ brand was founded under Rona's direction and as head of design; their products are sold worldwide through over 50 retailers among them Conran, Paul Smith, La Rinascente, Selfridges, De Padova

The minimalist approach and "honest" design is recognized with Rona's style. Rona's latest bespoke project, 'Project 34' in conjunction with Caesarstone which was unveiled, to great critical acclaim, at Tent London during LDF and then "Spectra" in 2016 with Frame magazine during Milan Salone del Mobile. The studio, underpinned by creative stimulation, specializes in experimenting with materials, manufacturing methods and technology.

Rona is also a visiting lecturer and in summer 2016 Alexander Von Vegesack, founder and curator of Vitra museum, invited Rona to tutor a week long workshop at Boisbuchet.

### **About Khalid Shafar**

Born in 1980 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. As a business graduate of the American University in Dubai Khalid worked in marketing and communication for almost seven years. In 2005 Khalid completed a degree in Fine Arts in Interior Design and by the end of 2009 had decided to leave marketing and follow his passion for design. Khalid has studied and specialized in Furniture & Objects design, first at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, UK, then at the Centre for Fine Woodworking in Nelson, New Zealand.

In 2011 Khalid opened his own studio in Dubai and in Nov 2012 Khalid inaugurated his first showcase space 'KASA'.

Khalid's approach to design encompasses his personal expression of form, movement, emotion, and in particular, 'the tale' of objects.

Among his notable international collaborations, Khalid collaborated with the Brazilian duo Campana Brothers on an installation for Abu Dhabi Art 2010. He recently collaborated with the historical French cabinetmaker Moissonnier, with the carpet industry leader Tai Ping, with the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), with the fashion brand COS, and with the design brand Kartell on special limited edition releases.

### **About Taher Asad-Bakhtiari**

Taher Asad-Bakhtiari (b. 1982, Tehran) is a self-taught artist whose practice focuses on, but is not limited to, objects, textiles and experiences. After studying multimedia and management in Canada and Switzerland, Taher opened a creative agency in Tehran and later New York City. He has developed several bodies of work including "The Tribal Weave Project", a multi-tiered and ongoing reimagination of tribal artifacts, and "recovered barrels", a metaphorical conceptualization of crude oil containers. Taher lives in Tehran.

### **About Jerry Helling**

Jerry Helling is the President and Creative Director of Bernhardt Design. Helling began his professional career at Bernhardt and recently celebrated his 25th anniversary with the company. In addition to setting the creative direction, he also manages the business side of the company.

A featured speaker on design and business, Helling has addressed audiences for organizations in the United States and Europe including: the Swiss Cultural Center, New York Magazine, the French-American Foundation, the Italian Trade Commission, Kendall College, the International Contemporary Furniture Fair, the International Interior Design Association, Fast Company Magazine, Detank, ID Magazine, the London Design Festival, Dwell and Interior Design Magazine. He also serves as curator and juror for a number of exhibitions and design competitions. Helling is one of the few Americans that is consistently named as one of the 100 most influential people on the global scene of fashion, art, architecture and design.

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