

## gulfnews : Dubai's Design Day exhibition celebrates innovation

**F**rom lamps made of staples to high-end tables that blur the boundaries between function and style, the Design Days Dubai fair inspired the city with collectible and limited-edition furniture

- By Aidan Imanova, InsideOut magazine
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- Image Credit: Supplied picture
- The 'Barley' installation by Eefiene Bolhuis imitates wind going through a barley field and was showcased by Privee Kollektie.

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Set in an immense, purpose-built tent at the foot of the iconic Burj Khalifa, the recent Design Days Dubai event was certainly off to a good start if its enviable location was anything to go by. Taking place for the first time in the UAE from March 18 to 21, the show created a much-needed platform for top local,

regional and international designers and galleries to come together and inspire the public with their work. Hosting 22 of the world's leading galleries dedicated to collectible and limited-edition objects and furniture and showcasing over 400 pieces of design, the fair is a refreshing debut on the region's design scene.

The four-day show - which also saw workshops and performances taking place - featured a delicate blend of modern and traditional design that seemed to take inspiration from both the East and West. Made up of lines and curvilinear forms, this year's trends are all about texture and hue with both being neutral and organically inspired with hints of the metallic. While several furniture items - including eccentric-looking chairs, minimalist tables and funky bookshelves - took their place at the show, many of the galleries focused on lighting - from the interactive to the mechanical - with a slew of new lighting designs taking centre stage. We loved Emirati-designer Khalid Shafar's prototype of the 'Arabi' chandelier. Exhibited by Carwan Gallery from Lebanon, the chandelier is made from brass wire, silk rope, metal and woollen Egaals - traditional black headbands worn by men in the Arab region to hold the keffiyeh, or head scarf in place. The Egaals are repetitiously arranged in circular formations, reflecting conventional forms of Arabic art and hearkening back to traditional curvilinear patterns found in Arabic calligraphy and mashrabiya patterns. This unusual lighting feature demonstrates perfectly how traditional objects can combine to create contemporary design.

Another lighting installation that won our hearts was rANdom International's experimental 'Swarm Light' exhibited by Carpenter's Workshop. Using

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state-of-the-art technology and controlled by a complex algorithm, the piece was recently displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and reacts to the viewer's audible presence. As one walks and claps beneath the magnificent showpiece, a beautifully whimsical swarm of lights is activated. We were also awe-struck by Georges Mohasseb's limited edition 'Megalopolis' floor lamp, crafted from 15,000 staples. Exhibited by the Lebanese SMO Gallery, we thought the lamp was an appropriate reflection of Dubai's architecture, the silver and gold rising into the air like the city's skyscrapers.

There were several other collectible and limited-edition furniture pieces on show, including well-known contemporary-abstract sculptor Jedd Novatt's first ever furniture items, the Ariane.3 sideboard and the Anna.1 dining table. Famous for creating dynamic, non-representational compositions of geometric forms, Novatt's pieces were commissioned by Paris' Galerie Diane de Polignac, with both pieces boasting the sculptor's signature geometric contortions at their bases. Other eye-catching items included Joseph Walsh's 'Enignum Canopy' bed, exhibited by Milan's Nilufar gallery, as well as 'Geo Cocktail', a molecular-looking table designed by Vito Selma and exhibited by the Dubai-based Nakkash Gallery. With design season upon us and fairs happening all around the world, a show as innovative as Design Days Dubai is a welcome addition to our city's calendar.

[www.designdaysdubai.ae](http://www.designdaysdubai.ae)