

PREVIEW



Charles Kalpakian, "Grande Applique."



Lindsey Adelman, "Beirut Heavy Light."

Photo courtesy of Ioy Mardini Gallery

Making 'Made in Lebanon'

Beirut Design Fair aims to bring back contemporary and vintage aesthetic

By Betsy Joles

The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Lebanese innovators will have a place to convene in creativity this coming September. Beirut Design Fair seeks to step beyond simply promoting design companies. The fair's organizers want the event to push the "Made in Lebanon" brand to speak for itself.

Opening Sept. 20, the inaugural four-day edition of the event, slated

to be staged at BIEL, will feature furniture, product design and collectibles such as Bauhaus trends from designers around the world. The fair will draw upon local and international talent, seeking to not only showcase design but also to help return Lebanon to the design map.

"We have an ambition here to promote the recognition of Lebanon's proper place," Beirut Art Fair director Guillaume Taslé d'Héliand told The Daily Star. "We think this city is totally legitimate in the front of creativity in the region."

During a news conference held at Clemenceau's Ecole Supérieure des Affaires Thursday, Taslé d'Héliand joined co-organizer Hala Moubarak and project collaborators Yasser Akkaoui and Dany Abboud to talk about making design a cultural and

economic mainstay in Lebanon.

The organizers also gave their audience a taste of what to expect from the debut edition of the fair – which they summarize as contemporary and vintage aesthetics and quality craftsmanship, on display in the heart of the city. In Taslé d'Héliand's opinion, "Beirut has the legitimacy and the means to really become a capital of design."

Although it has long been a hub for creativity in the region, working out of Beirut can be challenging for designers. High production costs and pricey import rates make it difficult for local designers to exhibit work abroad. Lebanon's design industry is growing, Taslé d'Héliand said, but it's far from its design heyday before the most recent Civil War, during which domestic pro-

duction dominated the market.

By creating a design fair to operate as a focal point for local talent, Moubarak hopes to work to restore local designer's market dominance.

"It's going to be a long process," she said. "In five years, my wish would be to actually impose the label 'Made in Lebanon.'"

To build and maintain a robust design industry, Moubarak said that designers need to work together with artisans – metal, ceramic, glass and woodworkers – that hold a strong place in Beirut's cultural history. Through such joint efforts, she feels, Lebanese design can be produced and sold locally as well as internationally.

"The world is going toward collaborative design," she said. "So let's go toward collaborative design."

Aside from collaboration

strengthening the creative environment, Yasser Akkaoui, Beirut Design Fair's strategy designer, said creative human capital will benefit Lebanon as a whole. As they strengthen their own industry, Lebanese designers can catalyze growth in other areas.

"They are at the heart of economic development in Lebanon," Akkaoui said.

Designers who apply to be exhibited during the fair will have their work vetted by a selection committee, with the aim of showcasing the highest quality work.

By pulling the best of the design community together into one event, Moubarak hopes Beirut Design Fair will help make "Made in Lebanon" a reality, saying, "[We'll] bring back to Lebanon what belongs in Lebanon."