

COMMERCIAL

Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

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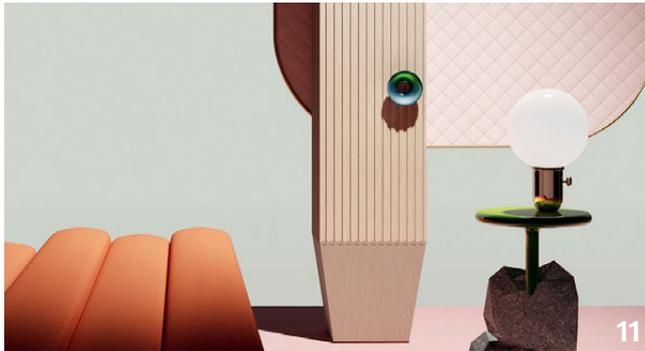
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Hala Moubarak and Guillaume
Tasle d'Héliand.
Photo by Anwar Azzi.

No borders to CREATIVE LEBANON

THE FIRST EDITION OF BEIRUT DESIGN FAIR SET TO TAKE PLACE FROM 20 TO 24 SEPTEMBER 2017

LEBANON: Beirut Design Fair will be held at the Beirut International Exhibition & Leisure Center from 20 to 24 September 2017. It will take place at the same time, and in the same location, as Beirut Art Fair (23,000 visitors), a contemporary art fair which since 2010 has sought to promote the artistic and cultural effervescence of Beirut, Lebanon and the countries of the MENA region.

As the first edition is just around the corner, *Commercial Interior Design* speaks to Guil-

laume Tasle d'Héliand, founder and fair director and Hala Moubarak, co-founder and head of exhibitors relations, to find out what visitors can expect from the upcoming exhibition and what makes Beirut Design Fair different from the other fairs in the region.

"It is Lebanese creativity that will make all the difference," says d'Héliand. "There are not so many countries on the shores of the Mediterranean basin that are distinguished by the quality of their contemporary design.

Italy is obviously, of course. But the only other remarkable country is Lebanon. Each country has its strengths. The unique place of Lebanon is a matter of history and geography, which explains its exceptional creativity and its effervescence. The difference of Lebanon is its multi-millennial and international culture, as well as its envied position, at the crossroads of Mashreq, Europe and North Africa."

As d'Héliand explains, Beirut Design Fair will be a different design event, because

DESIGN UPDATE



Beirut Heavy Light by Lindsey Adelman.
Photo courtesy of Carwan gallery.

“there are no borders to creative Lebanon”.

He continues: “Let us also bear in mind the unparalleled phenomenon of the Lebanese diaspora: let us visualise this capillary network of 14 million pairs of eyes and ears, imagine the soul of this nervous system that always returns to the land of the Cedar.”

Often regarded as the design and style capital of the region, Moubarak feels that even though the country went through wars, conflicts, and years of economical struggles, it managed to preserve its dominance in supporting creative minds.

“The amazing thing about this country is the hope for a better tomorrow,” explains Moubarak. “That’s why you see a young generation of creative, designers and entrepreneurs, waking up every morning to make a difference. And that’s exactly how Beirut became the design capital of the Middle East.”

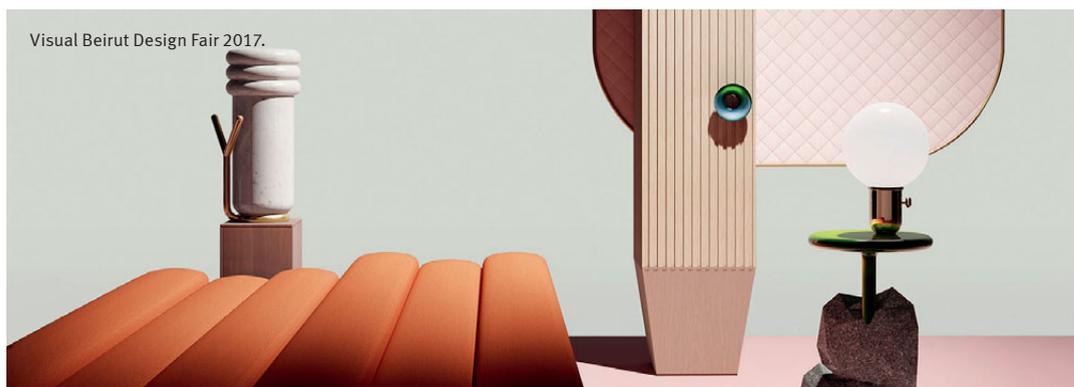
Moubarak says that initiatives such as House of Today Biennale, Design Week, and now Beirut Design Fair all help to showcase a nation’s varied crafts, and connect people and communities.

“Of course, we still need government support,” adds Moubarak “and it would be welcome. But, for the time being, and against all odds, it’s personal initiatives and crazy dynamic people who are making the difference on the ground.”

Both founders are in contact with nearly 200 product designers and 700 architects, many of whom love to create products.



Overlay by Paul Matter and Kallol Datta.
Photo courtesy of Carwan gallery.



Visual Beirut Design Fair 2017.



Visual Beirut Design Fair 2017.



Side tables by Charles Kalpakian. Photo courtesy of Joy Mardini Gallery



Grande Applique by Charles Kalpakian. Photo courtesy of Joy Mardini Gallery.



Loulou rocking chair by David/Nicolas. Photo courtesy of Joy Mardini Gallery.

She continues: “We have a unique design community, combined with skilled makers. It is distinguished by its youth, dynamism, mobility, openness and mainly freedom.”

“To help promote these talents, Beirut Design Fair will place Lebanese designers on the international scene and in foreign fairs. We are also organising a design award to give visibility to young designers, as well as non-profit exhibitions in the country and abroad.”

Beirut Design Fair will also bring design to schools and will assist universities in open platforms of dialogue with foreign academies.

“We are free to create, make, and we certainly have a voice to go forward and defend our belief in a country that makes the impossible possible,” she says.

Commenting on the role design will play in

the future of Beirut, d’Héliand says that there are many examples throughout the world that demonstrate the central and driving role of design and its many impacts – “cultural, social, economic and industrial”.

He says: “Product design and furniture are only one of the visible parts of it. What interests and concerns Lebanon is the mindset that animates ‘design’ because it is at first solution oriented and problem solving.”

D’Héliand believes there is a larger market in Lebanon than people think for design and decoration, which, according to him, is worth between \$700m and \$800m, of which “70% to 80% are unfortunately import”.

He concludes: “There is the opportunity to create a label ‘Made in Lebanon’ or ‘Designed in Lebanon’ and take back market shares for the benefit of local production. Design is an emerging market worldwide, and growing. It is the opportunity of a high-quality design fair, because it attracts attention and money and in so doing, allows the market to structure and assert itself, and therefore to develop.”