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Beirut Design Fair extends its borders



Summary

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Maghie Ghali | The Daily Star

BEIRUT: The Beirut Design Fair, back this month for its second edition, will again showcase the designs, products and innovations of local and international talents at the Seaside Pavilion. The 2017 fair focused mostly on Lebanese designers. But this year, the BDF seeks to expand and feature international galleries on a larger scale, while establishing Beirut as a focal point of Levantine design.

“When we embarked on BDF, we did it out of our strong conviction that Beirut was in the process of imposing itself as the platform, indeed the hub, of design in the Levant and the Middle East,” co-founder and fair Director Guillaume Tasle d’Heliand said at a news conference about the fair, which was held at local restaurant Liza Beirut. “As a bridge between East and West, its history and geographical location account for the creativity, curiosity, culture and the discerning flair of the Lebanese.”

“Our second edition will show how we’re moving gradually, yet at a fast pace, to welcome foreign talent,” BDF co-founder and Creative Director Hala Moubarak said. “The 60 exhibitors and 150 designers of our 2018 edition will have European galleries represented.”

This year’s theme, created in collaboration with the firm GM Architects, will pay tribute to Beirut’s 1960s golden age while simultaneously shedding light on what many believe is a new cultural boom in the city.

The fair’s space and layout will represent the capital’s “organized chaos,” and the urban growth that mixes together classic and modern architectural styles in various colors.

“The layered evolution of Beirut’s urban fabric continuously evolves from order to disorder and vice versa,” GM Architect founder Galal Mahmoud said. “The space will be organized like a city, where one tends to get lost in its play of narrow and wide streets, all while having ... high landmarks that give a sense of direction.” Mahmoud said the colors chosen for the layout scheme are a direct reference to Beirut’s golden age – a reminder of times past punctuated by bright optimism for the future – “as we try to get back on that right track that we were once on half a century ago.”

The fair also aspires to act as a launch pad for fresh young designers who seek exposure, and it is therefore developing ways of getting Lebanese designs out there.

As a result of the exposure they gained at last year’s BDF, for instance, six Lebanese designers will showcase their work at the MAISON&OBJET trade show in Paris later this month in the hope of receiving the show’s Rising Talent Award.

“One of our challenges is to enter into partnerships such as the one we did with M&O, and to give young Lebanese designers exposure around the world,” Moubarak said.

“In September, a few days before our event, those six Lebanese designers will gain the spotlight at the second-largest European trade show.

“This opportunity will open to them the door for collaborations and allow them to make Lebanon shine abroad,” she added.

In addition to showcasing aspiring designers, the fair will also emphasize young innovators.

Beirut Designs, an education and outreach program run by Madar Onboz that targets Lebanese youth and educators, will feature a new approach to youth innovation.

“We did a workshop with 5-year-olds in three different schools – a public, a private and a religious school – and looked at chairs,” Beirut Designs Director Nadine Touma said. “The chairs that they designed, which we will exhibit, will shock some of the designers here.

“Research has proved that this type of design thinking is a very important school of thought because it teaches problem solving,” she added. “This kind of thinking should not wait until we are 18 and in university, and then we ask ourselves, ‘What can we do?’ because there are plenty of beautiful things we can start from a young age.”

This year, BDF will add a new award, alongside the current categories of talent, object and initiative, that will focus on student talents.

In addition, the A+ Award program, a competition for students that was launched this year in Lebanese universities under the theme “Know Your Roots! Start Mining Your Nostalgic Memories” will be presented during the fair by a BDF selection committee.

“We launched an invitation for students to revisit the past in order to breathe new life into forgotten childhood objects,” Moubarak said. “We selected seven projects after long discussions with a jury ... and we will accompany [the winner] throughout the following months to produce their object and exhibit it as the work of an emerging designer in 2019.”

The Beirut Design Fair will take place from Sept. 20-23 at the Seaside Pavilion, Beirut Waterfront. For more, see [beirut-design-fair.com](#).

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