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September 27, 2018

## Hala Moubarak, Beirut Design Fair and the Burgeoning Lebanese Design Scene

Bubbly, vibrant and engaging, Hala Moubarak is a force. As she walks through the Fair, greeting designers, collaborators and visitors, there are smiles left in her wake, she radiates a sense of positive energy that's a joy to behold... This is the first impression you have of Hala Moubarak.



Hala Moubarak

Hala Moubarak, the co-founder of Beirut Design Fair, lives for art and design, that much is clear once you sit down with her for more than a minute. A lover of all things Lebanese and creative, Moubarak is a champion of design. Here we talk to her about everything under the sun.

Before getting where she is today, Moubarak had a long road to walk – rocky at times. She worked as an interior architect, she joined USEK as a lecturer in art and design, contributed to design magazines, as well as continues to pursue her education. She felt the need to make a change. “Every morning, I wake up with that strong feeling pushing me to create change in Lebanon.” She soon met

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Guillaume Taslé d'Héliand and set up the first design fair in Lebanon, held in September 2017.



Around Beirut Design Fair, Scenography by architect Galal Mahmoud

It's surprising to learn the lengths to which Moubarak went to realize her vision. An uphill struggle, she had little support from people around her. "People thought it was a crazy idea, especially in Lebanon."

However, she wasn't deterred and she gradually gained traction thanks to her determination and a few people who shared the same vision... (including Tarek and Mirna Khalifeh, [CreditBank](#), [who's the main partner, among others](#)) until the first edition was realized in September 2017.

According to Moubarak, Beirut Design Fair is more than just a fair that goes on for a few days. "It's a whole process that takes a whole year before the big day. It is about creating relationships, sharing ideas, working together and fostering a sense of community through collaboration with designers, artisans, craftsmen, and more. It is a creative, educational environment where young designers grow and learn. Beirut Design Fair brings people together, more so, Lebanese people together. The key thing is, everything is made in Lebanon."



Hala Moubarak and Guillaume Taslé d'Héliand

After its first edition in 2017, Beirut Design Fair continues to bring together gallerists, designers, professionals, and emerging talents alongside students in design – the creators of tomorrow.

More surprises were introduced this year. In its second edition, Beirut Design Fair launched its first contest dedicated to students, under the A+ Award, by designating a subject that links to history and to the responsibility of each creator to preserve it. Alongside the Award, Know Your Roots: Start Mining Your Nostalgic Memories where the BDF worked with Lebanese university students. "Design is one of the most important drivers of development in an advancing society and we launched an invitation to students to revisit the past, in order to breathe new life into forgotten childhood objects," said Moubarak.







Beirut Design Fair

Another close friend and partner in this year's edition is internationally-renowned architect [Galal Mahmoud](#). A lover of the Fair from the very outset, Mahmoud asked to get involved and take up any challenge. "What you saw during the show was the result of a cooperation between Galal on the one hand, and Guillaume and me on the other, where the communication, dreams, and Beirut that unites us, were at the heart of the scenography.

Perhaps the clearest example of BDF's growing international prestige was reflected in the choosing of six Lebanese designers as 'Rising Talents' by the prestigious [Maison&Objet](#) fair in France. Moubarak almost shivers with excitement, "One of our challenges was to enter into partnerships such as with M&O, and to give young Lebanese designers international exposure. In September, a few days before our event, those six Lebanese designers gained spotlight at the second largest European trade show! This opportunity has opened doors and allowed them to make Lebanon shine abroad. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with M&O in France, but also to taking Lebanese design to other European capitals. Because these talents have things to say, and to do! Because those designers give us high hopes!" she says.

This year's Beirut Design Fair was remarkable. With Lebanon's stock rising on a global level, there's never been a more exciting time for Lebanese design. With a passionate art, culture, design, and creativity enthusiast like Moubarak at the helm, the only way is surely up.

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