

The buds of May

History has a tendency to repeat itself, so Cyril Zammit urges that now is our chance to change it...



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NEW WAYS OF WORKING AND THINKING ARE CRUCIAL TO ANTICIPATE A FAST CHANGING WORLD

Remember a year ago we were all indoors, terrified of an invisible pandemic with no idea of what the following weeks would bring? If felt like we were at war, and forced us to completely reshifting our priorities.

Now the light at the end of the long tunnel is growing. In the UAE, the successful vaccination campaign has started to bring back hope to everyone in the weeks before the Summer break.

Theodore Roosevelt said once: "Believe you can and you're halfway there." This is where we at now. Halfway to a rebirth, but there is still some hard work to do.

When you look at the past 100 years, design has been the perfect ambassador of rebirth in war-damaged societies. After the aftermath of WWI (and the following horrendous Spanish Flu), designers jumped into Modernism and Avant-Garde, while architects reinvented the construction aesthetics with the Bauhaus movement. A strong need to move ahead, with the

use of new technologies and material developed during the war to enhance every day life and interiors. In parallel to this, Surrealism did look at a counter point of view and created a provocative series of objects. Art Déco replaced Art Nouveau with its series of patterns inspired by nature, another symbolic feature of rebirth.

After WWII, there was so much to be done to rebuild devastated countries. An immediate need for primary material to build homes as fast as possible and melt existing metal for new purposes. Design was to produce cost-effective, easy-to-use elements to bring back happiness to everyone. It was the first global movement of design that impacted even Japan at that time.

Because design responds to a changing world, new behaviours are starting to emerge from the trauma of last year. We realised that we should develop open spaces as new public living rooms, decentralise our city centres as the technology gives us the opportunity to be connected without physically be in an office. Even the notion of being 'at work' is changing. Bicycles are the new trendy transport (well maybe not here in the middle of summer), the transitioning to a virtual world made us also realise how much we missed our 'in person' human interactions. Finally we rediscovered how important it is to be self-sufficient and not depending on a worldwide grid of imports.

The recent announcement made by the Government of Dubai to support the creative economy with new measures facilitating the creation of businesses, changing the ownership rules, offering cultural and creative visas is a fantastic sign of an administration that understands that change is good. New ways of working and thinking are crucial if we want to anticipate a fast changing world. The integration of sustainability as a key player for our future is not only needed but now it's not negotiable.

Post-COVID societies will, hopefully, be focused on human kind more than on the materialistic needs. Although there are still too many troubled parts with that chaos in the world, we have an extremely urgent call to answer: save our planet to save ourselves. And it starts with our behaviours.

The UAE boldly declares that 'Nothing is impossible,' well, perhaps Audrey Hepburn put it a little more delicately saying: "Nothing is impossible. The word itself says 'I'm possible.'"👁️

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