

# From A.I. to A.R.

*Esquire's design columnist*  
**CYRIL ZAMMIT** sees Arab design take a global stage

**W**hile many of us were returning from summering in Europe last month, the spirit of Arab design was heading the other way. Paris' Arab World Institute played host to the inaugural Arab Design Award during Paris Design Week, in what was a truly proud moment for the community.

Being an advocate for regional talent for more than a decade now, it was hugely satisfying to see standard bearers being rightfully celebrated. Emirati Abdalla AlMulla was singled out as an emerging talent, as was Egypt's Don Tanani for his Entrepreneurial Talent. Elsewhere Studio KO as picked up the Grand Prix award and Lebanese icon Nada Debs was singled out with the Special Grand Prix for her achievements.

And that was only the start.

The Royal Commission for AlUla took Paris by storm with the second edition of AlUla Design Award. With more than 400 entries, ten finalists made it to Paris from Tunisia, France, India, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and five were granted the right to turn their prototypes into proper creations for the retail network that the Commission

has on site and abroad. But there is more from AlUla: the unveiling of the first Madrasat Addeera Collection, the first of a series of four limited-edition creations. Inspired by AlUla and its surroundings, using local material or creating new ones like this 3D-printed natural cellulose employing an innovative decarbonisation material technology that has the ability to absorb CO2, the collection has been a collaboration between designers and local producers, supporting a community and demonstrating how the symbiosis is strong between the two.

A few days later, across the English Channel, the UAE and Saudi Arabia were also represented at the London Design Fair with Al Ghadeer Emirati Crafts and the works produced by 16 Bedouin women using the traditional Sadu and &Bouqu (Riyadh) celebrating the Saudi Fauna and Flora in a contemporary display.

This month the celebration returns closer to home, with the return of Dubai Design Week, and Downtown Design. The latter will see creations from Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE on display with a new edition of UAE Design Exhibition curated this year by Fatma Al Mahmoud. Tanween by Tashkeel will, once again, unveil creations made in the UAE by five UAE-based designers who have collaborated with engineers and scientists over eleven months to deliver innovative and functional design creations.

Finally, early next year, the first edition of Doha Design Biennale will give us another chance to celebrate regional talents, a special focus on Morocco and Arab Design Now, an exhibition curated by Rana Beirut.

While there was never any doubt about AI - Arab Intelligence - the above proves us that there is also AR - Arab Reality - when it comes to the design world. ☺

**THE INAUGURAL ARAB DESIGN AWARDS IN PARIS WAS A TRULY PROUD MOMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY"**



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ABDULLAH TOUK

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