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DUBAI DESIGN WEEK:

INTERVIEW WITH CYRIL ZAMMIT

THE INAUGURAL UAE EVENT AIMS TO HIGHLIGHT LOCAL AND GLOBAL DESIGNERS TO BECOME A FAIR OF DISCOVERY

[Cajsa Carlson](#) 23 October 2015



There's not exactly a shortage of design weeks and festivals in the world, with more and more cities launching them to showcase local talent. Milan and Paris, London and New York—with their long backgrounds of innovative design—are obvious hotspots for those who want to see the latest from

designers, but increasingly, it's the newcomers we're most excited about. The latest city to launch a design week is Dubai, whose aim for the initiative is to establish itself as the regional capital for design, as well as a global meeting point for the international design community.

It was 18 months ago that Benedict Floyd, the CEO of Art Dubai Group, and [Design Days Dubai](#) Fair Director Cyril Zammit noticed that design was developing strongly in the city. It already has the the latter fair, which is a collectible design fair, as well as [Downtown Design](#), the high-end design trade fair that started in 2013 (and now a key element of Dubai Design Week). It's now introducing the Dubai Design District (d3), and in five years, will host the Expo2020. CH spoke to Zammit about the upcoming [Dubai Design Week](#) to get the lowdown on what to look out for—and stay tuned as we'll be on the ground covering the inaugural UAE event next week.



**There are quite a few design weeks in the world; what makes Dubai unique?**

Often a design week is focused on its home market. As Dubai is a point of convergence for the world, we decided to showcase the best of our local scene but also the regional one, and of course the world. We first decided to use the strong appeal of Dubai for celebrating countries

from the MENASA region that often are not exposed to international press or visitors. With [Abwab](#) (“doors” in Arabic), we have a collection of six pavilions hosted by designers from Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and of course the UAE. [There are] commissioned works under [this year’s] theme of “Games: the Element of Play in Culture.”

We are also presenting “Brilliant Beirut,” a graphic-led design showcase of the past seven decades in the Lebanese capital (from 1950s to present day), curated by Beirut-born and -based designer Rana Salam. Under the title of “Iconic City,” this exhibition will be repeated every year with a different city from the Middle East. Downtown Design, our trade show, is doubling its size this year and is the fastest growing design fair in the region. With over 90 brands exhibiting from 24 countries, it’s a fair of discovery and diversity.



### **What are you personally most looking forward to during the week?**

Global Grad Show is definitively a world premiere everyone is excited about. For the first time ever, 10 world universities will present up to 50 projects from their postgraduate students under six themes: Construction, Health, Home, Memory, Play, Work. Think of it as meeting the Future of Design. Also to enjoy during the week, the installations placed in several locations in town from the historical neighborhood of Al Fahidi to the Meraas Beach. A great

mix of design made by UAE-based designers and guest designers from abroad.

### **What role will design play in the future of Dubai, as the city grows?**

When we created Design Days Dubai in 2012, Dubai was the first (and remains the only) city in the Middle East opening its doors to collectible and limited edition design. There is a huge potential for professionals such as distributors, retailers, architects to settle in Dubai. The business-friendly and entrepreneurship spirit of the city is now taking shape with the Dubai



Design District offering several advantages to everyone to set up their companies on this free- zone. Design is a natural, new but growing element in the landscape of Dubai.

### **Dubai Design Week will feature a lot of designers from all over the globe; what was it that made you focus heavily on reaching out and invite designers from other countries?**

In a city where 200 nationalities are living together, it is natural that Dubai welcomes international design and designers during its design week. All the events we are organizing follow a common element: discovery. It is important we do work with established brands, but we believe it is equally important we help designers or design companies that have not been seen yet. So even if you have been to Milan Furniture Fair last April, I bet you will discover many new creations and creative minds here in Dubai.

*Dubai Design Week* kicks off next week, from 26 to 31 October 2015.

*Images courtesy of Dubai Design Week*



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