

ISSUE FIFTY FIVE
DECEMBER 2015

AIR

THE HEIGHT OF LUXURY FROM
EMPIRE AVIATION GROUP



EMPIRE AVIATION GROUP



Michael Fassbender

Luxury • Culture • People • Style • Heritage

The Bold Collective

Dubai-based design initiative, **DRAK**, draws attention to the city's budding art district

AIR

Over the past decade, Dubai has been reinventing itself in order to meet the diverse demands of varied cultures and industries. Today, it's a flourishing commercial centre – an affluent gateway between the East and West.

In conjunction with the booming business and tourism industry, Dubai's design scene has blossomed. Consequently, an ambition has emerged to make the UAE a global capital of art and design, a dream that has been cemented through the launch of Dubai Design Week and, with it, Design Ras Al Khor (DRAK).

Established at this year's Dubai Design Week, DRAK is an annual collective design initiative. This year's installation featured product design by Khalid Shafar, fashion by

Khulood Thani, a jewellery piece by Lebanese designer Nadine Kanso, an architectural pavilion by Tarik Al Zaharna and a dedicated food truck by David O'Brien.

The collective unveiled an inaugural project in the Ras Al Khor flamingo sanctuary, which explores wildlife preservation in the area. Co-founders aim to create a new exhibition each year, based on different topics. Shafar explains that this "helps support emerging designers and will encourage the design industry to grow in Dubai. Designers need to be exposed to the world, and that's the beauty of DRAK."

Shafar and his co-founders began developing the newly formed initiative earlier this year, around six months before Dubai Design Week, saying: "We had the idea for a good while before we

actually created DRAK. After Dubai Design Week was announced, we started actively putting things together. This was around April. We thought it'd be a great idea to organise something among ourselves.

"We were inspired at the thought of a group of designers coming together – a group project showcasing individual stories under one roof. When we heard the news about Dubai Design Week, that's when we knew we had to do something collectively."

Held in partnership with the creative community Dubai Design District (d3), Dubai Design Week celebrates the city's thriving art scene, with emphasis on collaboration. This year, international community gathered to explore and celebrate local craftsmanship.

Thani believes that it's important





DRAK is “open to the public” so art enthusiasts can share the inspiration behind their collections. “What’s amazing about DRAK is that it’s not only engaging for the designers. It’s also important to engage the younger generation and the general public; to encourage them to come and see what Dubai’s art and design scene has to offer.”

Dubai Design Week’s programme of design installations attracted various retrospectives from Middle Eastern countries and showed visitors what can be expected from the city in the coming years. This year, DRAK placed a strong emphasis on service, research and design development.

“We’ve had a lot of interest from academics, not only locally but internationally,” Thani reveals about DRAK. “This has been incredible and the feedback we have received has been brilliant.

“The design industry in Dubai is changing. When I graduated from school there was nowhere I could study fashion. I had to study marketing because that was the most creative topic I could study. There was no education for those who wanted to enter more vocational professions. Now, the whole country is leaning towards

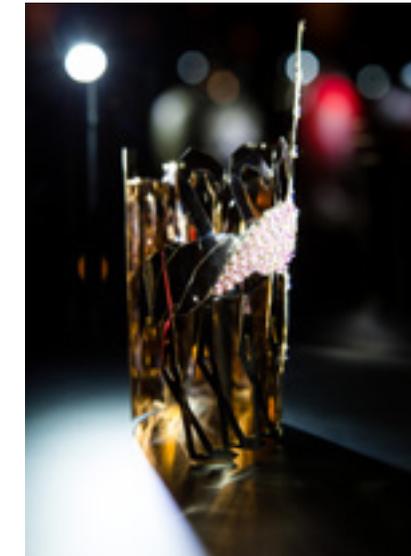
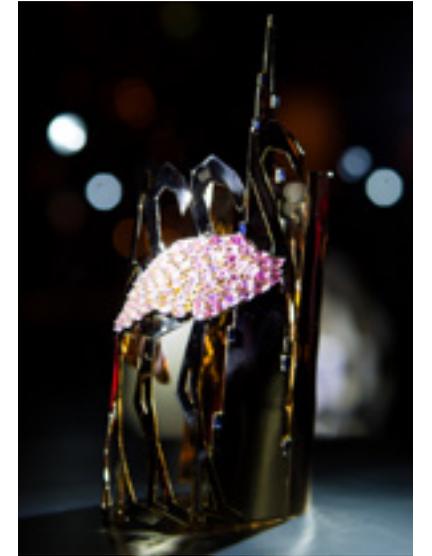
“ I believe that designers are the backbone of the eco-system in Dubai ”

educating people about these fields. It’s part of an overall strategy, which I feel the country is really promoting.”

Ambitious plans are being made to turn more of Dubai’s desert space into a bustling hub of creativity and commerce. The main objective of DRAK is to draw attention to the Ras Al Khor industrial area, one of the oldest areas in the city.

“It is an area that most people don’t know a lot about. They don’t understand the potential of it,” argues Shafar. “Our main objective is to draw attention to the area’s future as a creative district.

“Overall, design is very new to the region, but I believe that designers are the backbone of the eco-system in



Dubai. We create, we sketch and we draw. This is something we need to celebrate and it became our mission to dig deep into the area.”

Learning from other creative communities throughout the world, d3 has developed an ambitious plan to draw creative talent to Dubai. Tecom and d3 management are planning to combine a commercial retail area with a creative community. They aim to open Foster and Partners – a creative community within the area – by 2018, and develop a waterfront development - a new Marina - to attract the wider public to the district.

Shafar says: “The speed at which Dubai’s design scene has developed over the last three years is staggering.

Especially in comparison to cities like Paris, London, Milan and New York.

“However, we need to be careful about how we progress. We can grow much faster than we have been doing, and Dubai has great potential, but we need to be mindful about how we grow to ensure we have the right quality and the right outcome.”

Editor in chief of Architectural Digest, Manuel Arnaut, described working with DRAK as “an incredible and creative experience”, saying: “We have no doubts that the Ras AlKhor industrial area has enormous potential to stand out as a creative hub. We also firmly believe in the three concepts that this initiative advocates - Design Research, Innovation and Material Exploration.”