

# TIMBER

## DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY

MIDDLE EAST

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Tall wood buildings are gaining momentum around the world  
Observation House offers the ideal balance between privacy and views in Bulgaria  
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Studio MK27 explores the duality between opaque and transparent at the Mororó house  
Market value of the MENA design industry surpassed USD 100 billion in 2014

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## 'THE CABIN' BY KHALID SHAFAR

The fourth edition of Emirati Expressions opened in November and is set to explore the relationship between art and social life. Khalid Shafar designed 'THE CABIN' - a cylinder shaped structure veneered with teak - which draws its inspiration from the history of the United Arab Emirates during the life of its former president the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

According to Shafar, a mysterious ship lays abandoned on the land of the Abu Dhabi Sailing & Yacht club. No one seems to really know its story or where it came from. Many have speculated on the ship's history, but one story has some credence through an old black and white picture on the yacht club manager's office wall. It shows the ship, gifted by Kuwait in the early 70s, being used by Sheikh Zayed as a viewing deck to watch sailing races and to receive and entertain guests.

Visitors to THE CABIN will experience being between the sea and land where the eye, not finding a horizon, moves upwards to discover the jeweled space above. The installation has been designed to represent



Image © Khalid Shafar



Image © Khalid Shafar

the body of that mysterious ship. The first experience the visitor has is the feeling of being on land where a sculpted carpet captures the desert sand's wind rippled smoothness and being surrounded by shades of blue. THE CABIN responds to the reality of a ship that never sailed. A ship that remained docked on the seashore all its life.

Looking up the visitor experiences the faceted ceiling that is made from more than 418 wool Agaals wired together. This alludes to the many men who came to the ship to view the sailing races together. A men-only space reinterpreted by a ceiling made of a man's attire. In both spaces, aboard the ship back then and in the installation now, the visitor's view is different and the way we view is changed as well. The function back then and here now is similar, yet they are different spaces - here history has been reinterpreted.

THE CABIN then is an interactive space that brings the visitor back to the untold past but seen. A space of many experiences but one function only; viewing.

## SWEDISH TIMBER PRIZE TO BE AWARDED IN MARCH 2016

Swedish Wood will be announcing the 12th Swedish Timber Prize, in Sweden entitled 'Träpriset', architecture award on March 9, 2016. The jury has considered the 139 entries that were submitted by the deadline in January 2015. The competition is open to any type of structure, as long as wood forms a significant part of the design. It has to be fully completed, no more than four years old and available for the Swedish Timber Prize jury to visit.

The entries have been judged for the way they broadly meet the requirements of good architecture. The focus is on the actual site and the way the building relates to its surroundings and context. The Swedish Timber Prize jury has also considered materials and details, and how various functions have been resolved. Plus the use of wood, of course!

"The quality of the materials and construction techniques has moved on quite considerably, as has interest among architects and private individuals. Changes are quite slow to occur in the construction industry, but looking back we can see that a great deal has happened since the award was first established in 1967," said Per Bergkvist of Swedish Wood, who has been responsible for the Swedish Timber Prize since 1992.

Since the Swedish Timber Prize was first launched, a wide variety of buildings have won the award. The Tomtebo forest sauna outside Gävle won the award in 2012 and was designed by Meter Arkitektur in collaboration with their clients the Seitola-Gunnarssons. Before that, in 2008, Swedish Timber Prize went to the housing development Östra Kvarnaskogen in



Image © Ake E. son Lindman

Sollentuna, designed by Brunberg and Forshed Arkitektkontor on behalf of Folkhem.

The winner of Swedish Timber Prize 2016 will be awarded in Stockholm and will receive the Swedish Timber Prize statue and a prize of SEK 100,000. All the nominated entries will also be presented in the book 'Architecture in wood - The 2016 Swedish Timber Prize' and in a touring exhibition.



## American hardwoods widely celebrated at the inaugural 'Dubai Design Week'

UAE is the largest design market in the MENA region with a 27 percent share and USD 27.6 billion in revenues in 2014



Image © Khalid Shafar

American hardwoods were widely celebrated at the inaugural 'Dubai Design Week', which took place from October 26 - 31, 2015. A series of installations and product displays across Dubai highlighted the growing demand and widespread acceptance of American hardwood species by the design community in the UAE at the annual citywide event, which aims to place Dubai on the map as the emerging design capital of the world. The event represented

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a key milestone in the Emirate's journey towards achieving global recognition as a leading design hub, given that the UAE is the largest design market in the MENA region with a 27 percent share and USD 27.6 billion in revenues in 2014. Leading the way was 'Win,

Victory, & Love', a collaborative installation between respected Emirati designer Khalid Shafar and the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry. The installation, which was located

at the entrance of Downtown Design, paid tribute to 45 brave UAE soldiers who gave their lives in Yemen earlier this year. Using two important American hardwood species - American cherry and soft maple - Shafar aimed to pay homage to the fallen Emirati soldiers who devoted their lives to the UAE and also contribute to the documentation of their sacrifice, a process that is already in place by the UAE Government. A key objective of Dubai



Image © Saraifa Triser



Image © AHEC

Design Week was to celebrate and showcase the most exciting emerging designers and studios operating in the Middle East, with a major focus of activity being centered around the Dubai Design District (d3). A case in point being 'The Workplace Revisited', a showcase of work desks in American ash by Fadl Sarieddine Design Studio at d3. Similar to pods/cocoons on wheels, the desks can be nested together or combined with a larger meeting pod. In addition, the CITY's Bench, a 4.68m outdoor bench made from thermally-modified American ash and designed by Khalid Shafar, was also displayed at d3.

Outside of d3, the Design Ras Al Khor (DRAK) design initiative aimed to draw attention to the potential for the Ras Al Khor Industrial Area - one of the oldest in the city - to become one of Dubai's creative districts. Launched by four UAE based designers, the initiative involved installations, pop ups, experiences and product launches. Made of solid American ash, 'The 'Ataraxia' by Tarik Al Zaharna focused on the variety of experiences that the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary offers its users, and was an intensification of some of these elements, recreated and modified to be experienced on a more 'contained' scale. Also on display at DRAK was Khalid Shafar's 'Mr. & Mrs. Fanteer', a

humorous pair of side drawers in soft maple that reference the flamingo. According to Roderick Wiles, AHEC Director for Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Oceania:

"AHEC runs one of the most widely recognized wood promotion campaigns in the world and it makes perfect sense for us to be collaborating with Dubai Design Week and initiatives such as

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Downtown Design and Design Ras Al Khor. Today, great strides are being made in wood technology, but it is the creativity and inspiration of the design community that will ensure wood realizes its full potential. Overall, the Dubai Design Week provided us with a unique and exciting opportunity to see some of the very best creative talent and served as a platform to celebrate design and champion all the good work that is being done using American hardwoods."



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