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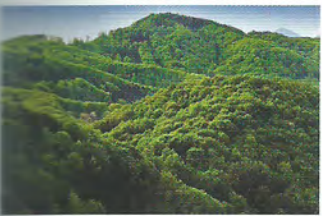
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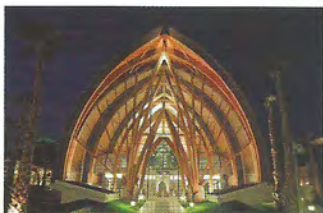
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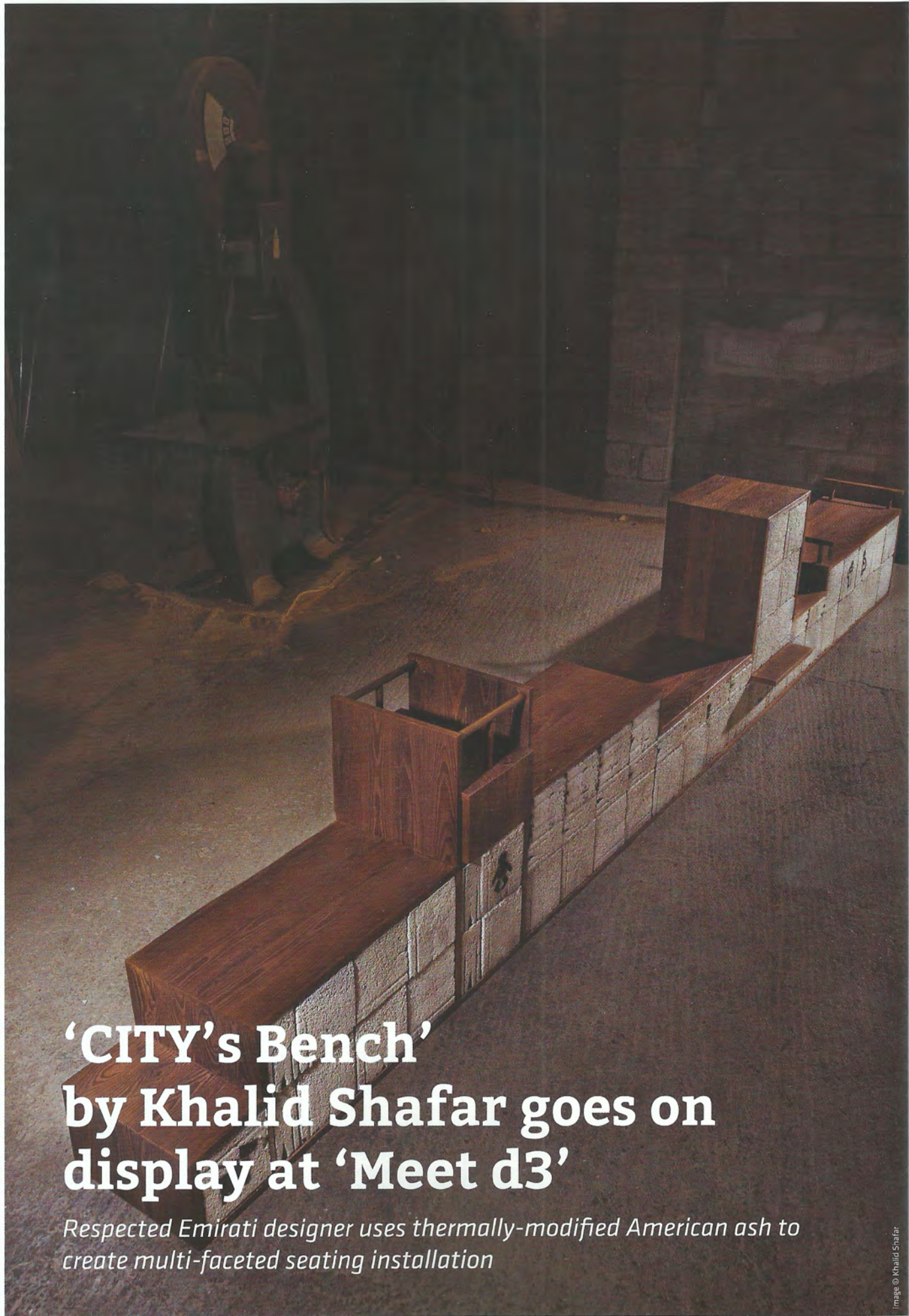
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‘CITY’s Bench’ by Khalid Shafar goes on display at ‘Meet d3’

Respected Emirati designer uses thermally-modified American ash to create multi-faceted seating installation

Image © Khalid Shafar

CITY's Bench', a 4.68m outdoor bench made from thermally-modified American ash and designed by respected Emirati designer Khalid Shafar, has attracted significant attention and interest at 'Meet d3'. The project is a collaboration between Khalid Shafar, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry, and Dubai Design District (d3), a purpose-built community dedicated to promoting and nurturing emerging local talent while also providing a creative home to established international design, luxury and fashion brands. A total of four benches, which were produced from thermally-modified American ash 'CAMBIA' donated by Northland Forest Products, were on display for the duration of the three-day festival.

The collaboration with Shafar and d3 builds on AHEC's prior initiatives in the Middle East and internationally, which have aimed at creatively promoting American hardwoods, and have involved the likes of Zaha Hadid, David Adjaye, Matteo Thun, Sou Fujimoto, Norman Foster and Paul Smith amongst



Image © AHEC



Image © AHEC



Image © AHEC



Image © AHEC

“A total of four benches, which were produced from thermally-modified American ash 'CAMBIA' donated by Northland Forest Products, were on display for the duration of the festival.

durability of the material against the UAE's harsh climate.

“As the public demographic varies in any place on earth and as the project site faces the Dubai skyline being the backdrop and the horizon of d3 location, CITY's Bench reflects this in its design. From form to function, there is a place for every individual on the bench regardless of age, size, or ability. The outer frame of the bench is made of thermally-modified American ash, while the inner part is filled with building blocks in three standard sizes to reflect the location of d3 and the ongoing construction around. This also serves to give an industrial look to the bench in contradiction to the clean neat outer wooden frame,” said Khalid Shafar.

others. According to Roderick Wiles, AHEC's Regional Director, thermal-modification is a relatively simple, but carefully controlled heating process, which when applied to a select few American hardwood species effectively turns non-durable interior timber in to a material that can be used outside and even in high moisture environments. Shafar's decision then to produce a bench for external use has not only showcased this beautiful timber to the general public but will also test the



Image © AHEC

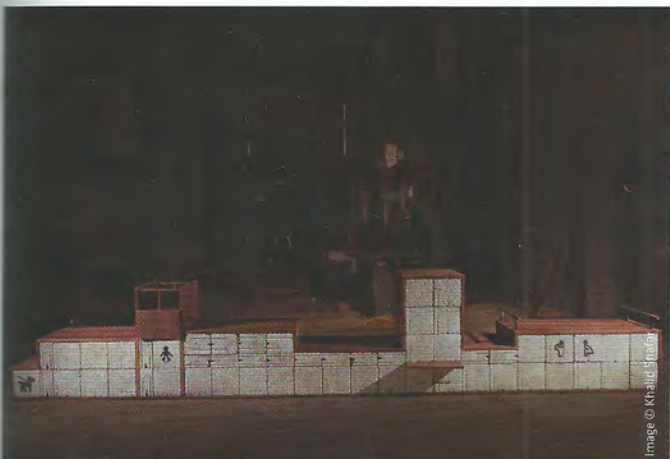


Image © Khalid Shafar



Image © AHEC

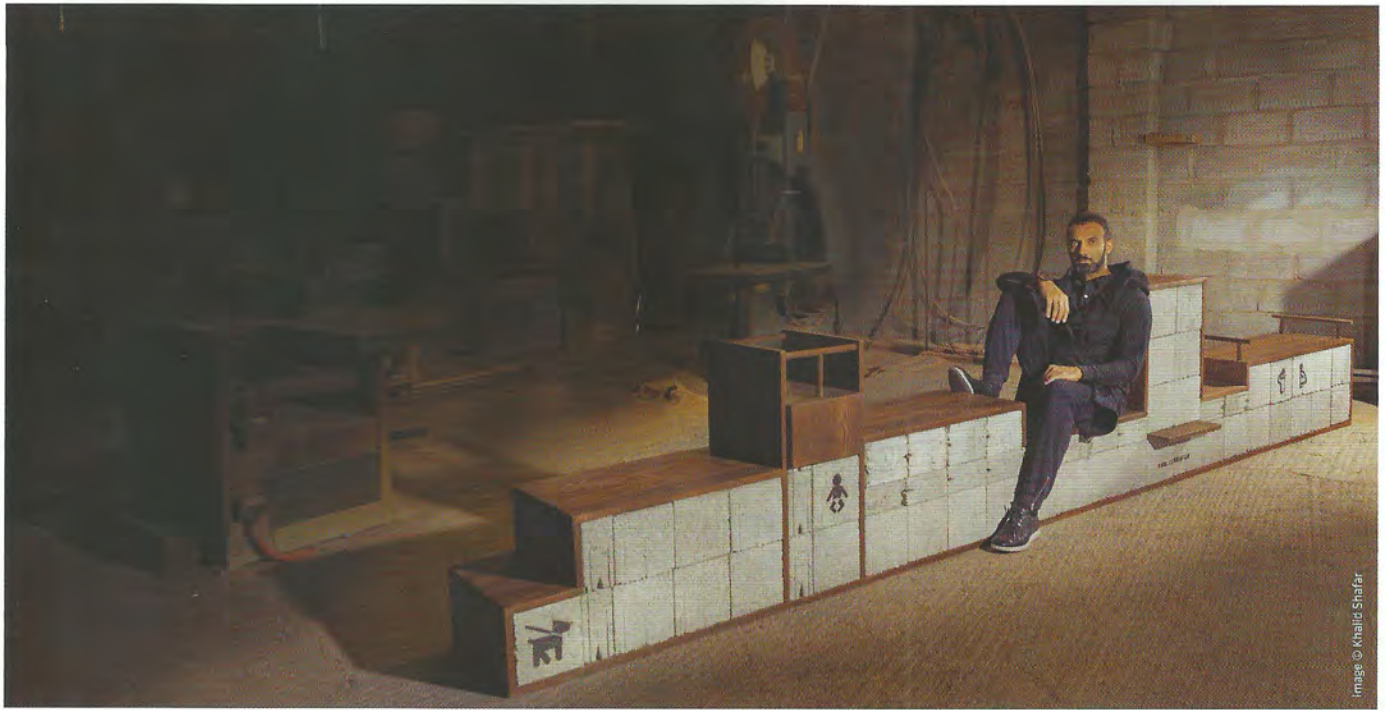


Image © Khalid Shafar

“ This collaboration with Khalid Shafar and Dubai Design District aims to highlight the use of newer technologies of hardwood durability enhancement.

The bench, which is almost 5 meters (4.68m) long and 40cm wide, has been designed to cater for the widest demographic possible with different heights across the bench allowing for children, adults, the elderly or even babies to be comfortably seated. Shafar intentionally designed the large-scale functional bench to stand out amongst the other pieces and serve in a public setting by allowing more people to share the space and connect. Furthermore, the raw natural finish allows for the natural textures, patterns and dark color of the thermally-modified American ash to stand out. By showcasing the bench at 'Meet d3', AHEC hopes to demonstrate the potential of thermally-modified American hardwoods in exterior use, particularly the increased dimensional stability and decay resistance of the timber, which significantly extends the service life and reduces maintenance needs of the bench.

“This collaboration with Khalid Shafar and Dubai Design District aims to highlight the use of newer technologies of hardwood durability enhancement. There's a developing market for thermally-modified

hardwoods across the globe and it's great to be able to showcase their potential here in Dubai,” said Roderick Wiles. “We believe this technology is a key part of the future for using wood externally. The market is growing and designers and architects want to use wood, but it has to perform well, look good, and last, or it just won't compete. Thermal-modification uses no chemicals, improves stability and has a very low environmental impact relative to other material solutions. By processing wood produced from America's well managed hardwood forests, thermal-modification provides a high quality, environmentally-friendly and sustainable alternative to some imported tropical hardwood species.”

According to Wiles, growing environmental awareness and stricter environmental regulations are forcing end users to look for timber from sources, which have a proven record of sustainable management and low environmental impact. The process of thermal-modification (also known as heat treatment) is now able to provide temperate hardwood species with the requisite durability and resistance to decay

that was, traditionally, only offered by tropical hardwoods. Whilst the concept is not a new one, thermal-modification today is an industrial process, using painstakingly developed technology and it truly represents a new opportunity for American hardwoods. The thermal-modification process, a clean and energy efficient technology, uses high heat in a controlled atmosphere to improve both the dimensional stability and the decay resistance of wood by permanently altering its chemical and physical properties.

'Meet d3' has been organized to harness the talents and abilities of the community to

celebrate creativity in the region. Programming across the three-day event included some of the most dynamic and original creative talents from across both the UAE and beyond, embodying the notions of convergence and co-collaboration around design, art, fashion, dining experience and entertainment - many of whom will now call d3 home. According to the organizers, the aim was to invite residents, designers, cultural enthusiasts, students and tourists to 'Meet d3' in a bid to help to ignite, inspire and engage them and share a sneak preview of what it will be like to be part of Dubai's home of design.



Image © AHEC