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BEIRUT DESIGN FAIR
20.09.17 / 24.09.17

DESIGN DEBUT

At last, Beirut gets a design fair to call its own – and its first edition is a hotbed of local talent

Words **RANIA HABIB**



You would be forgiven for thinking that Beirut has always had a design fair, given the ubiquitousness of Lebanese designers at regional exhibitions. In reality, the first edition of Beirut Design Fair was held this September, in parallel with the city's Art Fair, and showcased an engaging mix of emerging and established local design talent.

Gallerist Joy Mardini – a staunch 'defender of Lebanese design' – presented the works of Carla Baz, Charles Kalpakian and Beirut-based duo david/nicolas. The latter's 'visual reconstruction of Lebanese grandmothers' furniture' offered a fresh take on traditional household decor; standouts included the *Loulou* rocking chair and *Knefe* table, which playfully combine east and west, old and new.

Founded in 1913, woodwork specialist Boisseliers du Rif – now a third-generation family business – is globally renowned. Its exquisite *Arlequin* humidor gave heritage craft a contemporary spin, beautifully demonstrating the skills of the 50-plus artisans in its Beirut atelier. Lined in Spanish cedar wood on the inside and decorated in a marquetry of tinted diamond-shaped veneers, the humidor can be reconfigured into a jewellery box, a tea or coffee caddy, or customised.



1. A 'defender of Lebanese design', gallerist Joy Mardini showcased Beirut-based duo david/nicolas amongst other local designers 2. Design platform Albi offered a fresh take on a historical Phoenician shape with the *Breek*, a *carafe* used to serve the Levantine spirit *Arak*



PRECIOUS MATERIALS
HICHAM GHANDOUR'S
LAPIS LAZULI AND CAST
BRONZE CONSOLE

Radar design



1

1. *The Curiosity Chest and Harmonic table by Damj Design + Craft* 2. *Young designer Marine Bustros' modular Elements shelving system* 3. *Boisseliers du Rif's exquisite Arlequin humidor* 4. *Studio A's debut Art Deco-inspired collection*



2



3

The Curiosity Chest by Damj Design + Craft is an obsessive-compulsive update on traditional curio cabinets

Precious materials are often key ingredients in Hicham Ghandour's eye-catching work. The gilding expert lived in New York for more than three decades before returning to Beirut in 2011, and has collaborated with global brands including Ralph Lauren and gallerists such as Nina Yashar of Milan's influential Nilufar Gallery. For Beirut Design Fair, Ghandour unveiled a typically show-stopping lapis lazuli and cast brass console.

Fashioned from walnut and beech, the playful Curiosity Chest by Ahmad Khouja, founder and director of Damj Design/Craft, gave traditional curio cabinets an obsessive-compulsive update with 100 uniquely shaped spring-loaded drawers.

Newcomer Studio A, helmed by Ahmad Bazazo, offered up a cool-yet-timeless furniture collection, drawing inspiration from art deco silhouettes. Fellow young designer Marine Bustros recently founded her own practice and showcased *Elements*, a sleek, modular metal shelving system.

The fair exclusively welcomed Lebanese exhibitors this year (including heavy-hitters Fadi Saredidine and Ramy Boutros), as co-founders Hala Moubarak and Guillaume Taslé d'Héliand wished to highlight local talent. It will be interesting to see how adding global designers to the mix – and creating a more comprehensive programme around the fair – will expand the event's influence in the years to come.

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