

Divers cut, plant coral off UAE coast to build reef

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FUJAIRAH: Off the east coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) coral freshly removed from a reef is cut into pieces and replanted by a group of divers in the waters below.

The divers, from the Fujairah Adventure Center, are building artificial reefs they hope will spur a resurgence in sea life degraded over the years by climate change and development.

The small team and other volunteers have planted more than 9,000 corals over about 600 square meters in the past year. Within five years, they hope to cover 300,000 square meters with 1.5 million corals.

"It's a fertile environment for coral reefs, and this diversity has started spreading and has helped bring back sea life," diver Saeed Al-Maamari told Reuters.

Reefs, developing over thousands of years, are crucial to the survival of many marine species, while also acting as a barrier against waves that can help reduce erosion.

As elsewhere, UAE reefs have suffered substantial degradation over the past two decades, mostly due to climate change but also because of land reclamation.

Artificial reefs can help restore reefs that become a habitat for marine life and help combat coral bleaching and other degradation caused by climate change.

But it could take 10-15 years until meaningful levels of coral begin to grow naturally on artificial reefs, marine biologist John Burt told Reuters.

"This is a program that is going to take a considerable amount of time before it is able to demonstrate efficacy in terms of rehabilitating a coral reef," said the associate professor at New York University's Abu Dhabi campus.

The project in Fujairah, one of the poorer parts of the oil-rich Gulf Arab state, has government support with technical expertise provided by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment.

Fujairah is where most of the country's few popular diving spots are located and officials hope the reef will help foster sustainable fisheries and eco-tourism.

"We're recreating the coral reef environment and system, which will become colonized with fish and increase biodiversity and become a habitat for fish species that are threatened and become a nice environment for diving tourism," said Ahmed Al-Za'abi, director of the ministry's marine environment research department.







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Al-Qana set to boost UAE tourism potential

[How Arabian design scene is moving from product to purpose](#)

Thu, 2020-06-18 18:36

DUBAI: In a market often misperceived as solely lucrative and consumption-dependent, a new and refreshing wave of local creativity is shaping the design scene and enriching it with meaningful contributions.

In the process, indispensable pursuits such as sustainability and upcycling are finding their rightful place in the creative landscape.

I was born in the UAE, where I initially studied architecture before venturing into fashion and luxury brand management in France.



Curator May Barber and Artist Patricia Millns posing next to Millns's installation made out of recycled teabags in A Second Skin exhibition opening in Sorbonne Abu Dhabi. (Supplied)

Since then, I have collaborated with former design classmates in a range of design disciplines and projects. What I have noticed over the past few years are some interesting patterns or rather, values, emerging in the creatives' visions and work.

We have slowly moved from product to purpose, and from selling to inspiring or even creating an impact.

The Dubai-based Saudi label "Abadia" refer to itself as "ethical luxury." The family-owned brand, co-founded by Shahd Al-Shehail and her aunt, Naeema Al-Shehail, aims to empower and support Saudi women artisans by integrating traditional crafts such as sadu (a weaving technique) and naqda (a technique of pulling thin metallic threads through cloth) in their designs.



Patricia Millns signature artworks made out of recycled paper. (Courtesy of Patricia Millns)

Mochi, a fashion label founded by Dubai-based Palestinian designer Ayah Tabari, collaborates with artisans from different countries with collections dedicated to the craftsmanship of those communities – from Budapest to Marrakech.

French-Tunisian artist eL Seed, who became known worldwide for mastering the art of "calligraffiti" (a hybrid of calligraphy and graffiti) and dynamic collaborations with brands such as Louis Vuitton, is known to work with local communities in the making of his big canvases.

In his studio stands the TEDx award and a large coffee-table-like book titled "Perception." Both point to the story of eL Seed's collaboration with the marginalized Zaraeeb community of garbage cleaners in Cairo, who have collected and recycled garbage for decades using a sophisticated and efficient system.



Saudi Brand Abadia collaborates with artisanal communities in preserving craftsmanship. (Courtesy of Abadia)

This collaboration is possibly the highlight of his growing career, where he created something impactful and out of scale, covering nearly 50 buildings, while highlighting and celebrating the kindness, generosity and contributions of a hard-working, and almost invisible, community.

Though not yet deeply integrated into the local design thinking and practice, sustainability is, nevertheless, beginning to make its mark.

Sharjah-based Reemami minimizes waste from design to manufacturing and upcycles fabric waste into accessories, while advocating for local production

in Sharjah.

Upcycling in art and design is also becoming increasingly common. Dubai-based artist Patricia Millns (FRSA, Fellowship of the Royal Society of Arts) integrates recycling as a key practice in her work.

I curated an exhibition, "A Second Skin," in 2016 featuring two artists: Patricia Millns and Una Burke. Patricia had created large site-specific sculptures in crisp white hanging from the ceiling, unfolding on the floor like the roots of a gigantic tree.

The work was made out of recycled tea bags and explored a common theme in Patricia's work – the spaces in between. From the original exhibition in the Cartel in Dubai, the exhibition traveled to Paris Sorbonne Abu Dhabi and was part of the Arab Knowledge Forum.



Bulgari and Sheikha Fatima bint Hazza Al-Nahyan collaboration 'Jannah' displayed in the Louvre, Abu Dhabi. (Supplied)

The sculptures were suspended from the dome in the heart of the atrium of Sorbonne Abu Dhabi campus building.

In a recent phone call with Patricia, she said: "Working from home was great during the lockdown." She had to use what she found (at home).

She decided to use doilies and develop her work centered around the idea of "dhiyafa," or hospitality, using her signature paper mandalas. Her latest work uses wastepaper from a local factory. In a world of excess, as she describes it, the purity of her work has a monochromatic simplicity.

The work of African artist El Anatsui is well-known for upcycling bottle caps into large undulating canvases with a shimmering appeal.



Bulgari and Sheikha Fatima bint Hazza Al-Nahyan collaboration 'Jannah' displayed in the Louvre, Abu Dhabi. (Supplied)

The Ghanaian artist refers to his work as "metallic fabrics" where he references the liquor industry and the slave trade in Africa. The last El Anatsui tapestry I saw was displayed at the 2019 Abu Dhabi Art Fair in London's October Gallery.

The upcycled bottle caps, challenged against their nature, were crushed to create smooth undulating waves in an installation that was one of the most expensive artworks in the fair, offered at around \$1 million.

The creative community in the UAE is rather small. Enabled by the clusters system in Dubai such as Alserkal Avenue and the Dubai Design District d3, creatives have been grouped under a large physical umbrella and given a common address. However, the size of the community has not been an impediment in leading to numerous collaborations between different disciplines.

Dubai-based jewelry brand Bil Arabi, by Nadine Kanso, known for its signature Arabic font in bold jewelry design, has several collaborations to its name.



Inta El Kheir, hanging carpet installation co-designed by Nadine Kanso and Iwan Maktabi. (Supplied)

How did the collaborations start, I asked Nadine over the phone, as meeting in person is not possible during the current climate.

“They approach me most of the time,” she said. She named collaborations over the years – from a photo exhibition with Louis Vuitton in 2009 to aligning with local creative players such as haute couture designer Rami Al-Ali and the Iwan Maktabi carpet gallery, which co-conceived a hanging carpet commemorating the Year of Zayed in the UAE.

On the benefits of partnering, Nadine told me how her jewelry brand could have expanded to other mediums, but it called for a bigger responsibility in securing funding and redesigning structures. She prefers instead to collaborate with creative minds who align with her ethos, she said.

Earlier this year, we witnessed an unprecedented collaboration at the international level between luxury jewelry brand Bulgari and Sheikha Fatima bint Hazza Al-Nahyan, a member of the Abu Dhabi royal family and a cultural patron running her own cultural foundation.

An artisan from Asyut in Egypt working on Naqda embroidery for Abadia.
(Supplied)

The collaboration, which entailed two years of co-designing work between Rome and Abu Dhabi, gave birth to Jannah, a limited-edition high jewelry and fine jewelry collection reflecting a spirit of tolerance and understanding between two cultures with the hashtag #FromRometoAbuDhabi

What's next for the UAE design scene?

As the industry experiences a massive struggle due to the global COVID-19 crisis, it seems that the only way forward is to focus on values that will forge a long-lasting relationship with today's conscious consumers.

No doubt the challenge is great given the job losses and income shrinkage in the region but the future, despite the gloominess, may as well be promising with brands narrating successful, and purposeful, stories of the Arabian region.

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Arabic music record sleeves and what they can tell us

Hazem Jamjoum joined the British Library Qatar Foundation Partnership Project in April 2019 as Gulf History Audio Curator and Cataloguer. In this blog post he explores what record sleeves have helped him learn about the early 20th-century music industry in the Arab world. For some decades, the British Library's sound...

Dubai's COVID-19 restrictions on over 60s and young children lifted

Wed, 2020-06-17 20:15

LONDON: Dubai announced a lifting of restrictions to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) for people over 60 and children younger than 12 on Wednesday.

The decision to reopen certain sectors of the economy, which will begin on Thursday, was taken by the emirate's Supreme Committee for Crisis and Disaster Management, the Dubai Media Office (DMO) reported.

[#Dubai](#)'s Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management: Eased restrictions on activities across Dubai & restrictions on entry to shopping malls for people above 60 and children under 12 to be lifted starting June 18. pic.twitter.com/pFvHINDYup

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [June 17, 2020](#)

The precautionary measures of wearing face masks and social distancing still apply across the emirate.

Facilities to reopen include swimming pools, museums and cinemas, as well as those providing healthcare to elderly people.

According to the DMO, people aged over 60 and below 12 will be allowed to enter malls and other public places as long they continue to follow precautionary measures, such as wearing face masks and maintaining a distance

of two meters from other people.

As of Wednesday, the UAE had 42,928 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 293 fatalities.



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[Yemen coalition welcomes removal from UN child war zone list](#)

Author:

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RIYADH: The Arab coalition in Yemen has welcomed a decision by the UN secretary-general to remove the alliance from a list in an annual report on

children in war zones.

The coalition, which includes Saudi Arabia, also asked the UN to share with it details of any allegations of violations against civilians and children in Yemen.

“The members of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen welcome the decision by the secretary-general to remove the coalition from the annexes of his report on children and armed conflict,” the coalition said.

“The long-due decision recognizes the coalition’s unwavering commitment to protecting all civilians in armed conflict – especially children – and the preventative and protective measures the coalition has taken to strengthen the protection of children in Yemen.”

The statement said the coalition had set up a child protection unit and helped reunite with their families child soldiers recruited by the Houthi militia.

The coalition intervened in the Yemen conflict in 2015 in support of the internationally recognized government, which had been driven from the capital Sanaa by the Iran backed Houthis.



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Yemen calls for international pressure against Houthi recruitment of child soldiers