

Art can change the future

Amman Design Week's first edition stimulated an exchange of ideas and showcased innovators and their mechanics

On Tuesday, as the sun set on the inaugural edition of Amman Design Week, a new light was shed on Jordan's aspirations.

Investment in the arts, creative communities and design is often a sign of a mature civilisation and an established economy. Under the patronage of Queen Rania Al Abdullah, the annual event attempts to redraft global perceptions of the nation and support its growing creative class.

"Amman is a city that lies at the crossroads of civilisations, and has been a sought-after point of convergence for people from all walks of life," say fair directors Rana Beirut and Abeer Seikaly. "It is amid the uniqueness and in light of its centrality that Amman Design Week was envisaged as a platform that can harness creativity, revive the conversation about design, and instill a spirit of collaboration and exchange."

Be it through reimagining the past, or in celebration of self-empowerment through digital tools, regional designers are creating in a manner that is as rooted in its own vernacular as it is experimental and topical to the region. From problem-solving and enhancing communities to bringing concepts to life, design has the power to reshape the future. Amman Design Week attempted just that, and in my opinion, succeeded in style.

The multidisciplinary, inclusive public programme of the inaugural edition rested on three pillars: the Hangar Exhibition, the MakerSpace and the Crafts District. Together they engaged in an exchange of ideas, invigorated communities and brought to the fore avid learners and proactive makers in Jordan.



DESIGN DIARY



Live in style as Dubai-based interior designer **Pratyush Sarup** takes us into the world of interior design through this fortnightly feature

HANGAR EXHIBITION

Curated by Sahel Al Hiyari, the principal architect at the leading Jordanian firm Sahel Al Hiyari Architects, this presentation at the Ras Al Ain Gallery was dedicated to new-generation experimental designers from the region. Raya Kasssieh and Nader Tehrani worked with local women communities to create *Entrelac*, a huge woven installation using 350kg of undyed yarn. Suspended from the venue's high trussed ceilings, the architecturally scaled garment exuded geometric exactitude, entropy and material manipulation all at once. *Impress* by Hiba Shahzada used interwoven copper wires to simulate a transformative, three-dimensional plane. "What the mind conceives, whether of an object or a space, is never reduced to a single drawing, a single sketch or model," says Shahzada of the concept.



MAKERSPACE

Located in the Jordan museum, this presentation was a demonstration of the vision, perseverance and creative might of all innovators. Interacting with modern digital fabrication tools and innovative technologies, including 3D printers, against the backdrop of iconic artefacts on show at the museum, visitors were taken on the evolutionary journey of innovation. Showcasing makers who are exploring new forms and new technologies in different sectors — renewable energy, health care, architecture and engineering, to name a few — the exhibit delivered on its purpose of inspiring visitors.



THE CRAFTS DISTRICT

Dina Haddadin, the Jordanian architect and a self-taught visual artist, turned the 35-year-old Raghadan Bus Terminal into a celebration of the country's rich crafts heritage. *Colonnade + The Bridge*, Haddadin's temporary installation, borrows materials from our everyday landscape to create a stunning composition. As the entry to the venue, the *Colonnade* was imagined as a transient structure built using 12 scaffolding towers arranged in the form of a grid and placed in the middle of the empty plaza. Weaving a 700-metre piece of orange tarp between the posts, the architect achieved archways mimicking those along Quraish Street, the route leading down to the Terminal. Eschewing the loneliness of the Raghadan Bridge, Haddadin wove the brightly coloured tarp on the existing structure of the unused bridge. This led the way to a series of canopy installations and workshops that brought the terminal to life.