

Emirati designers need more support

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Downtown Design, a
furniture and product
design trade event,
opens in Dubai **B5**

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FIRST EDITION OF DOWNTOWN DESIGN, A FURNITURE AND PRODUCT DESIGN TRADE EVENT, OPENS IN DUBAI

DUBAI

By SARAH ALGETHAMI
Staff Reporter

Emirati furniture designers who want to see their designs turned into products face some barriers in the UAE, Emirati designer Khalid Shafar told *Gulf News*.

Shafar was speaking on the sidelines of a press conference announcing the opening of the first edition of Downtown Design, a furniture and product design trade event in Dubai's Mohammad Bin Rashid Boulevard.

Emirati designs are manufactured abroad rather than in the UAE since local companies are not willing to develop a product, which is a barrier for many designers, according to Shafar.

"There is more willingness [abroad] to take your ideas and apply them. It's not the way here. The companies here are more oriented for business to business. As much as you are still in the trial stage, they are not willing to open this door because there might be a chance that they might not finish this product," he said.

He also said that there is a shortage of Emirati designers.

Another challenge faced by budding Emirati designers is the lack of university degrees that equip them with knowledge of product design.

Despite the barriers, the design infrastructure in the UAE is developing, he said. There are a number of design galleries in Dubai, including Nak-



Ahmed Ramzan/Gulf News

Human touch

■ Craftmanship at The Workshop stand at the first edition of Downtown Design, a furniture and product design trade event in Dubai's Mohammad Bin Rashid Boulevard, which began yesterday.

kash, J+A, La Galerie Nationale, and Shafar's own gallery Kasa, where he displays his work.

International designers are starting to recognise Emirati talent. Giulio Cappellini of

Cappellini said that he is willing to work with Emirati designers.

Commenting on the design landscape in the UAE, Cappellini said: "In the UAE, there is more and more attention to

design from consumers."

The development of design in the UAE has caught the attention of international brands.

Some have used the exhibition as a platform to debut



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Khalid Shafar |
Emirati designer

their products in the Middle East, including Italy's Chi Wing Lo, which recently opened its Dubai showroom.

Chi Wing Lo, the Chinese designer behind the brand, said that consumers in Dubai are willing to pay any price for a good quality product.

Buyers have to dig deep into their pockets to buy Wing Lo's products. A circular cabinet with a revolving door costs between €12,000 and €14,000 on average.

Looking for distributors

But consumers don't have to pay a large sum to own quality furniture. At Discipline in Milan, products are priced between €150 and €600.

Renato Preti, president of Discipline, said that he wants to expand his business to the UAE.

The company's products are already displayed at a showroom in Beirut, and it is looking for distributors to bring the business to the UAE.

EVENT

Downtown Design lures top talent to emirate

DUBAI

By SARAH
ALGETHAMI
Staff Reporter

The first edition of Downtown Design opened yesterday at Mohammad Bin Rashid Boulevard in Dubai.

It is being held under the patronage of Shai-kha Latifa Bint Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

The four-day furniture and product design trade event attracted designers from the UAE, US, Italy, France and Turkey, among others.

Some of the companies present include Cassina, Atelier AK, Emeco, and Vitra.

The show is free for trade visitors and industry professionals, who can attend between noon and 8pm daily.

Members of the public can attend from 5 to 8pm on October 29 to 31, and noon to 6pm on Friday for a fee of Dh50.