

## **American hardwoods widely celebrated at the inaugural 'Dubai Design Week'**

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**November 11, 2015** - American hardwoods were widely celebrated at the inaugural 'Dubai Design Week', which took place from October 26 - 31, 2015. A series of installations and product displays across Dubai have highlighted the growing demand and widespread acceptance of American hardwood species by the design community in the UAE at the annual citywide event, which aims to place Dubai on the map as the emerging design capital of the world. The event represented a key milestone in the Emirate's journey towards achieving global recognition as a leading design hub, given that the UAE is the largest design market in the MENA region with a 27 percent share and USD 27.6 billion in revenues in 2014.

Leading the way was 'Win, Victory, & Love', a collaborative installation between respected Emirati designer Khalid Shafar and the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry. The installation, which was located at the entrance of Downtown Design, paid tribute to 45 brave UAE soldiers who gave their lives in Yemen earlier this year. Using two important American hardwood species - American cherry and soft maple - Shafar aimed to pay homage to the fallen Emirati soldiers who devoted their lives to the UAE and also contribute to the documentation of their sacrifice, a process that is already in place by the UAE Government.

A key objective of Dubai Design Week was to celebrate and showcase the most exciting emerging designers and studios operating in the Middle East, with a major focus of activity being centered around the Dubai Design District (d3). A case in point being 'The Workplace Revisited', a showcase of work desks in American ash by Fadi Sarieddine Design Studio at d3. Similar to pods/cocoons on wheels, the desks can be nested together or combined with a larger meeting pod. In addition, the

CITY's Bench, a 4.68m outdoor bench made from thermally-modified American ash and designed by Khalid Shafar, was also displayed at d3.

Outside of d3, the Design Ras Al Khor (DRAK) design initiative aimed to draw attention to the potential for the Ras Al Khor Industrial Area - one of the oldest in the city - to become one of Dubai's creative districts. Launched by four UAE based designers, the initiative involved installations, pop ups, experiences and product launches. Made of solid American ash, 'The 'Ataraxia' by Tarik Al Zaharna focused on the variety of experiences that the Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary offers its users, and was an intensification of some of these elements, recreated and modified to be experienced on a more 'contained' scale. Also on display at DRAK was Khalid Shafar's 'Mr. & Mrs. Fanteer', a humorous pair of side drawers in soft maple that reference the flamingo.

According to Roderick Wiles, AHEC Director for Africa, Middle East, South Asia and Oceania: "AHEC runs one of the most widely recognized wood promotion campaigns in the world and it makes perfect sense for us to be collaborating with Dubai Design Week and initiatives such as Downtown Design and Design Ras Al Khor. Today, great strides are being made in wood technology, but it is the creativity and inspiration of the design community that will ensure wood realizes its full potential. Overall, the Dubai Design Week provided us with a unique and exciting opportunity to see some of the very best creative talent and served as a platform to celebrate design and champion all the good work that is being done using American hardwoods."

Commissioned by the Dubai Design and Fashion Council and produced by global consultancy Deloitte, the MENA Design Outlook report was announced to coincide with the Dubai Design Week. According to the report, the design market across the region is expected to grow by about 6 percent annually to reach USD 147.5 billion by 2019. The report also states that the MENA design market was valued at more than USD 100 billion last year, representing more than 4.5 percent of the global design market, at USD 2.3 trillion. With design revenues in the region forecast to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9-10 percent in the next three years, the MENA design market is forecast to account for 5.2 percent of the global market by 2019.

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**About AHEC:**

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the U.S. hardwood industry, representing the committed exporters among U.S. hardwood companies and all the major U.S. hardwood production trade associations. AHEC runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, specifiers, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply. In addition, AHEC also produces a full range of technical publications. For more information, please visit: [www.americanhardwood.org](http://www.americanhardwood.org).