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# INDEX

Major contracts signed at the GCC's largest interiors show

# UNVEILED



Tonon



Presotto

The Dubai construction boom has resulted in the Emirate's furniture market being considered one of the most important in the world, with imports showing an annual growth of 24%. This is set against a regional trend, which is seeing an excess of over 2,500 existing and planned projects in the GCC worth over US \$1.2 trillion. With this in mind it can be argued that the Middle East region is one of the most important markets in the world for companies involved in the interiors sector.

On the back of this, this year's Index was the Middle East's largest ever interiors show covering over 35,000 m<sup>2</sup> net and filling all the available hall space at the Dubai International Exhibition Centre. In total 1,690 companies from 56 countries exhibited, including 35 major country pavilions. Although not as busy as previ-

ous years, put down by many exhibitors to the fact that this year's event fell over a weekend, the exhibition was still a huge success drawing all the major players of the region and some from overseas to showcase their goods under one roof. The overriding theme seemed to focus on classically styled furniture with complex lines, while wood in all its forms was notable for its popularity. Wallcoverings veering towards modern metallic schemes were on display, while textiles were brightly coloured with heavy textures.

Show stealers this year came in the form of Prague-based Sans Souci's 18kg red sculpture, which was the largest single piece of cast glass at Index and took a year to create. The other was the ultra modern Hi-Can bed from Deta. Complete with surround sound, internet access, and projector screen, the bed can be





customised to any size, can be made out of any material and can have as many or as few functions as required. The Italian furniture company returned to Index following its first venture into the Middle East market in 2005. General manager, Ivan Tallarico explained his decision for returning: "This is a massive market and a lucrative one to break into. So it makes sense to come here. It's also beneficial to see how your products are viewed from a local perspective, how they should be changed to appeal more to this region. Plus you also get a better position here as there are less large companies vying for space."

New launches at this year's event included a range of lighting from Gallery Vetri d'Arte. Zahir, Several and Royal, designed by the Tea Group, Renato Gambato and Marina Toscano respectively, highlight the wide spectrum of styles the Italian company has at its disposal.

Another interesting product unveiled at Index was Thai company Yothaka's range of furniture made from environmentally-friendly water hyacinths. Turn-

ing what had been a nuisance weed into a material source for furniture production, the company has hit upon a look that is both contemporary and stylish.

Despite what appeared to be smaller numbers of visitors there was no shortage of big deals being made with many companies reportedly happy with the high quality of business visitors. Italian company Selva announced a joint venture signed with Kuwaiti company Dia Behbehani to open a showroom in the country, meaning Selva will be represented in 80 markets worldwide. Tanya Wakeham, general manager, Selva Middle East revealed the significance of the contract: "This is our most important Middle East deal yet but we definitely have more in the pipeline as we are in the final details to open in Cairo, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi."

Furnishings giant Al Aqili also received a number of impressive contract wins during the show. The company, which wowed the crowds by taking up the whole of Al Multaqua hall, won an AED 17.5 million contract to supply and

fit 91,000 m<sup>2</sup> of Boen parquet flooring for phases two and three of the Al Raha Gardens residential villas project in Abu Dhabi. A second contract worth AED 8.5 million was for the carpeting of the apartments in the Dubai Marina Mall development. The deal will see the company supply 35,000 m<sup>2</sup> of carpeting from its Fabrica and Masland ranges from the Dixie Group.

UAE based Icon Emirates Flooring also signed an AED 2.4 million deal for a new distributorship in Iran after only one year after launching the company. "We exhibited in Index to secure distributorships and in addition to the Iranian success we are also in discussions with a potential distributor in Egypt. These were not planned meetings. These were guys who walked onto our stand," explained Mansukh Kanbi, MD, Icon.

So while this year's event might not have been as well attended as previous years, it seems that it had the desired effect in attracting the right people with big contracts clearly being there to be won.