

// PRESS RELEASE

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## || Dubai's leading firms create self-reflecting canvases for INDEX Design for Expression launch

- INDEX tasked 11 firms with creating canvases that illustrated their individual design ethos
- Wilson Associates, Gensler, Bishop Design and Sneha Divias Atelier some of the big names involved
- Finished pieces were stunning array of colours, materials, photography and self-portraits
- The one-off works of art were showcased at a gallery-type event at The Renaissance Hotel, Dubai



*Pictured: The team from Wilson Associates poses alongside their special canvas (main image). The submissions from GAI (bottom left) and (clockwise, from bottom right), Gensler, Sneha Divias Atelier and ALBAL Design Studio*

**DUBAI, UAE – 29/01/18:** Many of Dubai's leading interior designers gathered for a unique celebration of self-expression last week, presenting one-off canvases styled to directly reflect the individual design ethos of their firms.

The INDEX: Design for Expression launch event – marking two months until the opening of this year's INDEX exhibition, the largest interiors event in the Middle East – showcased the creative prowess of 11 different design outfits.

They were each given a month to create a visual representation of themselves as designers – in line with INDEX's 2018 theme, Design for Expression – after being provided with a blank canvas and set of acrylic paints.

Put on display at The Renaissance Hotel, Downtown Dubai, the finished pieces were as varied as they were sublime, oscillating between self-portraits, wild abstracts, three-dimensional pop-ups and digitally-printed imagery.

Samantha Kane-Macdonald, INDEX event director, said: "The concept was to bring our Design for Expression theme to life through the inspired minds of Dubai's design community. We know how incredible these designers are, but even that couldn't prepare us for the truly exceptional pieces we had in our gallery.

"We had genuine works of art that were perfect visual representations of the working nature and design stylings of each firm. They were all so varied and completely different to one another; from the minimalistic approach of WA International, to the wild signature layering on Bishop Design's canvas, to the slashed, ultra-violet 'reveal' of Pallavi Dean Interiors' classy piece. They were all wonderful.

“Our gallery showcased the strength and depth of creativity, approach and variety available within the region when it comes to choosing interior designers, and provided a fine example of the quality of the work that is being done to help transform Dubai and the wider UAE into one of the world’s most exciting and forward-thinking design hubs.”

Gensler, Bishop Design, Pallavi Dean Interiors, Wilson Associates, Sneha Divias Atelier, ALBAL Design, WA International, MMAC, Sharon Jutla Interiors, Godwin Austen Johnson and the Esra Lemmens Agency were the 11 firms tasked with designing for expression.



*Pictured: Bishop Design/Rogue with their multi-layered and textured piece (left). Pallavi Dean Interiors incorporated the Pantone Colour of the Year, ultra-violet, into their shredded canvas (right)*

In what was perhaps the most unique use of the canvas, the team from Wilson Associates presented their piece as a horizontal cork-board, on top of which each member of staff’s business card was transformed into a physical reflection of themselves, stood upright complete with personality-mirroring outfits and hairstyles. Project designer Alika Dobie explained: “We all have to be represented because without everyone working together, there would be no Wilson Associates Dubai.”

Godwin Austin Johnson’s Gillian Blair led her team in painting a portrait of company co-founder Brian Johnson, whose work across the region is so iconic that even his clubhouse marvel at the Dubai Creek Golf Club is printed on the 20 dirham note. Gillian said: “This process was all about expression. Brian is the face of GAJ. What we’re known for – even without the face! – is Brian.”

ALBAL Design Studio, led by founder and CEO Noura AlGhandi, incorporated every team member’s eye onto their dark canvas. “We as an international team see the self-portrait as a reflection of us and the uniqueness of our team, our philosophies and point of view,” explained Noura. “Everything that defines ALBAL is in the picture. We are a melting pot of countries and cultures and chose to show close-up portraits of every team member’s eyes. Independently from the cultural background or dress code, the view towards the eyes is always accessible.”

INDEX director Samantha Kane-Macdonald added: “Allowing scope for personal self-expression is already becoming more important when thinking about an interior space. This project allowed us to quite literally paint a picture that shows how blank spaces can be transformed to be pure, direct reflections of individuality. For 2018, INDEX will critique the way we express ourselves through the products we source for our interiors, be that at work or at home. Our exhibition will offer a wealth of product that will enable any client’s project to feel uniquely theirs.”

INDEX, which takes place alongside sister exhibitions WORKSPACE and SURFACE Design Middle East, March 26-29<sup>th</sup> at the Dubai World Trade Center, will continue to explore the theme of Design for Expression across its show floor, where the launch event’s paintings will be put on display.

Welcoming more than 800 exhibitors from around the world, INDEX's biggest change for 2018 will be its hosting of Ventura Dubai, the Middle East's debut staging of the internationally acclaimed Ventura brand, curated by Dutch design agents Organisation in Design. The dedicated area of the floor will feature 40 up-and-coming and established European designers, with four live installations.

Additionally, a new zone of the exhibition – Made in UAE – will be home to dozens of local artisans and craftspeople, including furniture-makers, glassblowers and upholsterers, all brought to the show to allow the design community to establish firmer local and regional trade contacts.

As always, INDEX will hold its annual INDEX Architecture & Design Awards on the second night of the four-day show, with 15 new categories on offer this year. Entries are now being accepted.

To register to attend the show, or for any more information, visit [www.indexexhibition.com](http://www.indexexhibition.com)

*\*for images of the night and to see all of the evening's canvases, please follow this link: <http://bit.ly/2Bzz7dc>*

## ENDS

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INDEX is the largest and longest running collection of interior, design and trend exhibitions in the Middle East. Established in 1990, INDEX is organised by dmg events Middle East, Asia & Africa.

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An international exhibition and publishing company, dmg events produces market-leading exhibitions and conferences for the global energy, construction, coatings, hospitality and interior design industries.

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Founded in 1989, dmg events has operated in the Middle East since 1995 and owns many leading brands including The Big 5 portfolio of construction events, INDEX – the Middle East's largest event for the interior design industry and The Hotel Show, the longest running and most important event for the hospitality industry.

Headquartered in Dubai, UAE and with satellite offices in India, South Africa and the UK, dmg events Middle East, Asia & Africa organizes over 45 events across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, North America and Europe. For more information visit [www.dmgeventsme.com](http://www.dmgeventsme.com)

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