

society dubai

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**MIND YOUR
MANNERS**
THE DUBAI GUIDE
TO ETIQUETTE

FLASH!
FROM DELUXE
IFTARS TO THE BIG
SPLASH PARTY

DUBAI'S ECO WARRIORS

Turning the city green

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE

TO DUBAI'S LIFESTYLE, PEOPLE, FASHION,
TRAVEL, CUISINE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY



Also...
The Tahoe Hybrid
- going green

Haute Drama
7 pages of fashion

Arnaud Rivieren,
Sculptor

COVER STORY

ENTERTAINMENT

TRAVEL

DUBAI'S GREEN TEAM

At first glance, it may not seem like Dubai has much of an interest in the environment. However, scratch beneath the surface of the relentless construction and the population's pro-capitalist disposition, and what you'll really see is a city with not only ambition, but also a conscience
by Lia Jashanmal

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While Dubai may be known for a lot of things (opulence, extravagance and over-indulgence, to name a few), 'environmentally-friendly' isn't exactly an oft-used moniker when it comes to the emirate. Having been accused by the World Wildlife Fund for having the world's largest per capita ecological footprint – although the reliability of this result is being debated – there's no denying we live in a frivolous city when it comes to energy consumption. With our unnecessarily constant air-conditioning, the belief that SUVs are a necessity (how many times do you really drive out into the desert?) as well as a slight disregard for environmental consequences (Ski Dubai), comfort, profit and growth appear to feature higher on our list of priorities than, say, the preservation of our planet.

As a rapidly developing city, it's not hard to see the origin of our wasteful ways. But, excuses aside, now is the time to take action. At the beginning of 2008, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister

THE ARTIST

Arnaud Rivieren, Sculptor

Arnaud Rivieren has taken the meaning of recycling to a whole new level. While working in his current job as General Manager for oil and gas firm, DPAL, in Jebel Ali, Arnaud spied a mound of scrap metal in the nearby yard and found exactly the right material to make his inspirations come to life.

"I've always drawn and painted but I wanted to make something more three-dimensional, more solid," says Belgian Arnaud, who arrived in Dubai in 2002. "It felt like a good time to start." Arnaud has now had several exhibitions at Al Quoz art gallery B21. Pieces include giant-sized cherries and pears plus the more abstract *Love is in the Air* and *Stream of Consciousness*, which all have a sleek, polished finish, a remarkable juxtaposition next to his primary material: scrap metal.

"I like to give a perfect finish, since the pieces come from something so ugly; I like the contrast."

But Arnaud is already working on his next project, set to be unveiled in January.

"It will be completely different again. I like

"I certainly wouldn't say I contribute to the environment by making my sculptures. But I do try not to use new materials."

He also admits that he has fallen victim to the Dubai trend of having a gas-guzzling car.

"I do drive a big car, but I need it for my work," he continues with a half-smile. "Of course, I'm absolutely worried about global warming. I work in energy and we are working on safe energy and commodities. Our growing population means the earth is losing natural resources, so we have to find a balance very quickly."

Coming from Belgium, Dubai must seem a little backwards environmentally?

"I think before, because we almost seemed alone in the UAE, with no-one watching, we didn't bother [with being environmentally aware]. However, in Europe everyone has gone green, which I think has had an affect on people here," Arnaud reflects. "I'm happy that Dubai is developing a conscience. I have kids and they will have to pay the price and make the sacrifice if we're not ready to do it now. The faster we go, the better. We are an example for them."

THE ARCHITECT

Carolyn McLean, Architect

Architectural firm Woods Bagot – responsible for the impressive interiors of our beloved Emirates Towers – have a dedicated green division, comprised of 50 green-accredited architects. Founded in nature-loving Australia, they have offices all over the world, including their newly opened eco-friendly office in Dubai Festival City.

Green-accredited Australian architect Carolyn McLean's passion for environmentally-friendly design is glaringly apparent and is reflected by her knowledge on the subject.

"At the beginning of the year, Sheikh Mohammed made an announcement stating that any building in Dubai has to be designed according to the LEED standards, though adapted to the Emirates environment," Carolyn explains. "This means most of new Dubai now has to comply; now everyone has to bring themselves up to that level."

Dubai-centric issues include water conservation, utilising solar power and air conditioner energy consumption. "It's about not necessarily designing fully glass

“RECYCLING ISN'T THE SOLUTION; IT SHOULD BE THE LAST OPTION. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO REDUCE YOUR CONSUMPTION AND RE-USE THE ITEMS”

of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, implemented green building regulations, based on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system from the US. The government is taking action, which means grand measures are already being taken.

While the ability to enforce green practices in our jungle of insurmountable construction is certainly an issue, when you combine the fashionable lure of 'going green' with its associated financial gains, it seems environmental conformism is rapidly becoming self-imposed.

Dubai is now playing on an international field, which dictates international standards. In addition, many of Dubai's 80 per cent expat population bring with them environmentally-friendly habits and standards from their own countries.

The green issue is one that is global and cannot be ignored. Anyone choosing to put the issue off will inevitably get left behind. Here we meet with the Dubai residents who are painting Dubai's future bright green.

to develop something more technically challenging each time," says the father-of-two. "For each sculpture, there is a long process. It's very precise and the steel needs to be welded."

The leftover scrap metal not only provides material for Arnaud, but also inspiration. "I like the form and the shapes the pieces have; they give me inspiration and I like to give another life to the shapes I find. At other times, I have in mind what I want to do and I go and look around for the piece I need."

Using scrap material certainly makes for original and interesting art. As well as steel, Arnaud has also created kitsch wall hangings made entirely of disposed cables. The end result is a mass of striking bright reds and blues and each piece can weigh up to a whopping 25kg.

"It's so exciting to think that these pieces were scrap that was supposed to be destroyed or melted," says Arnaud, who also says that he does not claim to be saving the world with his art.



Shot on location at Woods Bagot



Jamal Al Falasi
Youth Representative
at the United Nations

Shot on location at Bastakiya

boxes in a hot, desert environment, as tempting as it may be,” explains Carolyn. In addition to design, the LEED guidelines refer to construction too.

“It focuses on the workers on site too,” elaborates Carolyn. “For instance, if someone is sanding, it might be in the open air or they could use a vacuum sander that collects all the dust.”

Owners of existing buildings are also being encouraged to ‘go green.’ Carolyn says: “You can’t force someone who has a building to upgrade. But of the buildings that will be left after Satwa and Bur Dubai have been demolished, they’ll all eventually need to be updated.”

So does Carolyn think that this demolition is a further drive toward turning the city green?

“I think it’s more that there’s a vision to increase the density, to create a new urban environment without having to go out into the desert,” she says thoughtfully.

“In one sense, it’s positive, because rather than taking a new patch of desert, it’s actually using space that’s existing, with an existing infrastructure. But I do feel that we get less from a cultural perspective. They’re wiping out such a huge area. It’s sad.”

On the plus side, there are some pretty quirky technologies that have been created in order to reduce our impact on the environment. Ideal for Dubai, there’s green air conditioning – known as solar thermal – which uses a heat exchanger that chills water using heat. There’s also the ‘chilled beam’ system where cold water pipes in the ceiling cool hot air through natural convection. A huge plus is that no air is being blown. On the other hand, it may not be feasible with Dubai’s humidity.

Then there are ‘edge monkeys’, solar-powered robots that scale high-rise buildings, checking thermostats and adjusting shading devices or blinds accordingly. They can also clean glass, which would spell the end of Dubai’s window cleaners hanging from a shoestring.

Carolyn also mentions ‘footfloor energy’, which is being used in nightclubs – where energy from people dancing is captured by the flooring and used to illuminate the club.

However, as with all things new, there has been some criticism that although the government may be putting regulations in place, they are difficult to enforce. Still, in a sense, going green is almost self-regulatory.

“Energy efficient buildings are going to

“ENERGY IS QUITE CHEAP HERE AND THAT’S A DISINCENTIVE FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE. BUT IT’S NOT ALWAYS GOING TO BE THAT WAY”

cost less in running costs in the long-term. Tenants are increasingly becoming more particular about the buildings they occupy, especially international companies.”

Carolyn continues: “You’re basically future-proofing because, five years down the track, people are going to want to knock them down or retro-fit them.”

“Energy is quite cheap here and that’s a disincentive for a lot of people. But it’s not always going to be that way,” Carolyn predicts. “Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) has already put in a new system whereby they’ve identified typical use for residential buildings or apartments. If you’re using more, you pay a higher rate.” As the problem intensifies, no doubt we can expect similar measures will fall into place.

THE ECO WARRIOR

Jamal Al Falasi, Youth Representative at the United Nations

Dubai’s ‘Green Team’ wouldn’t be complete without a young and impassioned voice. Emirati Jamal Al Falasi brings a youthful exuberance and determination to the challenge of making Dubai green.

Last year Jamal headed to Antarctica, with his equally eco-aware sister Noor, on a student expedition to see the world’s changing climate first-hand.

“We saw what we thought was a pretty huge iceberg,” says 21-year-old Jamal, who is studying the environment – ecosystems in particular – at the University of Sharjah.

“In fact, it had broken off from an even bigger iceberg. It’s just not natural that a piece this huge would break off – some of the icebergs even had waterfalls because they’re melting so rapidly.” During this polar exploration (Students on Ice) Jamal – who managed to wangle sponsorship for the trip – aided scientists with his research.

“It was International Polar Year, which happens every 50 years, so they were updating facts and figures about Antarctica to see how much it has changed,” he explains.

As well as studying, Jamal is working for the United Nations as a youth representative: “Our main goal at the UN involves increasing youth awareness about the environment and encouraging them to take action,” he explains. “We target countries across the Middle East and cover topics such as environmental sustainability, climate change and the ozone layer.”

“I’m planning to do a masters in environmental economics and a PhD in environmental politics,” says Jamal. “My goal is to eventually become the Minister of Environment, so I can implement environmental laws in Dubai. In the long-term, I want to be the Secretary General of the United Nations.”

Although his goals may seem lofty to some, perhaps Dubai needs someone so convinced of the importance of our environment, and Jamal certainly serves as an inspiration to his peers, as well as younger children. He organises workshops at local schools and universities, to encourage environmental awareness and youth empowerment. “We get children to bring their recycling to school; that way they’re teaching their parents as well. We’ve also had art competitions, where children express their understanding of the environment through art.”

The UAE is undeniably progressing in terms of environmental awareness and action; hybrid taxis are already being spotted on our roads, and recycling facilities, though still far from ideal, are popping up more frequently and in more practical places. However, Jamal warns, “Recycling isn’t the solution; it should be the last option. You’re supposed to reduce your consumption and re-use the items that you have, not just for the same reason it was bought. Recycling should be the final step, when you can’t use the product anymore.”

One of the UAE’s biggest problems continues to be a lack of education and information on how to ‘go green’. “We did a survey that included several universities and all of the public schools in Dubai,” Jamal recounts. “We found out that 98 per cent of the people want to do something but they just don’t know what to do. Educating people is the most important thing. You can’t change the world if you don’t even know what you’re trying to change.” ■