

BDW BURNS BRIGHT

In some places quite literally,
Beirut Design Week lit up the city

Beirut Design Week returned for its third edition this June, an event dedicated to all things design-y, and enabling the city's thriving industry to connect with one another across a series of workshops, talks, exhibitions, screenings, discussion panels and open studios. After the week was welcomed in at the Downtown jewellery souks, the usually sleepy streets of Saifi were jolted wide awake by the Newcomers' Exhibition: usually vacant stores were occupied by pulsing pop-up shops, while the regulars flung open their doors for what became somewhat of a fashion street party, with barmen serving Prosecco cocktails on the sidewalks to industry elite and passers-by alike. Hipsters flitted into the candy-coloured Plastik magazine pop-up boutique and to browse Jeremy Scott kicks, while punters elsewhere gathered in Nada Debs to watch the artisans in action, bringing down the veil on design. While just one element of the week-long showcase, the evening was reminiscent of the retail festivities of the Vogue-organised event Fashion's Night Out, which were hugely successful in London, New York, Delhi and Beijing until it took a 'hiatus' this year. Attendees had such a ball that they were calling for the event to become a monthly regular on the calendar.

The achievements of founders Doreen Toutikian and Maya Karanouh are undeniably impressive, coordinating more than 90 participants – swelled from last year's 50 – across a sprawl of 87 locations. "It's been easier in many ways and harder in other ways. We learned a lot from the first two years," Toutikian told us at the launch, admitting she was particularly excited about the presence of their foreign guests, a selection







of Dutch designers and Danish architects exhibiting in the souks, giving Design Week its first major international edge. Lebanese designers, of course, made their mark on the city, and most of the designers we've featured in this issue took part in one way or another, including lighting fixtures designer Ghassan Salameh, who cited the week as "always a very pleasant experience to get to share with your local community, as well as international." The idea of community is paramount within Beirut Design Week, with workshops across a range of disciplines – from typography and upcycling to fashion journalism and rebranding – encouraging anyone with a whiff of creativity to explore it by getting involved. And for anyone feeling reticent, then perhaps the numerous happy hours that had inched their way into the programme schedule was more their thing.

