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Architect and interior designer Viktor Udzenija was invited by international auction house Christie's to curate its inaugural design section of the Middle Eastern Modern & Contemporary Art & Design auction, presenting 10 contemporary design works by artists and designers across the Middle East and North Africa.

Marking a novel twist to its traditional sale format, the design section presents a separate guest-curated sale, with the mission to connect the Middle East with other geographies.

"There is a vast depth of ingenuity, innovation and sustainability in these selected works, made by designers from all over the Middle East," Udzenija commented.

Udzenija's carefully-sourced design selection featured a diverse roster of talent from the region, including Lebanese painter and sculptor, Ranya Sarakbi's 'Ouroboros': a monumental looped serpent constructed from more than 16,000 single units of cast bronze. The handmade entangled band is 11 metres long and boasts dramatic, ever-unfolding geometric patterns.

# Contemporary Middle East

"It is hard to pinpoint and describe this incredible work without being whisked away into the land of myths and legends," Udzenija said of the sculpture. "It is just exquisite."

Other highlights from the auction included a tapestry by Iranian designer Taher Asad-Bakhtiari.

Woven by semi-nomadic tribal women using entirely naturally dyed, hand-spun wool, each piece can take up to four months to create, depending on size. Unlike the traditional Iranian carpet, Iranian tribal weaves display simpler patterns, because tribal people weave what they see: the sky, the mountains, the earth and the animals. Inspired by the power of this puritan philosophy, Asad-Bakhtiari imagines a process to further strip the tribal weave to its bare elements, starting with the weaving process itself.

"Despite being clearly rooted in the traditional Gabbeh carpets, the innovative approach of exposed warps and bold geometries gives this carpet a unique contemporary architectural aesthetic. The use of hand-spun wool and natural dyes make this work the epitome of sustainability," Udzenija explained.

Moroccan-born Hassan Hajja's 'Crate Stools' are inspired by the merging of his two cultures – the artist moved to London early in his childhood. Much of his work fuses elements from traditional and contemporary North African culture with familiar Western imagery and iconography.

Other pieces in the collection include a table by design duo david/nicolas - a tribute to their hometown of Beirut; a mirror by UAE-based designer and architect Ammar Kalo, where traditional crafts from the region meet modern fabrication techniques; and the 'Unique' chair by Carlo & Mary-Lynn Massoud, which is made from foam and coloured concrete.



Viktor Udzenija poses in front of Ranya Sarakbi's 'Ouroboros'



**Top:** 'Unique' chair by Carlo & Mary-Lynn Massoud  
**Above:** 'Crate Stools' Hassan Hajjaj covered with upholstery  
**Right:** Tapestry by Iranian designer Taher Asad-Bakhtiari woven by semi-nomadic tribal women