

# BAHRAIN'S 'CREATIVE NIGHTS'

Bahrain : By a Staff reporter

***Our unique abilities when put together naturally create something new... This is called creativity. The process of creativity involves conscious thought, subconscious feeling, plus the skills to put ideas together. Each process has its own individuality. Creativity provides human expressions that can aid the progress and welfare of mankind. Products of creativity help to satisfy our ever-increasing needs.***



Marwan Mattar, Hashem Salameh, Nagi Moubarak, and Walid Azzi.



Ridha al-Filla, Jubran Abdel Rahman, Khamis al-Muqlla, and Mazin Mattar.

**F**rom July 9 to 11, 2005, Bahrain celebrated a creative gathering. Recognised as the ultimate forum for creative community, 'Creative Nights' is the only creative festival in the region, bringing together creative minds, design directors, copywriters, producers, and every other one involved in the creative process. Top speakers were invited to communicate and share their insights with the attendees. Several workshops on strategy and web management also were held within the programme.

'The Design Cares Travelling Exhibition' displaying socially responsible designs was also held, and marking the closing of

the event, was 'The Night of The Adeaters', showing more than 500 unique TV commercials from all over the world during a five-hour show in an incomparable cinema atmosphere!

The people behind the organisation and success of Bahrain's 'Creative Nights', were Marwan Mattar, chairman and general manager of EMIC, and Hashem Salameh, managing director, EMIC, whose exemplary hospitality and management of this event speaks for itself.

ArabAd's invitation to 'Creative Nights' in Bahrain came from EMIC (Educational & Management International



John Foster.

Consultancy); a company specialised in graphic design training in Bahrain and the region. EMIC strive to provide long-term benefits for those engaged in the advertising industry and all ambitious individuals by providing training solutions that meet the requirements of today, and the needs and demands of the future, to support the prosperity of this industry in the region.



Marvin Ziedan.

The core of the event was the Creative Debates, which were held over two nights on July 9 and 10, 2005. The idea behind this was quite simple: to bring together everyone interested in visual communication into a creative meeting. As the title suggests, the debates took the format of a creative talk show where a live discussion between attendees and speakers took place under the supervision of a debates moderator, Naji Moubarak, CEO of Fidelis, and covered creativity, social responsibility, and branding. Key creative decision-makers had the opportunity to learn creative concepts on future trends from prominent speakers, meet and greet peers and clients.

Opening the first day of the debates was keynote speaker, Walid Azzi, publisher and editor-in-chief of *ArabAd*, who delivered a speech on creativity in the Middle East. He opened saying: "Creativity is about finding compelling solutions by looking at things from a different perspective. It is about finding a common denominator between different variables and bringing it to life in its most beautiful way."

Addressing creativity in the region, Azzi said: "It is very encouraging and refreshing to see work from the Middle East crossing borders into the international advertising scene and getting accredited. Creative people, especially in our region, exert a lot of effort to overcome the many restrictions that tradition and culture impose on advertising. With the right motivation, limitations could be the catalyst that provokes creatives to



Marwan Mattar and guests.

come up with outstanding solutions. I say proper motivation is in order to put more pressure on planning and account teams to be equally creative in their briefs and advertising propositions."

Using examples to demonstrate his point, Azzi illustrated how creativity has the power to transcend cultural barriers.





Khaled al-Mouharraqi.



Berman and Moubarak listening to the audience.



Ramsay Najjar.

He went on to stress the importance of them mission of the industry in the region, saying: "We should continue to nurture our resources until our Middle Eastern vibes reverberate around the world. We should encourage people to vie for the skies and develop our industries and brands in order to compete on the international level. Our advertising should harmonious with reality and brands should withstand the test of time. We should promote noble causes and help protect the environment. We have the power to make a difference.

"Creativity is an enormous and powerful weapon. I call upon all advertising and creative professionals to give more room for intuition, more trust in gut feelings, and a bigger faith in hunches. Let creativity survive numbers, research, and rules. Be open to new ideas, outstanding experiences, innovative concepts and uncharted waters, and try to embrace change with grace." He concluded.

On the first day of debates, the key speakers were John Foster, JWT's newest executive creative director, and Khaled al-Muharraqi, a leading CG Artist of the world.

Foster is an award-winning senior art director. He started his career in London, working on high-profile accounts such as Shell, Colgate, Heinz, Reebok, United Distillers, and Mercedes Benz, working for Young and Rubicam, Leo Burnett, and



Abdulla al-Muharraqi, and his wife with Dr. Khaled bou Muttaie

Woollams Moira Gaskin O'Mallay. Winner of awards at Cannes, D, & A.D., The One Show, The Clio's, and Communication Arts, his participation in the event was invaluable. Foster talked extensively about his experiences in Singapore and produced examples to demonstrate some of the most important creative aspects of his work, and emphasised the various facets of creativity in the Middle East.

Al-Muharraqi, is the son of Abdulla al-Muharraqi, one of the region's pre-eminent artists.

Having inherited his father's talent, but lacking in direction, he studied photography and interior design at the Art Institute of Huston in the early 90s. It was at this point that he became fascinated with using computers in developing design concepts, and soon became a member of the Society of Illustrators and worked with a number of leading international advertising companies in the Gulf. Today, he has become one of the leading CG Artists in the region and has gained international recognition for his work. The topic of his speech was entitled: 'Life evolves, so does art'.

The second day of speeches featured David Berman, president of David Berman Communications, Ramsay Najjar, chairman Strategic Communication Consultancy (S2C), and Khamis al-Muqla, CEO, Gulf Saatchi & Saatchi and current IAA president-Bahrain Chapter.

Berman has over 20 years of experience in design and strategic communications. He brings both graphic design and





Moanes al-Mardi, Najeeb al-Hamer.

information technology expertise to his work. Since 1984, he has worked to establish a code of ethics, which embraces social responsibility for graphic designers throughout Canada, and many consider his knowledge of typography and electronic publishing to be unmatched. During the debates, Berman presented an extremely well received speech entitled: 'Weapons of Mass Deception: Design & Social Responsibility', in which he said: "Over 95 percent of the designers who have ever lived are alive today. Together, visual communicators have the power to define what professionalism in the design field will be about: helping increase market- share or helping repair the world.

"Are we aware of the influence we wield as professional communicators in the new economics of globalised messaging and branding? And once we do, where lies our responsibility, our opportunity, our ethics, our culpability, our balance?"

In this dramatically-illustrated presentation, Berman forwards his thesis that global branding strategies are the most powerful tools used today to encourage over-consumption amongst growing developing world populations, the largest long-term threat to global harmony and the environment. He argues that communications professionals have more conspicuous power than they realise, and play a core role in helping some corporations mislead audiences in order to invent unfulfilled "needs" in larger and larger markets.

In a world where design has become a recognised corporate asset, designers have the opportunity to use their persuasive skills responsibly and to accelerate awareness of the messages the world



Khamis al- Muqla, and Tareq al-Saffar.

really needs shared. Recent developments regarding professionalism and ethics offer hope that there is great opportunity for designers and other professionals to choose what their still-young profession will be about: creating visual lies to help sell stuff or helping repair the world by bridging knowledge and understanding.

Berman's compelling presentation generated much debated and was very enlightening for attendees. This was followed by Najjar's presentation entitled: 'Branding a Country' (which is presented separately in our coverage), and with a speech by al-Muqla, in which he discussed the concept of 'Branding Bahrain'. He opened his presentation saying, "A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer" while showing world-renown brand logos to illustrate his point. He went on to discuss whether branding a country is "branding" or "identity", and through the idea that the brand is



Adobe Seminar.



a journey with a destination, he went on to explore with visual aids, the many aspects through which Bahrain may be defined as a brand, and why the branding of Bahrain is necessary.

Al-Muqla's compelling presentation tackled many aspects of branding opportunities for Bahrain, including the people and kingdom of Bahrain, the country's role in pioneering political, economical, and educational reform in the Middle East, the empowerment of women, business environment, Formula 1 hosting advantages, and the FTA agreement with the USA. After giving many international examples of country branding, al-Muqla concluded that focus, braveness, thinking big, and being different were the only ways to discover and explore a brand.

The 'Creative Nights 2005' also featured a two-day workshop held on July 10 and 11, 2005, covering Project Strategy and Planning, and Successful Management of Web Projects, which were presented by Berman. In the first seminars, attendees learnt the successful and straightforward methodology that has helped hundreds of organisations get the results from their communications projects that help fulfill their missions. Participants gained hands-on experience as they learnt the principles in applying strategic techniques in marrying project implementation to



**Jacob Alex.**

organisational objectives. The latter seminar taught essential principles for delivering effective Web and New Media projects on time and on budget.

'Creative Nights 2005' was also proud to present a new design technology tracks, featuring the latest and the best technologies for designers. This was presented by Jacob Alex from Grapheast, and covered the Adobe Creative Suit CS2.



**Younis Skaini and his team.**



**MTC team.**



**MTC's display at the event.**



**The Night of the Adeaters.**