

Tanween Challenges – Media factsheet

About Tanween Challenges

Tanween Challenges is an annual 6-day competition that offers a unique opportunity for MENA designers across all disciplines to tackle real-world problems. The designers get the opportunity to craft original, practical solutions to four real-life challenges focused on different fields—all within tight timeframes and with limited resources. Tanween Challenges has been taking place at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) every year since 2019.

Each of the four challenges welcomes 20 participants (individuals or in teams) to put their creative skill sets to the test. Supported by challenge partners, and a supplementary program of workshops and talks, participants will have the tools to tackle their challenge briefs and propose a solution. One winning project from each challenge will be selected for commercial production by our Production Partners.

About this year's four challenges

This year's challenges embrace a life-centered approach that goes beyond human-centric designs, aiming to harmonize human activities with the planet's biodiversity in an era marked by overproduction, technological advances alongside growing inequalities, and urban expansion at the expense of nature. With this collective vision, Tanween Challenges seeks solutions that nurture all forms of life, supported by a cross-disciplinary blend of expertise to tackle these complex issues courageously and innovatively.

- City Breathe: Pavilion of Urban Respiration – Pavilion Design Challenge

Urban development and industrial activities have significantly compromised air quality, contributing to pollution that affects our health and the natural habitats within our cities. This six-day architectural challenge seeks to address these issues by reimagining how we can coexist with our environment and each other more harmoniously. Read more [here](#).

Partner: Albawardi and LEAD

- Invisible Threads: Visualizing the Unseen Impact – Graphic Design Challenge

Across the globe, the human species has left an irreversible mark on Earth's ecosystems, with far-reaching consequences for biodiversity and ecological balance. This challenge invites innovative minds to reveal the subtleties of our interaction with our planet. How can visual communication transform complex data into insights that lead us to a sustainable future? Read more [here](#).

Partner: Data is Beautiful

- **Reimagine the City: Activating Public Ground for Multispecies Living – Furniture Design Challenge**

In urban landscapes, the design of public spaces often prioritizes human habitation, neglecting the needs of other species that share our environment. This oversight results in a controlled environment that limits biodiversity and hampers the ecosystem's health. Can design help flip this narrative? This challenge invites participants to answer the question: How can we create urban spaces that promote co-habitation between humans and other species? Read more [here](#).

Partner: NYXO, Am Unique by Namthaja

- **Sustainable Bag: Biomaterial and Local Legacy - Fashion Design Challenge**

The fashion industry has a problem: overproduction, overconsumption and the dominance of global fashion over local cultures. These issues are not only disastrous on the environmental level but also on the cultural level. The "Sustainable bag" challenge seeks to foster an exploration of sustainable fashion solutions through the use of bio-materials. Read more [here](#).

Partner: Vanina

What's at stake for the winners

The winning projects that result from Tanween Challenges receive support from Production Partners to be commercially produced. They also get displayed in a dedicated space as part of a design exhibition at Ithra's Tanween Conference, an annual creativity conference that celebrates design and provides an environment rich with opportunities for designers to showcase their work, connect, network, and get exposure to the latest developments in the design industry.

Tanween Challenges Success Stories

- From Manuscripts to Contemporary Design Challenge (2022)

Participants from across the Arab World, including Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt, and the UAE took part in this enriching challenge. They were encouraged to relate cultural heritage to everyday life, and explore the relationship between artifacts and contemporary graphic design. Its objective was to design contemporary posters based on the visual and cultural appeal of historic manuscripts, and use those designs to produce a range of products, thus demonstrating the value and importance of creative production.

This challenge was held in partnership with Seen Store as the production partner. Additionally, Hundred Best Arabic Posters, a dynamic platform that aims to document the Arab world's visual culture through selecting and highlighting the best Arabic posters from the region, was the knowledge partner.

Poster designs by participants Arwa Alshammari, Nour Zahabi, Sally Mallat, and Kinda Ghannoum were chosen for production, and were transformed into a range of everyday items; from brooches to tote bags and notebooks to prayer rugs. These products were made available for sale through platforms like Seen Store, Virgin Megastore, Papermoon, as well as the Ithra Store. A portion of the profits generated from the products' sales directly benefited the designers, further fueling their creative pursuits.

- Marj – Architecture and Design: Cardboard Pavilion Challenge (2022)

This Challenge was addressed to architects and interior designers to create a pavilion that shows the beauty of architecture by using only one material - cardboard. The goal was to build a sustainable, moveable and iconic structure to be a traveling landmark.

When nature's spontaneity takes place and reshapes the face of the earth, we witness development and prosperity in all its greatness, which never replicates, but adapts to its surroundings. In sea and on land, this concept reiterates. From Marj, which means "green fields" in Arabic, green hills form on land, coral sprouts in sea, and seas collide in perpetuity.

Through "Marj," the winning designers—Azaheer Mohammed Alshamaa, Shouq Ali Metaki, and Rana Khaled Ali—wanted to translate the natural formation and overlapping of design into an architectural concept through one of the most notable structural materials i.e., cardboard which they used in designing the project.

- **Faseelah – Building Simplicity Pavilion Challenge (2021)**

In 2021, Tanween invited designers and architects to register for an immersive challenge entitled “Building Simplicity”. Over the course of 6 days, participants sought to overcome the construction complexities commonly associated with digital design through the simplest of means by constructing a sophisticated traveling pavilion. Using computational power and limited resources, their designs were guided by three key factors: site, scale, and materials.

The winning design from this challenge, entitled “Faseelah Pavilion”, is a truly remarkable structure that embodies the essence of Saudi Arabia's abundance and prosperity by paying homage to its iconic palm tree. Highlighting its intricate anatomy, Faseelah captures the beauty of its leaves and trunk through a modular design approach, resulting in a tranquil space that emulates the experience of being under a palm tree, and inviting visitors to immerse themselves in its serene ambiance.

Faseelah is a remarkable architectural creation designed by Lujain Alatiq, Laian Abussaud, Sara AlMaddah, and Lama Dardas. In line with Ithra's commitment to inspiring and enriching local communities, this traveling pavilion has been showcased in various prominent locations including the Saudi Design Festival in Riyadh, King Abdullah Environmental Park in Al Hasa, Aramco Core Area, Khobar Corniche, and King Abdullah Financial District in Riyadh. It is currently installed at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, where locals can visit and enjoy this architectural interpretation of the beloved date palm.