

AUTUMN EQUINOX EDITION  
22.09.2025

# الواحة

ALWAHA TRIBUNE

*A Journal of Musings & Mindful Moments* [الواحة] is the Arabic word for oasis, a fertile spot in the desert where water is found, creating a sanctuary of life amidst arid surroundings. Etymologically, the word derives from the Arabic root و-ح-و, suggesting a place of rest and refuge.

## About Al Waha

# Reflections from My Personal Oasis

Welcome to the start of a new journey, one that has made me question the pace at which we live our lives and the space we create to allow for creativity to flourish. A few questions have been percolating with me: How do we consume media today? How do we form meaningful connections with our world? In fact, how do we connect with each other?

**My hope is that Al Waha Tribune will help answer some of these questions.**

In such a fast-paced digital world, my intention is to share glimmers of everyday life that have made me pause, think, and wonder

– these may come in the form of art, books, music or just nature.

It goes without saying, that experimenting with a creative project like this is both exciting and overwhelming, but with each sentence written, I see an opportunity to send ripples through our community and to encourage curious minds to ask further questions.

In addition to my own humble observations, Al Waha is also intended to be a shared space for some truly amazing people to contribute their opinions and views of the world. Together, I envisage a tapestry of

thoughts from a diverse group sharing openly and honestly their perspectives.

Now, you may be wondering why a newspaper? That's not very environmentally friendly? Well, you will be pleased to know we made sure that the paper used is recycled and, more importantly, my hope is that this will be a cherished keepsake. I carry such vivid childhood memories of my parents sitting on the floor with newspapers spread like a carpet around them as they sipped their morning gahwa. There was something special about hearing them share their perspectives, inspired by

the day's news, and the moments of silence as they were engrossed in their reading.

With this first issue of Al Waha Tribune, you will find your very own keep cup – a vessel created to hold brew after brew as you, too, enjoy a morning coffee while browsing these pages. Aligned with the Autumn Equinox – a time when the Earth shifts towards balance and the scorching summer begins to release its grip – this edition is an invitation to pause and reflect upon the depth and interconnectedness that surrounds us.

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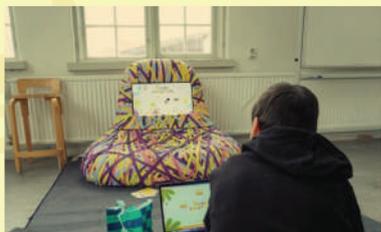
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## HOW THE POWER OF A SMALL DECISION CREATES CHANGE

### *The Culprit: The Coffee Cup*

#### *How many paper cups do you use to fuel your day?*

This question may sound simple, but the answer may surprise you. Our refreshments come wrapped in disposable containers that we use for less than an hour but remain in our environment for decades. While change is said to be the only constant, the small changes we need to make to protect our environment seldom get the same urgent attention.

Globally, we consume 2.25 billion cups of coffee daily, with the majority served in disposable cups. In the UAE's thriving coffee culture, boasting over 3,000 coffee shops and a busy last-mile delivery service, the rate of change toward sustainability does not seem to be picking up when it comes to disposable cups. I hear many people saying the same thing: "I forgot my cup."

Consider your own coffee routine. If you buy just two takeaway drinks per day, you are using over 700 disposable coffee cups a year. While UAE-specific data isn't readily available, I believe most of these cups end up as municipal solid waste in our landfills.

This is where it gets complicated. Each cup begins its journey in a forest, then travels through energy-intensive manufacturing processes. In most cases, it gets lined with a thin layer of plastic, which makes it non-recyclable in most facilities. You enjoy your coffee for perhaps thirty minutes, then the cup ends up in a landfill, taking years to decompose. The plastic lining will persist even longer perhaps decades. Only %1 of coffee cups are successfully recycled due to the mixed nature of their materials.

The intention is there, but developing new habits is never easy. We only need to look as far as the success of New Year's resolutions to know that the majority will fall off the bandwagon. We need to change our behaviour by removing friction, not just by being motivated by the cause. Try keeping your reusable cup in your car or in your office. Make it easy and notice the difference it makes when you use your own cup.

And remember, the parent who brings a reusable cup models conscious consumption for their children. The colleague inspires others to remember theirs. The friend who

keeps an extra cup for group outings turns environmental action into social connection.

**LET'S START CHANGING  
THE WAY WE DO THINGS  
AND CREATE MEANINGFUL  
IMPACT.**



22.09.2025

 The Climate Tribe



# When Climate Meets Creativity

By Valentina Vettori

*After an inspiring moment, Valentino Vettori decided to restructure his career, shifting from the competitive fashion world to climate-aware art. Photo: Arcadia Earth*

*A chance encounter at a retail conference inspired a drastic change for Valentino Vettori. A prominent fashion photographer and artist, Valentino decided to refocus his life's work on climate change, now constructing immersive art exhibits showcasing environmental issues.*

Rewind a few years, and you will find a very different version of me. Far from the climate activist, I am today, I was, in stark contrast, an embodiment of pollution itself. My world revolved around fashion storytelling – orchestrating installations, fashion shows, and trade conferences. Everything was about the immediate, the dazzling, the now, with little regard for the resources I was consuming or the environmental impact of my actions.

In this high-paced, glamour-filled industry, sustainability was an afterthought, if it was a thought at all. The endless cycle of creation and consumption, the very heartbeat of the fashion world, was my norm.

***But I now realise it was a necessary chapter.***

My journey towards climate activism began unexpectedly in 2017 at a conference in Los Angeles, California. I was there to do what I knew best – create a captivating installation, this time themed around the future of Retail. It was an assignment like many others, yet unbeknownst to me, it would become the turning point in my life.

After my work was done, I had the opportunity to attend various talks by influential figures like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, discussing ambitious ventures like space travel. Yet, amidst this futuristic discourse, it was the presentation by Paul Hawken, an individual I deeply admired, that struck a chord with me. He was introducing his book, 'The Project Drawdown,' which outlined two hundred solutions to reverse climate

change in a manner that was both effective and economically viable.

The contrast was stark and thought-provoking. Rooms were packed with people excited about distant planets, while only a few were present to hear about restoring our own. This disparity ignited a fire within me, raising a critical question: Why are we so captivated by the idea of leaving Earth for Mars yet so indifferent to the possibility of healing our own planet?

I waited for Paul Hawkins to finish his presentation and asked why he believed the room wasn't packed like it should be. We realised there were possibly two problems. The first is that we always speak negatively about climate change and climate issues, highlighting things that

don't inspire people to contribute to their time and emotions but scare them away. The second was that we never give individuals a list of actionable tasks they can take to be part of the solution, as many believe that only scientists will ever solve this problem.

I realised that I could shift my talent from being a storyteller for fashion to a storyteller for climate change. Inspiring, informing, and activating the community became my next and most important mission in life.

This was a moment of profound clarity. I began to question my own contributions and priorities. The knowledge that I had been part of an industry often indifferent to environmental consequences weighed heavily on me.

In the days and weeks that followed, I grappled with a mix of emotions—guilt, frustration, and a burgeoning responsibility to make a change. This wasn't just about a career shift; it was about aligning my life's work with a cause that was rapidly becoming a core part of my identity.

I left Los Angeles with a mind swirling with new thoughts and possibilities. Returning to New York, the reality of my newfound purpose collided with the expectations of my existing life. My team, skilled and ready, was awaiting instructions for our next fashion installation. But I had undergone a transformation; my priorities had shifted irreversibly. I gathered my crew and made a declaration that marked the beginning of a new era: no more projects unless they were climate-related. It was a bold move, one that came with its own set of uncertainties and risks.

The next step was equally drastic. Sitting in the quiet of my home, I analysed my finances and made a decision that would change everything. I decided to sell my house. This wasn't just a financial move; it was a commitment to my new path. The funds from the sale would fuel my ambitious project – an immersive installation dedicated to climate awareness.

I envisioned a space where visitors could engage with the environmental crisis in a deeply emotional and immersive manner. I wanted to create an experience that was not only educational but also profoundly moving, one

that would leave a lasting impact on anyone who walked through it.

The following six months were a period of intense challenge and growth. I faced three significant obstacles on my path to creating this ambitious installation. The first was the sheer scale and complexity of the project. I was venturing into uncharted territory, incorporating advanced technologies like projection mapping, augmented reality, virtual reality and immersive storytelling – techniques that were entirely new to me.

The second was bridging the gap between my background in fashion design and the scientific understanding necessary for an authentic climate change narrative. I had to dive deep into the science of climate change, a field far removed from my previous expertise. This required seeking out and collaborating with experts, ensuring that the installation was not only artistically compelling but also scientifically accurate.

My third hurdle was more personal. Friends and family, concerned for my well-being, saw this drastic career shift as a significant, perhaps unnecessary risk. Convincing them of this project's worthiness and feasibility was a journey in itself.

Despite these obstacles, I remained steadfast, fueled by a positive attitude and a belief in the impact of my work. The design process began by dreaming and envisioning the experiences I wanted to create, the places I hoped to transport my

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**SITTING IN THE QUIET OF MY HOME, I ANALYSED MY FINANCES AND MADE A DECISION THAT WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING. I DECIDED TO SELL MY HOUSE. THIS WASN'T JUST A FINANCIAL MOVE; IT WAS A COMMITMENT TO MY NEW PATH. THE FUNDS FROM THE SALE WOULD FUEL MY AMBITIOUS PROJECT – AN IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION DEDICATED TO CLIMATE AWARENESS. 🎧**

- Valentino Vettori



*Inspiring, informing, and activating the community became Valentino's most*

audience to, and the blend of technology and information that would inspire them.

I reached out to my network and the scientific community for support and guidance, ensuring the factual integrity of the project. Simultaneously, I sought to gain the trust and hope of my family, whose support was crucial.

After months of relentless work, collaboration, and overcoming doubts, the project finally came to fruition. The day we opened the first Arcadia Earth exhibit culminated not just hard work and creativity but also belief—belief in the power of storytelling to make a difference.

The success of the New York installation was just the beginning. Its positive impact on the community ignited a desire to expand this experience to other cities. We opened in Las Vegas, then Saudi Arabia, and most recently in Toronto, Canada, in collaboration with the World Wildlife Foundation. Each exhibition has become a beacon of inspiration, touching the lives of hundreds of thousands.

Now, as I reflect back, I hope that in my own way, I have contributed something meaningful to the world and that my story can inspire the next generation of climate solution builders.

# Bringing a Message in a Bottle Cap

By Jo Park



*A local community member drives past an Oscar Olivares mural. Photo: Oscar Olivares*

*Oscar Olivares's art is a testament to resilience and dedication. Working in his home country of Venezuela, Oscar's bottle cap murals foster climate awareness in his community and inspire future artists.*

Oscar Olivares started drawing when he was very young; his favourite subject? Spider-Man. "That was my first motivation," he says, as I spot an impressive drawing of Spider-Man hanging behind him.

"When I was 14, I began drawing the Venezuelan national football team. And the fans in the stadiums. I wanted to capture their passion." Self-taught, Oscar studied biographies of famous artists. To Oscar, art was the perfect way to express one's feelings, thoughts, and identities.

One day, at the age of 17, Oscar experienced a fundamental event that changed his perception of art forever, causing him to ponder how his creativity could be used.

"When I was 17, I was assaulted by a guy with a gun on my way home from school," he says, recalling the violent moment when he realised the dark reality of poverty and desperation. Oscar admits that this incident initially made him want to leave the country.

"But after a lot of reflection and meditation, I understood the only thing I had was drawing—my art." Oscar knew he had to send out a message. "When you study art history and biographies of other artists, you see the principal inspiration of a lot of art movement is nature." Taking action against climate change through art became one way of bringing his community together and counteracting the hopelessness he'd witnessed.

"In your passions is where you can find the best answer," he claims. "One artist that especially impacted me was Paul Signac. His style is interesting—he would express elements with small dots, making you see the whole picture when you step away from the painting."

Inspired by this perspective, Oscar brought Signac's ideals of totality to a recent mural commission he'd received in the municipality of El Hatillo, Venezuela. "They asked if I could use only bottle caps without painting over them. I was so sure of the impact this would have internationally!"

The mural was an instant sensation. Today, Oscar's website and social media showcase various vibrant and immense murals made

of plastic bottle caps. There is no painting over or manipulation; the murals are exactly in the colours and condition they came in.

"We're working on our mural number 28," he shares in excitement. "I'm very happy with everything we've achieved—especially to see a lot of schools showing this type of art that use recycled materials!"

For Oscar, the process of putting together these murals is more beautiful than the end result. "There are some parts of the mural that are designed for everyone to participate," he explains. "It's very nice in the end because it gives the community a chance to be part of the art."

The bottle caps used are collected through individual

contributions or local recycling centres. No bottle caps go to waste. The bottle caps that aren't used for the ongoing project are either kept for his future projects or donated to organisations such as Fundación Amigos del Niño con Cáncer to help raise funds for children affected by cancer.

"This year, we're going to achieve 2 million bottle caps collected, and that sounds like a lot, but it's nothing compared with the plastic that goes to the ocean every year." Oscar believes that the most important impact the mural holds is its educational one. "People learn that they can use these recycled

what communities can make when they work together. And to see how many bottle caps make up the murals and grow conscious of how many more are being thrown into the ocean."

Also, for Oscar, opportunities are hidden in things that we see every day. "I want people to see that what can be bad for the environment can be used for something like the murals."

It is difficult to stay uninspired in Oscar's presence. He speaks with conviction, inspiring all those around him. "Signac drew inspiration from the sea. I think one of the most important abilities that an artist should have is the ability to observe and to be patient. To really see the world around us."

And that's exactly what Oscar did. He took a step back and observed the rapidly changing world, and he saw what the world needed were messages in bottle caps.

PEOPLE LEARN THAT THEY CAN USE THESE RECYCLED MATERIALS DIFFERENTLY. THE ART HELPS THE AWARENESS SPREAD. 🎧

- Oscar Olivares



This year alone, Oscar and his foundation will be able to collect over 2 million bottle caps. Photo: Oscar Olivares

Each step of building these bottle cap murals involves a healing message for each community in which his art is displayed.

"One time, a woman approached me with a special football-edition bottle cap that belonged to her late son, who passed away some years ago," Oscar recalls. "She saw what we were doing and wanted the bottle cap in this special place." Over the years, more people would often approach Oscar with a bottle cap and a story. "Every bottle cap is human. It once belonged to somebody."

materials differently. The art helps the awareness spread."

Aside from producing artwork himself, Oscar is an art educator. He teaches his students to make art their mission. And a vessel for the message they want to send out to the world. "I always invite students to think, if they're going to make art, what message will they send through their arts. If everyone on earth can see their art, what is the message they're seeing?"

Here's Oscar's answer to his own question: "I want people to see in my mural



Oscar Olivares stands in front of a bottle cap mural. Photo: Oscar Olivares

# Mapping the Heat, Cooling the Streets

By Sraddha Sabu

Through a granular, real-time map of urban heat and AI-driven insights, FortyGuard, a pioneering startup based in the UAE, brings to light the ever-increasing dangers of extreme heat.

*A difficult truth about the world's temperatures hides in the shadows.*

Globally, the weather disaster with the highest death toll, beating hurricanes, floods and other deadly catastrophes to take almost half a million lives annually - is actually the unassuming, insidious presence of extreme heat.

Like a spectre from the past, the problem of heat had once again materialised in the life of entrepreneur Jay Sadiq. It was 2019, and Jay had just read a rather intriguing article - one about cooling the city of Los Angeles by painting the roads white.

Memories from his childhood in Abu Dhabi overwhelmed him, Jay remembers. "I, unfortunately, had very strong asthma, and sometimes during summertime, I remember my father and my mother used to carry me and rush me from the car into the building so I'm not exposed to the heat."

"It's a problem that limited me from spending time with friends who were playing football or going to school," he says. A problem he always wanted to solve.



*Forty Guard is on a mission to lower the temperature of our streets and cities, creating a cooler environment for us all.  
Photo: The Climate Tribe*

After more than a decade into his career in sales, private equity, and entrepreneurship, Jay honed his problem-solving skills. He had been adept at coding websites since the age of ten, thanks to his father's wish that he learn new skills, even building websites in his teen years.

It was that enterprising instinct that reacted to the prospect of painted white roads. Questions arose in his mind - wouldn't this reflect the sun's rays back to pedestrians and harm them as well? Why don't they cool the asphalt without changing its colour?

Jay says, "I had been solving for a lot of things that I was not really passionate about, and now this is a problem that I could be passionate about, and I wanted to cool down Abu Dhabi."

Jay developed a similar material to ensure cooler roads; however, almost immediately, there was a roadblock.

"The client in Abu Dhabi was asking, 'Where are we going to put it?' So we said, 'You know, just put it everywhere.' And they were like, 'Jay, you can't put this material everywhere.

You have to tell us, where are the hot spots in the city?'" Jay explains. Locating the city's hot spots was now the bigger problem, leading Jay and his team to an even better solution: heat mapping.

For residents of concrete cities, the urban heat island effect can have fatal consequences. Trapped and amplified by concrete buildings and black-top roads, the heat exacerbates underlying illnesses. A 2024 study estimates that Europe alone could see the number of temperature-related deaths increase by -40,000 90,000 people annually.

However, exactly how a city's layout affects the temperature of specific areas remained unclear. While the satellites showed Jay and his team a consistent temperature of °33C across the entire city, he knew something was missing.

"The difference in temperature at two meters above the ground in urban settings can be almost 10 to 15 degrees Celsius, only a few kilometres apart within the same hour, and that is where the problem starts."

This left Jay wondering, "Where are those differences, and who's capturing them?"

The answer is FortyGuard, courtesy of its Temperature Operating System that offers urban heat data at a granular level of up to 10 sqm blocks over specific time frames. That's like having a live heat map in your hand, pinpointing the temperature on each street or area in your city in real-time, along with AI-driven actionable insights.

Jay says, "Half of the solution is understanding the problem. FortyGuard is trying to make urban heat data accurate so we can cool cities and deliver temperature insights to every application."

The applications are endless, from building better water and irrigation systems to creating better transportation routes and predictive analytics for urban planners. Imagine the potential of future engineers combatting increased heat by creating cool zones across cities and strategically cultivating green spaces. For example,

land surface temperatures around tree-lined streets are around 8 to °12C lower than streets without them in Central Europe.

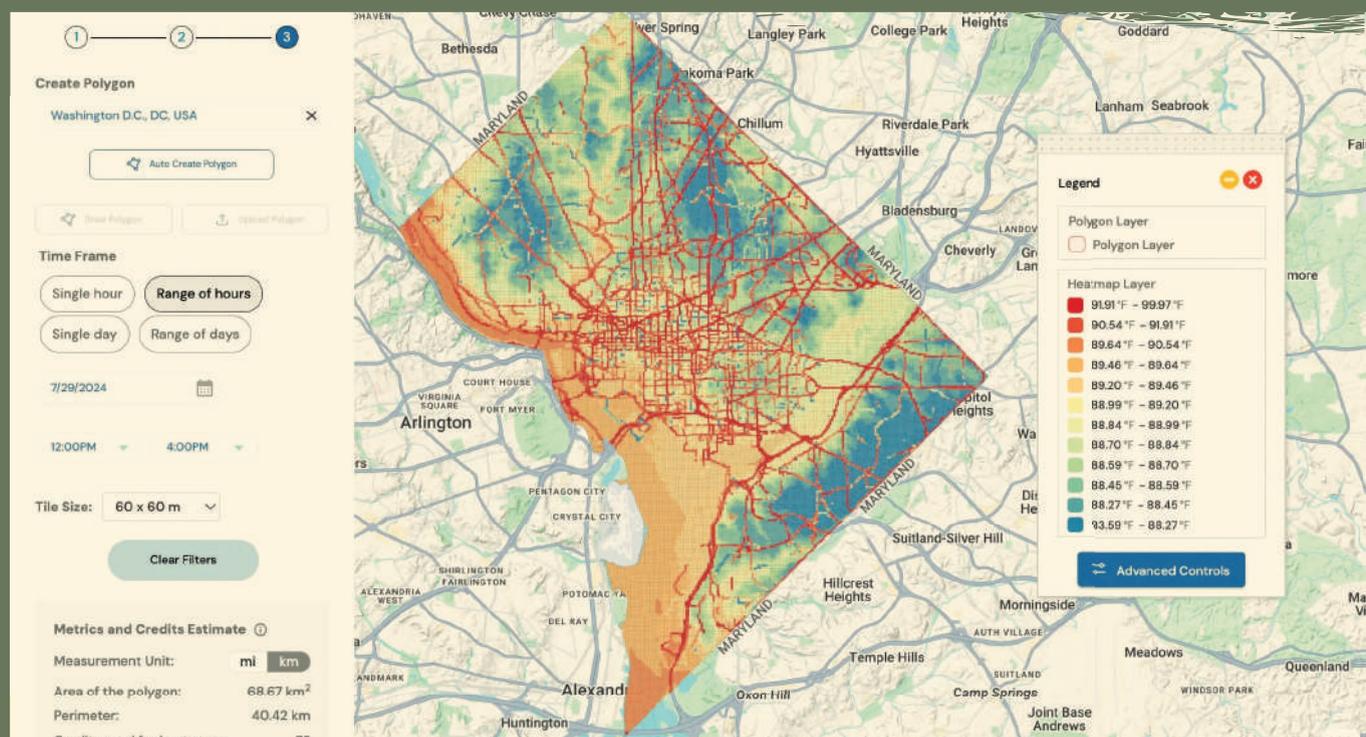
Cooling down the streets means healthier residents and cities that help reduce global temperatures, participating in the solution rather than furthering the problem.

While he now leads a team of over 20 people, Jay credits the "magic" of Abu Dhabi's Hub71 ecosystem with helping expand the company's potential and reaching an international stage.

"We are literally the very first company from the MENA region to have access to Earth 2, which is a digital twin of Earth's climate, and to have a collaboration with NVIDIA working on a climate tech technology," Jay shares proudly.

"Let's build something that not only delivers impacts to something I suffered from but really changes the world," he says. "I want to cool down cities."

And with Earth's unstable future rushing toward us faster than ever, cooler cities can help change the world.



A Forty Guard map showcases its Temperature Operating System, which offers urban heat data at a granular level of up to 10 sqm blocks over specific time frames. Photo: Forty Guard



**THE DIFFERENCE IN TEMPERATURE AT TWO METERS ABOVE THE GROUND IN URBAN SETTINGS CAN BE ALMOST 10 TO 15 DEGREES CELSIUS, ONLY A FEW KILOMETRES APART WITHIN THE SAME HOUR, AND THAT IS WHERE THE PROBLEM STARTS.** ”

- Jay Sadiq

## WORK AS PLAY

# Reclaiming Joy Every Day

Moments of rest can be just as insightful as the time we spend working. When we take a break – and, in particular, the summer break – the smallest, most awe-inspiring things have a chance to rise to the surface. Things we have a tendency to overlook when we're consumed by our busy work schedules.

These are the times our emotions are more apparent. They are also the times we allow ourselves to indulge in 'play'. And when those breaks are over, we return to our *modus operandi*. I therefore wanted to explore how play can be integrated into work, rather than a place of respite once we have already burnt out. How can we bring the same joy and curiosity to the place where most of our time is spent, and how might this contribute to approaching an otherwise grim topic like climate change with a different spirit.

Our capitalistic world encourages productivity based on measurable outputs, but play is not part of that equation. It is counter-intuitive to believe that slowing down can help us move forward faster. What I have come to realise is that play helps us look at the world through a wider lens and urges us to keep exploring. In the book *Essentialism*

by Greg McKeown, research has proven that play, anything that is done from a place of joy, helps reduce stress and that giving ourselves the mental space helps discern the important from the mundane.

Having visited the Picasso Museum in the South of France this summer and seeing some of Pablo Picasso's artworks in person, they look deceptively simple, almost childlike. It is hard to believe that they are worth such high valuations, having sold for millions of dollars. This brings to mind his words, "without great solitude no serious work is possible", which in turn raises the question of whether solitude and boredom be considered a starting point for creative play? No judgement, expectation or end goal, simply just curiosity, experimentation and, most importantly, fun?

I have found that being cognisant of our approach to work and stepping off the hamster wheel, we inevitably find ourselves. Maybe this is as simple as having your favourite cup of tea, listening to music that you love, or carving out time just to read a book that is unrelated to your work? Or, perhaps, it's about working in a physical space that brings you joy? Every little helps

and the energy we bring into a space serves as a mirror back to us.

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU FELT A SENSE OF JOY, OR FOUND YOURSELF TRULY ENGAGED AND PRESENT DOING YOUR WORK?**



*Without great solitude no serious work is possible* 🎵

- Pablo Picasso

# A Bright Spark in the UAE's Fashion Landscape

Interview with Miroslava Duma

As fast fashion and convenience-fuelled consumerism continues to prevail, a new fashion technology company is setting up shop in the UAE with an ambitious mission: to democratise fashion design while accelerating the adoption of breakthrough sustainable materials across the industry's \$3 trillion global market.

Co-founded by Miroslava Duma - known for previously having co-founded material sciences lifestyle apparel company, PANGAIA - Spaarkd operates as a 'factory-as-a-service' connecting creators to a global network of over 300 material science laboratories and 500 vetted factories.

"We are building an AI-powered design tool that enables anyone to design like a professional, unlocking creativity that has historically been excluded or exploited by the industry," explains Duma. "By open-sourcing access to materials, factories, and tools, Spaarkd is working to democratise fashion, empower new

voices, and accelerate the adoption of breakthrough material innovations."

## Coming Home to The UAE

The decision to establish operations in the UAE stems from the country's reputation as a hub for innovation and international collaboration. Duma shares the company's reasoning in glowing terms: "The UAE is, for us, a land of peace, dialogue, progress, and prosperity. It is also a place of extraordinary openness, where international talent is welcomed and supported with world-class infrastructure, safety, and opportunity."

The founders see the UAE as uniquely positioned for their global ambitions, calling it "an ecosystem where dreamers and doers are given the conditions to build boldly" and "a true crossroads of cultures and ideas."



## Revolutionary Materials Leading The Charge

At the heart of Spaarkd's mission lies cutting-edge material science. The company's leadership, who has been investing in material innovations since 2016, highlighted several breakthrough technologies that are reshaping what's possible in sustainable fashion.

Carbon capture materials represent one of the most exciting frontiers. "Technologies that remove carbon or methane from the atmosphere and convert it into usable materials" are already being put to practical use. The company worked with San Francisco-based

partner Twelve to create sunglasses with lenses made entirely from captured carbon, "a tangible step toward an 'earth-positive' future, where products leave the planet better off than if they did not exist."

Bio-manufacturing presents another revolutionary approach. "Using DNA from spider stem cells, scientists can now grow fibres that are softer than a cloud yet stronger than steel," says Duma. This same process can replicate various materials, re-imagining material creation through nature's own blueprints.

The company is also championing leather alternatives and plant-based textiles created from agricultural waste.



## *Taking Inspiration From the Natural World*

For Spaarkd's leadership, the work represents more than just business opportunity, it's deeply personal. "Nature is the greatest scientist and inventor of all time," Duma explains, describing their approach as both "scientific and deeply spiritual."

This philosophy drives their biomimicry approach: "Everything we need already exists in the natural world—from the DNA of a spider that can inspire unbreakable silks, to abundant seaweed that can become textiles, to orange peels and grape skins that can be transformed into wearable materials. It shows us how waste can be reborn as beauty," she says.

## *Built-in Social Impact*

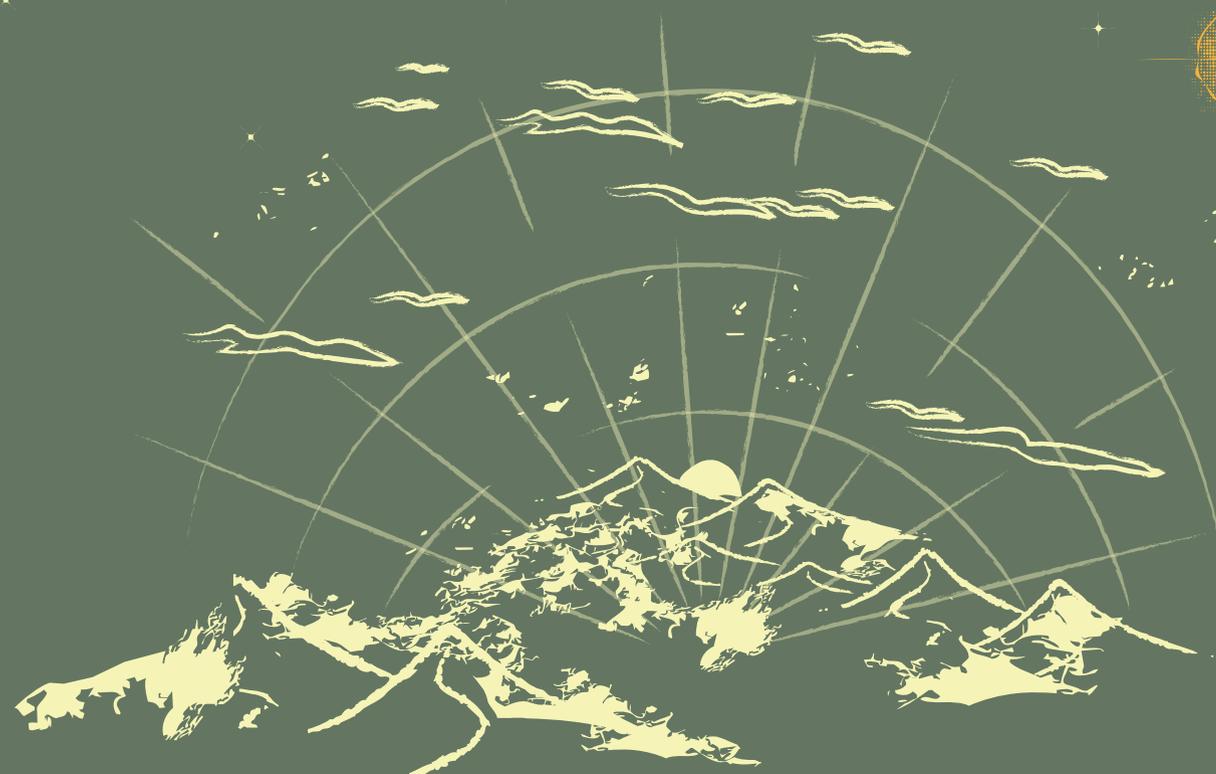
Beyond environmental benefits, Spaarkd has embedded social responsibility into its business model. Every item produced through the platform allows buyers to direct a portion of their purchase toward

NGOs of their choice, creating a direct link between fashion consumption and positive social impact.

As the fashion industry faces increasing pressure to address its environmental footprint, Spaarkd's approach of combining accessible design tools, sustainable materials, and social impact could represent a new model for how fashion businesses operate in the 21st century.

The company's broader mission reflects this ambition: "to help transition a three-trillion-dollar industry toward responsible production and consumption, while ensuring material science innovations scale rapidly and become the new normal."

As consumers, we each hold the power to shape this transformation – by choosing brands that prioritise sustainability, supporting innovations that heal rather than harm our planet, and recognising that every purchase is a vote for the kind of future we want to create.



# Are Weather Cycles Universal?

Interview with Thabet Al Qaissieh

The answer is no. And yet, so many have referenced four very specific seasons, whether in science, literature, art, and even music.

With Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter featuring so significantly in our academic and cultural references, we rarely ever stop to look around us and question whether this actually applies to our part of the world.

India, and the wider South Asia region, often experiences a wet season, also known as the monsoon, and a dry season. Or, here in the UAE we tend to experience colder or hotter seasons.

**What is universal, however, is where our beautiful planet is on its journey around the sun.**

Equinoxes [Autumn and Spring] occur when planet Earth is neither tilted away nor towards the Sun, and Solstices [Summer and Winter] take place when the planet is tilted towards or completely away from the Sun. This affects daylight, which results in the longest and shortest days.

Our ancestors often turned to the skies, not only for navigation but also to be able to recognise changes in weather patterns. Our guest contributor, Thabet Al Qaissieh, Founder of Al Sadeem Observatory, which was a personal endeavour fueled by passion for the wider world has been advocating for a black sky policy in Abu Dhabi. Currently, there is only one place in the UAE where you can see the Milky Way

in all its glory - the beautiful desert of Al Quaa, where The Climate Tribe will be hosting a community event in the cooler months.

Read more about Thabet's journey and keep an eye on The Climate Tribe Community Events page to join us for an evening of stargazing and reconnecting with the ways of our ancestors.

*Let's start at the very beginning - what made you want to set up Al Sadeem Observatory?*

**Thabet Al Qaissieh:** It all began by chance. I was simply looking for a telescope to enjoy the long, quiet winter nights, even though I'd never actually used one before. When I mentioned it to Alejandro Palado, who ran an amateur

astronomy group, he suggested, "Why not set up a small observatory and host some astronomy nights?" The idea stuck. I talked it over with my younger brother Mansour, who immediately encouraged me to go for it. Just a few months later, Mansour sadly passed away. That loss gave me the drive to turn the idea into reality - not just for me, but in his memory. And that's how Al Sadeem Astronomy was born.

*That's a beautiful story. Can you tell us more about your advocacy for dark sky policies in Abu Dhabi?*

**Thabet Al Qaissieh:** The night sky has always been part of who we are - whether we see it through the lens of science, faith, wonder, or simply beauty.

Sadly, most people today barely look up. Light pollution has drowned out the stars for much of the world, robbing us of that connection to the cosmos. Abu Dhabi is different. We're blessed with incredible spots where the night sky still shines in all its glory. And unlike many cities that only talk about tackling light pollution, we've actually done something about it. A dark sky policy doesn't just help stargazers – it's a win for everyone. It protects wildlife, supports the natural ecosystem, and keeps our skies a source of inspiration for generations to come. When you look up here and see the Milky Way stretching across the desert sky, you understand why it's worth protecting. It's not just about astronomy – it's about preserving one of the world's oldest, most shared human experiences.

*It truly is – and there is so much we can learn from our ancestors who could read the stars in ways we have long forgotten.*

*Najm Suhail still remains one of the most significant signs of shifts towards cooler months though – what's the story behind it?*

**Thabet Al Qaissieh:** Suhail, known to astronomers as Canopus, makes its grand appearance in UAE skies toward the end of August, bringing with it a welcome sign that cooler weather is on the horizon. The star itself doesn't influence our climate, but as Earth orbits the Sun, Suhail comes into view at just the right time, mere weeks before summer officially ends. For centuries, this brilliant star has held a special place in Arab tradition. It's more than just a point of light, it's

a trusted seasonal marker and a source of inspiration for poets, who often wove Suhail into their verses as a symbol of change, relief, and beauty. Even today, its appearance stirs something in us, reminding us that the long, hot summer will soon give way to gentler days.

*You have been raising awareness through a beautiful visual experience bringing people closer to the unknown world of the stars and galaxies? Why now and how have people responded to this?*

**Thabet Al Qaissieh:** The cosmos lives within each of us. As Carl Sagan beautifully put it, the very elements in our bodies were forged in the hearts of collapsing stars. At Al Sadeem, we bring this cosmic connection

to life, whether through breathtaking images of the universe or immersive experiences in our Cosmic Cube. Seeing is believing, and every glimpse sparks awe and inspiration. That's why we published our book, in Arabic, gathering centuries of Arab scientific writings and poetry about space into one volume – bridging ancient wonder with today's skyward curiosity.



## Childism within Design

By Ari Puguh

John Wall, Director of the Childism Institute, describes 'childism' as the phenomenon of prejudice against children, a concept initially developed in the domain of psychoanalysis. It highlights the importance of taking the childhood period as something that matters and should be handled thoughtfully. It is critical

to acknowledge the rights of children and young people in practice and to guarantee their consideration as citizens in the present moment, rather than merely for future discourse. The interest in this subject can be traced back to my childhood. It originated from a series of unfavorable events that transpired during that

period, which compelled me to take a stand and articulate my views on the subject. That is to ensure that children are aware of their rights and recognise the significance of their perspectives.

Positioning my role as a designer and a doctoral researcher in the childism and design discourses,

my objective is to contribute to the larger social context beyond the confines of the academic and design milieu, specifically for children and the young generation. Amanda Cachia, renowned art historian and disability art activist, emphasises the notion that individuals [designers] possess



the capacity to effect change by acting on their convictions. She asserts that designers, in their capacity as agents of social transformation, can influence the global landscape, disseminate awareness, and promote societal and environmental stewardship. Engaging in social design and becoming acquainted with participatory design, the potentiality of play, and Scandinavian approaches are methods by which I can establish a connection with something that is more proximate, concrete, and advantageous for my objective.

To illustrate the initiative, insights gained from the previous projects, including Hemma: Migration and Sense of Home Through the Eyes of Ukrainian War Refugee Children in Sweden, and Improvisational Disentanglement, in which I collaborated and explored participatory design approaches on the project together with young participants. These projects taught me so many valuable lessons. The inclusion of children and young people

as active participants consistently yielded novel perspectives throughout the collaborative process. In many cases, I find that I am the one acquiring knowledge and experience, rather than the other way around. Their contributions frequently manifested in the form of unanticipated resolutions, exerting a profound and tangible influence that resonated on a personal level. Thus, thinning exclusivity and intimidation characterise the design world. The integration of participatory design methodologies with the discourse of childism has imparted an invaluable lesson: that children themselves possess a wealth of knowledge that can be readily absorbed and applied.

It is my belief that, by giving priority to children's perspectives in the design of larger-scale contexts, such as the development of urban areas, the production of goods and projects, the construction of buildings, and the creation of experiences, we can

produce environments that are both inviting and accommodating of all individuals. Furthermore, it has the potential to engender a sense of joy and positive sentiments within the broader societal context. Ensuring that we are investing in a healthy and positive environment, by taking care of the children, to begin with. Investing in the optimal conditions for early childhood development has the potential to yield substantial benefits for society. The fulfillment of these elements during childhood can contribute to the development of healthy and compassionate adults.

The experience of residing in multiple countries, characterised by transience and cultural diversity, has imparted a multifaceted perspective, encompassing an evolution in one's approach to life and circumstances. This experience has been instrumental in broadening my perspective on various sociocultural perspectives. An attempt is made to approach each subject from

a different angle; there is no place that is the same, as each location is unique in its own right. However, a conclusion that can be drawn from extensive travel and experience in diverse locations is that people in general exhibit similar characteristics. The pursuit of a satisfactory quality of life, respect, and well-being is a universal aspiration. Considering this, it is essential to strive towards the preservation and reinforcement of these fundamental values.

Moreover, across various eras, adults have demonstrated a tendency to disassociate their adulthood from their childhood; they tend to efface their childhood self and behave as if they have been adults their entire lives. The term "childish" is often perceived negatively by society. This phenomenon presents a challenge, as it encompasses a wide array of elements from one's formative years that could potentially be advantageous. Preserving the vitality of curiosity and wonder is essential for maintaining the inner child within. Therefore, I aim to sustain a connection with my childhood self, thereby facilitating a deeper exploration of the curiosity and wonder within myself. We mustn't neglect or disregard our childhood selves; rather, we should strive to maintain a connection with our inner child in all our endeavours.

## BOOK OF THE SEASON

# "Music as Medicine: How We Can Harness Its Therapeutic Power"

by Professor Daniel Levitin

I have always known that music makes me feel better. I have also observed how water reacts when a singing bowl is placed on water - the ripples and vibrations creating visible patterns. Given that we are made up of approximately %60 water, this begs the question: what effect does music have on us as humans?

When I came across this book, I was curious to discover how much of these intuitive observations are backed by science. In 'Music as Medicine', neuroscientist Daniel Levitin makes a compelling case for fundamentally reframing how we think about music, not just as entertainment, but as having profound positive effects on wellbeing and health.

For example, shamanic drumming, which has been used for healing purposes for over 20,000 years across diverse cultures, has been proven to have measurable neurobiological effects. These rhythmic patterns synchronise brainwaves and activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is our body's natural rest and repair mechanism. Our natural instincts about music's power based on ancestral knowledge becomes even

more compelling when science begins to validate their effects.

Music can also create a sense of flow, not just by enhancing our experience but by generating the neurochemical conditions that help quiet our internal chatter. What I particularly appreciated about this book was how Levitin weaves in compelling stories that engage the reader rather than overwhelming them with dense scientific facts. His accounts of Parkinson's and stroke patients experiencing remarkable improvements through music are both heartwarming and powerfully illustrative.

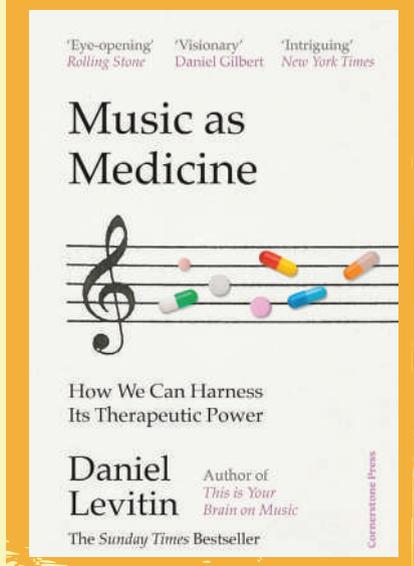
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One of the main takeaways for me was Levitin's assertion that music is not just a "nice to have" but rather necessary for optimal human health. The book validated not only my personal relationship with music's healing capabilities but also affirmed the profound connections that millions of people have with this universal language that, much like art, truly transforms lives.

Having advocated for healing through reading in hospitals for many years, providing young patients with an escape and comfort through books, 'Music as

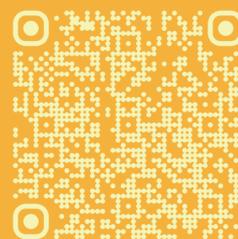
Medicine' opened my eyes to the complementary power of rhythm, melody, and harmony. Imagine replacing the sterile beeping of hospital machines with therapeutic soundscapes designed to promote healing - what a difference this could make to the mental and emotional health of recovering patients.

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did and discover new dimensions to remarkable capacity music holds for healing. May all your days be surrounded by the medicine of music.



## Al Waha Radio

**EACH SEASON BRINGS  
ITS OWN RHYTHM  
AND CARRIES ITS OWN  
SOUND.**



*I've curated this carefully chosen playlist as a soundtrack for my Autumn months. I hope it allows you to explore some genres of music that you wouldn't normally gravitate towards.*