Museums Heritage and Community

The Dubai Experiment

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INTRODUCTION

Museums remain testimony to human creativity. In recent years, United Arab Emirates believes that museums are places where cultural legacies are safeguarded and transmitted to successive generations. This belief has been reflected lately in the increasing numbers of newly established museums that address different aspects of Emirati cultural life.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name of the Emirates</th>
<th>Governmental</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Abu Dhabi</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Dubai</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3 Sharja</td>
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<td>4 Ajman</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Al Faiha</td>
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<td>6 Um Al Qunain</td>
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<td>7 Ras Al Khaimah</td>
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<tr>
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There have been a total of 45 museums in the UAE; almost half of them do exist in the emirate of Dubai. This article will give a general overview about the current condition of these museums, their mission and role in promoting cultural heritage and their programs. Promotion of cultural heritage considered to be a vital aspect in sustaining cultural life in UAE. Many historic buildings were converted to museums. These museums are not only exhibiting different aspects of life in the United Arab Emirates but also acting as educational centers dedicated to the study of the culture in the United Arab Emirates. The museums are not merely a storehouse of the finest example of the wealth of art and archeology of UAE; it has re-gained its position within the society as an institution witness to the nation collective memory.

Museums in Dubai

Dubai Government has contributed significantly to the well being of their communities and implemented innovative activities to raise awareness of cultural heritage which has benefited children, adults, and elderly. The main purpose set by the Department of Architectural Heritage at Dubai Municipality concerning promotion of cultural heritage is to support cultural actions and dissemination activities which raise awareness of cultural heritage and ensure an effective grassroots involvement. Hence, the department believes that museums could play a significant role in this field. This role has been translated in various aspects and different means. Some museums in Dubai can be a place to think and reflect, some are places to learn, some are places to meet and interact and some are place to enjoy and entertain.

Museum as a Place to Think

Museums in Dubai are places that make you think and reflect on how people used to live in the past and how they have adapted to the harsh environment. Dubai Museum in Bur Dubai and Heritage house in Deira are good examples on how museum could a place enable various public to discover their roots. The mission of Dubai Museum is to enable the local generation of the past and of the present to meet and maintain the customs, traditions and history of the emirate of Dubai. The building was formally the residence of the ruling family which was constructed in 1799, considered to be the oldest buildings in the Emirate of Dubai. The building also represents a unique Emirati example of defensive architecture. Visitors to Museum of Dubai will have the chance to know more about the Emirate life development in its rural, maritime, desert context and others through the exhibits, collections and creative designs. Then to leave the building with an impression reflecting the historical development story of the Emirate life nature in an aesthetical approach that imitates the live panorama.

The mission of Heritage House Museum in Deira is to disseminate knowledge on the social life in Dubai in the old days located in Deira, the construction of the building dates back to 1890, and its importance emanates from the variety of its elements, components and enriched artistic decorations which reflect experience, profession, good taste and extent of development of construction systems and methods. Visitors to the museum can get the authentic experience of a tent and enjoy traditional food and coffee in the tents installed in its open court. Today the museum is managed by Department of Tourism.

Museum as a Place to Learn the Wisdom of the Past

Other aspect of museums in Dubai is that museums could be centre for education and a place where you learn “know how”
and gain knowledge of traditional techniques and methods of construction. The House of Traditional Architecture in Shindagha in Deira is taking this role. This house was built in 1928 to be as a residence for Sheikh Jum'a Bin Maktoum at Al-Shindagha area on the banks of Dubai Creek, adjacent to the house of Sheikh Saeed Bin Maktoum Al-Maktoum. The mission of the Museum of Traditional Architecture House is to reflect the history and story of traditional architecture. The house includes a hall for introducing traditional architecture in Dubai and other Emirates. Some halls are displaying elements of traditional architecture, various traditional decorations, traditional construction tools and materials. Two additional halls were assigned to display the methods used in the traditional construction and architectural conservation.

Museum as a Place to Learn
Other museums in Dubai have the role to educate visitors, either local or tourists on specific aspect of the Emirati life. The Camel Museum and the Horse Museum in Shindagha, are examples on that. The mission of the Camel Museum is to explain all aspects related to the camel in terms of its physical character or its role in the Arab life. The House, known as “Beit Al- Rekkab” (House of the Camels), was built in the forties of the twentieth Century in Al-Shindagha, next to the house of the late Sheikh Saeed Bin Maktoum Al-Maktoum. The museum include information about history of camels, their prestige to the Arab, their names in the Arabic literature, camel anatomy and Camel racing. The mission of the museum to explain to the visitor all aspects related to the camel in terms of its physical character and its role in the Arab life. The building was established in the forties of the last century in Al-Shindagha to be used as a home for the late Sheikh Moza bint Saeed Al-Maktoum. It was refurbished and designed to house the “Horse Museum” to explain the history of Horses, their prestige to the Arabs, their names and related old Arabic literature.

Museum as a Place of Enjoyment and Festivity
Other aspect of museum is being a place to enjoy and celebrate nature. in Hatta village museum, in winter and during Dubai shopping festival a lot of cultural and recreational activities are organized to highlight the rich legacy of UAE’s tradition. Heritage Events showcase a wide variety of exhibitions that cover the country’s handicrafts, culture, folklore music and dance, literature, and an exhibition on the life of the late HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Activities also include mock Bedouin wedding ceremonies, horse exhibitions, traditional souks, and live cooking counters selling popular traditional food. The Hatta Village is also a favourite heritage destination for tourists and residents alike. Events include traditional music bands, handicrafts show, Camel caravans etc.

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