

# Arab newspaper wins international design awards

In tough competition with almost 14,000 other newspapers, the Gulf News of the United Arab Emirates recently became the most awarded paper from the Arab region in the international Best of Newspaper Design competition.

Dubai – “Each member of the design team does his best to come up with ideas that surprise the reader. Our aim is to make the navigation through the paper a memorable experience that the reader will repeat every day,” says Miguel Angel Gomez, design director at the English-language *Gulf News*, which was the only Middle East winner at the 28th Best of Newspaper Design competition held in February 2006. The Emirati title won six prizes (five Awards of Excellence and one Silver Award), excelling over 13,862 rivals in the international contest organised by the Society of News Design (SND), in the United States.

“I was expecting maybe three awards but not as many,” said Gomez.

The *Gulf News*, which was established in 1978 and has a circulation of 110,000, received more distinctions than established papers such as the American *Wall Street Journal* or the Spanish *El Pais*.

“Our strategy is to take the *Gulf News* to a new level. We want to tell stories that are relevant to the readers, such as on the creation of the Dubai metro or the extension of the Dubai Creek and present them in a simple and appealing way. These kinds of stories affect almost all readers and become a talking point, he said.

The features on the Dubai metro included a double page about the new metro system, with a detailed map of the construction in progress and information on the transportation time once the new metro was up and running. The story about the Dubai Creek contained a graphic of the creation of a new creek, its location and the buildings that will be demolished because of the new construction.

## Visual Journalists

Gomez points out, however, that the achievement in the competition would not have been possible without the involvement of each member of the design group and of the colleagues in the newsroom. He considers his team as a group of “visual journalists”. Concerning the level of integration of the designers into the newsroom he says: “It is never enough and we are still in the process of changing the mindset of the newsroom. The editor-in-chief is one of the key actors to make this change possible”.

For Douglas Okasaki, regional director of Society of News Design for Middle East and Africa, the many awards obtained by the *Gulf News* reflects “the high quality of design in our region and the high standards of creativity and innovation”. According to Okasaki, the Arab press is paying more and more attention to the design and legibility

"Many newspapers in the Middle East are turning the information more visual by including bigger pictures, graphics and all kind of illustrations. It is a general trend in the region," he said.

Clearly, those efforts are now paying off and the many awards won by the *Gulf News* is clear evidence of this.

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