



**Dubai Design Week 2017**  
**Boano Prismontas + Ricardas Blazukas**

**“Aidah”**

*Kublai Khan entered the courtyard. The pace of his stride sounded majestic and calm, with each step echoing in the arcade clearly but with an audible heaviness, as if tired from carrying the burden of the whole empire. The sun gently filtered through the green leaves and reached Marco Polo who was sketching under the tall tree. Surprised by the approaching footsteps, Marco looked up and a hint of a smile appeared on his face. Kublai stopped, and the silence flooded the courtyard with palpable tension. Even the old pavement stones seemed to be respectfully waiting for the emperor to say a word.*

*“Marco,” said the emperor, “Look at these beautiful flowers. They will be dead one day, when we are not here to look after them. And even your sketches will vanish in a rainy night. What will be left of this beautiful place?”*

*Marco replied: “My emperor, the solid stones of this palace will be here forever. Architecture stays, it has the power to oppose the vicious tyranny of time and space.”*

*“Marco, architecture might stay, you are right, but unfortunately it won’t record our conversations, nor the smell of the morning dew, nor the purple colour of the shadows in autumn. That’s why we are forced to whisper fragments of realities into the wind, hoping they will be heard”.*

*Marco, with a wider and confident smile, invited the old emperor to sit close to him.*

*“Marco,” continued the emperor “In my life I’ve learned that the real wisdom comes with the understanding and acceptance that everything evolves and changes. Today it is my turn to tell you about a city and I invite you to listen to me. I will tell you about Aidah, the city that returns, the city that grew from the sand and flourished outside the reign of time. I’m sure you haven’t been there yet”.*

*Marco, intrigued, said “Aidah? No, please, tell me more.”*

*Kublai Khan began. “Imagine a vast plateau gently edged by rough mountains. Imagine a desert, so dry and hot, the midday sun can break its mightiest stones with a crack so loud, even the sky trembles. At the time I was just a solitary wanderer, walking east, determined to discover where the sun rises. The desert, magnetic and irresistible was dragging me inside her core, swallowing my hopes and my fears until I was completely lost. I was hiding under the dunes during the day, and travelling at night, guided by the brightest stars ever seen by man. Every day the sun was rising far, too far, beyond the horizon. I was almost losing hope when one day, I saw it.”*

*“Saw what?”, interrupted Marco impatiently.*

*“Marco, I have never interrupted you, please pay some respect to this old emperor, and listen. Your patience will be rewarded” said Kublai Khan.*

*“It was night, and the pale reflection of the moon defined the roundness of an object - a sphere. It gently floated and moved on the warm breeze released by the desert sand. I have no idea what it was or why it was there, but I knew I must get closer and catch it. A bit further, behind the curved profile of a hill, I discovered a field of spheres. One, two, three... I wanted to get them all and in half an hour I had more than twenty! But the sun was already appearing at the horizon, ready to desiccate any living thing, reckless enough to linger in the open. The realisation came to me with a jolt, that I hadn’t prepared my shelter for the day. There was no time to think, in thirty minutes I could die. I took a rope, connected the spheres together and hoping they would be strong enough to lift me from the ground. And it worked! The spheres were able to shelter me from the heat, cradled by the wind.*



*“Every night more spheres appeared in the desert and I kept connecting them. Tethering them to rocks and to each other. I created structures you could not imagine. I built towers. I built bridges. I built palaces. I built a metropolis in the empty sky!”*

*Marco: “Aidah...”*

*Kublai Khan, nodding: “My satisfaction and pride in birthing Aidah was fuelling my dreams and aspirations. With every new structure, I thought I could not out do myself and yet today a higher and more beautiful tower would be erected. And tomorrow I will build the widest arena the world can conceive! Aidah was challenging and breaking the rules of nature. Defeating any law of physics. You know, scientists just say words in the end, tell stories, just as we do.*

*I spent one month scouting the desert every night, looking for more stones big enough to ballast and anchor my ever growing city. But I eventually realised there were no stones left, only the black spheres seemed to be of an infinite source. Aidah was beautiful, yet fragile. A strong wind could push her away and vanish all the efforts made to build her. Once again, I had to decide what to do. I could either keep her as she was, or set off and start a long journey, heading for new adventures.*

*“One day, I’ll come back” I thought. I removed three big stones and let Aidah afloat, free to be transported by the wind. I no longer had interest in heading towards the sun, I just wanted the world to see how beautiful Aidah was.*

*Marco, I visited so many places and received so much appreciation and support. The city welcomed people from all over the world and my solitude finally ended. The whole world helped me to erect more amazing futuristic buildings. Aidah buzzed with trade, art and celebrations, secured by anchors carried from all corners of the Earth. It was a truly unique city.”*

*Engrossed in Kublai’s words, Marco asked “...but did the spheres end eventually? And did Aidah ever return to the desert? Why did you leave Aidah to return here?”*

*“So many questions, Marco.” Said Kublai, lifting his hands as if to gently hold them back. “These are different stories, too long to explain. Now, let me return to my room, I’m tired. You are too curious my dear friend, once I believed this was a positive thing, but now that I am old, I think that the beauty of the world hides in those mysteries we cannot untangle...”*

*The Emperor left the courtyard and a little gust of wind followed him, stirring some of the leaves on the ground. Marco stood up and moved closer to the old wall, pensive. He looked at the old stones as if they were an ancient manuscript to decipher. The last of the Emperor’s words were still resonating in his mind when he noticed a small inscription, gently highlighted by the afternoon sun. “L... Lo... London... Br...Brick... London Brick? Who knows what this could mean”...*



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### Links:

[www.boanoprismontas.com/aidah](http://www.boanoprismontas.com/aidah)