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News that matters to YOU

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# From 'fairy tale' to the 'theatre'

By Amna Khaishgi

THE One Managing Director, Thomas Lundgren, believes Middle East has evolved to keep up with global trends and styles.

Within a decade of its establishment, THE One built a network of 10 'theatres' in five countries across the Middle East. In June 2005, Stockholm was the first European country where THE One opened its 'theatre'.

In eight years (1997-98 to 2005-06) the company has grown by 499 per cent with an annual turnover expected to reach \$ 85 million in the next financial year.

Sitting inside his lavish office complex at Jumeirah, Thomas talks exclusively with The Emirates Evening Post about the furniture industry and his aspirations.

**What role THE One is playing in improvising the home interior trends?**

Over the years, the furniture market in the Middle East has evolved to keep up with global trends and styles. Today, we are living in an era of fashion and political statements, entertainment and multicultural lifestyles. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the fashion-conscious Middle East, where trends from Europe, Asia and North America are endorsed and adopted.

Fashion has permeated all areas of our lives and has even made its way into the furniture market, where we have an assortment of textile and colours mimicking the catwalks of the Paris and Rome fashion shows.

The importance of home fashion combined with entertainment in our homes is now more relevant than ever before.

THE One offers its 'fans' this unique form of home fashion and entertainment through their lifeline products and cul-



"We call our consumer as 'fans'. They understand the difference that's why they come to us."

-Thomas Lundgren

Managing Director & Founder of THE One Thomas Lundgren. (Photo: K.N. Murali)

ture that personifies re-invention, style and drama.

**So it is all about money!**

Well money is not everything. Money cannot replace creativity. But it does not mean that THE One only caters to the elite.

We have positioned our brand as MASSTIGE - a spot between Masses and Prestige. It is relatively untapped segment in the home interiors market. We offer home fashion at affordable prices.

**You spent a decade in Ikea. Why did you leave the company?**

I left Ikea because I felt bored. To be more philosophical, I left Ikea because I had a problem. I dreamt of a founder who made prestige furniture for the masses. But with the Mideast franchise, that didn't happen. They sold the franchises at very high prices, which was against the company's philosophy. I knew I couldn't fight with the

company so I left them.

**Do you think there is a future for your children in this part of the world?**

I don't know. This is what they have to decide. I just want a safe place for my children. But is there any safer place in the world right now?

**Do you see a future for THE One in the Middle East?**

Not just Middle East but in the whole world. But I am a little bit scared. The more we expand the more we are going to miss the 'family' feeling. And if we become a 'corporation' then I am going to die.

**You often criticise other home interior brands for being over-priced and lacking in creativity. Don't you think this is unprofessional?**

I am not criticising any one. I am just trying to explain how we are different. I worked for Ikea for 10 years. It is a great company.

But there are enormous copycats in the market. If you are a consumer, you should know what others are selling. They are selling commodities. I am not.

This is the difference between others and us. We all are competitors. We need to teach people about the difference between them and us.

**Do you think consumers who come to your shop understand that difference?**

I think they can. We call our consumer as 'fans'. They understand the difference that's why they come to us.

**Do you think consumers are loyal enough?**

Oh yes! But if you are not giving anything except commodities then you are loosing them.

**Don't you think your personality is overshadowing THE One?**

Without my personality, THE One would have never been what it is today.

**You have been through a long struggle. Do you think Middle East was the right place for such a struggle?**

It was the only place I knew. For me there was no difference. If I had been in Sweden, I would have to face the same amount of struggle.