

Dewan

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This anniversary monograph celebrates the remarkable journey of Dewan Architects + Engineers, a visionary UAE-based firm that has made a lasting impact on the design world since 1984. Discover its rich history, vibrant present, and the exciting future it continues to shape as a leader in contemporary design.

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AN ARCHITECTURE
MONOGRAPH



Dewan

AN ARCHITECTURE MONOGRAPH

Dewan

EDITED BY CATHERINE BELBIN

*for Mohamed AlAssam, 'MD',
our founder and mentor*

ARCHITECTURE OF TIME, PLACE AND FUNCTION

Celebrating 40 years of architectural brilliance in a nation as young as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), itself only formed in 1971, is no small feat. Yet Dewan Architects + Engineers, a pioneering studio headquartered in Dubai, has played an active role in shaping the urban transformation of this country, from its nascent years through its construction boom and beyond.

This monograph highlights the illustrious architectural portfolio and extraordinary achievements that Dewan has realised since Iraqi-born Mohamed Al Assam established the firm in Abu Dhabi in 1984.

Through stimulating interviews and conversations with some of Dewan's leading architects and engineers, a series of articles illustrated by world-class photography and sketches has been compiled. These provide rare insights into Dewan's unique DNA, as well as its philosophy and approach towards architecture, urban planning and engineering, which have been a guiding compass since the start.

As one of the oldest architectural studios in the country, Dewan has left an indelible mark on a wide variety of diverse projects. Many of these are catalogued in this book, highlighting its continuously growing architectural footprint into new markets and territories that span the Middle East, Africa and the Far East.

Headquartered in the heart of Dubai's Design District, Dewan is widely regarded as one of the leading design firms in the region, having amassed an impressive portfolio of projects and garnered numerous prestigious awards and accolades.

One of the defining traits of Dewan is its ethos for hard work – yet a family culture permeates the firm, engendering trust with clients and creating a real sense of loyalty among its employees, commonly called 'Dewanees'. The understated, professional way Dewan goes about its work means that many people may not be aware of just how many buildings can be traced back to the firm.

As a journalist and design editor with over 20 years of experience in the Middle East, I have witnessed first-hand the importance and excitement surrounding the opening of several of Dewan's iconic projects and their significant impact on society. Whether the Al Jazira Hotel & Resort, the opening of the Fotouh Al Khair Mall in Abu Dhabi, the landmark Ibn Battuta Mall – a sprawling single-storey thematic mall, the likes of which had hitherto not been seen in the country – or the residential Green Community (DIP), City Walk, or Media One Tower... all have become part of the urban fabric of the UAE.

Throughout the past four decades, as the cityscape of the country has evolved, Dewan's placemaking has stood as an example of architectural works rooted in the firm's philosophy of being of time, place and function. Subtly, these characteristics run through all its projects, from the prestigious Address Dubai Mall to the highly complex Aquarabia water theme park in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In short, the architecture of Dewan is designed to stand the test of time, creating environments that inspire, uplift and enhance the lives of people - in the words of the studio's founder, "Good architecture should please the eye, delight the heart and benefit the users."

CATHERINE BELBIN, EDITOR

“Our greatest strength is our ability to work seamlessly across regions as a unified team, transforming our clients’ visions into successful, innovative, high-performance landmark buildings and spaces that have a profound impact on their cityscapes.”

FROM FRONT OF PHOTOGRAPH, CLOCKWISE: MOHAMED AL ASSAM,
MOHAMMED ADIB, HAIDER AL ASSAM, AMMAR AL ASSAM



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A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of two modern skyscrapers. The buildings feature a repetitive pattern of windows and light-colored, cantilevered balconies or window frames. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The perspective creates a sense of height and architectural scale.

01

FIRM
FOUNDATIONS

AL THOWIMA TOWER,
DUBAI, UAE

A portrait of Mohamed Al Assam, a middle-aged man with a mustache, wearing a dark blue blazer over a black turtleneck. He is standing in front of a modern glass skyscraper with a blue sky and clouds in the background. The image has a cinematic feel with soft lighting.

THE DESIGN LEGACY OF A VISIONARY

This is just the beginning for architect Mohamed Al Assam, Executive Chairman and founder of Dewan Architects + Engineers. Fondly known as 'MD' to all who work with him, Al Assam has been at the helm of the UAE-headquartered firm for the past 40 years. The studio continues to prosper and expand globally as he creates the blueprints for the decades ahead, aimed at securing Dewan's position as one of the leading design practices in the region and one of the top hospitality design firms in the world.

MOHAMED AL ASSAM
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER

Very few architects have been as great a part of the UAE phenomenon as Mohamed Al Assam – an Iraqi-born architect with a curious sense of adventure who has been practicing in the Emirates since 1976! Even then, this visionary was able to imagine modern cityscapes emerging along the coast and from the desert dunes.

Al Assam has been designing prestigious buildings, royal palaces and compounds, shopping malls, hotels, schools and places of worship across the UAE and beyond for almost half a century, navigating his way through some highly challenging economic cycles to make an impressive architectural imprint in the hitherto desert scape.

Today, Dewan Architects + Engineers – the pioneering practice he established with two part-time employees in Abu Dhabi in 1984 – is one of the most respected in the region and now employs over 750 staff members (‘Dewanees’) in the UAE and abroad.

PIONEERING SPIRIT AND INFLUENCES
Fuelled by lucrative oil prices and a desire to show Iraq as forward-thinking, the government’s development council, Majlis Al Emaar, commissioned several modernist architects between 1952 and 1958 to curate a new international image for the country.

The great luminaries it engaged included Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gio Ponti and Alvar Aalto, who designed symbolic projects such as the Baghdad University and an Olympic stadium. This wave of internationalism positively impacted Iraqi society and profoundly influenced young architects, impressed with this new approach to building.

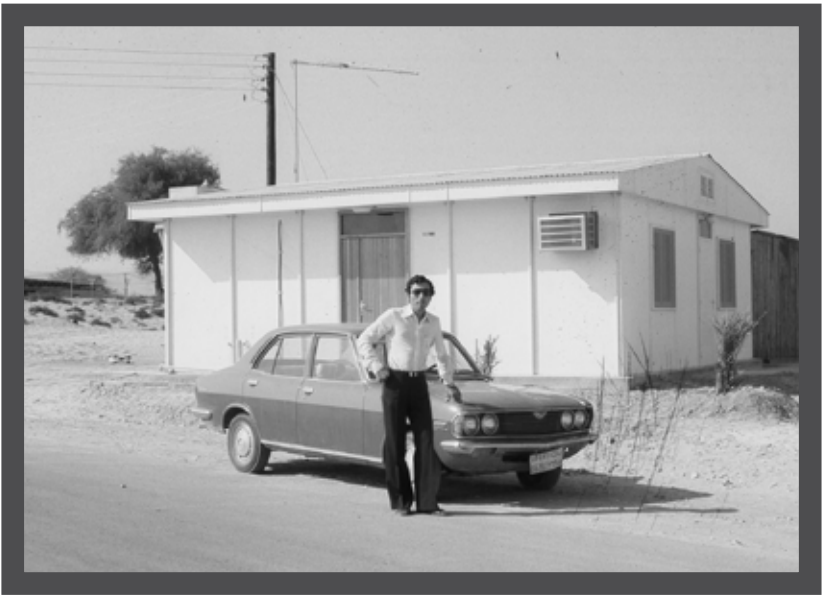
HOME-GROWN TALENT
In the 1940s and ‘50s, well-to-do Iraqis had to travel overseas to study architecture; many returned to practice architecture in Iraq and became regarded as the ‘Pioneers’, the last of whom was architect Maath Alousi. This trend changed in 1959 with the establishment of the Baghdad School of Architecture, which enabled middle-class students to study architecture – hitherto the privilege of the wealthy – for the first time, thus creating a new generation of Iraqi architects, the first of whom graduated in 1964.

One of eight siblings and the son of a wealthy Iraqi textile importer, Al Assam spent school holidays in his father’s office, absorbing trading methods and the secrets of running a business before finding his own professional direction.

However, a neighbour, Hashim Kamuna – an architectural student whom Al Assam used to see



“Our first office was a portable cabin on the edge of the desert – it was normal for camels to stroll past, which is quite funny to look back on now.”



returning from university every day with his T-square, triangle and rolls of architectural drawings – further aroused his interest in architecture. Al Assam had already been indirectly influenced by the foreign modernist architects making their mark on the urban landscape.

In the following year, 1965, as soon as Al Assam was eligible, he too enrolled at the University of Baghdad’s esteemed School of Architecture.

AN INVALUABLE EDUCATION
“I learned so much while at university – including that hard work, determination, detailing, planning and an appreciation of each project’s functionality are at the core of success. I also came to realise that one of my core skills was in the art of detailing.”

They say that architects fall into two camps: those that start with the drawing and prefer to work independently; and those that start with dialogue and enjoy teamwork, sharing ideas and creating the concept together.

“I always like to be part of a team, and that’s how we work at Dewan – as a group, each contributing with their specialised talent.”

Despite the political turmoil and instability caused by the ousting of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958, followed by numerous revolutions and regional conflicts, Al Assam continued his studies, graduating six years later, enriched and inspired by the numerous international and Iraqi architects and their work in Iraq.

“My university years were the best years of that department; most of the Iraqi pioneers, including Hisham Munir [1930-present] and Mohamed Makiya [1914-2015] were permanent teachers there, while Rifat Chadirji [1926-2020] occasionally taught. I never imagined then that I would have encounters with these pioneers again. We also had numerous visiting architects from Europe.”

FIRST UAE PRACTICE, RAK – 1976
A year after graduating, and still in his early 20s, Al Assam worked for the Iraqi government on numerous civic buildings and private projects before establishing his own studio in Baghdad.

“Having submitted a technical tender from the Ministry of Transport to design a series of cargo and passenger stations along the river from the north of the country to Basra, I contacted a British firm to collaborate [with us]. That was when I met John Wigmore, a seasoned engineer based in Dubai.”



BANIYAS TOWER, ABU DHABI, UAE

“Good architecture pleases the eye, delights the heart and benefits the occupants.”

Within days, disillusioned with the political situation in Iraq and intrigued with the possibilities in the Gulf, Al Assam decided to relocate with his family to the UAE, where he and Wigmore set up a practice together, called Wigmore Assam & Partners.

“I had been thinking about emigrating, and the prospect of a new adventure in the Gulf seemed perfect. It was not easy to leave the country at that time, especially for government employees, so I got permission to go on holiday! With just US\$1,000 in my pocket and some money hidden in my socks, I embarked on a risky exit to start a new adventure. Now, 47 years later, as we celebrate four decades of Dewan - one of the region's most prolific design practices - I'm still pursuing my architectural goals and aspirations, from my base in the UAE.”

The partners registered their company in 1976 and began working from a portacabin on the outskirts of Ras Al Khaimah for a project

commissioned by then-ruler Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammed Al Qasimi [1920-2010].

“Our first office was a portable cabin on the edge of the desert – it was normal for camels to stroll past, which is quite funny to look back on now.”

In 1978, Al Assam endured the first of a few financial crises that would impact his career. Wigmore, who had been in the region since 1950, decided to call it a day and returned to the UK while Al Assam remained in situ to try to secure the outstanding payments.

With a young son and wife to care for, Al Assam moved to Kuwait for a few years, hoping to save some money. “I felt professionally unfulfilled and frustrated – but I had little choice as the Iran-Iraq War was ongoing, ruling out a possible return home.”

He adds that overcoming these early hurdles was character-building: “I like challenges. I am not daunted by the unknown or by working in areas of unrest; these characteristics have helped me throughout my career.”

DEWAN IS ESTABLISHED – 1984

Encouraged by his childhood friend Kadim Al Rubaie, in early 1984 Al Assam returned to the UAE, where he set up Dewan Architects + Engineers in the country's

capital. This was also supported by a friend and distant cousin, architect Taghlib Taqi. Shortly afterwards, aided by the excellent relationships enjoyed by Kadim with business and social communities in Abu Dhabi, Dewan scooped the contract for an avant-garde 25-storey high-rise building called Baniyas Tower, located at a prominent location on the seaside of the capital's central district. With their youthful spirit, the three friends worked on the concept design together, working from Dewan's first, tiny office.

“This was a groundbreaking project, and as the client was a prominent person, it was one of the first in Abu Dhabi to have high specifications – including basement parking, a double-glazed glass façade and a rooftop swimming pool with retractable roof!”

At that time, many of the buildings in Abu Dhabi were financed and subsidised by the Department of Social Services and Commercial Buildings, known as the Khalifa Committee. Stringent architectural guidelines left little room for deviation or design creativity. The guidelines initially permitted no more than four floors; later this became 10 and then 20 floors. Buildings were therefore often demolished and rebuilt with more floors to obtain better returns on investment.

The iconic Baniyas Tower, still in place 40 years later, deviated significantly from the norm – serving as an example of how pushing architectural boundaries can result in timeless masterpieces.

Supported by a part-time architect, draughtsman and secretary, Al Assam and his close-knit team

began to win other challenging projects, including royal palaces and residences and the Al Jazira Hotel and Resort in Ghantoot.

DEWAN MAKES ITS HOSPITALITY DEBUT

“The Al Jazira project demonstrated how projects used to evolve; originally a type of motel around a kidney-shaped man-made canal, this small cluster of chalets on the seaside morphed into a four-star luxury hotel.

“This was a turning point for us – our first hospitality project – and over the years Dewan has developed its expertise in this area to become one of the leading hotel designers in the world, creating hotels in the Middle East, Africa and the Far East for major developers and chains including Hilton, Marriott and Ritz-Carlton.”

DUBAI: GATEWAY TO ARCHITECTURAL FREEDOM

Moving to Dubai in the late 1990s was a significant milestone for the home-grown practice, a business decision that has reaped dividends and resulted in a vast array of varied and more innovative projects – from Ibn Battuta Mall to the iconic Media One Tower in Media City and the prestigious Address Dubai Mall by Emaar in Downtown Dubai.

“The attitude in Dubai was different, and the developers were less conservative. There was freedom of architectural expression, which inspired us to be more creative, leading to bigger and more prestigious projects.”



AL JAZIRA HOTEL AND RESORT, ABU DHABI, UAE



DEWA MOSQUE, DUBAI, UAE



Dewan's portfolio later expanded to include the 57,000-square metre Astana Grand Mosque (formerly Nur-Sultan Grand Mosque) in Kazakhstan, the largest mosque in Central Asia with four towering 130-metre-high minarets, which recently won two design awards and has been nominated for a place in the Guinness Book of Records.

Other noteworthy recent projects include The Estates in Cairo, the SolForest Ecopark residences in Hanoi and the Port de La Mer in Dubai.

The firm constantly demonstrates not only architectural and engineering prowess, but also its flexibility in skilfully designing, managing and building projects of varying budgets and proportions, in different locations. Simultaneously, the firm has spread its wings, opening numerous international offices in locations from Manila to Cairo to cope with growing demand.

Al Assam strongly believes that architecture should benefit society: "Architecture is not just about designing buildings. It's about designing buildings in spaces that people can live and work in; a means to solving urban problems. A good and successful building should please the eye, delight the heart and benefit people."

Dewan's reputation for quality and precision, and its unique knowledge of the regional architectural landscape, has also caught the attention and respect of major international firms such as Foster + Partners, KOK, HKS and Kengo Kuma & Associates, who often collaborate with the practice on UAE and KSA projects.

HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM COVENTRY UNIVERSITY – 2020

Al Assam's collaborative leadership and management style has won him global accolades and peer respect. He has been named seven times by the respected Middle East Architect magazine as one of the most influential architects in the Middle East.

Recognising his exceptional contribution to architecture in the Middle East, the UK's Coventry University awarded an Honorary Doctorate to Al Assam during a ceremony in Coventry Cathedral in 2021.

"It really is a great honour to be recognised for practicing architecture over 50 years in one of the most turbulent regions of the world," he says.

Al Assam has periodically spoken at universities in Iraq, Lebanon, the UK and the UAE, where he always stresses to students that the key to success is hard work and determination. Time and time again, he says: "If I could do it, so can you."

ANNUAL DEWAN AWARDS FOR YOUNG ARCHITECTS

The highly respected Tamayouz Excellence Award – primarily sponsored by Coventry University – have always been supported by some of the world's top architects, including the late Anglo-Iraqi architect Dame Zaha Hadid. Al Assam was a member of the jury in 2011 and 2012 before initiating the Dewan Award for Architecture.

As part of Dewan's corporate social responsibility CSR programme, the firm teamed up with the Tamayouz Excellence Award in 2018 to sponsor the annual architectural competition that invites aspiring architects from all over the world to design a project to address social challenges in Iraq, including creating schools in the marshland and a refuge for homeless women, as well as other types of buildings.

"I believe that we should make positive contributions to society. I have been lucky. But there are many less fortunate architects in my country and if we have the possibility to help them grow and prosper by creating opportunities to assist them, I believe we should. Though I have been away from my country for many decades, I feel this obligation. It gives me considerable pleasure and satisfaction to be involved with these talented creative people and it also gives me the rare opportunity to work in my homeland."

The important Dewan Award for Architecture creates a platform for young architects to curate designs that can potentially be built and genuinely help communities in need. As Al Assam states, "Architecture should serve a social purpose and should be designed to help people."

EXPANSION, FULFILLED DREAMS, CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Almost three decades after fleeing his native Iraq, Al Assam was able to fulfil a long-standing dream by finally returning in 2003 and opening an office in Baghdad. Determined to play a role in the redevelopment and rebuilding of his country, destroyed



BASRA CULTURAL PALACE, BASRA, IRAQ

by years of almost continuous war and conflict, Al Assam was finally able to pursue his passion for urban planning and design, becoming an active player in Iraq's new era. "Initially, I was keen to be a part of the development of the old city of Najaf, where my father is from, and my soul too. My vision then expanded to include other urban planning redevelopment projects in Karbala, Kadhimiya, Basra, the UAE and the region.

"We have encountered numerous obstacles there [in Iraq]; for example, we lobbied hard to keep the historic 'Grand Souq' in Najaf that the local government sought to demolish. Fortunately, it is still standing. We have received assurance from the authorities that many parts of the old city, including the 'Grand Souq', will not be destroyed."

The Cultural Palace in Basra is one project that Al Assam has been painstakingly trying to get off the ground for years yet is also delayed by the slow pace of bureaucracy. "I'm sure that it will be built one day; I hope that day will be soon."

ESTABLISHING A UN GLOBAL CHARTER IN IRAQ

The Dewan team has also been instrumental in founding non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – initially in Iraq. "After the fall of Saddam Hussein, many people suddenly found that they have



KARBALA, IRAQ

a lot of freedom. NGOs can play a significant role in development by expressing opinions and creating ways to give people opportunities."

Al Assam was part of a group of architects who succeeded in getting the blessing of the UN to establish the Iraqi chapter of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), which supports international companies committed to responsible

“Hard work, determination and planning are at the core of our success.”

business practices in human rights, labour, the environment and [anti-]corruption.

“I can confidently say there is less corruption among architects, with a social conscience, in Iraq than any other profession. Architects not only design, they also actively build a society by creating components for that society.”

DEFINING MIDDLE EASTERN ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

Al Assam recalls that from the beginning of the 2000s he started to reflect on and re-evaluate his life, legacy and work, which led him to formulate new values, including those related to urbanism. Over the past decade, two architects who have profoundly influenced Al Assam are 85-year-old Iraqi Maath Alousi [1938-present] and 77-year-old Rasem Badran [1945- present], a Jordanian/Saudi of Palestinian origin, both of whom have enjoyed expansive pioneering roles in architecture in the Middle East. “Now, after decades of practicing in various parts of the world, both are pursuing their own architectural identity and we have become friends; together, we are trying to find an identity derived from our conditions, turbulent history and social and urban problems.”

While many Middle Eastern architects and designers have been influenced by foreign architecture and Western movements, these seasoned global architects are now researching the architecture and urbanism of their people and their lands.

This search for a unique, distinguishing Middle Eastern architectural style has taken Al Assam and Alousi on a new journey to define and highlight the rich and meaningful characteristics of the architecture indigenous to the people of the East Mediterranean – focusing primarily on Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq.

“The Al Liqa (Arabic for an urban forum or gathering) initiative is something I have always wanted to do; and now, with a group of like-minded architects, we have decided to pursue this challenge, which seeks to define the cultural and urban identity

of our society and to create solutions to solve our urban problems. The initiative also seeks to promote dialogue in the Arabic language that will highlight the characteristics of architecture and urbanism from the region, which has long been influenced by foreign architects and ideals. We need to depend on ourselves, our culture and our heritage.”

The group has just launched its website and is setting up an office in Beirut, where the liberal environment is conducive to such an initiative. Along with founding member Dr. Habib Sadek, President of the Chadirji Association for Architecture and Society, some 20 prominent architects are already on board.

A FORTHCOMING COLLECTION OF MEMORIES AND INSIGHTS

For the past 10 years Al Assam, one of the very few architects that has been practicing in the UAE since the 1970s, has been recording, researching and collating material for his autobiography. “The book will be a detailed mix of professional and personal memories; through the pages of this book, I will seek to explain the social, cultural and urban changes that I have witnessed in Iraq and the UAE. This will give me an opportunity to share with others the incredible journey that I have enjoyed, and been privy to, as an architect practicing in this complex and dynamic region.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESSION

Influenced not only by the architecture, philosophies and successes of some of Iraq’s pioneers of modernism but also their fates, Al Assam has spent the best part of 25 years ensuring that his firm will survive and prosper, even if he is no longer at the helm.

“The two Iraqi architects that I admired the most, Mohamed Makiya [1914-2015] and Rifat Chadirji [1926-2020], both studied outside Iraq in the 1940s, returning in the ‘50s, where they were well-known as being at the forefront of the handful of excellent Iraqi modernist pioneers. This group also included Medhat Ali Madhloom [1913-1973] and Hisham Munir [1930-present]. Sadly, however, when they stopped practicing, just as with Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe before them, their studios closed.

“Firms like HOK, Foster + Partners and Zaha Hadid were structured to continue regardless or not of whether the founder was on board, and so I have put a great deal of effort into preparing Dewan’s future for when I am no longer active. It would be a great pity to see all the years of hard work and success disappear. So, with a clear succession plan already in place, Dewan will continue to make its mark.”



LEGACY, SUCCESSION AND THE FUTURE

While establishing the new Al Liqa architectural NGO in Lebanon and lobbying for the construction of a new cultural centre and a new city south of Basra, penning his autobiography and directing the annual Dewan Award for Architecture, held in association with the Tamayouz Excellence Award, septuagenarian workaholic Al Assam is ready for his next challenge. “I’m supposed to have more time now that I’m in ‘semi-retirement’, but actually I’m as busy as I ever was!” he says with a smile.

As Al Assam reflects on his 54-year career, he says, “I just want to be remembered as a good person who contributed to architecture and society.” This desire encapsulates the purpose and passion that has driven him to deliver enduring impact.

In architectural circles, Al Assam’s legacy extends far beyond structures or urban planning schemes. His career is a testament to resilience, innovation and a

commitment to shaping environments that stand the test of time. He has never overlooked his clients or the people for whom he has created better environments, nor the support of his invaluable team members. He is held in high esteem throughout the company he founded, where Dewanees know him simply as ‘MD’ – short for Managing Director, a position that he previously held in the practice.

His journey epitomises the transformative power of architecture, not merely as structures but as solutions to urban problems for people. His impact is etched both in skylines and in enhanced daily lives, which speaks volumes about a man who has always had a vision to serve society through purposeful and visually pleasing architecture.

As Dewan Architects + Engineers celebrates its first 40 years, it’s clear that for Al Assam, this is only the beginning. **D**

BLUEPRINTS FOR THE FUTURE

AMMAR AL ASSAM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

With an eye on the long-term growth of shareholder value and brand equity, Dewan's CEO, Ammar Al Assam continues to navigate an ever-evolving economic landscape as he takes one of the Middle East's most-respected firms to global prominence.

Dewan has already grown from a one-person practice in 1984 to one of the region's leading multidisciplinary architectural design firms – and CEO Ammar Al Assam is propelling it to the next stage. He joined in 2002 and was appointed to his current position in 2014; since then he has introduced a more contemporary, youthful management style and helped it to harness technology and other modern practices.

Ammar is spearheading Dewan's five-year plan, the result of a collaboration with U.S.-based Zweig Group – the leading research, publishing and advisory resource for architecture, engineering, planning and environmental companies. The plan focuses on four strategic areas: Growth and Operations in the short to medium term, and People and Clients in the longer term.

Specific targets of the plan include doubling revenues, enhancing margins by 30 per cent and developing untapped markets. Ammar believes this can be achieved by growing the business organically and through strategic M&A transactions, adding that the firm's reputation and ethos for quality ethos for quality mean this growth must be well studied, planned and executed – absolutely not rushed.

GROWTH IN NEW MARKETS

Opportunities in the UAE and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) are increasing, creating demand for more staff across Dewan offices globally. This demand has been addressed by the opening of a new office in d3 (Dubai Design District), the epicentre for creativity in Dubai, and a site office in Ras Al Khaimah to support Dewan's growing luxury residential and hospitality project portfolio in the emirate. The ongoing growth is also backed by Dubai's reputation; Ammar notes that the emirate is globally renowned for its pioneering reputation – a place where new architectural and design standards are constantly set.

As essential as these projects are, Ammar is cognisant of cyclical market fluctuations and so emphasises the importance of agility – which is why diversifying the firm's market reach, including to Southeast Asia and Africa, is an integral part of the five-year plan. Growth in new markets has long been part of the Dewan playbook, and projects already executed in developing regions include: the multi-award-winning Astana Grand Mosque in Kazakhstan, which is the second largest mosque outside the Middle East; Kempinski hotels in Djibouti and Congo; the Rove Hotel & Residences in Mauritania; Layan Verde in Phuket, Thailand; The Estates in Cairo, Egypt; and SolForest Ecopark in

PIXEL AT MAKERS DISTRICT,
ABU DHAB, UAE

ADDRESS DUBAI MALL,
DUBAI, UAE





ECORIVER,
HANOI, VIETNAM

Hanoi, Vietnam. More staff members have already been employed in offices in the Philippines, Egypt and Vietnam, enabling Dewan to service projects located beyond its Middle East home.

Dewan's management team recognises that operating in the UAE is challenging due to the cost and availability of resources in such a competitive market. Expanding into markets with lower operational costs, such as Egypt and the Philippines, can help the firm fulfil its revenue targets while still controlling costs. However, cost is far from the only reason – the markets under consideration also have plentiful resources of technical architects and designers because of well-established universities and education systems.

While growth is exciting and essential, Ammar does not want Dewan's expansion to incur unnecessary debt, reflecting the conservative way in which the founder built up the firm.

In 2007, when Ithmar Capital – a leading regional private equity company – invested in Dewan, the firm experienced significant growth, diversifying to new markets including KSA and solidifying the culture of excellence in corporate governance and reporting standards. The shares were

eventually repurchased eight years later, and this experience prepared the firm for future M&A activity and growth.

Ammar stresses that, despite being a large firm, Dewan operates in a collaborative manner, with a flat management structure that allows for quick decision-making, supported by a culture of strong work ethics, passion and camaraderie.

EXPANSION THROUGH MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

In a significant milestone, Dewan recently completed its first acquisition. DesignLab is a dynamic Singapore- and Vietnam-based design firm that specialises in luxury resort hospitality projects – a sector that Dewan wishes to expand into further. Ammar states that Dewan partners with people and companies that share its core values, noting that DesignLab will be a great addition to its service offering and portfolio of companies.

The extent and speed at which the firm should grow are important factors being considered by Ammar. He must weigh up Dewan's desire to be recognised globally as a leading architectural practice, while not losing sight of the values that have brought it to this point: being known as a trusted and reliable



RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL,
AL KHOBAR, KSA

firm that excels in design. While Dewan exercises caution regarding mergers and acquisitions, its impressive track record positions it as an attractive prospect for companies seeking investment opportunities. Ammar acknowledges that Dewan's current focus is on its own strategic plan but he suggests that, in the future, it could “look at strategic merger plans if it makes sense for the firm.” Simultaneously, he emphasises the importance of maintaining control and calculating risks and returns in any venture that unites Dewan with another entity.

THE BUSINESS OF HOSPITALITY

Much of the firm's current revenue is derived from increasing demand in the hospitality and leisure sector, particularly in the Middle East. Starting with its initial venture, the Al Jazira Hotel & Resort in the Ghantoot area of Abu Dhabi in the 1980s, Dewan's impressive client portfolio has expanded to include major global hotel groups such as St. Regis, W Hotels, Sofitel, Ritz, Kempinski, Address Hotels and Fairmont. Ammar notes, “Many top hotel operators recommend us to their clients for all their projects, and it's important to us that they come back to us.” He adds that repeat clients account for about 70 per cent of Dewan's business, reflecting the trust they place in its quality and integrity. With a post-COVID

global travel boom, especially in the Middle East, the demand for hospitality properties is expected to continue rising.

Dewan helps clients deliver outstanding hotel experiences because it understands the intricacies of hotel operations. This expertise is exemplified by its current engagement in 12 Red Sea resorts and its successful securing of contracts with the Diriyah Company for the massive 63 US billion Diriyah cultural and lifestyle tourism destination located adjacent to Riyadh, KSA.

Ammar is a self-professed lover of hotels – particularly design hotels and their associated creativity – and is especially interested in resort architecture. Dewan's future portfolio may include the design of boutique hotels, which can offer character and personal service on an intimate, human scale – something that the firm's recent acquisition of DesignLab can greatly contribute to.

Already, Dewan has received plaudits for its work in the sector – including being placed 15th in the world for ‘Hotels, Motels, Convention Centres’ in ENR's *The Global Sourcebook*, and sixth in the ‘Hospitality’ sector in the World Architecture Top 100 for 2023.

THE GROWING ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY, THE METAVERSE AND AI

One thing is clear to Ammar, who helped companies introduce advanced software prior to joining Dewan: “Technology will change how we work, both within the business and design spheres of the firm. Complete, accurate information allows for better decision-making and gives us a fuller understanding of the lifecycle of projects.”

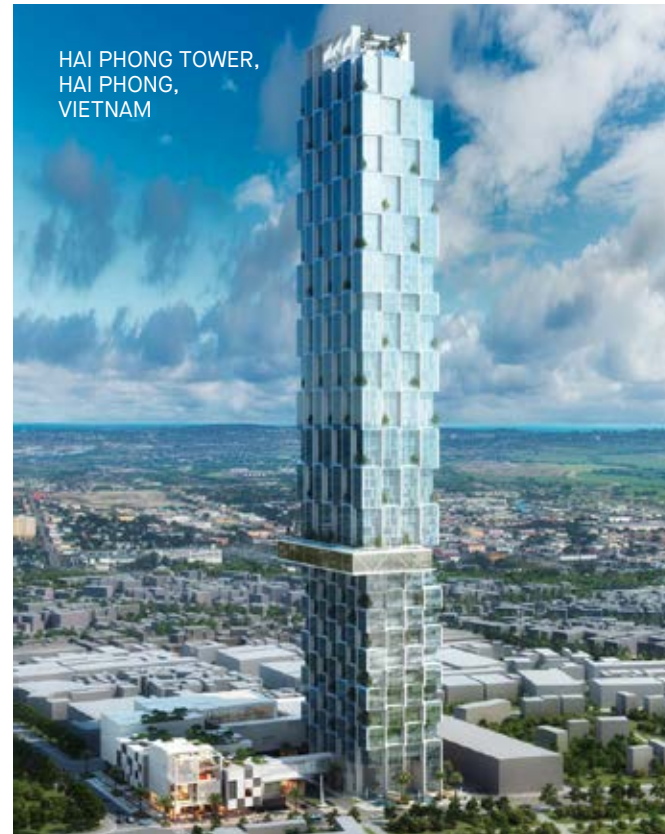
He is excited about the benefits that integrating new software will bring to Dewan, noting that the Deltek ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system has already helped to enable superior levels of project intelligence, management and collaboration.

Dewan has been leveraging Autodesk’s solutions for several years, and since 2015 has adopted more advanced solutions like Autodesk Revit, which supports both the delivery of high-quality services to clients and adherence to the ISO 19650 standard for managing information across the entire lifecycle of a building asset with Building Information Modelling (BIM). Its use of cloud-based solutions facilitates efficient collaboration among Dewan’s teams, leading to notable time savings, enhanced productivity and superior results for clients.

Dewan is shifting toward data-centric models and extensive databases, which are utilised for analytics, automation and advanced simulations. The data is integrated with other technologies like Digital Twins and AI analytics, providing a comprehensive approach to design, construction and building management.

In digital automation, Dewan is creating custom BIM plugins and solutions and exploring Generative Design, conducted through groups like the Dewan Technology Leaders (DTL), the Metaverse Architecture Department (MAD) and the BIM team. The firm participates in AI design competitions and employs tools like Midjourney for conceptual work, while in the Dubai office, a 3D printer is used to create replica models of designs to aid the design process.

Dewan made a pioneering leap into the future by establishing MAD, which is tasked with exploring real-world applications of 3D modelling in its innovative Babel 4.0 metaverse project. Clients can take a virtual walkthrough of the project at various design stages, enabling them to visualise the space in greater detail and clarity than with existing two-dimensional technology. Though real-life experiences will not be replaced, changing technology will reshape how people work and how the firm operates.



HAI PHONG TOWER,
HAI PHONG,
VIETNAM



THE ONE TOWER,
DUBAI, UAE



VISION TOWER,
DUBAI, UAE

“Architects are great users of technology – and as it develops and becomes more sophisticated, it will become an even more useful tool. AI’s impact in site analysis is already propelling their skills into new territories.”

The forward-thinking approach of Dewan led to the firm being named as 2024’s Most Innovative Company in Architecture by Fast Company Middle East.

AN EVOLVING STRUCTURE

When Dewan’s forward-thinking CEO looks ahead and envisions the future of the firm, he sees a highly professional organisation that retains its culture, sense of fun and personality while operating in multiple markets. Highly competitive, Ammar – who enjoys participating in Ironman and marathon races – says one of his most defining legacies at Dewan will be growing it to the next stage. He also believes that within the next 10 years he may be fulfilling alternative roles at the firm, though he is still determining what those changes will involve. The structure of Dewan will gradually be reshaped as the shareholder base expands, taking it from a predominantly family entity to broader ownership. Nevertheless, Ammar will continue to serve on the Board and to play a crucial role in Dewan’s strategic vision.

As Dewan’s ambitious five-year business strategy plan gathers momentum, the firm is poised to become a major global force. For Ammar, the key objective is to ensure that the right people are in leadership roles as it grows and diversifies its service offering.

Above all, he wants his greatest achievement to be “taking my father’s legacy and growing it, taking it to the next stage – so that when I leave the firm, it’s in even better management hands.” **D**

A portrait of Haider Al Assam, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. He is standing in front of a modern glass building. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the subject.

STRATEGICALLY GOING GLOBAL

HAIDER AL ASSAM
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Dewan is strategically advancing from local prominence to international recognition. At the same time, it is leveraging cutting-edge technology to keep costs under control without compromising on quality. Organic growth means the company is expanding its presence in the UAE and venturing into new markets worldwide, all while continuing to foster a culture of inclusion and respect.

Since joining Dewan in 2008, Haider Al Assam has played a pivotal role in extending the company's reach globally. As Director of Operations, his expertise in Strategic Management – backed by international experience and a degree from the University of Windsor – has been instrumental in driving the firm's expansion into new markets, including Asia, the GCC and Africa. The company's international offices, which were once focused on business development and back-office tasks, have now been seamlessly integrated into the core team, providing enhanced architectural support.

Indeed, the new Cairo office – which, like that in Manila, the Philippines, has rapidly doubled in size – is able to fulfil projects from start to end, while the office in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam is proving to be especially influential in helping the company to develop business in new markets in Southeast Asia.

Dewan now operates in eight offices across six countries, its international standing reflected in the 21 languages spoken by its employees. Approximately 30 per cent of its workforce is stationed outside the UAE – and further growth is on the horizon as the company seeks to be recognised around the world. In fact, coinciding with its 40th anniversary, Dewan recently opened an extension to its 1,700m² headquarters in Dubai's d3 district. The new 350m² office is the hub for the Structural Design and

“My goal is to expand and grow into different markets, to build Dewan’s reputation not just as a leader in the region, but also further afield.”

Quantity Surveying departments, providing the team with a dedicated workspace. A new site office has also been established in Ras Al Khaimah, where Dewan is involved in several ongoing prestigious projects.

The firm's commitment to delivering quality has resulted in strong relationships with clients and facilitated its involvement in prestigious projects such as the Aquarabia water theme park and the Amaala development, both in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Amaala is being developed by Red Sea Global one of the world's most visionary developers and will include several hotels as well as a luxurious marina and marine research facility.

A key driver in Dewan's ongoing growth is the company's large number of repeat clients. “We’ve built a reputation, and the biggest developers like the work we do and the way we work – so they contact us,” Haider states matter-of-factly.



EFFICIENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT TO SUPPORT EXPANSION

With more than 700 members of staff, Dewan has long recognised the need for sophisticated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Building Information Modelling (BIM) metrics. To meet this demand, the company has incorporated Deltek, a comprehensive and efficient software system that seamlessly integrates all aspects of project management, from business development to cost monitoring. This advanced tool provides real-time data on project hours, enhancing profitability and fostering flexibility in decision-making.

Haider emphasises that Deltek's ERP system is crucial in streamlining operations and increasing efficiency. The software's ability to automate processes allows Dewan's people to focus on creativity and project delivery, while its detailed and accurate data – based on the company's vast experience of delivery – results in more precise bids, enabling the company to position itself even more competitively in the market.

AWARD-WINNING COMPANY CULTURE

Dewan prides itself on a unique company culture that has contributed to a remarkable retention rate and high levels of employee satisfaction – as well as recognition such as being named Best Workplace of the Year in the 2024 *Design Middle East Awards*. The company's Executive Chairman and founder, Mohamed Al Assam, has successfully maintained a family atmosphere, promoting an open-door policy where every employee, regardless of hierarchy, can communicate directly with management. Finding employees who have worked at Dewan for 15 years or longer is not difficult – such as Nabeel Kenderyan, who began as an engineer 35 years ago, and Hussein Saleh, now Principal Designer, who began in a more junior position some 25 years ago.

Despite the company's substantial growth, the Dewan family culture extends to its diverse global offices. Each location adapts to its unique cultural dynamics, emphasising effective communication through monthly visits from management and regular virtual meetings. Dewan's commitment to staff welfare is evident in initiatives such as team-building activities, which foster a sense of unity among its employees.

Dewan's unusual approach also generates great loyalty – and around 90 per cent of those who do leave to work elsewhere come back to the company. “Of course, we open the door for them immediately. Again, it's part of our culture. It is not common for big companies to have a culture like this,” says Haider Al Assam.



Perhaps this is why those who work for the company are referred to, and refer to themselves, as ‘Dewanees’ – a group that includes two architects who are sons of a member of the founder's household staff, and who were inspired to work in their father's employer's organisation.



DEWAN HEADQUARTERS,
DUBAI DESIGN DISTRICT (d3)

BEYOND WORK

Team-building activities at the head office include a variety of fun occasions - such as the popular outing to Mushrif Park for zip-lining and Iftar dinners that help unite the Dewanees. They also come together for various outreach activities like blood drives, food distribution in labour camps and collecting donations for others in need.

Another side of the company’s CSR activities, which which Haider also has responsibility for, is its internship and mentoring programme, which may form part of a student’s university curriculum. Other participants include interns from Iraq and winners of the annual Dewan Award for Architecture, part of the prestigious Tamayouz Excellence Award, which the firm organises and sponsors.

Dewan also understands that when people are happy at work, they are eager to encourage students and interns to participate in their fields by sharing their experiences at job fairs and visiting universities – extending the cycle of positive influence.

“In-house training is more than academic lessons; it teaches how things are done within the company’s culture.”

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

Dewan prioritises internal development and invests in its diverse workforce – female professionals make up 28% of the workforce, and there are plans to increase this to over 40% – through comprehensive training programmes, which include ‘lunch and learn’ sessions as well as more formal courses. In line with its stated aim to ‘foster a culture of continuous learning’, the company also offers outside training for staff, and bears some of the costs, while its commitment to the future is evident in initiatives like Dewan Young Leaders (DYL), which not only imparts industry-related skills but also instils the values and culture that are integral to Dewan’s identity.

Haider underscores the importance of in-house training, emphasising its role in shaping the company’s culture. “Training is a big part of what we do,” says the Director of Operations. “We really like to build up people to become the next managers. Someone who started as an architect is now a design manager, for example.”

Dewan’s dedication to employee growth extends beyond internal programmes, as it sponsors external training and actively participates in community outreach, reflecting its commitment to being not only a thriving business but also a responsible corporate citizen. As Haider says, “We don’t want to be known only for projects and revenues. It’s also the fact that we have been here so long as a family. Our roots are here. We have a close connection with the community as a whole. This is our home.”

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A commitment to fairness and equity sits at the heart of the approach that Dewan takes to building a sustainable future – for the company, its employees and for the broader community. The company believes in actively seeking suppliers and partners who prioritise ethical sourcing and practices; it also shares its sustainability initiatives, progress and

“The founder takes people under his wing, working together with them to reach the goal. He takes a truly collaborative approach.”

challenges with its employees, stakeholders and the public to foster trust and accountability.

Finally, Dewan empowers its employees to actively participate in the company’s sustainability journey. An example of this is the growing number of staff members who now possess sustainability certificates for rating systems including LEED and Estidama.

Dewan’s strategic development, operational efficiency, enduring company culture and commitment to employee welfare and sustainable practices confirm its deserved position as a leading player in the global architectural and project management landscape. As the company continues to expand and innovate, its legacy of excellence remains a testament to its founder’s vision and the collective efforts of the Dewan family worldwide. **D**



A portrait of Mohammed Adib, a man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a black blazer over a white shirt. He is standing against a dark, textured stone wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the texture of the wall.

ELEVATING DESIGN

MOHAMMED ADIB
CHIEF DESIGN OFFICER (CDO) AND PARTNER

With an extensive portfolio of new projects on the drawing board – including some 30 luxury hotels and the Middle East’s largest water theme park – and its recent acquisition of Singapore-based DesignLab, Dewan is continuing to make its mark on world design.



THE ST. REGIS RED SEA RESORT,
UMMAHAT ISLANDS, KSA

Mohammed Adib has been Dewan's Chief Design Officer (CDO) and partner since 2017 – and over the past two decades has acted as a design partner to Dewan through Barcelona-based interior design and architecture firm Intercon.

Adib is a key contributor to Dewan's ever-evolving design portfolio as the firm prepares to undertake more large-scale, global and high-profile projects.

Currently, the bulk of Dewan's ongoing projects are in the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, divided almost equally between the two. "KSA has accounted for a big share in the past few years, but the UAE has also shown progressive growth recently. Ras Al Khaimah is a very large market for Dewan. We have about ten projects on the man-made Al Marjan Island, covering various roles and scopes including Lead Architect, Executive Architect, Architect of Record and Site Supervisor.

"Our founder, Mohamed Al Assam, started his first business in the UAE in Ras Al Khaimah in 1976 and now, more than five decades later, we have come full circle, with some of our largest projects located there," says Adib.



ALULA CENTRAL, ALULA, KSA

"Abu Dhabi has reignited in a big way, with schools, residential and cultural projects. In Dubai alone, we are working on three new hotels, including an SO/ by Sofitel, a Moxy and the Riu Palace."

Dewan is particularly active in the much-publicised Red Sea hospitality scene, working with renowned international design firms on the now-completed Nujuma, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve and The St. Regis Red Sea Resort, in addition to being commissioned for the Pendry Hotel and The One Hotel in the prestigious Diriyah development.

"The Red Sea coastline is beautiful," says Adib. "It's untouched, and it will prosper. The hotels will surely be successful, as will the marinas providing mooring for Mediterranean-registered yachts that must spend six months outside of Europe annually. So, we are very optimistic about the architectural opportunities and demands in the kingdom."

DEWAN'S HOSPITALITY MIGHT

Since its first foray into hospitality in the early 1980s with the Al Jazira Hotel & Resort in Ghantoot, Dewan has amassed an enviable portfolio of hospitality projects in the Middle East, Asia and Africa and is recognised as a leading design firm in the sector,

working with all the top-tier hotel operators including Marriott, Hilton, Kempinski, Accor, Address, IHG, Radisson and many others.

In 2023, Dewan was again highly ranked in the respected *Building Design* magazine's prestigious 'World Architecture Top 100' list, which placed the firm in 41st position globally and in sixth place in the Hospitality sector. Meanwhile, ENR's *The Global Sourcebook* placed the Dubai-based studio in 15th position in the Hotels, Motels and Convention Centres category, further reflecting the international respect that the industry has for the company's hospitality design strengths.

"Dubai has seen tremendous growth and a phenomenal number of developments in the past 20 years. The emirate has great strength in hospitality and a vast number of hotels – and Dewan has played a considerable role in the design and building of this sector.

"Dubai's success has been Dewan's success – we got stronger together, and that makes our company special," says Adib with pride.

Dewan's outstanding reputation has resulted in numerous collaborations with globally renowned



ALULA CENTRAL, ALULA, KSA

"Our job is to create buildings that deliver memorable experiences through efficient, functional and sustainable design."

international design firms and architects, who know that the company understands the market and has the technical expertise to deliver projects to the highest standards.

Citing the example of the prestigious one million-square metre Address Dubai Mall project for leading developer Emaar, Adib notes that, as lead consultant, Dewan had to manage more than 30 sub-consultants, including leading design firms like AtkinsRéalis and DP Architects.

"The architect's brain is very well-suited to project management. Somebody who designs something has a global vision of the project," he says.

Having designed hundreds of hotels, Dewan understands hotel developers' and operators' mindsets and needs. "An architect cannot design everything, but we have experts in back-of-house and management; kitchen consultants; traffic impact experts; the right subs... all of which are essential to the successful operation of the hotel and the resulting ROI of the project," says Adib.

"Today, people want memorable experiences, and our job is to create buildings that deliver those through efficient, functional and sustainable design," he affirms.

MORE HIGH-QUALITY RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS IN UAE

"Activity in the UAE is currently intense, especially in the high-end residential sectors; many boutique developers are entering the market with innovative projects that are pushing standards up. The quality of build and finish, which was lacking for many years, is going up significantly."

AWARD-WINNING THINKING

Dewan was very proud for its Babel 4.0 metaverse project to have won the Innovation and Sustainability Award at the *Architectural Digest* Design Awards in 2022. The award was received by Adib, who notes: "Dewan believes that to be successful the understanding and commitment around creating a new and exciting sphere should be collaborative, and that digital experts, designers and architects should work together."

"Creating Babel 4.0 was pivotal to bringing the community together and tackling challenges. This extraordinary non-profit library and thought space enabled architects, designers, project managers and suppliers to tap into expertise and experience from around the world, sharing knowledge and findings with peers."

THE ACQUISITION OF DESIGNLAB

As part of Dewan's strategic five-year plan, Adib was charged with expanding the firm's footprint in Southeast Asia. The firm studied various acquisition

options to help it grow, eventually agreeing to acquire a majority stake in DesignLab, a Singapore-based boutique-style hospitality design firm founded by three partners with a shared passion for hospitality, design and travel.

"A partnership is when both sides are stronger together than they are on their own – and it was very clear from the beginning that that was what we could get: a partner who shared our philosophies, with whom we could grow. As they are high-end resort designers with a completely different design style, it's a perfect union," says Adib.

With offices in Vietnam, Singapore and Spain, DesignLab has considerable experience of creating some of the world's top resort hotels, especially in Southeast Asia, where it has also created numerous high-end private residential projects. Dewan, meanwhile, has designed several luxury resort hotels, including the Park Hyatt St. Kitts Christophe Harbour, St Kitts and Nevis; the Ritz-Carlton in Al Khobar; the Djibouti Palace

Kempinski; and the Kempinski Hotel Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.

"We are confident we can win a lot of work for them here and increase their revenue, while they can introduce us to the market we want to develop. We offer different design services, so we can approach the same clients," says Adib.

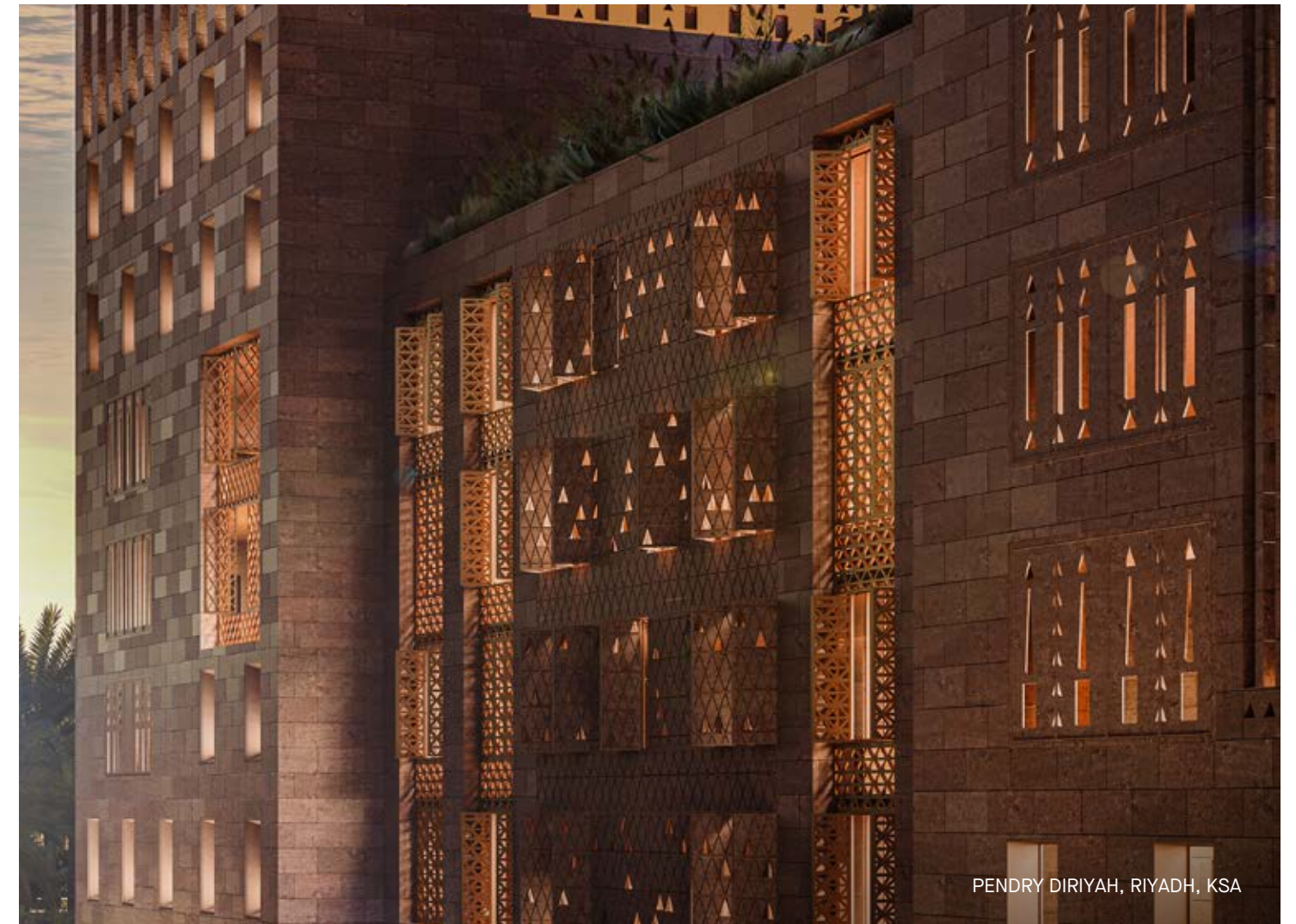
LOOKING EAST

Recently, Dewan opened an office in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam – its second design office in Asia – with a strategic plan to develop in the region. The result is a number of exciting and varied projects, some of which have already been completed and handed over.

"We manage most of these projects from start to finish and we are developing a new design team. We are highly respected there and often selected as the Concept Architect, so we do the concept and control the design through a design guardianship role with local offices, just like when Foster + Partners does a project with us here in Dubai," Adib explains.



LAYAN VERDE, PHUKET, THAILAND



PENDRY DIRIYAH, RIYADH, KSA

“The desert is a canvas waiting to be adorned.”



OCEANO, RAS AL KHAIMAH, UAE

The growing team is currently working on a large mixed-development project in Thailand that includes 16 buildings, a five-star hotel and a four-star hotel operated by Dusit, apartments, a conference centre and a beach club. Adib describes it as being ‘anti-architecture’. “We told the developers that they would not see the building when it was finished, as it was located in the jungle and designed so that it would be wrapped and protected by the natural habitat. It is a completely different approach; the whole area will be a sustainable and walkable community – just what visitors are looking for when they go to a place like Phuket,” he observes.

In rapidly developing Vietnam itself, Dewan is actively designing several masterplans and winning commissions for high-profile projects that will boost

the company’s visibility and reputation. These include a new luxury flagship store for a company that produces artificially engineered stone, as well as a TUI BLUE hotel.

“We are participating in a couple of highly publicised competitions and have secured a couple of local design awards. It’s always enjoyable to start in a new market. We have been following the Vietnam market for about a decade and are very positive about its potential. We are enjoying working there,” notes Adib.

UTILISING TECHNOLOGY

Adib says Dewan fully appreciates the value of technology: “Dewan’s innovative approach is reflected in its rigorous management of

information across the building asset lifecycle with BIM and in its use of cloud-based solutions, data-centric models, digital twins and AI analytics. We are also exploring generative design, creating custom BIM plugins and utilising a 3D printer for replica models, while our incorporation of Deltek enhances operational efficiency through sophisticated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). This gives us, the people, more time to focus on the things that humans are best at – conceptualising, interpreting clients’ needs and desires, and building relationships.”

EVOLVING HOSPITALITY DESIGN

Adib notes that hotel and hospitality trends are continuously evolving: “Today’s travellers are more independent, more worldly and more practical. When they wake up in Shanghai, they want to immediately know which country they are in – not

feel that they are in a characterless, anonymous room. For that reason, chains like 25hours, Citizen M and Mama Shelter, with distinct characters, are growing in popularity.”

EMBRACING LOCAL CULTURE

Dewan also favours creating hotels that consider local people: “For example, hotels with doors opening to the street, rather than with doors to and from the hotel’s interior. Also, the growing tendency for hotels to rent out F+B space to external operators is catching on and enriching guest experiences.”

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

As Dewan celebrates its 40th anniversary with the acquisition of its dynamic new partner DesignLab, a new era of design begins. “A hotel in the desert would be a wonderful project – the desert is an extraordinary place and deserves to be celebrated,” says Adib. **D**



DRAGON TOWER, HANOI, VIETNAM



PERFORMANCE ARTS ACADEMY

MILESTONES

- 1984

 - Mohamed Al Assam establishes Dewan Architects + Engineers in the UAE capital city of Abu Dhabi.
- 1988

 - Dewan's first project, Baniyas Tower – a groundbreaking high-rise, glass-façade building in Abu Dhabi – reaches completion.
- 1990

 - Al Jazira Hotel & Resort in Ghantoot, Abu Dhabi is the first hotel project in the UAE to be delivered by Dewan.
- 1999

 - At the turn of the new millennium, Dewan opens a second office in Dubai.
- 2004

 - The first Dewan office in Iraq, the homeland of Mohamed Al Assam, opens in Baghdad, followed five years later by a second office in Basra.
- 2005

 - The iconic Ibn Battuta Mall in Dubai, Dewan's first mall project in the UAE, is completed.
- 2006

 - Dewan establishes a presence in Riyadh to explore possibilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- 2007

 - Dewan welcomes onboard private equity firm Ithmar Capital as strategic investor.
- 2008

 - The first Dewan office in Southeast Asia opens in the Philippines capital, Manila.
- 2009

 - The Fairmont Hotel (now the Rixos Marina Abu Dhabi) is the first hotel project of Dewan to cover more than 200,000 square metres.
- 2014

 - Ammar Al Assam becomes CEO of Dewan Architects + Engineers, having joined the firm in 2003.
- 2017

 - Architect and interior designer Mohammed Adib assumes the role of Chief Design Officer and becomes a partner in the firm.
- 2018

 - Dewan relocates from its head office in Jumeirah to a dynamic new space in the heart of Dubai Design District (d3).
- 2018

 - The Dewan Award for Architecture is launched: the global annual prize, founded by Mohamed Al Assam, invites designers to develop solutions for tackling societal challenges in Iraq.
- 2020

 - Address Dubai Mall, a landmark multi-tower project in Downtown Dubai, is completed - at the time Dewan's largest ever project, at 319,751 m².
- 2021

 - Dewan's first office in Africa opens in Cairo, Egypt, following projects in Congo, Djibouti, Egypt and Mauritania.
- 2022

 - Dewan establishes the Metaverse Architecture Department (MAD).
- 2024

 - Dewan's second office in Southeast Asia opens in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- 2024

 - Dewan begins the design of Aquarabia in Saudi Arabia, which will be the largest water theme park in the region.
- 2024

 - Dewan acquires a majority stake in Singapore-based hospitality design firm DesignLab.



02

DESIGN DYNAMICS



HUSSAIN SALIH
PRINCIPAL DESIGNER

FROM ART TO ARCHITECTURE

Conceptual design is a crucial part of any project, playing a key role in ensuring it meets the client's needs while interacting successfully with its environment and users. Great design should start with a strong concept – and the strategic sketches created early on must tell a powerful story that can be appreciated by anyone who sees or interacts with the finished building.

When a project begins, the design process starts with an initial fact-finding and data analysis phase. The Conceptual Design team focuses on understanding the physical and environmental characteristics of the site itself – its dimensions, the topography, the prevailing wind, sun path, accessibility and much more.

As Principal Designer Hussain Salih, who has been at Dewan since 2004, says: “All these factors will impact not only decisions such as how to orientate the building, but also how the surrounding built environment will affect our design and how our design will affect the surroundings; it is a reciprocal set of relationships that will affect my decision-making later. So, it's about more than considering the impact of the sun or other natural elements – it's also about the culture, the history and context of the site; how we can create a design that is rooted to the place and looking to the future at the same time.”

FORM FOLLOWING FUNCTION... AND TIME

Over a hundred years ago, influential architect Louis Sullivan said, “Form follows function.” But, Salih says, “After all these years, we have discovered that the form of a building should also follow many other factors, too. So, beyond the function of the building, form should also follow the influences of the context and the environment of the place.”

At Dewan, the study of location includes understanding the culture of the society and its needs. Salih emphasises that each site has its own identity, and that each one is unique due to differences in history, culture and social environment. He notes, too, that all these factors significantly impact Dewan's design process.

“Whether form follows function is quite a big debate. At Dewan, we believe that architecture should follow both its place and its time. This has very deep meaning.

“The many factors create what we call responsive architecture: architecture that responds to its context – to its place and to its time.

“Time plays a big role. For example, if you build a building in 1920, you're going to build a totally different building in the same place in 2024.”

Dewan understands that everything evolves, says Salih: “Nothing stays the same during a period of 100 years,” he remarks. “The available materials and technology, and the philosophies of architecture, will all have changed and will keep changing. Even if the culture, place, sun path and prevailing wind and other natural forces stay the same, something – perhaps the technology – will be different, while ideas and needs may also change.”



Salih notes that the society being designed for can also evolve: “Take, for example, the issues of climate change and sustainability needs: a great part of environmental responsibility lies with designers and architects. It is not only that we burn fossil fuels for the heating and cooling of most of our buildings; construction itself is responsible for many emissions, and so now we start looking for local rather than imported materials and those that produce less carbon emissions, and we need to use native vegetation, local craftsmanship and so on.”

Since its inception, Dewan has adhered to the belief that a building is a reflection of its place and time, which what can make it a truly successful piece of architecture.

“As Sir Winston Churchill said, ‘We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.’ That’s very profound, because it’s about psychology and human behaviour,” says Salih.

“It’s not only about how aesthetically pleasing your building is; it’s about how a person feels within a space that determines whether the architecture is successful or not.”

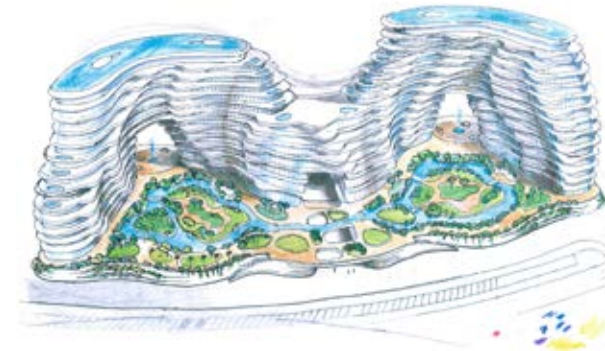
ARCHITECTS AND PHILOSOPHERS

Salih notes that designing building is only a part of the business of architects. “We design the relationships between humans and their habitat. We are building places for communities, for people. And this includes a lot of factors – including philosophy, sociology, science and emotions,” he says.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADITION

While Dewan appreciates the value of technology in the design process, Salih says this does not necessarily mean ignoring the value of more traditional approaches.

“A hundred years ago, our buildings were all rectangular. Even if we look at Baroque or Renaissance architecture, it’s all straight lines. And that’s because of limited technology in design and construction. It was impossible to do what Zaha Hadid, for example, later did. But technology gives us such opportunities and allows for a big leap in philosophy and ideas. Globalisation and the internet have also opened our eyes more widely to what’s going on. And this helps a lot in the transition of technologies, ideas and philosophies.



“In this region, for example, we were using building materials derived from nature itself: native materials such as stone, mud and palm trees. Architecture evolved, and we are importing new technologies, ideas and construction methods from all over the world; it took some time to convince society about such changes – but in the end we need to build our own architecture.”

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

At Dewan, the creative process can vary according to the size of the project, Salih explains: “For a small project, we may create the first freehand sketch, to show the philosophy behind the project; then the team will develop it further using their wide spectrum of tools. For a bigger project, we might divide our team

into three smaller teams, who will be asked to come up with totally different ideas – like an internal competition. We [Dewan] believe in democracy – everyone can share his or her opinions and ideas.”

Salih adds that, in an age where architecture involves a lot of computer-aided design, “We believe things could or should still start with the hand-mind connection. Despite the era we are in, the computer adds little value at the initial design stage. At this stage, the computer is not a form-finding, it is a form-making.

“And this stage is where the form-finding must take place. These emotional connections between your brain, your hand, the pencil and the paper, create the design. For example, I have many freehand sketches for every single project I’ve been involved in.

“After your emotions have been put on paper, they can be taken to the computer. But before that, the computer cannot do anything. That is why we keep telling the team members to start with freehand sketches.

“There is a natural correspondence between your brain and your hand; how can you convey your emotions, your passion directly to a machine? Computers can do the science part but not the art part. That’s where we as humans have incredible power.” **D**



TOMORROW'S CITIES

Dewan has for many years been making a significant and positive impact on urban development throughout the region. Today, the company's urban planning department continues to work towards creating a brighter, more inclusive future that is sensitive to heritage and diverse human needs in built-up spaces.

Dewan's Urban Planning division is headed up by Akram Al Mahood – a vastly experienced urban planner who says the practice has undergone enormous change in the Middle East since he started. “Two decades ago in the region, very few constraints existed in terms of sustainability and socioeconomic factors, and there was little awareness about the actions of planners on the overall context of a project.” Today, says Al Mahood, a broad variety of complex, often conflicting factors must be considered in every project: “Now, many more factors must be taken into account – for example, sustainability and the environment are considered throughout the planning process. So this discipline needs a huge amount of practice, not only training.”

Al Mahood's experience of living and working in many different countries mirrors the company's presence in various regions worldwide. And this means that the factors driving urban planning decisions can vary greatly. “For example, Saudi Arabia's desire to develop new cities from scratch often involves greenfield developments where the land is empty, and may involve the latest technologies and urban planning techniques. This contrasts greatly with Iraq, where many challenges concern existing cities and the renewal of services and infrastructure – immediate, primary needs,” he says.

Urban planning may involve starting from a ‘blank sheet of paper’ or advising a decision-maker on the impact of their choices. This includes determining whether they can achieve their objectives while also preserving or enhancing certain places and structures that are of significance to a location and its identity.

The varied challenges require an adaptable mentality and approach. Likewise, the urban planning team must work closely with other partners and disciplines on the feasibility and constructability of projects, including ensuring adequate preparation. Each project varies in terms of scope, scale, deliverables and duration.

A GROWING APPRECIATION OF HERITAGE

According to Al Mahood, conservation, preservation and heritage on one hand, and urban renewal on the other, are probably the most difficult aspects of urban planning – particularly when the two are considered together.

Outside of the region, architects and urban designers may specialise in preservation and conservation – studying the impact of any proposed new buildings or development on the existing fabric, particularly the historical one, and collaborating with designers and the city to ensure the old and new can work together.

How this is done in Middle Eastern cities depends on the country and its policies. For instance, in Saudi Arabia the decision to preserve and renew old buildings is made at governmental level, whereas in Iraq the responsibility to conserve significant places, such as places of worship, may lie with the client.

On the one hand, there is a desire to preserve, while on the other, there's a longing to develop anew. Dewan is often tasked by clients to navigate this delicate balance – a challenge that the team always rises to overcome.

MADINAT AL NAKHEEL
BASRA, IRAQ

“With technology, things that used to take months now take weeks, and things that took weeks now take days. This is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place within the sphere of urban planning.”



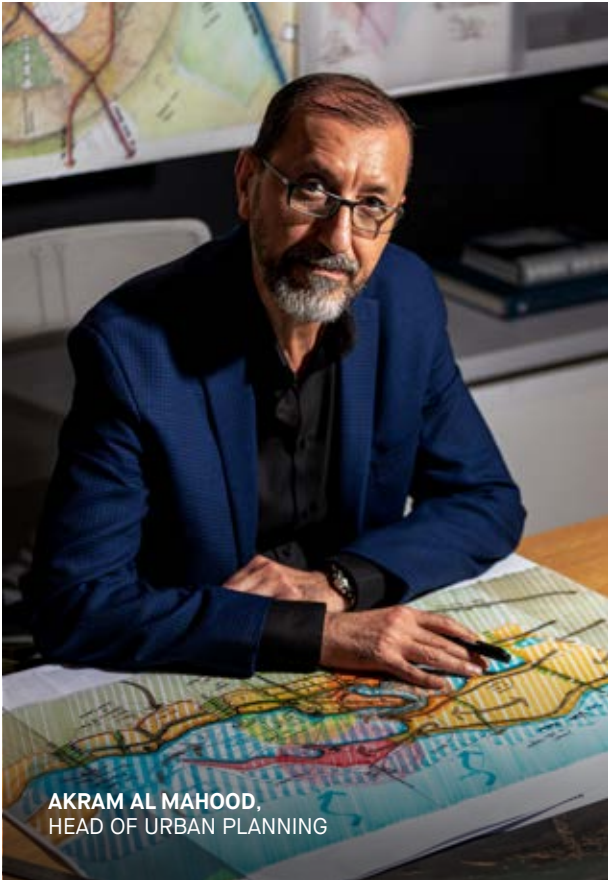
ADAPTABILITY AND RESILIENCE

Historically, cities or parts of cities undergo cycles of development and decline – they are built up, only to be knocked down and redeveloped. Flexibility and adaptability are essential for cities to become resilient; thus, they should be capable of changing the activities they host according to the demands of the time. The team at Dewan tries to build in resilience by appreciating how spaces and structures may evolve over time. Al Mahood cites Jumeirah Road in Dubai as an example of this resilience and flexibility – “a way of keeping the same structures while changing the activity, the purpose of the buildings and the infrastructure.”

“We also see how the Dubai Metro stations are being turned into public spaces – and it is because of brave decisions being made by the emirate’s leaders.”

THE HEART AND THE COMPLEXITY OF URBAN PLANNING

Beyond considering mobility and infrastructure, other crucial factors include environmental issues and understanding the land. The urban planning team at Dewan spends extensive time on analysis – a complex task that involves geography, existing urban fabric and their intricate connections with human history, beliefs, values, ideologies and populations.



AKRAM AL MAHOOD,
HEAD OF URBAN PLANNING



THE ESTATES,
NEW ZAYED, EGYPT

highly specialised, to ensure that different and detailed challenges can be solved.”

One challenge is providing enough public room and open spaces, especially with growing populations and increasing population density. Yet, “The most challenging problem of urbanism is the existing urban system, which has been in place for at least 150 years. The system says you have a central place, all the businesses in one place – downtown – where people come to work. Then you have suburbia, where people live because property is cheaper. And people come to and go from work at the same time.”

THE INFORMATION EXPLOSION

Throughout Dewan and in the wider architectural realm, the amount of available information has risen hugely in recent years. The urban planning team uses technology, including powerful software, to analyse data quickly and efficiently – as Al Mahood says, “Things that used to take months now take weeks, and things that took weeks now take days. This is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place within the urban planning realm.

“In the future the use of real-time data to understand how we can reach solutions quickly and efficiently is going to increase. The engineering science of optimisation was very limited even just ten years ago, because of a lack of understanding around how engineers could model their work to get the most efficient solution.

“And in the future, artificial intelligence will play a greater role, helping to resolve the many factors that urban planning must consider.”

BEYOND VIRTUAL REALITY

Al Mahood sees great potential for technology elsewhere: “Today, Virtual Reality is usually only viewed by one person at a time. Of course, urban planning must consider the needs of many, many people, and so we are interested in technologies such as hologram projections, which enable multiple people to experience the same thing, to move around it, at the same time. These technological advancements and new techniques are arriving all the time now.”

However, he emphasises that technology can’t help with some things, such as defining the meaning of a development for people who currently live there or are going to live there in the future. “We must also ensure that powerful tools such as Artificial Intelligence are used with control – because without control they may do more harm than good. Artificial Intelligence cannot replace genuine compassion, empathy and understanding; these things have to come from the heart. They can’t be learned or imitated.” **D**

The urban planning role is, therefore, all about problem-solving. The need to meet the needs of multiple communities, users, visitors and other stakeholders requires the practice to attempt to satisfy many people. Given that various factors on the ground may change during a project, possessing strong problem-solving skills is essential.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The team at Dewan recognises that urban planning is going to become more challenging in the coming years. Al Mahood says, “This is why the discipline will become more prominent; yet it will also become

RIGHT: CHRISTOPHER GRAHAM STOCK, HEAD OF BIM
LEFT: HANINE SALMAN, SENIOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION SPECIALIST

DESIGNING TOMORROW: STEPPING INTO
THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE WITH XR

FIELD OF VISION

Dewan's extensive use of innovative technology means the company is poised to redefine what's possible in architectural design and construction. Tools such as Digital Twins, Extended Reality and Quible, its in-house-developed custom AI assistant, are helping the firm to lead the industry's next stage of technological advancement.

Since its inception, Dewan has undergone a transformative journey in the way it exchanges and manages information. From an era where paper drafts were the industry norm, the first big change occurred when it embraced Computer-Aided Design (CAD) as technology advanced, which made design accuracy and coordination more efficient and manageable. The evolution then accelerated, and the advent of 3D Building Information Modelling (BIM) models marked a technological paradigm shift, adding previously unimaginable layers of sophistication, complexity and capability.

One of the most exciting phases of the company's technological evolution is the current shift towards data-centric models and rich databases that can together be leveraged for analytics, automation and advanced simulations. This approach streamlines design and construction, while also enabling greater value to be realised during a building's operational life.

QUIBLE – A CONTEXT-AWARE AI ASSISTANT

Developed by Dewan's Research & Development team, Quible – Query-Based Interactive Building Logic Engine – is a custom AI assistant that serves as an intelligent interface to Dewan's workflow. By leveraging natural language processing and machine learning, Quible can provide instant, context-aware answers to a wide range of questions related to Dewan's projects, processes and technological capabilities.

Originally created to support AI-augmented Building Information Modelling, Quible has evolved into a versatile digital assistant that exemplifies Dewan's commitment to pushing the boundaries of what's

possible with artificial intelligence. As Dewan continues to pioneer new applications for AI, Quible will play an increasingly vital role in empowering the company's teams and delivering exceptional value to clients.

A TRANSFORMATIVE WAY TO APPROACH DESIGN CHALLENGES

One of the most exciting avenues being explored is Generative Design, which combines artificial intelligence with computational geometry.

Christopher Graham Stock, Head of BIM at Dewan, says harnessing its power will yield significant benefits: "It's a transformative way to approach design challenges. Instead of starting with a preconceived idea and then validating it through software, we can input objectives and constraints, then let the software generate myriad design alternatives – potentially even tens of thousands – quicker than is otherwise possible. It can reveal solutions we might never have considered. This means we can deliver designs that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also incredibly efficient and sustainable, tailored precisely to local context and the project's specific needs."

The technology enables the envelope of what's possible in design to be pushed. As Stock says, "It enables us to be more experimental, more precise and ultimately more effective in meeting our client's goals."

BRINGING CONCEPTS AND COLLABORATION TO LIFE THROUGH IMMERSION

"Extended reality is like an umbrella. It incorporates virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality," says Hanine Salman, Senior Digital Transformation Specialist at Dewan, who fuses architectural creativity with the near-limitless possibilities of Extended

“The ability for data to be interactive and live opens the door to a more responsive design process, allowing teams to stay agile and informed, ultimately driving better project outcomes.”

Reality. By leveraging game engines and interactive technologies, she aims to consistently redefine immersive experiences to make projects more effective while running more smoothly and profitably.

XR enables immersive design and review collaborations, allowing architects and clients to work together in a 3D model, in real time, making design decisions more efficiently and accurately. Virtual prototyping enables various design concepts and structural solutions to be tested and shared virtually.

3D virtual site walkthroughs can also be utilised, helping teams that will be on site by ‘walking them through’ the space to discover any site challenges or opportunities before construction begins.

“Clients can ‘walk into’ a proposed design in detail, enhancing their understanding and leading to faster decision-making. In addition, we don’t have any surprises when construction begins. It’s wonderful!” says Salman.

Finally, on-site visualisation allows construction workers to overlay digital plans onto the physical construction site, letting them confirm that the building aligns perfectly with the design before work commences. The reductions in cost, time and errors can be significant.

As hardware and software develop further, XR may be used throughout the project life cycle, from inception to final construction delivery, with clients viewing project elements through 3D glasses or devices such as digital contact lenses, rather than a headset.

Moves like this, says Salman, will help mass adoption of XR, adding: “It is so useful. And for people to use it, it should be easy – it shouldn’t complicate their lives.” With technology evolving, processing and networking power increasing, and hardware and systems becoming more integrated, XR could even be used to demonstrate large-scale models in the future.



THE NEXT STEP: FREEING HUMANS FROM THE REPETITIVE

Stock and Salman, alongside many of their colleagues, agree that the next disruptive trend in architectural design and construction is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Stock says, “AI’s machine learning capabilities can analyse vast amounts of data, predict outcomes and optimise solutions in a way that’s beyond human capacity. We are actively researching these technologies to stay ahead of the curve and to offer innovative solutions to our clients.”

Salman adds that generative AI can be used to create a ‘mood board’, which can help move a project forward from pre-concept phase to concept phase. She notes that AI can also enhance the potential of XR in architecture by helping to integrate systems

within the extended reality prototype – for example, by making it easier to track information or measure statistics about a building.

XR and AI can be used together to simulate external influences, such as sun or wind, and a building’s reaction to them. This can help a team test out ideas and reconcile conflicting challenges.

Dewan is also embracing the use of data analytics from building information models, integrated them to gain insights throughout a project’s lifecycle, allowing the company to identify trends, check model health, achieve ‘zero risk’ models and perform risk assessments; it even has the potential to forecast maintenance requirements. As Stock says, “It’s not just about constructing a building; it’s

about creating a ‘smart’ building that can communicate its state and needs.”

The company has also invested heavily in automating routine tasks, speeding up the modelling process while freeing up professionals to focus on more complex aspects of a project, raising quality. In the sphere of digital automation, Dewan is creating custom BIM plugins and solutions, including dashboard analytics for project data. The company is aware that by pushing beyond the boundaries of standard software, it can enhance its levels of efficiency.

UTILISING TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE EXISTING BUILDINGS WORK BETTER

“The Internet of Things (IoT) is redefining our engagement with built spaces,” says Stock. “By embedding sensors and smart devices into buildings, an enormous amount of data can be collected on energy usage, temperature, occupancy levels and more. This data aids real-time management – making buildings more energy-efficient and responsive to user needs – and can become a valuable resource for future designs and maintenance. This data can be integrated with other technologies like Digital Twins and AI analytics, offering a holistic approach to building management.”

Meanwhile, Augmented Reality (AR) combined with AI can act as a powerful tool in existing structures, allowing building managers to ‘see’ behind walls, below floors or into ceiling cavities and locate and visualise maintenance needs or access digital manuals and schematics.

HOW DIGITAL TWINS BENEFIT PHYSICAL ASSETS

Dewan’s clients are increasingly interested in Digital Twins, as they are beginning to recognise the immense value they can offer.

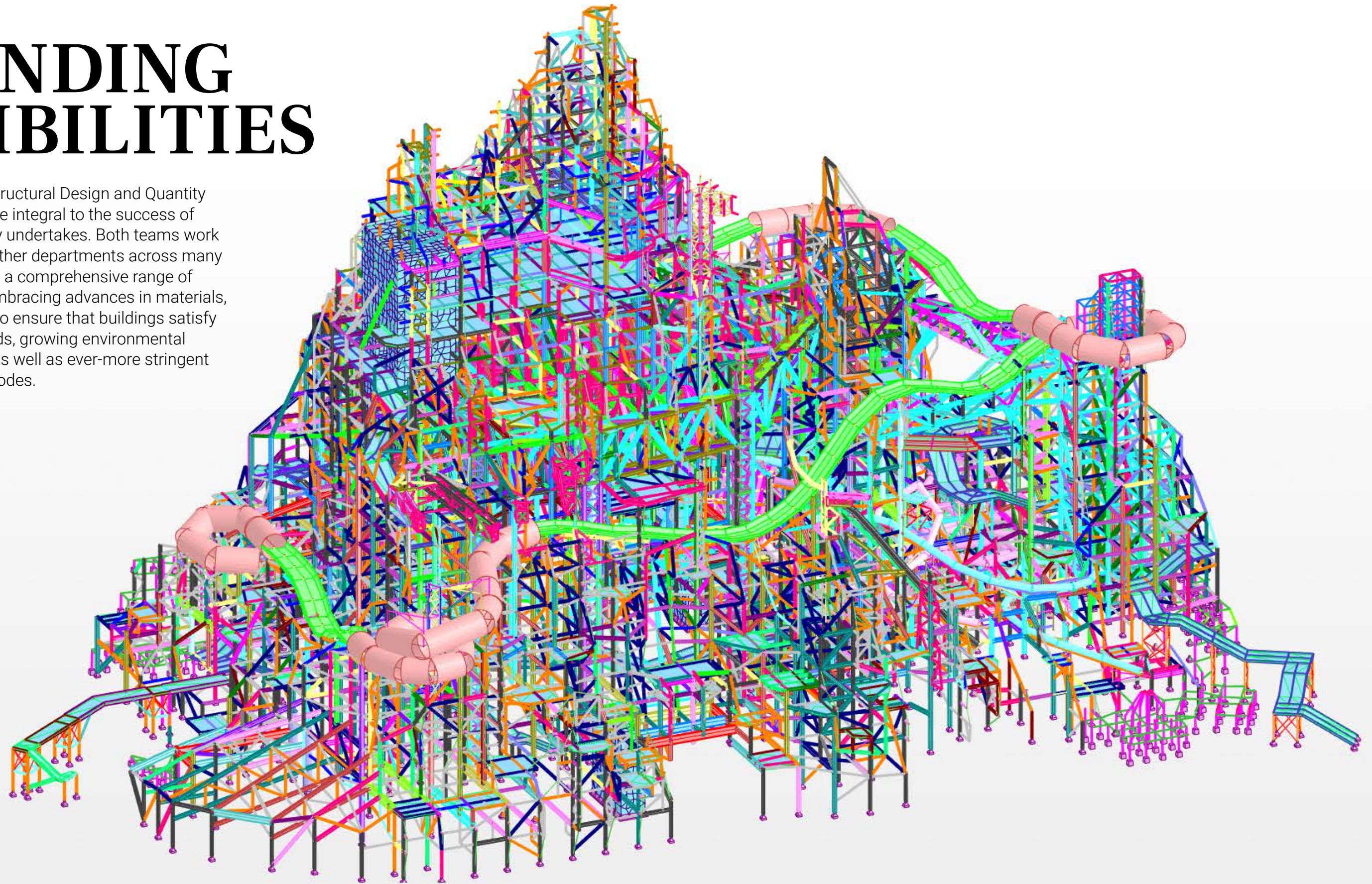
Essentially a real-time digital counterpart of a physical asset, a Digital Twin is a real-time digital replica of a building that receives data from the physical asset. The Digital Twin then becomes a tool for long-term operation, helping to enhance predictive maintenance and energy efficiency, and enabling new levels of interaction between a building and its occupants.

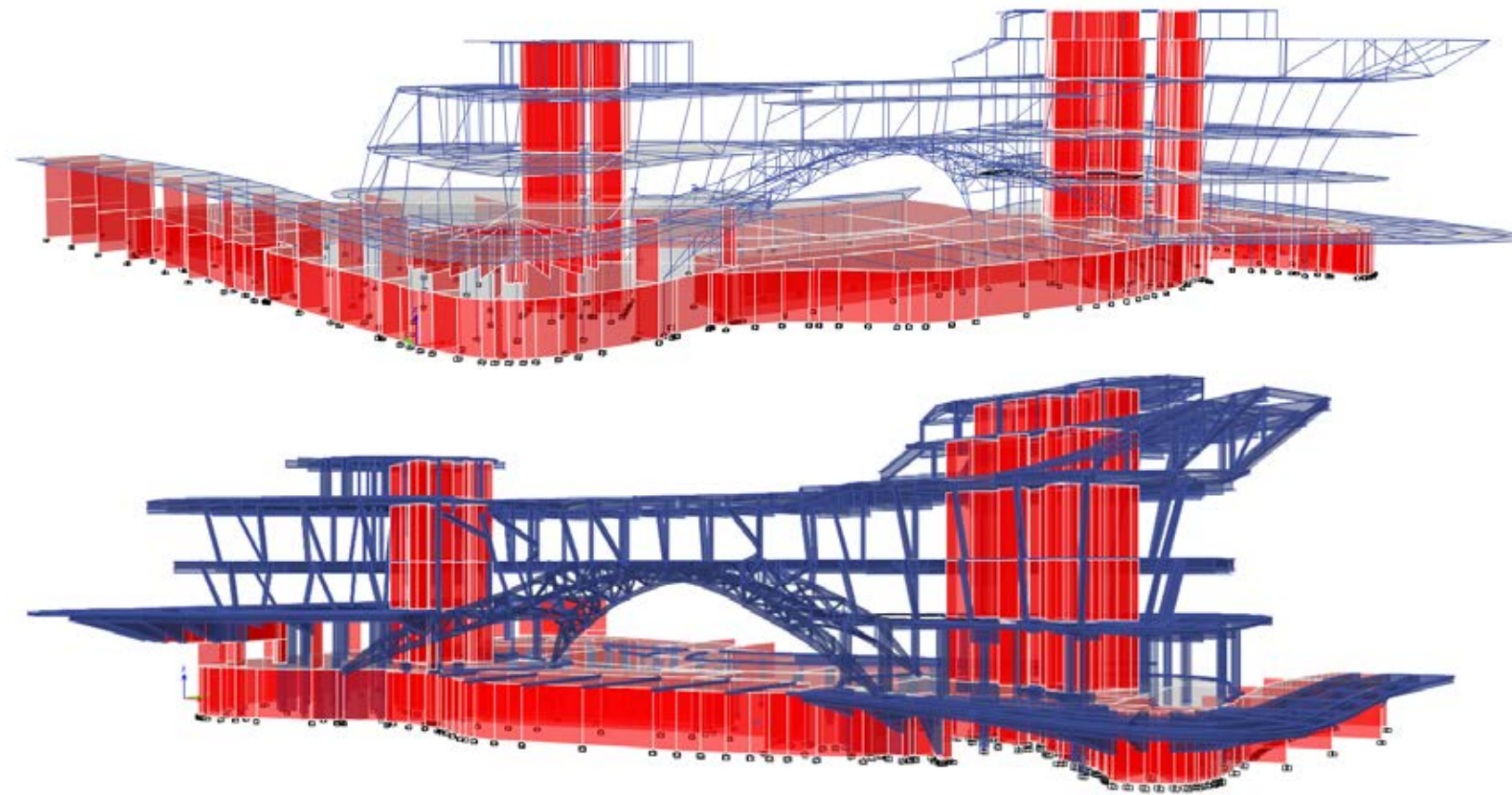
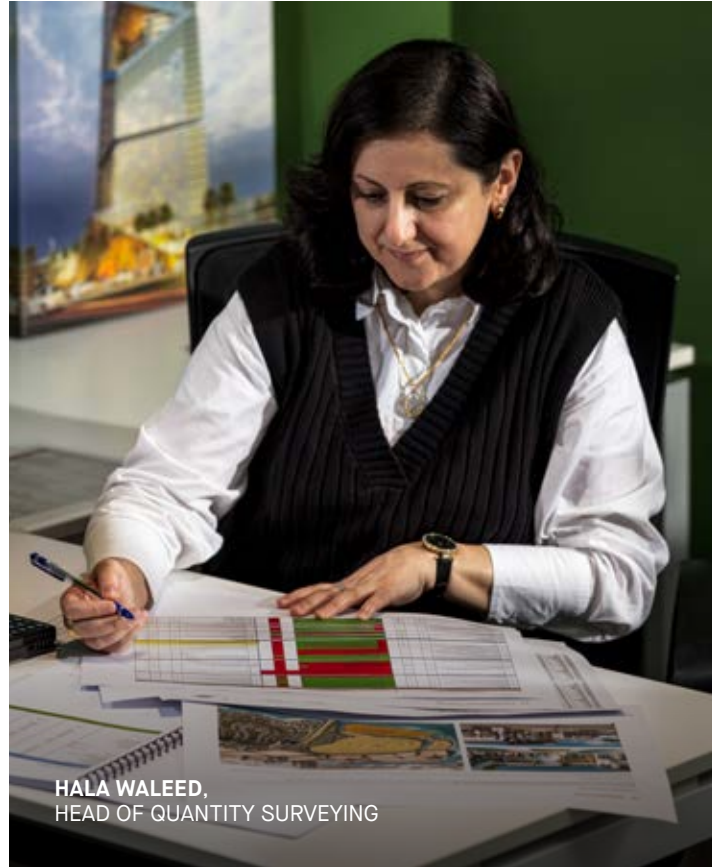
REMAINING AT THE FOREFRONT OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Dewan wants to remain at the forefront of technology, particularly in the coming transformative era that will fundamentally change how buildings are designed, built and operated. The company is committed to innovation because it knows that doing so will allow it to not only enhance project values, but to redefine what is possible in the built environment. **D**

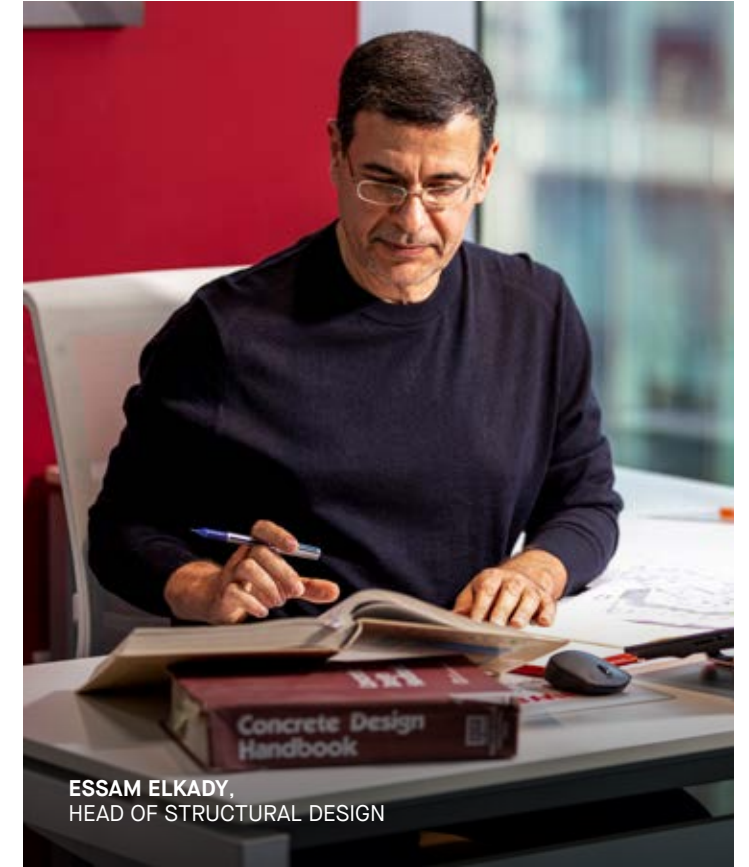
EXPANDING POSSIBILITIES

Dewan's award-winning Structural Design and Quantity Surveying Departments are integral to the success of every project the company undertakes. Both teams work hand-in-hand with many other departments across many project phases, employing a comprehensive range of skills and expertise and embracing advances in materials, technology and software to ensure that buildings satisfy clients' increasing demands, growing environmental and cost considerations, as well as ever-more stringent building regulations and codes.





AMAALA YACHT CLUB, AMAALA, KSA



The Structural Design Department is led by Essam Elkady, who joined Dewan in 2005 and uses his expertise to enhance the functionality of buildings by exploring the most effective construction materials and structural systems. The team's active engagement commences during the initial stages of design, when it collaborates closely with the concept design team, providing guidance on the most suitable structural system for the design. Engineering interventions may then take place during the concept phase to ensure compliance with regulations, economic viability and seamless functionality.

As a project then progresses to the schematic phase, the detailed design team focuses on addressing regulatory, code and authority requirements. Streamlining the engineering process during the concept stage plays a significant role in facilitating subsequent schematic requirements.

During this stage, the team confirms structural dimensions and coordinates with other disciplines, including Building Services/MEP (Mechanical, Electromechanical, Plumbing), landscape and other specialist design consultants. Notably, advancements

in software and materials technology over the past two decades have revolutionised this stage of structural engineering.

As Elkady explains, "The engineering and construction industry has benefited greatly from advancements in construction materials, technologies and design software. For instance, we now have access to high-strength materials that can withstand higher loads than ever before. Furthermore, sophisticated construction technologies have enabled the creation of intricate structures, while Building Information Modelling (BIM) tools have improved coordination and collaboration among different disciplines, resulting in the reduction of potential construction challenges."

COLLABORATION THROUGHOUT

Dewan's dynamic Quantity Surveying team is led by Hala Waleed and includes MEP and civil engineers and chartered quantity surveyors. The team's responsibilities encompass the entire spectrum of pre-contract services, from the pre-concept stage of project competitions to project awarding.

Collaborating seamlessly with the business development team, the Quantity Surveying team plays a pivotal role in many various aspects,

including preparing tender documents and managing the tendering process, creating cost plans and bills of quantities, and formulating budgets for projects. After project approval, the team becomes involved from the conceptual stage, meticulously managing the costing process through to detailed design. Rigorous control and checks, and coordination with diverse design disciplines – such as structure, architecture, mechanical, electrical, landscape and fit-out – are executed to ensure optimal material costs and feasibility fit to budget before bidding and final awarding.

A MULTIDISCIPLINED TEAM

With a tenure of 16 years at Dewan, Waleed continues to guide the department's evolution - from focusing solely on Quantity Surveying and Bill of Materials (BOMs) preparation to a multifaceted department encompassing costing, value engineering (VE) and comprehensive studies. The team has expanded to include not only civil specialists but also mechanical and electrical specialists and cost engineers.

The latter, says Waleed, are particularly important now: "Years ago, clients were just in rush – they would want us to produce tender documents and to

find the most competitive bid, even if it was not in line with their budget. Nowadays, our clients are well-educated about construction costs – and they know exactly what they are looking for. These days, every project will have an appointed cost consultant who will monitor the budget from day one. We are always trying to help our clients realise the budgets they have allocated to their projects, and we work hard with the design team to find solutions."

EVOLVING TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Dewan's current suite of tools – including BIM – facilitates seamless 3D modelling, analysis and real-time updates within a unified platform. This contrasts with previous practice, which involved separate workstreams and varied software usage across design, detailing and drafting.

"The Architectural, Engineering and Construction (AEC) industry of today is incomparable to that of 25 years ago, due to advancements in analysis software, material science and construction technology. In addition, artificial intelligence and machine learning are making analysis software more sophisticated and capable of handling complex designs, further empowering engineers.



STEEL FRAME OF CAMEL ROCK, AQUARABIA, QIDDIYA CITY, KSA

“The range of tools available nowadays is genuinely unparalleled. For example, BIM tools are extremely useful and frequently used in structural design. Building a physical 3D model and generating analytical models from it has become quite effortless. One can easily exchange information automatically between both models during the design process,” notes ElKady.

The expanding possibilities presented by more advanced, powerful and integrated tools are also empowering clients to embrace more daring and creative architectural designs. However, navigating evolving codes and regulations remains a constant challenge. Future trends suggest there will be increased reliance on BIM and AI for structural analysis and automated design iteration.

In addition, says ElKady, “New materials are stronger, lighter and more sustainable, allowing for more innovative designs, while construction technology is

evolving with the use of robotics, 3D printing and modular construction, making the construction process faster and more efficient. With these advancements, the AEC industry is moving towards more sustainable and efficient designs while improving safety and reducing costs.”

The dual challenge is firmly recognised by ElKady: “In today’s dynamic landscape, clients and designers are increasingly inclined towards bold and innovative designs, as they see many possibilities. However, among this surge of creativity, the regulatory environment is becoming more stringent. Consequently, we find ourselves trying to find a delicate balance where we aim to meet client expectations and bring the imaginative visions of design teams to life while ensuring compliance with ever-evolving regulations and design codes. This contiguity of creative freedom and regulatory precision underscores the complex challenge that contemporary design professionals face.”

“The Architectural, Engineering and Construction (AEC) industry is moving towards more sustainable and efficient designs while improving safety and reducing costs.”

INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

Operating beyond the borders of the UAE, the QS department now handles projects across the GCC, Africa and Asia. Many noteworthy changes in the construction field, including a diverse range of construction systems and increased client awareness of construction costs, have been observed during this period.

Waleed comments: “Sometimes, clients may assume that costs are the same regardless of location. But there are so many factors affecting cost, including the location, the condition of the land, local authority requirements and the availability of material. There is also the question of expertise around construction methods – for example, the use of post-tensioning is well established in the UAE, while it has only recently started to be used in projects in Saudi Arabia. That means the cost of utilising it in Saudi Arabia will be greater. We must consider all these aspects.”

In response to market demands, the QS team actively collaborates with clients to align project bids with allocated budgets and to offer proactive solutions with the design team. The team faces many challenges, including time constraints and budget considerations, as it focuses on adapting to unique client and project locations. The evolving role of cost consultants from the project’s outset is emphasised, enhancing collaboration and budget alignment throughout the design stage.

CLIENT SATISFACTION – THE KEY FOCUS

Cutting-edge structural analysis software enables rapid processing capabilities, and the integration of AI may enable automatic problem-solving and design optimisation, potentially reducing material costs. Concurrently, advancements in material technologies and construction techniques are offering opportunities for more environmentally friendly and innovative designs. While technological advancements are pivotal, the paramount focus remains client satisfaction – the ability to deliver on their vision within budget and timeline constraints. The engineering team retains an active role throughout the construction stages, addressing

challenges during the early and main work phases, as well as during the tender clarification and construction phases.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Acknowledging that challenges are an inevitable part of any project – including unknown site conditions, construction programme requirements and constructability constraints – ElKady and the Structural Design team remain committed to resolving issues promptly. Looking ahead, the team hopes to take advantage of continued advancements in design technologies. ElKady envisions faster software capabilities that can meet the dynamic demands of each project’s design. “I would like to see software that can automate routine design and detailing activities, freeing up engineers to focus on optimising structural systems and developing alternative design options,” he says.

Reflecting on the challenges, Waleed expresses pride in the department’s achievements, with each project serving as a valuable lesson. She anticipates continued growth for the Quantity Surveying department, leveraging software and the BIM process to realise enhanced efficiency in costing and BOQ production in the coming years.

Looking to the future, she envisions advancements in AI facilitating easier drawing interpretation and quantity extraction, while emphasising the enduring importance of the human touch. That same human touch is integral to the approach taken by Dewan, characterised by a supportive office environment that fosters a sense of belonging, where teamwork and commitment contribute to a unique and pressure-free atmosphere.

AWARD WINNERS

Dewan’s engineering prowess was recognised with a top-three placing in the Engineering Consultancy Company category at the second (2023) edition of the Excellence and Creative Engineering Award. The award, given by The Society of Engineers - UAE, celebrate excellence and honour the efforts of institutions and individuals who positively impact various engineering sectors in the UAE, and have driven progress and achieved leadership and excellence in the field. **D**



BEYOND BUILDING

The Post Contracts & Construction Supervision department at Dewan has been an integral part of the company from its earliest days. Today, it oversees the construction of a wide variety of projects – including pioneering multi-billion-dollar developments that stand among the largest and most valuable of their kind. Staffed by more than 250 professionals from diverse disciplines, the department is focused on maintaining Dewan’s leadership in construction quality and integrity. It is also a key contributor to revenue and profit.

Led by Director Thyer Al Kubaisi, the Post Contracts department is crucial to the success of many projects around the world. It ensures that what is being built aligns completely with client expectations and desires, as well as addressing real-time challenges. Dewan is rightly recognised as a leader in construction quality, integrity and safety; the team works tirelessly to uphold this hard-won reputation, all while dealing with unexpected challenges and predicaments and managing contractors. The team must also be able to fully comprehend contractor queries and provide comprehensive answers, sometimes in coordination with the design team. This is crucial to ensure adherence to the design, specifications and expected quality levels. Clear communication is also of paramount importance.

The department, currently based in the UAE and Saudi Arabia with over 200 professionals, concurrently manages more than 20 projects. Its responsibilities are expanding to cover other international locations, such as Asia or Africa, with projects carried out in countries like Iraq and Congo. In addition to overseeing post-contracts, Al Kubaisi actively participates in winning new business, collaborating closely with the business development team to explore opportunities that can help Dewan to expand its project portfolio.

The Post Contracts department in the Abu Dhabi office has been in place since the company’s

inception. Steered by Nabeel Kenderyan, who has been with the firm for 35 years, it takes care of projects across Abu Dhabi and Al Ain.

The team is also involved during the tendering stage of each project – leading the process by initiating communication with contractors, ensuring compliance with contractual boundaries, and addressing inquiries and overseeing and managing the bidding process.

TODAY’S BIG PROJECTS

As Dewan turns 40, two of its largest projects symbolise the enormous and ongoing changes in the region.

The first, a multi-billion-dollar mega integrated resort in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE, is attracting attention as one of the biggest projects in the Middle East and among the first to include a ‘gaming area’. Situated on Al Marjan Island, a series of man-made islands offering views of the Arabian Gulf, it will feature over 1,000 rooms, suites and villas, along with more than 20 restaurants, a spa, an event centre and a theatre.

The second, the Aquarabia water theme park near the Saudi capital of Riyadh, will be the kingdom’s first water park and the largest in the region, boasting 22 rides and slides within a park spanning over 250,000 square metres.

“Sustainability and lean construction are other areas where great progress has been made in construction. We now put a lot of effort into avoiding wastage, using locally sourced materials and disposing of debris more responsibly, to minimise environmental impact.”

THYER AL KUBAISI,
DIRECTOR - POST CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT



OPPORTUNITIES AND TRIUMPHS

The Post Contracts team has encountered numerous challenges over the years. Taking the Aquarabia water theme park as an example, its remote location presents difficulties in attracting qualified professionals. Additionally, meeting tight deadlines without compromising project quality is a common challenge across projects. Al Kubaisi notes that overcoming these obstacles involves a broad range of actions, including closely collaborating with contractors to inspect each construction stage progressively, ensuring that inspections do not hinder delivery.

One notable project, Address Dubai Mall, also exemplified how the Post Contracts team must often adapt to dramatically changing circumstances. Initially conceived as a three-building complex, it was later expanded to four towers and was being built even as its design was still in flux. Navigating market challenges and changes in both civil defence and seismic requirements, the team successfully completed the project. They also overcame additional obstacles, including financial hardships faced by some parties involved both in the delivery and in the ongoing construction.

AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

The economic and construction boom that lasted until 2008 saw an influx of international contractors, consultants and suppliers, elevating the level of professionalism in the construction industry. Clientele and staff alike became more diverse, reflecting a broader spectrum of nationalities and expertise.

Technology, too, has significantly evolved in recent years and plays a pivotal role in enhancing operations. As Al Kubaisi explains, “For example, the use of computers and tablets during inspections allows us to take photos instantly and dispatch the outcome of the inspection instead of writing on paper, while Building Information Modelling (BIM) allows us to monitor drawings and changes much more closely and solve clashes at an earlier stage. Document control software has also changed a lot over the last 20 years. While we used to have perhaps two or three hundred document boxes at the end of a project, now it is a fraction of that.”

Looking ahead, Al Kubaisi foresees a growing dependence on technologies such as fingerprinting,



BIM and artificial intelligence. However, he believes the most significant challenges in the future will centre on shortages in manpower and navigating complex regulations and authority approvals. As the team embarks on more ambitious projects, automation is expected to play a crucial role in streamlining processes and addressing these challenges.

Sustainability and lean construction are other areas where great progress has been made in construction, particularly during the last 10 years. “We now put a lot of effort into avoiding wastage, directing contractors to use materials that are sourced locally and disposing of debris and rubbish in the most responsible way possible, to minimise environmental impact,” says Al Kubaisi.

AWARD WINNERS

Dewan’s many accolades for excellence in construction include awards for achieving one million and subsequently two million man-hours without accident for the high-end 52 | 42 twin towers residential project in Dubai. Similar recognition has been bestowed upon other projects, such as the Fujairah Business Centre. **D**

NABEEL KENDERYAN,
DIRECTOR - POST CONTRACTS
DEPARTMENT, ABU DHABI



“By merging modern architectural and engineering practices and traditional cultural context Dewan has created a host of building designs that have contributed to Abu Dhabi’s transformation from a humble city to a world-class capital. Over the past 40 years – including 34 which I have been a part of – Dewan has designed nearly 250 buildings including towers, malls, palaces, commercial buildings, schools and places of worship.”



ADDRESS DUBAI MALL,
DUBAI, UAE

DELIVERING PERFORMANCE DESIGN

Regarded as the technical powerhouse at the core of Dewan, Design Delivery is currently handling over 30 major projects worth an estimated UAE 30 billion. A significant proportion of those involve Dewan as Executive Architects and Lead Consultants, collaborating with some of the world's most esteemed international architectural practices. Meanwhile, as the firm continues to undertake more complex projects, it is laying the foundations for further expansion in new locations.

In the words of Samer Touqan, Managing Principal Projects and Design Delivery, “Our role is to translate creative ideas, philosophical concepts and images into developed designs and engineered models that can be documented in drawings and specifications, and then tendered and constructed to become a part of the built environment and a statement in the daily life of users.

“The Concept Design team conceptualises built form that is influenced by context, planning philosophies, emotions and aesthetics. The Design Delivery team’s role is to transform this initial design information – for example, prevailing winds, orientation – into design inputs based on surveys and building code. You cannot cheat with mathematics and physics, and that’s how we reach buildable technical solutions,” says the veteran architect, who has spent over 20 years with the firm, rising through the ranks to head this pivotal department.

ARCHITECTURAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE WORLD’S BEST

Over the decades, Dewan has diligently worked towards building loyalty in local and regional markets while also attracting the discerning eyes of some of the world’s leading international design firms, from Foster + Partners to Kengo Kuma, BIG, Tado Ando, Hopkins, HKS, TVS and CallisonRTKL, among others. As Dewan’s reputation for excellence has grown, so has the number of collaborations on important GCC projects.

Touqan explains: “As Dewan celebrates its 40th anniversary, these collaborations make up a considerable amount of the firm’s workload. The market is booming: Dewan currently has multiple projects in collaboration with Foster + Partners, while others include an integrated entertainment resort in collaboration with HKS. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the company is developing the Media and



GRAND VIEWS, ABU DHABI, UAE



AQUARABIA, QIDDIYA CITY, KSA

SAMER TOUQAN, MANAGING PRINCIPAL,
PROJECTS AND DESIGN DELIVERY

“The future will be a balance between size and organisational culture; a challenge to keep our company identity while still being able to move on to even larger projects.”

Innovation District for DGCL as Executive Architects with Hopkins architects; in Al Khobar, working on a luxury mega-villa in partnership with South Africa's Saota, and as architect for a Ritz-Carlton; and there's the Amaala Yacht Club in the Red Sea with HKS. The list goes on and on...”

Dewan's long-standing regional presence and its tenacity and reputation for excellence set it apart from others in the Middle East. “These big design houses get invited and create really interesting architecture. The experience of Dewan allows the company to develop initial designs and take these projects to the next phases,” Touqan adds. “The firm is proud to be present both as architects and executive architects at an international level.”

Part of Dewan's strength lies in its unwavering commitment to quality and a deep understanding of this market's intricate workings, forged over four decades.

Touqan, a Canadian of Palestinian origin, recalls his first impressions of Dewan as a new employee when the company signed a contract with TRO Jung Brannen of Boston, USA for the 175-metre, 43-floor, mixed-use Media One Tower, which become his first high-rise accomplishment with Dewan. This was the firm's first foray into a project with an overseas architectural practice. Completed in the mid-2000s, the tower at the gateway to Media City is an architectural icon.

“This was an extremely complex project due to its shape, and it included a hotel and an office tower. It was then unusual for a project to require so many design subconsultants and engineering disciplines, yet there were at least ten specialised sub-consultants, including vertical transportation and lighting specialists, to ensure the building was perfectly synchronised.” The success of Media One quickly led to Dewan's involvement as Executive Architects for the 260-metre-high, 60-storey Vision Tower in Dubai's Business Bay, in collaboration with TVS Design Architects of Atlanta, USA, which was completed in 2014.



SHURA LINKS, SHURA ISLAND, KSA

A STEADFAST, MULTINATIONAL GLOBAL WORKFORCE

With over 300 international architects and professionals, spread over a growing global network that includes the Philippines, Egypt, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, Touqan's team develops comprehensive designs that have put Dewan on the map as the go-to firm both for regional clients and the world's leading star architects.

A REWARDING INTERNAL WORKPLACE ECOSYSTEM

Touqan enjoys close camaraderie with Abu Dhabi-based Frenchman Yann Pennès, Senior Projects Director and an important member of the executive committee of senior directors at Dewan. Touqan points out that Dewan's internal ecosystem and incubator mentorship programme helps young architects become well-versed in the firm's optimised procedures and steers them towards ongoing opportunities. Working in a protective and supportive team environment, the younger designers can mature and progress. The result is that the average employee spends at least eight years with the firm.

According to Sara Kakani, an ambitious young senior architect who joined Dewan a few years ago: "The scale and variety of projects the firm works on are truly inspiring, especially ones like Aquarabia, with its challenging engineering; it generated much joy among the team as it is a niche project – not one that you come across every day."

The UAE-born designer speaks also for the numerous multi-cultural, multinational young 'Dewanees' when she says: "It's encouraging to be in an environment and office that is continually growing. The company is moving with the times; as young architects, we are appreciated for having something new to contribute, especially when it comes to technology."

Touqan concurs: "Working with young architects allows the firm to see architecture through the eyes of new generations and develop initiatives like the Metaverse project and the Dewan Young Leaders (DYL) programme."

With studies showing that a quarter of architectural students drop out, and of those who graduate only



MANDARIN ORIENTAL RESIDENCES, ABU DHABI, UAE

10 per cent will practice architecture, Dewan's management recognises the importance of identifying and nurturing talent.

FOSTERING A GLOBAL NETWORK OF STRATEGIC COLLABORATORS

With around 30 ongoing projects in the region with an estimated value in the region of Dhs 30 billion, Touqan and Pennès are optimistic they can achieve their five-year strategic plan.

"We want Dewan to become as efficient as possible through diversification into new geographical markets – both by gaining new projects and as a source of manpower," explains Pennès, who has spent the past 16 years with Dewan.

Furnished with new ERP software such as Deltek, the two managers are keen to further develop technological tools like BIM, digital twins and AI to leverage a network of Dewan architects, or small clusters of architects in multiple markets, without having to open physical offices in these new locations.

YANN PENNÈS,
SENIOR PROJECTS DIRECTOR

"The firm is looking to start more collaborations, partnerships with like-minded architects around the globe," they say in unison. "Dewan is very specific about the people it wants to work with, and they can be difficult to find. So the firm can open the door for the international recruitment of people who can cooperate from their location."

"If there is someone, say, in Canada or Japan who is ready to work with the firm, all he or she has to do is receive a couple of passwords and undergo some security checks – and then they will be able to join us from a remote location," Touqan adds.

PUSHING BOUNDARIES TOWARDS EVEN MORE COMPLEX ARCHITECTURE

Both Touqan and Pennès are keen to push boundaries and take on more complex projects, like the Aquarabia water park – the firm's first foray into that highly specialised arena. Despite this inexperience, they have, through careful analysis and calculation, quickly become recognised as water park specialists!

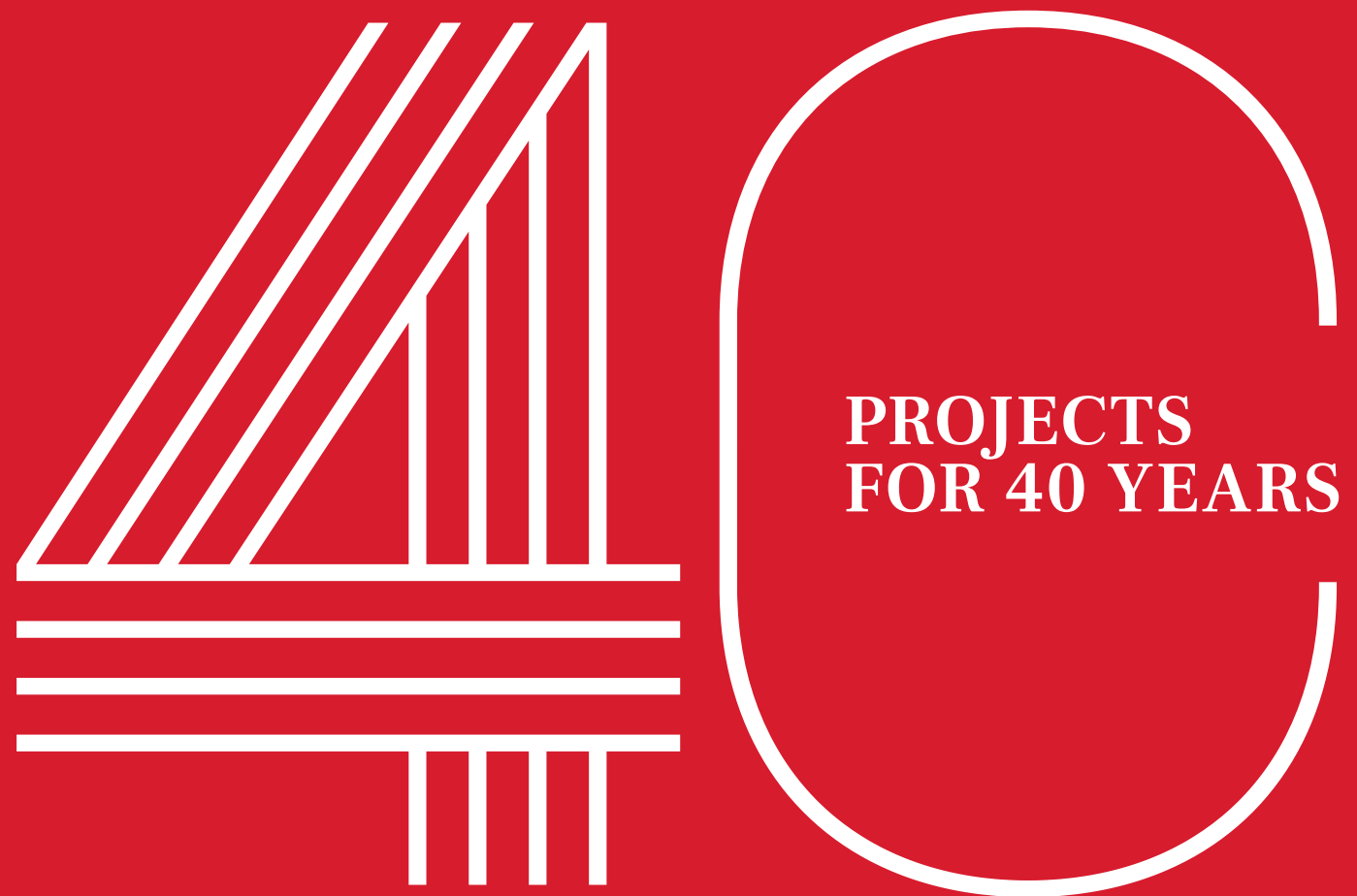
"We worked with Foster + Partners and WSP on the new Red Sea Airport, but I would love to design a major airport terminal when the opportunity arises and we have the manpower," Pennès says. Touqan, meanwhile, aspires to include a hospital or a scientific research structure into the company portfolio. "A hospital is similar to a big hospitality project but has more specialised medical equipment and is much more sensitive," he says.

The DDD team members are all driven by curiosity – to understand the complexity and uniqueness of each project – and a determination to find the solution. They appreciate being the next generation of architects, with the opportunity to take the firm to the next level. **D**

MEDIA ONE TOWER,
DUBAI, UAE

03

DEFINING
PROJECTS



Since 1984, Dewan has embarked on a groundbreaking journey, starting with pioneering projects in the UAE and expanding to create iconic buildings and urban developments in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Egypt and beyond. To celebrate this milestone anniversary, here we spotlight 40 transformational projects, completed over four decades, that showcase the firm's significant impact. These projects have been pivotal to Dewan's growth, enabling it to advance new design disciplines and enter new markets. They highlight the firm's continuous innovation in and influence on the architectural landscape, as well as charting its journey to international recognition as a prominent and respected industry leader.

BANIYAS TOWER
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: H.H. SHEIKH HAZAA
 BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN
COMPLETION: 1988



BANIYAS TOWER

Dewan's first major project in the UAE was a pioneering, avant-garde tower that seamlessly merged traditional Iraqi Abbasid architectural elements with cutting-edge contemporary materials. Conceived by Mohamed Al Assam and his colleagues at Dewan as they worked from the firm's initial small office, the 25-floor building featured some of the highest specifications seen in the UAE at the time. Located on the capital's Corniche, its impressive façade incorporates an innovative double-glazed glass curtain wall system, reportedly one of the first of its kind in the country. The high-rise building also hosts a rooftop swimming pool with retractable roof, as well as underground parking, which helped to set a new benchmark for sophisticated residential buildings in the emirate. Four decades on, it continues to hold its own among the surrounding newer towers.

AL JAZIRA HOTEL AND RESORT
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: ABU DHABI
 NATIONAL HOTELS
COMPLETION: 1990



AL JAZIRA HOTEL & RESORT

This low-rise contemporary hotel, nestled on a man-made island, marked Dewan's first foray into the hospitality sector. Designed by Mohamed Al Assam, who had previously created a small hotel in his native Iraq, the property is located on a kidney-shaped breakwater at the tip of a long, narrow canal on the Abu Dhabi coast. Initially conceived as a motel, it evolved into an 80-key, four-star resort featuring two curved wings, where the main activities and restaurants are clustered around a central swimming pool. The round majlis-style meeting room is particularly notable. In phase two, 20 villas were added on a nearby secluded beach, next to a shell-shaped swimming pool. Importantly, the project showcased Dewan's innovative approach to hotel design in one of the UAE's earliest resort-style destinations, laying the groundwork for future hospitality ventures.

STRAND HOTEL

LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: MOHAMED BIN SHIEKH
 BIN HASSAN AL KHAZRAJI
COMPLETION: 1993



STRAND HOTEL

Designed for both comfort and convenience, the four-star Strand Hotel in Abu Dhabi was one of Dewan's earliest projects in the UAE. Located in the bustling downtown area on the Corniche, the hotel features a contemporary design and a practical layout. Architect Mohamed Al Assam oversaw every aspect of the design, tackling the client's challenge of fitting the maximum number of rooms on a small 15.2-metre by 24.4-metre plot. This task was further complicated by a height restriction of 14 floors due to local architectural regulations. The result was a compact 80-room hotel with four main specialised F&B outlets and a sleek modern exterior, adding a new dimension to the emerging hospitality scene.

FOTOUH AL KHAIR MALL

LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: H.H. SHEIKH TAHOON BIN
 SHAKHBOOT AL NAHYAN
DESIGN PARTNER: CARLOS OTT
COMPLETION: 1999



FOTOUH AL KHAIR MALL

This mirror-glass-clad building was Dewan's first mixed-use project in the UAE and marked the firm's initial collaboration with a renowned international architect. Positioned along a major thoroughfare, the building features a ground floor dedicated to retail, while its structure showcases distinct curved towers for residential and commercial use. An outdoor plaza for residents is seamlessly integrated into the roof of the retail zone, enhancing functionality and community appeal.

SHEIKH TAHNOON TOWER
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: H.H. SHEIKH
 TAHNOON BIN
 MOHAMMED AL NAHYAN
COMPLETION: 2003



SHEIKH TAHNOON TOWER

With its modern design and sleek aesthetics, this high-rise landmark was created in Dewan's early years. Originally conceptualised by British architectural firm Llewelyn Davies, its design and engineering were subsequently modified and refined by Dewan's architects, resulting in the tower's distinctive structure. Prominently located, the building combines innovative design elements with subtle traditional influences. The 14-storey structure incorporates high-quality materials and advanced technology, reflecting both architectural elegance and functionality. Colloquially known as the Arab Bank Building, it exemplifies Dewan's commitment to blending contemporary design with traditional accents.

GREEN COMMUNITY
LOCATION: DIP, DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: UNION PROPERTIES
DESIGN PARTNER: BERNARD SPOERRY
COMPLETION: 2005



GREEN COMMUNITY

This pioneering residential community in Dubai Investments Park was one of the UAE's first gated neighbourhoods. The 67 hectare development features colourful, European-style buildings and a picturesque canal, inspired from the French Riviera's Port Grimaud, designed by François Spoerry. Dewan collaborated with Spoerry's son, Bernard - who was appointed by Union Properties - to create the concept design, and the firm continued to involve him as it developed the remainder of the project from the schematic phase. The charming community includes low-rise buildings and lush gardens, with the Copthorne Lakeview Hotel adding four-star luxury to this unique development of villas and apartments.

CRESCENT TOWER

With its striking, dynamic crescent-shaped aluminium roof, this luxury two-tower residential condominium remains a prominent icon on the Abu Dhabi skyline. Situated in the fashionable Khalidiya area, it was one of the tallest and most luxurious residential complexes upon its inauguration and noted for its distinctive glass, aluminium and terracotta-coloured façade. The ground floor housed the renowned French supermarket Prisunic.

CRESCENT TOWER**LOCATION:** ABU DHABI, UAE**CLIENT:** FOUNDATION PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**COMPLETION:** 2006



IBN BATTUTA MALL
 LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
 CLIENT: NAKHEEL
 DESIGN PARTNER: CALLISONRTKL
 COMPLETION: 2005

IBN BATTUTA MALL

Named after the 14th-century Maghrebi explorer and scholar, this 1.5-kilometre-long mall was one of the longest themed shopping centres when it opened, marking Dewan's first major retail project. The exterior and interior design involved collaborations with international artists, sculptors and artisans who recreated six distinct courts to reflect the art, architecture and culture of Morocco, Andalusia, China, Tunisia, Persia, Egypt and India, allowing shoppers to trace the travels of Ibn Battuta.



DJIBOUTI PALACE KEMPINSKI
 LOCATION: DJIBOUTI, REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI
 CLIENT: NAKHEEL
 COMPLETION: 2006

DJIBOUTI PALACE

Completed in just under 12 months in order to host the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Summit, Djibouti's first five-star hotel also marked Dewan's first major hospitality project outside the UAE. The architecture subtly blends Arabian and African styles, reflecting its strategic location in the Horn of Africa between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. This 177-key hotel, developed in collaboration with Japanese contractors Taisei, required intense coordination between design and construction departments to meet the tight deadline.

MEDIA ONE TOWER
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: AL JABER ESTABLISHMENT
DESIGN PARTNER:
 TRO | JUNG BRANNEN
COMPLETION: 2008



MEDIA ONE TOWER

With its curtain wall's distinctive pattern of seemingly randomly oriented panels creating a visually distorted effect akin to a modern pixelated image, this architectural icon stands majestically at the entrance to Dubai Media City. Dewan's first mixed-use project in Dubai, completed in collaboration with an international design firm, was highly complex. Its unique shape and dual function as a hotel and office tower required an unprecedented number of design subconsultants and engineers to ensure seamlessly synchronised vertical transportation and lighting.

VISION TOWER
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: DUBAI PROPERTIES
DESIGN PARTNER: TVS DESIGN
COMPLETION: 2010



VISION TOWER

The elegant 60-storey Vision Tower, standing at 260 metres, is ranked 59th tallest in Dubai and 87th tallest in the Middle East by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. Its graceful glass curtain wall reflects Dubai's dynamic energy and pioneering spirit, while the building set new standards for quality. The iconic tower's audacious design, featuring a bent glass façade internally illuminated for maximum impact, posed significant structural challenges due to its slender profile and height-to-width ratio, requiring innovative engineering solutions.

W ABU DHABI – YAS ISLAND
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: ALDAR
DESIGN PARTNER:
ASYMPTOTE ARCHITECTURE
COMPLETION: 2009

W ABU DHABI – YAS ISLAND

Designed and built in under 18 months to host the inaugural Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, the W Abu Dhabi - Yas Island has become synonymous with the emirate. Its high-tech, striking glazed 'abaya' veil drapes over and unites two buildings across the racetrack. The innovative grid shell, supported by 10 V-shaped columns, features a triangulated mega structure and a quadrangular grid. The façade, covered in 5,800 pivoting diamond-shaped glass panels, incorporates LED lighting for dynamic colour-changing effects.

KADHIMIYA
LOCATION: BAGHDAD, IRAQ
CLIENT: BAGHDAD MUNICIPALITY
COMPLETION: 2010



KADHIMIYA

Dewan's comprehensive urban masterplan for Kadhimiya, one of Iraq's oldest towns, aims to revitalise this unique area of Greater Baghdad and preserve its significant religious and cultural heritage. The Integrated Conservation and Development Scheme positions the shrine as the core, surrounded by urban layers, maintaining the district's soul while providing new social and economic impetus. This addresses modern urban challenges, yet caters to the diverse needs of residents, visitors and pilgrims. Dewan also completed similar human-centric schemes for the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, in 2017 and 2015 respectively.

BATEEN WORLD ACADEMY
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: ALDAR
DESIGN PARTNER: CPG
COMPLETION: 2011



BATEEN WORLD ACADEMY

This avant-garde, award-winning school is one of Dewan's many educational projects, funded through social capital resources. The sophisticated, future-focused design features a stimulating three-storey building clad in energising shades of orange aluminium, complemented by auxiliary structures. Its innovative use of space and sustainable materials embodies the school's philosophy for today's high-tech era. The layout, with a large, light-filled leafy atrium, promotes a secure learning environment, setting a new benchmark for design and education in the UAE.



ABU DHABI FUTURE SCHOOLS PROGRAMME
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: MUSANADA
COMPLETION: 2013

ABU DHABI FUTURE SCHOOLS

As part of its 'Future Schools Programme', the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) appointed Dewan to design and supervise the construction of 19 schools, each designed to accommodate approximately 1,250 students. As Dewan's largest educational project to date, these schools each include spacious classrooms, multiple laboratories, a 600-seat auditorium, a library, a cafeteria with kitchen facilities, a gymnasium, a swimming pool and a multipurpose sports hall. Built to world-class standards, the schools are equipped with the latest technology to enhance teaching methods. The project received a 3-Pearl Estidama Rating for its sustainable design, which emphasised simplicity, effectiveness and efficiency. Construction was divided into three phases: the first phases were completed in 2014, with all phases set to conclude in 2026.



THE ONE TOWER
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: RASHID AL MAZROUI
COMPLETION: 2014

THE ONE TOWER

Located in Dubai's TECOM district, The One Tower was one of the first buildings to seamlessly connect with the mass transit Metro system, and its functional design embodies the city's frenetic pace and vibrancy. Two sleek halves are joined by decorative steel trusses, blending form and function. This architectural innovation enhances the tower's clean, efficient design, transforming it into a striking and novel landmark.

PREMIER INN DOHA EDUCATION CITY
LOCATION: DOHA, QATAR
CLIENT: PREMIER INN HOTELS
COMPLETION: 2017



PREMIER INN DOHA EDUCATION CITY

Dewan's debut project in Qatar's capital was to design this practical four-star hotel in the heart of Doha Education City. The clean, straightforward lines of the exterior reflect the modern aesthetic of the surrounding renowned universities and convention centre. This project continues Dewan's work with multiple Premier Inn hotels, following a successful track record of delivering projects in Abu Dhabi.

**MASTERCARD EEMEA
HEADQUARTERS**
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: TECOM GROUP
COMPLETION: 2017



MASTERCARD EEMEA HEADQUARTERS

This Mastercard regional headquarters was one of Dewan's first corporate office projects for a multinational client, paving the way for similar developments including flydubai's Campus and the ENOC HQ. Located in a prime spot within Dubai's Internet City, the glass façade of the low-rise building features horizontally sliding volumes designed to resemble banknotes and wallet compartments, symbolising the client's connection to finance.

LAPITA, DUBAI PARKS MARRIOTT
 LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
 CLIENT: MERAAS
 DESIGN PARTNER: CALLISONRTKL
 COMPLETION: 2017



LAPITA, DUBAI PARKS MARRIOTT

An homage to the South Pacific, this hotel is a landmark project showcasing Polynesian elegance through vibrant colours, intricate textures and distinctive thatched roofs. Set within lush, heavily landscaped gardens, the hotel embodies tranquil luxury and serves as an anchor to the surrounding theme parks. Its low-rise, clustered structures with lagoon-style pools and themed areas create an authentic environment. Nearby, Dewan's Riverland project, inspired by the cobbled streets, chateaux and winding canals of the medieval alpine town of Annecy in France, complements the development's diverse architectural themes.

AKH TOWER
 LOCATION: DAMMAM, KSA
 CLIENT: AL ABDULKARIM HOLDING
 COMPLETION: 2019



AKH TOWER

The 37-storey Akh Tower was among Dewan's first projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. At 150 metres high, it made an instant and dramatic impact on Dammam's skyline as the tallest tower in the city. Angled lines run across the striking edifice, embracing the podium and continuing upwards to form ramps and vertical circulation elements. This approach integrates the podium into the tower's intricate design, enhancing its character, sophistication and functionality. The façade of gleaming glass and geometric patterns complements the sense of upward movement in this progressive and intelligent building in the oil capital of KSA's Eastern Province.

ADDRESS DUBAI MALL
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: EMAAR PROPERTIES
DESIGN PARTNERS:
 ATKINSREALIS & DP ARCHITECTS
COMPLETION: 2020

ADDRESS DUBAI MALL

This iconic multi-tower mega-project is one of the largest – both in size and value – to be undertaken by Dewan as lead consultant. The multi-use development comprises four luxury buildings – including two Address Residential towers, the five-star Address Dubai Mall hotel and the residential Boulevard Point tower – which are all connected to Dubai Mall by a three-storey glazed pedestrian and vehicle bridge. Together, the façades create a captivating woven texture that is memorable, engaging and thought-provoking. Balancing artistic and functional elements, the design combines solidity with transparency. The quadrant acts as a landmark conduit between Downtown Dubai's commercial and residential zones.

MAMSHA AL SAADIYAT
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: ALDAR
DESIGN PARTNER: CALLISONRTKL
COMPLETION: 2020



MAMSHA AL SAADIYAT

This exclusive beachfront residential complex – situated in the heart of Saadiyat Island’s Cultural District near the Louvre, the forthcoming Guggenheim and the Zayed National Museum – features a contemporary design inspired by the vibe of South Beach in Miami. The apartments, townhouses and penthouses offer modern residential design and vibrant public spaces. Parks, promenades, plazas and sikkas blend harmoniously, meandering through the complex which borders a 1.4-kilometre stretch of natural beach. This development epitomises luxury coastal living and the thriving local arts and culture scene.

FLYDUBAI CAMPUS
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: FLYDUBAI
COMPLETION: 2021



FLYDUBAI CAMPUS

The flydubai Campus is one of the first properties in the Warsan area, which is designated for corporate developments as part of Dubai’s growth strategy. The campus’s design captures the brand’s energetic and forward-thinking identity, merging creativity with functionality. It features uncluttered workspaces that enhance employee performance and is technologically advanced, highlighting flydubai’s innovative spirit. Planned expansions will include a city check-in and a three-star business hotel, supporting operational efficiency.

REEM MALL

LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: AL FARWANIYA
 PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS
DESIGN PARTNER: CALLISONRTKL
COMPLETION: 2022



REEM MALL

Located on Reem Island, this new mega-mall features the world's largest indoor snow park. The mall's contemporary architecture, crafted by an experienced international design team, includes a state-of-the-art layout with optimal retail configurations. Housing Abu Dhabi's largest hypermarket, 450 stores, 85 restaurants and cafés, as well as diverse family entertainment facilities, the development provides a visually stunning and efficient space both for visitors and retailers and includes parking spaces for 7,000 cars.

THE ESTATES

LOCATION: CAIRO, EGYPT
CLIENT: SODIC
COMPLETION: 2022



THE ESTATES

The Estates marks Dewan's debut residential project in Cairo and is situated along the Cairo-Alexandria Desert Road. Drawing inspiration from California's modernist architecture, the development integrates indoor and outdoor spaces to harness the warm climate. It boasts clean lines, open-floor plans, floor-to-ceiling windows and natural materials. Offering premium amenities such as a spa, retail outlets and a nursery within lush landscapes, the project marks a new era and standard of living for Egyptians, introducing a modern lifestyle and innovative concepts to the new generation.

ASTANA GRAND MOSQUE
LOCATION: ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN
CLIENT: SEMBOL CONSTRUCTION
COMPLETION: 2022

ASTANA GRAND MOSQUE

As Dewan's first project in Central Asia, the magnificent Astana Grand Mosque in Kazakhstan's capital stands as the largest mosque in Central Asia. The award-winning design spans more than 68,000 square metres inside and 6,300 square metres in its open courtyard, covering a total of just over 10 hectares. This landmark features a 63-metre-diameter sky-blue dome, supported by a lightweight steel frame and a complex octagonal base. The mosque holds a prestigious place in the Guinness World Records and can accommodate 30,000 worshippers.

RIXOS MARINA ABU DHABI
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: NATIONAL
 INVESTMENT CORPORATION
COMPLETION: 2022



RIXOS MARINA ABU DHABI

Gracing a breakwater off Abu Dhabi, the imposing Rixos Marina evokes the grandeur of a bygone era. Initially, the brief in 2000 was for a low-rise resort; however, this was revised following the client's visit to Atlantis Paradise Island in the Bahamas. The design now blends classical influences with arabesque nuances, creating a modern masterpiece. The twin towers, built from concrete with glass-reinforced concrete ornaments, are linked by a striking 30-metre bridge. Originally operated as a Fairmont, this five-star hotel – which features 750 luxury rooms and stylish apartments – adds a distinctive silhouette to Abu Dhabi's coastal skyline.



NUJUMA, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE
LOCATION: UMMAHAT ISLANDS, KSA
CLIENT: RED SEA GLOBAL
DESIGN PARTNER: FOSTER + PARTNERS
COMPLETION: 2024

NUJUMA, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE

The first Ritz-Carlton Reserve in the region, Nujuma is the world's first resort of its kind to feature shell-inspired architecture, and is innovatively clad with approximately 1.5 million metres of natural rope. Dewan served as executive architect for this stunning property, overseeing design development and construction documents and providing prefabrication advisory, ensuring the seamless integration of the project's architecture. The interior design, featuring sea and sand tones, complements the rope exteriors and integrates geometric patterns and traditional motifs, while landscaping with indigenous plants frames pathways that connect pavilions and villas. This is Dewan's second luxury retreat to open that has been developed by Red Sea Global.

PIXEL AT MAKERS DISTRICT

This mixed-use, human-scale development, designed for the creative community on Reem Island, honours the country's pearl diving heritage by blending tradition with contemporary design. The exterior features pastel terraces and bay windows with shading screens in 14 pearly hues, while the bright, airy interiors offer a contemporary industrial vibe. The development includes mid-rise gateway buildings and a low-rise hub with residential, office, retail and dining spaces spread across seven towers, as well as a pedestrian plaza adorned with pocket gardens to foster collaboration.

PIXEL AT MAKERS DISTRICT
LOCATION: ABU DHABI, UAE
CLIENT: IMKAN
DESIGN PARTNER: MVRDV
COMPLETION: 2024

SOLFOREST

Inspired by the developer's masterplan vision for green living, this biophilic project fuses urban and rural elements and represents Dewan's first built project in Asia. The SolForest and EcoRiver projects were secured shortly after Dewan opened an office in Vietnam. The two-tower eco-structure is both an urban building in a rural area and a tower in the countryside, creating a distinctive architectural statement. Its organic vertical garden concept ensures every apartment enjoys a green view, while the podium's growth-inspired design fosters intimate, human-scale spaces. The varied green façades offer natural shading and reflect Vietnamese community culture, enhancing sustainability.

SOLFOREST
LOCATION: HUNG YEN, VIETNAM
CLIENT: ECOPARK
COMPLETION: 2024

THE ST. REGIS RED SEA RESORT**LOCATION:** UMMAHAT ISLANDS, KSA**CLIENT:** RED SEA GLOBAL**DESIGN PARTNER:** KENGO KUMA & ASSOCIATES**COMPLETION:** 2024

THE ST. REGIS RED SEA RESORT

The Red Sea's first island resort offers unparalleled luxury in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ummahat archipelago. It is one of many projects Dewan has undertaken for developer Red Sea Global, a visionary for tourism development in the region. The primarily timber architecture features gently curved roofs that blend with the landscape, while the sand dune-inspired villas and spiralled overwater 'coral villas' are designed to provide 360-degree views of the turquoise sea. To minimise disruption to marine life, units were built off-site, then assembled and carefully installed on-site.

PORT DE LA MER**LOCATION:** DUBAI, UAE**CLIENT:** MERAAS**EXPECTED COMPLETION:** 2025

PORT DE LA MER

Dubai's first freehold master community in the city's exclusive Jumeirah suburb offers a blend of Mediterranean-style architecture reminiscent of Italy and Spain. This vast waterfront development is centred around a deep-water super-yacht marina, inspired by Porto Montenegro, which the design team visited for authenticity. The development features terracotta and yellow buildings across six distinct zones: La Côte, La Rive, Le Pont, La Voile, La Sirène and Le Ciel. It includes swimming pools, gyms and beach access, with vibrant piazzas, waterfront boutiques and dining enhancing the seaside atmosphere.

AQUARABIA

Dewan's venture into water theme park architecture design is the expansive 250,000-square-metre Aquarabia, the largest of its kind in the Middle East. Announced as one of the first developments in Qiddiya City, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's premier entertainment destination, the park is set to become a major tourist attraction. Dewan employed advanced BIM technology and collaborated with leading industry experts for this highly complex project. The design features eight themed zones with 22 rides and experiences, including five record-breaking attractions: the world's longest and tallest water coaster, the longest slide wheel, the tallest AquaLoop, the tallest and longest mat racers, and the first underwater vehicle of its kind. An 82-metre-high, man-made mountain, Camel Rock, adds to its unique appeal, while the design prioritises sustainability and water recycling throughout the project.

AQUARABIA

LOCATION: QIDDIYA CITY, KSA

CLIENT: QIDDIYA INVESTMENT COMPANY

DESIGN PARTNER: FALCON'S TREEHOUSE

EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2025





RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL
LOCATION: AL KHOBAR, KSA
CLIENT: RETAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT COMPANY
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2025

RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL

Having made its mark on the Red Sea region and garnered a proven global hospitality design record, Dewan is now pioneering architecture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. This four-floor, 118-room five-star resort with branded villas, designed by Dewan, is situated on a tiered site offering panoramic views of the Arabian Gulf. The journey begins with a grand entrance, elevated significantly above sea level, providing a captivating introduction as guests ascend the main access ramp. The façades will be clad in stone, complemented by luxurious bronze details and contemporary mashrabiya-inspired window patterns. Continuous slabs and balconies will provide effective shading. This project will play a crucial role in enhancing tourism and aligns with KSA's Vision 2030 to diversify the hospitality sector.



LA MAZZONI
LOCATION: RAS AL KHAIMAH, UAE
CLIENT: THE LUXE DEVELOPERS
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2029

LA MAZZONI

La Mazzoni was inspired by the harmony between nature and architecture, and draws deeply from its milieu on Al Marjan Island, Ras Al Khaimah. The concept celebrates the meeting of sand and sea, expressed through the building's fluid curves and soft, natural palette. The exterior architecture integrates the flowing movement of ocean waves, while the massing reflects the rugged contours of the region's iconic Jebel Jais mountain. Layering within the façade mirrors geological formations, and cave-like openings blend the built form seamlessly with the surrounding environment.



MASAAR
LOCATION: SHARJAH, UAE
CLIENT: ARADA
COMPLETION: 2024 (PHASES 1-3)

MASAAR

A green spine of 50,000 trees links the seven districts of the first upscale gated neighbourhood in Sharjah, creating a vibrant oasis in the UAE desert. This was also Dewan's first residential project in the emirate, and the firm designed and supervised the construction of villas and townhouses across three phases of this project. The 3,000-home development integrates organic design inspired by Vastu Shastra principles, promoting wellness and harmony with nature. The architecture features smart home elements and incorporates lush green parks, reflecting a strong commitment to sustainability and community. Following this project the client awarded the design of the Anantara Sharjah Resort to Dewan.



OCEANO
LOCATION: RAS AL KHAIMAH, UAE
CLIENT: THE LUXE DEVELOPERS
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2026

OCEANO

With its unique, organic architectural design, this ultra-luxury development offers diverse panoramic views and commands some of the highest per-area prices on Al Marjan Island. The vision for the two-tower complex, linked by slim glass bridges, was to create a trendy lifestyle offering set on a tranquil private beach. It incorporates free-flowing glass façades and minimalist window frames that wrap around the apartments, enhancing the free-flowing floor plates which rotate on different planes to maximise the views. Additional facilities include an infinity pool, cigar lounge, yoga room, chauffeur lounge, boutiques and yacht moorings.

CENTRAL PARK AT CITY WALK

Situated in the heart of Dubai, this dynamic mixed-use development harmoniously combines community living with lush green spaces. It features a meticulously designed mix of residential units, retail spaces, dining options and entertainment facilities, set around a private park. Dewan was engaged in the expansive debut of Phases 1 and 2 of the project which, as one of the first major developments to be launched in the emirate after the 2008 crisis, introduced the concept of low-rise, outdoor retail neighbourhood space that was later replicated across the region. Dewan is now serving as the lead consultant for the final premium phase, which includes sleek, modern apartments that will provide unparalleled vistas of the park and the Dubai skyline.

CENTRAL PARK AT CITY WALK
LOCATION: DUBAI, UAE
CLIENT: DUBAI HOLDING REAL ESTATE
DESIGN PARTNER: CALLISONRTKL
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2026 (PHASE 5)

LA MER BY ELIE SAAB
LOCATION: RAS AL KHAIMAH, UAE
CLIENT: ARTE DEVELOPMENTS
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2027



LA MER BY ELIE SAAB

Designed by Dewan, La Mer by Elie Saab represents the Lebanese fashion designer's first branded residence in Ras Al Khaimah and showcases his signature interior style. This prestigious waterfront development features three elegantly spiralling residential towers inspired by Ras Al Khaimah's historic forts. The cylindrical towers, tapering at the top, harmoniously blend past and future influences and reflect the rugged layering of the nearby mountain range. The wavy balconies echo the Arabian Gulf's waters, while expansive floor-to-ceiling windows offer breathtaking views and dramatic interconnecting bridges create shared spaces. With its elegant fusion of Saab's interiors and historical and contemporary design, La Mer sets a new standard for luxurious living on Al Marjan Island.

LAYAN VERDE
LOCATION: PHUKET, THAILAND
CLIENT: VILLACARTE GROUP
EXPECTED COMPLETION: 2029



LAYAN VERDE

Nestled across an expanse of land in the Layan region along Phuket's western shoreline, Layan Verde represents Dewan's first foray into Thailand. Featuring a 62-key five-star hotel, a 103-key four-star hotel, 134 hotel-branded condominiums and 625 residential condominiums, every aspect of the design has been meticulously overseen by Dewan. Championing the ethos of sustainable living, the design philosophy seamlessly blends avant-garde architecture with the natural contours of the land. Embracing the concept of 'see but not be seen', each unit offers breathtaking ocean views while maintaining privacy through innovative design and hanging greenery.

04

FUTURE FOCUS

AMAALA YACHT CLUB,
AMAALA, KSA



HEALTHY PROSPECTS

Dewan is expanding its market presence across the Middle East and Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. With promising business prospects and strategic expansion plans, the firm is well-positioned to capitalise on emerging opportunities in various market segments.



With a healthy business pipeline, a committed team and a positive outlook, Joe Saghbini, Dewan’s Business Development Director and Regional Director – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is bullish about the potential for further growth. Hands-on and brimming with enthusiasm, the Lebanese-born French national, who has been generating business for Dewan since 2012, uses his vast experience and knowledge to help win lucrative contracts from new and existing clients.

ONGOING GCC GROWTH

Saghbini states that the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region is witnessing extraordinary growth: “It is where things are happening. Despite lots of real estate development over the years, there are still new projects. In business development, we feel the traction in certain places, zones, countries, regions or sectors. Things are looking extremely bullish now. There is a lot of demand – and it’s going to keep coming!”

He adds that Dewan’s business pipeline in the UAE and KSA is particularly strong, noting that the firm is undertaking a wide variety of education, residential, mixed-use and hospitality projects.

OPPORTUNITIES IN A MORE LIBERAL KSA

Saghbini is keen to point out that as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia becomes a more liberal country that is ‘open for business’, there will be more opportunities than ever before: “Since the launch of Vision 2030 by HRH Mohammed Bin Salman in 2016, global awareness of developments in KSA has significantly increased. Renowned architects worldwide have contributed to remarkable projects being built all over the country, and this has notably enhanced the kingdom’s international recognition.”

Two key announcements – the staging of Expo in Riyadh in 2030 and the FIFA World Cup in the kingdom in 2034 – will build on Vision 2030. Additionally, the 10th Asian Winter Games will take place in Trojena in 2029 – the first Asian Winter Games to be held in the Arabian Peninsula and the first winter sporting event in an Arabic-speaking country. “Compared to five or six years ago, KSA has come a long way,” states Saghbini.

The kingdom’s population is almost 34 million, with approximately 60 per cent being Saudi nationals. Additionally, 63 per cent of the population is under the age of 30. These are significant stats, Saghbini

says: “They are very proud of their country and the recent progress towards modernisation and global openness. This generation, Gen Z, represents the future of the kingdom and will play a major role in the coming decades.”

BUILDING IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

Currently, Dewan’s key KSA opportunities are emerging from subsidiaries of the Public Investment Fund (PIF) – including Red Sea Global (RSG), AMAALA (now part of RSG), and Diriyah Company – as well as from private developers.

The firm is also employed by Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC), another large PIF subsidiary that is developing entertainment and mixed-use destinations in Riyadh and north of Jeddah on a project called Qiddiya Coast.

“One of our biggest projects in the kingdom is the Aquarabia water theme park in Qiddiya City, where we undertook the role of lead consultant. We have completed the design and are now in the construction phase. It is truly amazing! It will be a major achievement for PIF and QIC – and for Dewan, obviously. We can already sense the exposure this project gives to our firm,” states Saghbini.

HIGH-PROFILE PROJECTS

As KSA plans prestigious events, Saghbini notes the parallels with Dubai and Qatar, which have both enjoyed success in hosting major international events. “These huge, high-profile projects are about changing perceptions. If they were infrastructure projects – not headline news – then people would not be so interested,” he says.

“However, when you promote amazing resorts on pristine beaches and attention-grabbing developments like The Line, people speak about them. I cannot see any slowdown, especially with the two major commitments the kingdom is taking to the world – Expo 2030 and the World Cup 2034 – though I’m sure there will probably be a refocusing on certain types of projects.”

A REFOCUSING TO COME

While KSA’s high-profile projects of today are primarily taking place in remote areas, Saghbini notes that future projects will more likely address the needs of Saudis and the local population: “I believe that more construction activity will take place in the capital Riyadh, which will host Expo 2030. There will be more infrastructure-related projects not only there



but also across the country. Riyadh is building a new airport and is launching a new airline: Riyadh Air. All of this will generate a lot of work in the capital.

“The government is also trying to push more for Saudisation; more Saudis are being exposed to big projects and being given very important responsibilities – and delivering.

“In our sector, more and more Saudi architects, designers, interior designers and engineers are being offered huge opportunities. Even now, they are involved in projects that few of their peers elsewhere in the world can imagine. The bar is set very high – and they are eager to rise to the challenge. There is huge potential in the country!”

THE NEXT WAVE IN KSA

It seems probable that the next wave of projects in KSA will include many residential developments, as an increasing proportion of the 22 million Saudis, as well as expatriates, are looking to own their own house.

With approximately seven million people living in Riyadh currently and expected exponential growth – to 8.5 million by 2030 and 25 million by 2050 – infrastructure needs will also be substantial.

It is almost certain that, with many events being held and insufficient room availability, the hospitality sector will continue to grow as well, leading to the development of hotels at all budget levels. Specifically, Expo 2030 will involve a wide range of development activities, including the construction of pavilions and the creation of large facilities to accommodate and welcome an estimated 40 million visitors.

Saghbini adds, “I can see the education sector growing too, as the workforce becomes more skilled and there is a need for well-educated, well-adjusted and well-trained new generations. There will be many more mixed-use retail/entertainment developments – large-scale places, including huge e-gaming centres.

“Furthermore, the government initiated a mega-project to enhance the capital’s greenery, aiming to plant 7.5 million trees in one year. We already see significant progress, with King Salman Park set to become the largest urban park in the world.

“We can anticipate a significant transformation in the real estate market in the coming years. While PIF subsidiary companies will remain pivotal, the private sector may assume a more prominent position.”

This shift is already visibly underway in the capital. Dewan is currently lead consultant for a substantial low-rise office development spanning approximately 210,000 square metres. Additionally, the firm is receiving an increasing number of RFPs [requests for proposals] from private developers such as Retal, Mawan Real Estate, Taiba, Al Othaim, Dar Al Arkan, Osus, Rafal and others.

The anticipated sustained increase in work opportunities is likely to be accompanied by a growing preference among developers for local firms.

DEVELOPING LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE

Saghbini observes that more countries in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region are developing their own architectural language and growing in confidence. “For example, on the Diriyah project there is a strong desire to maintain this very old traditional sort of identity, including through the architecture – Najdi and Salmani. This requirement now extends to all projects in the capital, particularly those on main roads and arteries. It has affected even projects that have been designed, permitted and are already on-site.”

He adds that, for designers, “How to reconcile tradition and modernity is a real challenge.”



“When international design partners say, ‘Whatever you decide, we’ll follow,’ I think that this is the best validation that the firm can receive.”

FURTHER EXPANSION AHEAD

In March 2020, Dewan employed eight people in Saudi Arabia. By January 2023, the team had grown to around 40 members; now, it is now over 100. Saghbini notes that this growth has only been restricted by the challenge of finding individuals with the necessary expertise and experience.

The firm is working on recruiting more Saudi nationals, anticipating that the team will number more than 200 by the end of 2025. “We are fully committed to KSA and to growing our business there – the kingdom is a primary market for Dewan,” states Saghbini.

CONTINUED OPPORTUNITIES IN THE UAE

While the KSA market is growing at pace, Saghbini still sees many opportunities in the UAE: “This market has demonstrated its resilience and there is expansion; look at Ras Al Khaimah, with developments like the new business district and Wynn Al Marjan Island. Dubai continues to be a strong market, rebounding well after Covid, while the Abu Dhabi real estate sector, with Aldar at its forefront, has also seen significant recent activity,” he says.

“The country’s leaders have followed a smart strategy in establishing initiatives, such as new visa types, to encourage permanent settlement in the country. They likely recognised the risk of expats leaving; given that expats make up around 85% of the population.”

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF DEWAN

As client requests and ambitions continue to grow, Dewan is looking at ways in which it can diversify to meet these and to capitalise on opportunities. “It’s always important to diversify. However, this can also take people outside of their comfort zones – as happened when we said yes to the Aquarabia water theme park. Yet we are now recognised as water park specialists,” notes Saghbini.

“Conversely, it is difficult to say ‘no’ – especially when approached by major clients in the UAE or KSA, or by some of the most reputable international consultancy firms. The risks have to be calculated – we must maintain our reputation as a reliable partner, which we have worked very hard to achieve. It is important we bring in projects that are good for the company and not overly risky. With over 700 people now in the firm, we must always consider what all the possibilities are – that’s the biggest responsibility our CEO and management team have. We recently opened offices in Cairo and Ho Chi Minh City, aiming to expand our business beyond the GCC region, where we have been operating for the past four decades.”

Saghbini looks forward with excitement, saying: “The future is full of possibilities, and we are optimistic about maximising the opportunities that will be available to us!” **D**

GLOBAL VIEWS

Distinguished by its collaborations with renowned international architects, Dewan has cemented its position and reputation as a trusted design partner. Here, a number of Dewan's global partners share their thoughts on these collaborations and the creation of iconic structures redefining the Middle East's architectural landscape.



**ADRIAN SMITH + GORDON GILL
ARCHITECTURE (AS+GG)
ROBERT FOREST, PARTNER**

"AS+GG collaborated with Dewan on our Burj Vista Residential Project in Dubai, UAE, starting in 2007.

The Burj Vista project sits opposite the Burj Khalifa, and AS+GG's design philosophy was to create a project where all the residents have a dynamic view of Burj Khalifa - as if they were part of a theatre audience. We created unique living room and balcony configurations to provide outstanding views and reduce solar gain to the project, thereby elevating its sustainable credentials at a time when sustainability was rarely considered in the Middle East.

Dewan played a key role in the project's development, working as Architect of Record, with AS+GG as Design Architect. The firm's commitment to quality, schedule and execution at a very high level helped the entire team to reach the project goals.

In our experience globally, we have found that collaboration is the key to success in highly complicated architectural projects – and in Dewan we found the perfect team player. We were able to work as a unified team with a shared project vision, which was only possible due to Dewan's commitment to collaboration.

Dewan's local expertise was also a vital component in the success of the project, complementing our design expertise. AS+GG was able to push the boundaries of design, achieving a unique high-profile project with Dewan's expertise and support.

Through our collaboration, we have created a project with unique character that creates a strong, high-profile presence in Dubai. We wish Dewan further success, and look forward to future collaborations."



**ASYMPTOTE ARCHITECTURE
HANI RASHID, CO-FOUNDER**

"The Yas Hotel in Abu Dhabi, a collaborative effort between Asymptote Architecture from New York and Dewan, serves as an example of how architectural design can be integrated with precise execution. This collaboration has resulted in a building that is recognised globally for its architectural significance.

Asymptote Architecture's design for the Yas Hotel was influenced by the dynamic nature of Abu Dhabi's urban landscape and its global aspirations. The design incorporates elements inspired by the mathematical and tectonic properties of dunes and aerodynamics. This approach is notably evident in its strategic location, both alongside and above the Yas Marina Grand Prix Race Circuit, as well as its integration into the Yas Marina harbour.

A standout feature of the Yas Hotel is its grid shell, a complex steel structure supported at seven points. This feature not only contributes to the hotel's striking appearance but also symbolises Abu Dhabi's technological advancements and cultural ambitions. Over time, Yas Hotel has become a pivotal element in Abu Dhabi's sports, arts and architectural landscapes. Currently known as the Yas V Hotel, it stands as a representation of what can be achieved through collaborative and synergetic architectural endeavours, demonstrating the potential of architecture to inspire and manifest pride and place."



**BENOY
NEIL SERRIDGE, DESIGN DIRECTOR**

"We greatly enjoyed working with Dewan on the iconic City Walk project in Dubai. Together, our brief was to create a unique, mixed-use destination as part of Dubai's vision to diversify its lifestyle destination retail offering.

Our designs had to meet the diverse needs of residents and tourists alike in order to provide a dynamic cultural and retail hub for the UAE. Through detailed architecture, a common visual language and culturally relevant design, we created a contemporary, open-air destination that responds to the surrounding streets and buildings and today exists as a key lifestyle destination for Dubai.

Since 2007, Benoy has built a strong presence in the Middle East, with a growing portfolio of projects in the UAE, Bahrain and, more recently, Saudi Arabia.

Increasingly, we're seeing renewed demand for spaces that promote a sense of local community and inclusivity. In practice this has meant an increase in demand for projects that aim to bring people together, embracing social integration across generations and welcoming people from all regions and backgrounds."



**HKS
KEVIN UNDERWOOD, GLOBAL PRACTICE
DIRECTOR, HOSPITALITY, PARTNER &
RAFFAEL PETROVIC, STUDIO DESIGN LEADER**

"The developments at Amaala offer an unparalleled opportunity to shape a new tourism destination from the beginning – and it is a privilege to be involved as designers of the yacht club, as well as master planners for the wider Triple Bay resort. HKS is honoured to team up with Dewan to be part of one of the key projects that will help fulfil the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision to become a leading traveller destination.

The club's design is inspired by the Red Sea rock formations on the Saudi coast, resulting in bespoke cantilevered terraces that echo the forms of the cliffs which have been eroded by wind and sea. The building's detailing is rooted in mankind's relationship with the sea, and in maritime history. The interior is as visually stimulating as the exterior, with unparalleled attention to detail ensuring that guests remain connected to the landscapes around them.

By joining our firm's global experience of working with luxury hotels and resorts with Dewan's deep knowledge of regional construction excellence, we hope to deliver a truly innovative and sustainable building. Our partnership with Dewan brought together diverse perspectives, combining their deep knowledge of regional architecture with our innovative design approach to create one of the leading yachting destinations in the world."



CALLISONRTKL (DUBAI BRANCH)
GEOFF FORD, ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL

"As an architect immersed in the dynamic landscape of the Middle East for the last 16 years, I have witnessed the rapid evolution of design in this region. From the vernacular that celebrates cultural heritage to the cutting-edge innovations shaping the future skyline, the Middle East has become a canvas where the past harmoniously converges with the aspirations of future generations.

While collaborating with Dewan Architects + Engineers on the Lapita Hotel/Riverland, Mamsha Al Saadiyat and Reem Mall, CallisonRTKL and Dewan have managed to forge a partnership founded on a shared commitment to pushing the boundaries of design, production and delivery excellence. Together, we have navigated the complexities of creating spaces that seamlessly blend aesthetic, functionality, sustainability and cultural identity.

As architects, we recognise that the built environment has the power to shape experiences and influence societies. CallisonRTKL's collaboration with Dewan is testament to the belief that through design integrity we can not only meet the functional needs of today but also create enduring spaces that resonate with the spirit of the Middle East.

The Middle East's design landscape is more than just a canvas; it demonstrates the convergence of tradition and innovation. CallisonRTKL looks forward to further collaboration with Dewan and continued contribution to this ongoing narrative: shaping spaces that inspire, connect and endure."



BIG – BJARKE INGELS GROUP
JAKOB LANGE, PARTNER

"For nearly 10 years BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group – has had a growing presence across the Middle East, which is one of the most important markets for us. Dewan Architects + Engineers is one of our key trusted local partners in the region and it is a pleasure collaborating with them on projects of varying scales and complexities. On the occasion of their 40th anniversary, we wish them all the very best for continued success for many years to come."



KENGO KUMA & ASSOCIATES
NICOLA MANIERO, PARTNER

"Collaborating seamlessly with Dewan to craft an exquisite series of villas on Ummahat AlShaykh Island in Saudi Arabia has been a harmonious venture. Focused on creating an opulent resort for the renowned St. Regis operator, the villas are thoughtfully divided into two distinct typologies: Coral Villas, poised elegantly on the water; and Dune Villas, nestled gracefully on the land.

The design ethos is a marriage of sophistication and nature, drawing inspiration from the island's intrinsic elements. The Coral Villas mirror the organic beauty of the coral reefs, seamlessly integrating with the surrounding waters. The architecture of the Dune Villas pays homage to the majestic desert landscape, incorporating natural materials and earthy tones to merge effortlessly with the island's terrain.

The collaboration emphasises the symbiotic relationship between interior and exterior spaces, seamlessly blending luxurious interiors with the island's natural splendour. Meticulous attention to detail is evident in every facet, from panoramic windows framing breathtaking views to carefully curated interior elements that echo the island's charm.

This collaborative endeavour with Dewan is a marriage of artistic vision and technical prowess, resulting in a series of villas that not only reflects the grandeur of St. Regis but also pays homage to the enchanting essence of Ummahat AlShaykh Island."



MVRDV
JACOB VAN RIJS, FOUNDING PARTNER

"When we won the commission for Abu Dhabi's Pixel in 2017, it was our first piece of work in the Middle East to move from proposal to reality. Despite having a lot of experience elsewhere, in Abu Dhabi we were still seen as 'inexperienced architects from a far-away country'. Dewan was the opposite of that, a firm that had vast experience and a proven track record in the region, so they took us by the hand and helped us manoeuvre in a challenging environment.

For example, in Abu Dhabi, one really feels the impact of an invention from the English-speaking world, 'value engineering', which, coming from the Netherlands, is something we are less familiar with. It was much more business-like, and by engaging in a dialogue with a design partner that knows the system, we were able to ensure that the architecture itself wasn't squeezed out of the project.

On one hand, Abu Dhabi is a place where a lot of foreigners live, yet on the other hand it's a place that still finds its traditions and history important. An over-indulgence in tradition can be a bit crass, so together we found an interesting balance between pushing for something more modern while ensuring that it fits within the local expectations. In our collaboration on Pixel, that approach is visible in the project's reference to oysters, with a hard outer 'shell' and a central courtyard that is like a pearl – when you describe it, it sounds like it could be cheesy, but in reality it turned out quite subtle.

Today, that project stands in the middle of an empty plain, waiting for the surrounding buildings to be constructed. Yet, despite this exposed condition, when you're inside the courtyard, in between the seven towers, it already feels comfortable, secluded and protected from the harsh environment. One day it could become quite a lively area, but for now we get the feeling that together, we were really the pioneers." **D**

CREATIVE ASSETS

In 2024, Dewan acquired a majority stake in DesignLab, a renowned Singapore-based hospitality design firm. This strategic move coincided with Dewan's 40th anniversary celebrations and reaffirmed its commitment to becoming a global, multi-dimensional design consultancy firm.



LEFT TO RIGHT: MOHAMMED ADIB, ALVARO PAREDES AND AMMAR AL ASSAM

Founded in 2016 in Singapore and Vietnam by three partners with a shared passion for hospitality, design and travel, DesignLab has distinguished itself with projects across East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and South America that demonstrate a sensitivity to place, culture and people.

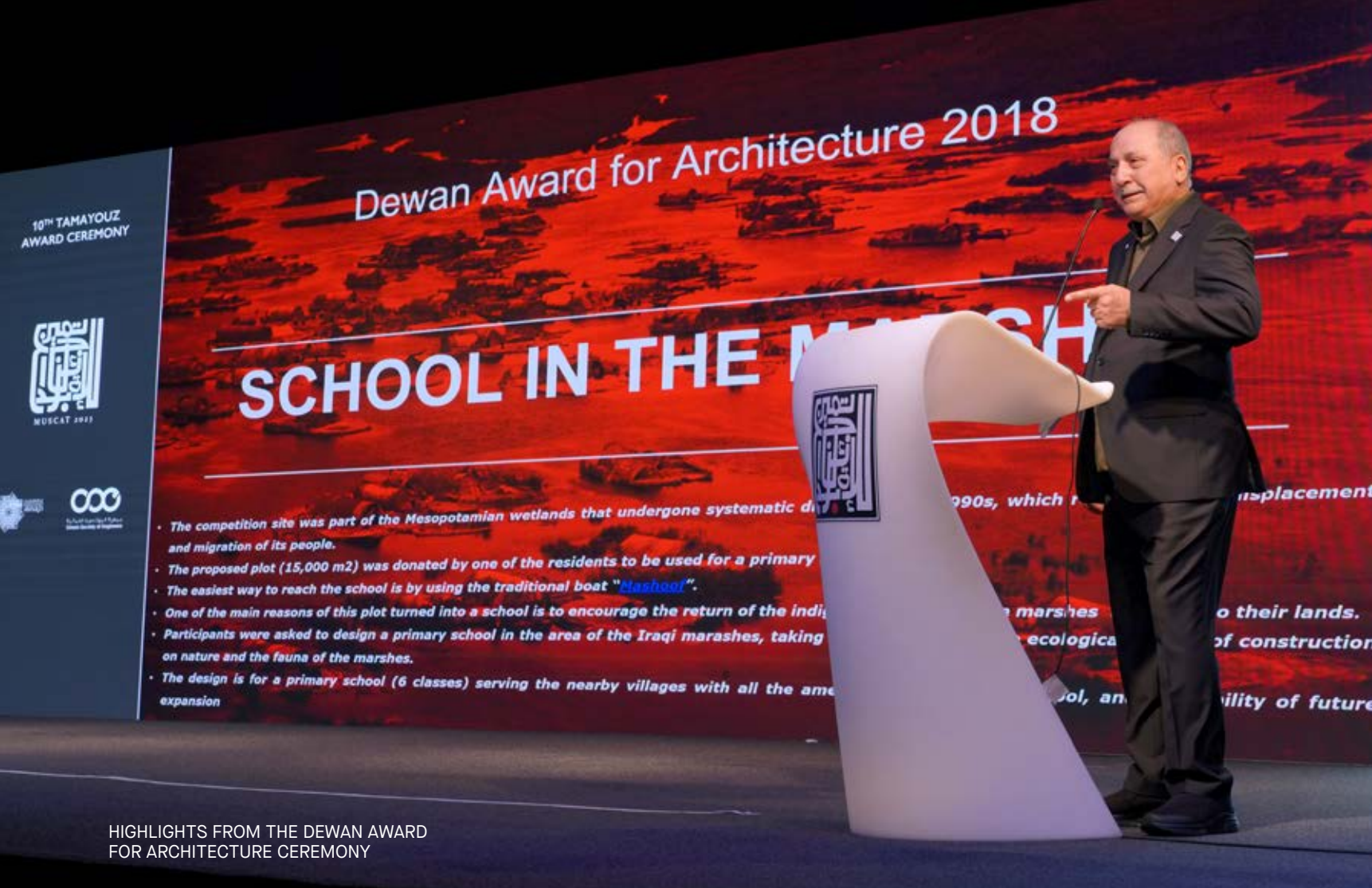
The acquisition has enabled Dewan to significantly enhance its resort design expertise and to strengthen its leadership in the Middle East's hospitality sector. The partnership will leverage DesignLab's extensive experience in sea, mountain and desert resort projects, which are fundamental in driving the flourishing hospitality sector in the region.

"Initiating this venture of global expansion alongside DesignLab transcends mere business objectives; it's about forging meaningful partnerships and embracing diverse perspectives. Our acquisition of DesignLab exemplifies this ethos, reinforcing our commitment to innovation, sustainability and client-centric excellence on a global scale," said Ammar Al Assam, Chief Executive Officer at Dewan Architects + Engineers.

The partnership enables DesignLab to benefit from Dewan's extensive client network and experience in delivering large-scale, multi-disciplinary global projects. Dewan will leverage DesignLab's regional prominence in the Far East to further enhance its Southeast Asia footprint. The integration will also include establishing a DesignLab office within all Dewan offices, facilitating closer cooperation and the integration of systems and resources.

Alvaro Paredes, Principal at DesignLab, says: "The partnership signifies a shared conviction in our mutual strength, recognising that together we are greater than the sum of our parts. In joining forces, we've discovered an unparalleled ally to accompany us on this journey. This partnership is poised to yield remarkable projects and experiences, which will help us grow as a company and as a group. Since founding our company we've yet to encounter a company with whom we are more aligned in terms of vision, goals and values."

The acquisition of DesignLab underscores Dewan's substantial expansion into new territories and reinforces its global presence. Dewan's primary objective is global expansion, specifically focusing on growing its business in new regions and sectors. **D**



REWARDING YOUNG TALENT

Young architects throughout the world are being encouraged and challenged by Dewan's initiatives to develop new talent.

From a modest beginning, Dewan's involvement in nurturing the creativity and skills of tomorrow's architects has expanded to include the prestigious Dewan Award for Architecture, held under the Tamayouz umbrella of competitions and awards. The competition challenges both young and established architects worldwide to envisage real-world solutions to specific, important Iraqi challenges. This practical focus differentiates it from other general award briefs.

The Tamayouz Excellence Award, an independent, non-profit initiative created to elevate the respect of Iraqi architects, was founded by Ahmed Mallak. Originally comprising one award for an Iraqi Graduation Project, it has grown to include nine awards, along with a diverse lineup of scholarships, international design workshops, training and internship programmes, thanks to the encouragement and participation of renowned architects like the late and revered Zaha Hadid. Since the award's outset in 2012, Dewan has provided jury members for judging projects, as well as an annual scholarship for one of the winners of the Iraqi Graduation Project competition, making the firm one of Tamayouz's most valued sponsors. The years of active involvement in the Tamayouz Excellence Award helped encourage Dr. Mohamed Al Assam to initiate the Dewan Award for Architecture in 2018. The award remains a key part of Dewan's corporate social responsibility drive.

"We were really surprised by the international interest in the Dewan Award for Architecture," Dafir Mann, Senior Projects Manager and competition coordinator admits. "Even in the first year, the competition created considerable interest, with over 50 entries. Since then, it has experienced increases both in the number of entries and in the geographical participation."

Mann, who was educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the American University in Cairo, admits that he constantly promotes this project through his role as lecturer for master's level architecture in the UAE, as well as through his participation in competition juries, job fairs, international presentations and workshops.

Perhaps because of Tamayouz and Dewan's efforts to promote the award, participants are now hailing from Latin and South America, as well as the Far East. Shortlisted projects represent diverse country cultures, including Italy, Vietnam, Singapore, Poland, Sweden, China, Spain, Turkey, Iran, India, Egypt, Jordan, the UK and the UAE, among others.

BENEFITS OF THE DEWAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION

To respond to this challenge, entrants must research not only the project's specific physical location in Iraq, but also its cultural and social context. Architects from diverse backgrounds view the brief through their own lenses, providing a range of unique perspectives and approaches to problem-solving.

Although none of the projects submitted to date have been realised, winning submissions must consist of executable, potentially buildable solutions. "You have all these fabulous ideas given to you about how to solve problems. We had a meeting with the governor of Basra and showed him [some 2023 projects] and he was very excited. Even if the authorities are not interested in [or able to implement] specific solutions, they can take the study of the site and the research which has been done - and devise a new project based on that research."





“I believe that we should make positive contributions to society. It gives me considerable satisfaction to assist and recognise creative young people through the Dewan Awards. It also gives me the rare opportunity to work in my homeland.”

MOHAMED AL ASSAM

COMPETITION THEMES

- 2018 – SCHOOL IN THE IRAQI MARSHES**
Design an ecologically focused primary school in a specific Iraqi marshland.
- 2019 – AL-UMMA PARK IN BAGHDAD**
Design a safe, green public oasis within a dense urban area.
- 2020 – ALMEDINA YOUTH HOUSE AND PLAZAS**
Design a multi-activity youth complex and plaza in the Almedina area of Baghdad.
- 2021 – A SANCTUARY FOR HOMELESS GIRLS IN IRAQ**
Design a sanctuary for homeless girls as a means of impacting societal issues.
- 2022 – REHABILITATION CENTRE FOR TERRORISM VICTIMS IN IRAQ**
Design a comfortable space that supports the psychological and physical needs of patients.
- 2023 – THE NEW BASRA WATERFRONT**
Design a vibrant recreational urban destination for the underused Dakeer Island.
- 2024 – THE IRAQ PAVILION FOR A GLOBAL EXPO – BRIDGING PAST AND FUTURE**
Design a pavilion for an international exhibition that celebrates the area’s legacy and promising future.

THE AWARD

Each year, a shortlist of 20 projects is sent to an international jury composed of esteemed architects assembled by the Tamayouz Group. The early competitions saw most entries being submitted by individuals; however, group projects are becoming more common. One advantage of group entries is that they represent the ‘real world’, where collaborations are essential, especially among different disciplines.

“Some of the main criteria of judgment are research, understanding the local situation, as well as the buildability and constructability. The project shouldn’t be ‘up in the clouds’. We have a really high mark for the buildability – the project should be executable, so that it could become reality.”

The competition is one of the few open to international entries that offers the opportunity of a paid internship for the winner. For six months,

with the possibility of extending for an additional six months, the winning architects can work in Dewan’s headquarters, where they receive mentoring and valuable experience. Notably, at least one winning intern has been offered permanent employment.

In lieu of this opportunity, the winner may choose a monetary award. Both options include international media exposure and valuable networking opportunities during the Tamayouz Excellence Award ceremony, along with an impressive addition to the victor’s CV.

THE FUTURE OF THE DEWAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE

The use of technology in architectural design is becoming increasingly prevalent – and in 2023, for the first time, a design concept developed by AI was shortlisted. Additionally, the trend of increasing

international interest and universities’ participation in the award are expected to continue on an upward trajectory, with more entries originating from a greater range of countries.

THE 2023 WINNER IS...

The 2023 Dewan Award for Architecture was based around the New Basra Waterfront and sought proposals to transform the underused Dakeer Island into a vibrant recreational urban destination for locals and visitors. The winners were selected from 137 submissions from 33 countries.

The winner was ADD Architects of Alexandria, Egypt, for its verdant design for the revitalisation of Basra’s Waterfront. Trees are strategically integrated into an innovative architectural design to create a self-sustaining, natural environment. **D**

THE 2024 COMPETITION

A pavilion at an international exhibition is an important showcase for any country. Thus, the theme for the 2024 Dewan Award for Architecture is The Iraq Pavilion for Baghdad International Fair – A Canvas for Mesopotamia. Submissions should reflect and celebrate the legacy of Mesopotamia as a beacon of innovation, art, architecture and ambition while envisioning a promising future. The Iraq Pavilion shall be a realm that celebrates the achievements of Iraqi people through all ages, fostering connections in an era where bridges are the foundation of diplomacy to build future global relationships. The stand-out idea will incorporate a holistic design approach, across multiple disciplines, making it a showcase for creativity and originality.

FORGING AN IDENTITY

As at all successful companies, the image and branding of Dewan has evolved over the decades to reflect the firm's continuous growth, expansion and brand recognition while remaining respectfully loyal both to the original logo and to the company values.

THE ORIGINAL LOGO

The original logo was designed by architect Mohamed Al Assam when he established the company in the early 1980s. It featured a rounded letter 'd' in bold red, surrounded by numerous grey circular lines as a brand mark, underneath which the name 'Dewan Architects and Engineers' was written in both English and Arabic.

The logo design reflected the straightforward nature of branding in the UAE at that time, where the focus was typically on the name rather than on stylistic and graphical elements. Red, a preferred colour of Al Assam, was chosen for its bold and energising attributes. The grey was representative of the technical aspect of the studio's work, while the repeated circular lines, reminiscent of a ripple effect in water, were symbolic of new creative ideas.

A NEW, EMBOLDENED BRANDMARK FOR A NEW ERA

As Dewan grew and expanded to become one of the most respected architectural firms in the region, it sought a rebranding that would reflect its success and prominence. This involved the creation of a new logo, which no longer featured the characteristic circular lines and focused more attention on the name of the company, rather than the letter 'd'.

This process led to the creation of the primary Dewan brandmark, created using a stencilled font that alludes to the boldness of the firm and to the creative nature of the architecture and engineering industry. The result is a solid brandmark that exudes simplicity, clarity and functionality – an effective brand recognition tool and an icon that signifies the firm's values of professional ethics and

respect for the profession, as viewed through the lens of Dewan's loyal team of professionals and its clients and peers.

The stencilled font alludes to interactivity and collaboration, in keeping with the firm's open-door, transparent management style, reflecting how Dewan is a 'window' through which to experience the world that the firm helps to shape. This effect is especially strong when it is die-cut to reveal the image behind it or when it is used as a graphic to mask it.

The new brandmark design is divided into two parts: the Dewan word mark and the 'Architects + Engineers' descriptor.

AN EXTENDED COLOUR PALETTE

The Dewan colour palette of white, light grey, dark grey and Dewan Red was expanded to include Dewan Turquoise, a colour that has traditionally been used extensively in Middle Eastern architecture and is also believed to be synonymous with good fortune and tranquillity.

DOCTRINE FONTS BY LEADING TYPOGRAPHER JONATHAN BARNBROOK

The Doctrine family of fonts was designed by well-known British typographic designer and filmmaker Jonathan Barnbrook; as a contemporary sans-serif typeface it has an agreeable character and recognisable system.

Doctrine Primary is used for paragraph text, while Doctrine Stencil is the primary communications font, applied mainly to titles, headings and display text. Meanwhile, the main typeface for PC and Mac is Arial, to be used when Doctrine is not available.



Dewan
Architects +
Engineers



CONTEMPORARY ARABIC FONTS DESIGNED BY NADINE CHAHINE

The well-crafted and robust Neue Helvetica Arabic typeface – designed by Lebanese designer Nadine Chahine as a partner to the iconic Neue Helvetica typeface – has been adopted for Arabic headlines and text. With its clean hybrid of Kufi and Naskh structures, the modern font is designed to be versatile, formal and easy to read. The Dewan Arabic brandmark features a stencilled version of the Neue Helvetica Arabic typeface, generating a prominent youthful appearance, which is much appreciated in the Arabic-speaking world.

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY LOGOS

For special milestone occasions such as the firm's 25th, 35th and 40th anniversaries, the firm's in-house graphic designers generate commemorative logos to complement the Dewan brandmark.

The bright red 40th anniversary logo, revealed to coincide with Dewan's anniversary celebrations, was inspired by the curved lines of the firm's first logo. The digits are formed by the lines to symbolise a fluid moving track charged with positivity, endless creativity and growth. This logo visually captures the essence of the dynamic firm today: a world-class architectural firm embarking on a new era.

“The evolution of the Dewan logo during our 40-year tenure also signifies the growth of the firm - from a local startup to a very successful global enterprise that has earned respect and recognition in our field.”

AMMAR AL ASSAM

THE POWER OF BRANDING

The new approach to branding and visual identity, which also contributes to heightened brand equity, is in keeping with the multi-award-winning firm's vision for tomorrow: one where Dewan's presence as a participant at prestigious global industry events is poised to increase as part of its expansion into diverse new markets and revenue streams. Today Dewan's brand image enjoys an aura of familiarity, reliability, loyalty and quality – characteristics that sum up the firm. Now, having made their mark, they are planning to be guided by the same ethos for the next 40 years.... **D**

CELEBRATING 40 DESIGN YEARS

To mark 40 years of pioneering design excellence, Dewan hosted a special celebration day to honour its 'Dewanees' - the dedicated individuals who have been at the core of the firm's remarkable journey since its inception. On the scenic lakeside lawns of the Arabian Ranches Golf Club, guests gathered for a memorable occasion filled with camaraderie, merriment and entertainment.





“Our success over the past four decades is thanks to the passion and commitment of every Dewanee. I’m incredibly proud of what we’ve built together, and I know that with all of you Dewan is in good hands.”

MOHAMED AL ASSAM



FUTURE FORWARD

WHAT WILL THE CITY OF THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?



"Future cities will feature sustainable designs with green roofs and living walls, utilising IoT (Internet of Things) systems and smart infrastructure for better resource management. They will include adaptable spaces, with a focus on high-density, mixed-use areas to reduce vehicle reliance and promote public transport and walkability. Construction will be innovative, with 3D printing enhancing productivity and enabling the development of new architectural forms."

DINA ABU TAAH,
SUSTAINABILITY ENGINEER



"The cities of the future will be digitally connected through Building Information Modelling (BIM). Much like digital connections, the cityscapes will be interconnected and will prioritise pedestrian-friendly areas, efficient circulation and public transport. Buildings will be energy-efficient, incorporating renewable energy sources and green technologies."

RYAN CALDEIRA,
BIM MANAGER



"In the coming years, we will have both physical and virtual cities. The physical city will blend organic forms with advanced technology, and biomimetic structures fuelled by renewable energy will be seen everywhere. Focused on sustainability, smart technology and human-centric design, these cities will be resilient, efficient and liveable."

RIMA LABABIDI,
JUNIOR ARCHITECT



"During the coming years we will transform unused lands, such as deserts, into lush green zones hosting civilisations. Using advanced technology, we will create sustainable communities with small suburban areas instead of towering skyscrapers. City designs will foster peaceful, eco-friendly living, harmonising human habitats with nature and promoting a balanced, green future for all."

NINA SCHAKAT,
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER



"Urbanscapes of tomorrow will be dynamic and interactive, using artificial general intelligence (AGI) to gather and process data on human needs. It will seamlessly integrate technology to provide efficient, sustainable solutions, creating a responsive urban environment that anticipates and fulfils the needs of its inhabitants in real-time."

MUTAZ ALMURSHID,
SENIOR DESIGN ARCHITECT



"In sci-fi movies, future cities typically feature skyscrapers and floating high-speed transport. However, from an architect's perspective, cities will be designed to be walkable and self-sufficient, with plenty of green spaces – both horizontally and vertically. The incorporation of advanced technology will simplify life and keep everyone connected."

JAYCINTH DELA CRUZ,
ARCHITECT

Looking towards the next 40 years of Dewan's evolution and the built environment, some of the new generation of 'Dewanees' shared their visions for how the urban landscape will change in the coming years and the role architects will play in that evolution.

WHAT ROLE CAN ARCHITECTS PLAY IN SHAPING THE CITIES OF THE FUTURE?



"Sustainability architects need to heavily guide decision-making from the beginning, [and] specifically during pre-concept. It is impractical to pursue green building initiatives after major design decisions have been finalised. They need to be given the opportunity to counter-argue why the client should invest more to design a green building."

BETTUEL MEHDI,
JUNIOR SUSTAINABILITY ARCHITECT



"As architects, we must design urban spaces that balance density, sustainability and inclusivity to combat overpopulation. Through innovative, community-engaging designs, we will be able to optimise scarce spaces and foster resilient cities that cater to a growing population while protecting the environment and enriching residents' lives for generations to come."

HAITHAM AL HUSSEINY,
ARCHITECT



"Landscape architects can shape future cities by designing green spaces to enhance biodiversity and air quality. They create sustainable, mixed-use developments, optimise pedestrian and cyclist routes, and use smart technology for adaptive landscapes. Their efforts promote environmental stewardship, liveability and efficient urban planning, [while] aligning [these aims] with future city visions."

BASANT HASSAN,
JUNIOR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



"Our role as architects is to guide clients toward sustainable designs by advocating for eco-friendly materials, fostering communal spaces and integrating technology to enhance connectivity. Prioritising environmental harmony and social interaction will allow us to shape future cities that nurture community bonds and a deeper connection with nature."

SANA ZIDAN,
DESIGN MANAGER



"To realise such innovative future cities, it is essential that architects look to the past, observing key principles of good design and fusing them with exciting utopian visions. Smart cities will only be successful if architects perfect the art of marrying functional simplicity with adaptability, resulting in timeless yet resilient projects."

SAFFRON FELLOWS,
JUNIOR ARCHITECT



"Urban planners are the architects of the future cities. They create dynamic, efficient and inclusive communities by integrating green areas into urban landscapes, promoting affordable housing, improving public transport, ensuring equitable access to resources, and safeguarding cultural gems. The future city will not simply be developed; it will be intelligently designed for everyone."

SARANG RAVEENDRAN,
URBAN DESIGNER

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

A commitment to design excellence, innovation and industry leadership has brought recognition to Dewan and its people on the global stage from prestigious societies, awards bodies and trade publications.



2024

FAST COMPANY MIDDLE EAST
MOST CREATIVE PEOPLE IN BUSINESS 2024
AMMAR AL ASSAM
MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANY IN
ARCHITECTURE 2024
DEWAN ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS

ARCHITECTURE LEADERS AWARDS
CEO OF THE YEAR
AMMAR AL ASSAM
HOSPITALITY PROJECT OF THE YEAR – DESIGN
RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL AL KHOBAR, KSA

DESIGN MIDDLE EAST AWARDS
BEST WORKPLACE OF THE YEAR
DEWAN ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS

IDENTITY DESIGN AWARDS
ARCHITECTURE COMMERCIAL
FLYDUBAI CAMPUS

CREATIVEPOOL ANNUAL 2024
BRONZE AWARD SPATIAL DESIGN - COMPANIES
THE FORUM AT DOWNTOWN DESIGN 2023

2023

CONSTRUCTION WEEK
MIDDLE EAST AWARDS
ARCHITECTURE FIRM OF THE YEAR
HIGHLY COMMENDED

ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD
TOP 225 INTERNATIONAL DESIGN FIRMS
RANKING 97TH

BUILDING DESIGN
WORLD ARCHITECTURE 100 2023
RANKING 41ST

ME DIGITAL CONSTRUCTION AWARDS
DIGITAL COLLABORATION
CHAMPION OF THE YEAR
DEWAN ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS

MIDDLE EAST CONSULTANT AWARDS
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
MOHAMED AL ASSAM

METaverse ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR
DEWAN ARCHITECTS + ENGINEERS

14TH REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT
INDUSTRY CHOICE AWARDS
ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR

IDENTITY DESIGN AWARDS
ARCHITECTURE – DESIGN OF THE YEAR
ASTANA GRAND MOSQUE

ARCHITECTURE – CULTURAL BUILDING
ASTANA GRAND MOSQUE

RETHINKING THE FUTURE AWARDS
HOSPITALITY CONCEPT – FIRST AWARD
SO/HOTEL

2022

MIDDLE EAST CONSULTANT AWARDS
ARCHITECTURAL COMPANY OF THE YEAR

DESIGN MIDDLE EAST AWARDS
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
MOHAMED AL ASSAM

ARCHITECTURAL
DIGEST DESIGN AWARDS
INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY AWARD
BABEL 4.0

MEED PROJECTS AWARDS
MEGA PROJECT OF THE
YEAR – UAE NATIONAL WINNER
REEM MALL

GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN AWARDS
MIXED-USE CONCEPT – FIRST AWARD
DRAGON TOWER

UAE SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS
EXCELLENCE & CREATIVE
ENGINEERING AWARD
BEST ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY
2ND PLACE

2020

DESIGN MIDDLE EAST AWARDS
YOUNG TALENT OF THE YEAR
SIMA HAMMAMI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dewan, like all thriving businesses, owes its success to a multitude of people and organisations. We would first like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our dedicated employees. Each of you is integral to the accomplishments of our company. Congratulations, Dewanees: you have made us what we are today. No matter where you are - whether at our Dubai headquarters or in one of our overseas offices - you are a vital member of our family.

Also of huge importance are the developers and clients who have entrusted us with bringing their visions to life. Your confidence in us is an honour. We promise to continue offering a first-class service throughout our next forty years and beyond.

Our carefully selected contractors and subcontractors have rewarded our trust and exceeded our expectations, performing exceptionally across all manner of projects, environments and circumstances. Together, we will continue to build a sustainable future.

This book is dedicated to celebrating all of you. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the Catherine Belbin Communications team and photographer Ales Vyslouzil for their hard work in making this a fitting tribute to our shared successes.

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+ مهندسون
استشاريون

