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R E P O R T E R

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Opportunities & prospects

DUBAI

A FERTILE GROUND FOR
DESIGN & INNOVATION

50+
Inspiring
Designs

Latest
Projects

Santiago Calatrava **Zaha Hadid Architects**

OMA -Rem Koolhaas **Foster+Partners**

BIG -Bjarke Ingels **UNStudio**

10-ON-10: with Stefano Core

Brand Buzz: 50 years of **MERINO Group**

A FERTILE GROUND FOR DESIGN

DUBAI

A SPECIAL FEATURE BY SURFACES REPORTER
WRITE TO US AT PRESS@SURFACES.IN

Perhaps no other city in the world has seen the tremendous amount of transformation that DUBAI has gone through over the very short course of less than 50 years. More precisely the 90's started the foundation of what we now see as the skyline of Dubai – a city which can be counted amongst the most modern ones with the most iconic and technologically advanced architecture in the world. The financial windfall of the 1950s, with the discovery of oil completely transformed the sleepy fishing village into a modern metropolis.

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Some remnants of the old fishing village and its architecture can still be seen in the Old Town area. **Al Fahidi Fort**, which was built all the way back in 1799 is now the oldest building still standing in Dubai. When it was first built, the Fort was used as a residence of the ruler and designed to be a shelter in case of attack, and nowadays it is home to the Dubai Museum – a fitting place to learn more about the history of the emirate.

CHANGING CITYSPACE

The change in financial situation also demanded new style of accommodation for people as well as business facilities which gave rise to the building of the city's first skyscraper - **The Dubai World Trade Centre**. Over the years that follow, local companies in collaboration with intrepid European designers experiment with new forms of architecture. The **Burj Al Arab**, luxury hotel designed by **Tom Wright** of WKK Architects in 1999, cemented Dubai's rise as the face of iconic buildings and luxury destination. This was followed by several other skyscrapers such as the **Cayan Tower** at Dubai Marina, **The Address** at Palm Jumeria and many others. And how can we not mention the Majestic, **Burj Khalifa** – the tallest building in the world.

In the past one year, many Top Architecture and Design firms across the world such as **Zaha Hadid Architects, OMA, Santiago**

Calatrava, have opened offices in Dubai. **SURFACES REPORTER** has shared the recently completed **OPUS Tower** by Zaha Hadid Architects in February issue.

"One architect called Dubai the 'Alice in Wonderland' for architects and designers, a place where their unique imaginative ideas could get appreciated and built."



"Huge advances in design technology are enabling architects building in Dubai to rethink form and space, combining innovative new digital design techniques with much more sustainable construction methods and materials - offering solutions to the urgent ecological challenges we all face today."

**Tariq Khayyat, Head,
Zaha Hadid Architects, Dubai**



Photo: Surfaces Reporter

One of the most interesting things about Dubai, says **Tariq**, is that it conveys a remarkable message of optimism for the Arab world, demonstrating an exceptional degree of ambition and commitment together with a genuine pride in the structure of the city. Through experience, they have learned the importance of implementing the essential social and civic infrastructure.

Dubai has grown into a hub and meeting place for the whole Arab world and beyond. *“To meet such a diversity of people from as far apart as Africa, the Middle East, Eurasia, Europe and India in one place is very exciting,”* he adds.

Reflecting the practice’s growing role in the development of the region, **Foster + Partners** recently opened a new office in Dubai in June 2017. Located in the new Dubai Design District, it will provide a regional base for the practice to serve clients in the Emirate. Foster + Partners’ first project to be built in Dubai was **The Index**, which was commissioned in 2004, followed by two new stores for Apple – most recently **Apple Dubai Mall**, which opened in April 2017.

Meanwhile, **OMA** also completed its project **Concrete** in Dubai last year.

“Dubai is emerging as a global hub for the design and construction industry, exemplified by the varied scope and breadth of our projects in the region. We have been heavily involved in a number of projects over the past two decades, from the Index Tower that opened in 2011, to presently working on the Dubai Design District Creative Community and Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation (DIDI); office developments such as ICD Brookfield Place and the new Mobility Pavilion for the Expo 2020. The opening of our new office in the city reflects our commitment and belief in Dubai as a centre for design and innovation.”

Gerard Evenden, Senior Executive Partner, Foster + Partners





The Dubai Creek Harbour



Wasl Tower

There are a number of large-scale projects which are currently under construction or will be constructed in the future. Currently multibillion-dollar construction projects are taking shape in Dubai. In a report published by Forbes in 2012, says Dubai has recovered faster from the financial crisis than most other countries and now its economy is growing in a higher rate than its counterparts because of its zero tax policy and economic free zones.

Some of the Top projects to watch out include **The Dubai Frame**, **The Dubai Creek Harbour Tower** amongst several others. **UNStudio** unveiled plans for **Wasl Tower**, set to be tallest building in the world with a ceramic facade. The mixed-use tower will be clad in glazed clay tiles that interlace to form sweeping curves, illuminated at night to make it look like the building is breathing.

THE SHIFT TOWARDS DESIGN APPRECIATION & SUSTAINABILITY

The growth of Dubai’s architecture has been booming in the last 15 years or so, even with the economic slowdown in between. Not just architecture, everything related to design, be it artists, fashion designing or industrial designing has been seeing an unprecedented growth. This led to the creation of a design district dedicated to design – **Dubai Design District** or d3 as it is called. It is home to the region’s growing community of creative thinkers.

Today d3 has more than 400 different companies that are a good mix of creators and entrepreneurs. Located at the waterfront near the Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall, it is being built as part of the Dubai Plan 2021 using the Smart City principles which offer digital connectivity to create an innovation-led economy.

Of the six dimensions aligned to Smart Dubai, environment is one of the key focuses, with services such as **solar panel roofing, smart street lighting, and waste management being implemented**. With the implementation of electric vehicle charging points, energy analytics to better enable business partners with energy management, and also recycling across the district, is enabling d3 to become more sustainable, to ultimately benefit end users.

“Not just architecture, everything related to design, be it artists, fashion designing or industrial designing has been seeing an unprecedented growth.”



Dubai is slowly emerging as a design hub for the middle east and even other regions. In a recent interview, d3’s **CEO, Mohammad Saeed Al Shehhi** mentioned how Dubai is transforming with design at its core:

“We found that the industry here is growing at a very significant rate compared to the rest of the world. Dubai will require 30,000 jobs in the next five years. That led to the launch of Dubai Institute of Design and Innovation, the first university that will be hosted at d3, where students can get a Bachelor’s degree in design in partnership with MIT and Parson’s.”

In one of his articles, written last year, Mohammad reflects on the growing popularity of sustainability, “While Dubai has always been associated with a penchant for luxury, the growing popularity of ecologically sustainable and integrated built environments reflects a shift in consumers’ and the industry’s perception of the new age of design in the city. Today, architects and interior designers in the region are increasingly opting for recycled materials in their cutting-edge designs, with woven vinyl flooring, reconstituted stone and consciously sourced upholstery taking centre stage.”

DUBAI DESIGN WEEK 2017



Talking about the success of the recently concluded Dubai Design Week, **Rue Kothari, Director of Downtown Design** said:

“The beautifully designed layout and our strong curation of international and regional brands was incredibly well received by the region’s leading architects and interior designers. Not only did we double in size, but we delivered a high-quality show that demonstrates the credibility and potential of the region’s commercial design market.”

SURFACES REPORTER team enjoyed the exhibition, installations, which also had global grad show where 200 projects from 92 of the best universities were presented to improve lives. **Benedict Floyd, CEO and Co-Founder of Art Dubai Group** that owns and manages Dubai Design Week, says: “In only three editions, Dubai Design Week has grown to equal in stature its sister event Art Week and plays a similar role in establishing Dubai as the region’s capital for culture and creativity.”



Vertica Divedi with Deepankar Chaudhary & team of Hands Carpet during Dubai Design Week