

ARCHITECT

MIDDLE EAST

NEWS, DATA, ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC INSIGHTS FOR ARCHITECTS IN THE GCC

ANALYSIS

Urban planners and expert speakers scrutinise the lack of pedestrian space in Dubai

INSIGHT

Profiling the biggest and best projects that are set for delivery across the Gulf region in 2012

FEATURE

Locally-based architects pick their favourite UAE buildings from the past four decades

BACK TO BASICS

AK Design reinterprets the traditional Arabian courtyard

PAST AND PRESENT

Following last month's 40th anniversary of the UAE, Middle East Architect asked locally-based professionals to pick their favourite building from the past four decades

BURJ KHALIFA

ARCHITECT: SOM
DATE: 2010

“ This building is a magnificent piece of structural engineering, and demonstrates a great synergy between the architects and the engineers. You can see that because all the vertical structural elements are allowed to go down in a straight line to the foundations. There are no transfer beams or slabs and this clearly is the secret of the engineering success of this building. As a result the tower is extremely stiff, both laterally and torsionally. The ‘Y’ shape plan of the tower makes the structure not only relatively simple but it also causes reductions of the wind forces on the tower. As you go up the building each tier moves back in a spiral stepping pattern. This results in a change in the tower's width at each setback. Because of this, the wind vortexes are kept in check as each new tier offers a different building shape. The extreme stiffness combined with the reduced wind loads make the Burj Khalifa an engineering masterpiece.”

Bart Leclercq, Head of Structures, WSP Middle East



A view of the Dubai Creek area, taken in March 1958.



Deira's Clock Tower is visible in the bottom left of this photograph.



DUBAI MUNICIPALITY BUILDING

ARCHITECT: Civic Design Studio/
Pacific Consultants International
DATE: 1979

“ The Dubai Municipality Building could easily be overlooked as an iconic landmark in Dubai but it is one of the few culturally sensitive developments. The viewer is immediately mesmerised by the warren truss space frames that block 80% of direct solar radiation and create a pleasant shaded micro climate. The Dubai Municipality building is a monument that effectively addressed today’s issues of sustainability and green buildings 32 years ago and is more relevant today. It is a truly timeless masterpiece that was decades ahead of its time.”

Ahmed Bukhash, chief architect and founder, Archidentity



DUBAI METRO

ARCHITECT: Aedas/Atkins
DATE: 2009

“ Dubai is one of the fastest growing cities in the world, making the provision of high quality infrastructure facilities absolutely imperative. The metro is a modern day gem, enhancing the culture and business of the emirate by providing an efficient conveyance system. It is at once a symbol of innovation while the station architecture reflects Dubai’s identity and character. These uniquely shaped shell roofs, while modern and iconic, invoke the heritage of pearl diving. The design required skill and bravery, brought early prosperity, and is an integral part of Dubai’s modernism.”

Mohamed Alaa Mandour, founder, KMA



ROLEX TOWER

ARCHITECT: SOM

DATE: 2010

“ I find the Rolex Tower on Sheikh Zayed Road to be a wonderful architectural statement. The tower is an elegant mixed-used building with apartments on the upper level and offices below. Its simple form contains beautifully detailed fritted glass - exactly what you come to expect from SOM. The building does not try and make a statement with strange forms, shapes, colours, textures and materials. Instead, the design is completely stated with sharp corners, an elegant slot on the upper face, and perfectly located set back at the rear. Rolex Tower is beautifully illuminated at night in the same simplicity as it reflects the sunlight during the day. Commissioned by Ahmed Seddiqi and Sons, it has a lot to say about the successful cooperation and understanding of planning and design by an owner and architect working together.

Steven W Miller, regional manager, Perkins Eastman





DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE

ARCHITECT: John Harris
DATE: 1979

“As with anything that weathers the test of time and matures, the Dubai World Trade Centre tower has slowly and gracefully aged into a quiet icon in a veritable city of icons. Admittedly, the beehive façade is not much to look at by comparison to the more modern looking buildings but it represents a turning point in the development of Dubai into a world capital of design and architecture. While discussions about sustainability abound, the DWTC façade seems oddly forward thinking, and more responsible in that respect. I admit that I was not particularly enamored by the building when I first saw it in 1998, but since I made Dubai my home in 2006, it has grown on me. How we feel about architecture is inexplicably visceral. Such is how architecture impacts each and every one of us.”

Hisham Youssef, Gensler, and founding board member of AIA's Middle East chapter





NATIONAL BANK OF DUBAI

ARCHITECT: Dubarch with Carlos Ott and Norr Architects

DATE: 1998

“ The headquarters building for the National Bank of Dubai is one of the emirate’s first deliberately iconic modern buildings, situated on the creek in the heart of the city. The structure of this modern tower is expressed very clearly and the shapes are simple and powerful; it is a ‘bridge’ supported at the sides by two massive granite columns. On the creek side, the curtain wall curves gracefully from top to bottom, like a billowing sail. The reflections of the creek shimmer on this glazed facade, and change with the light. With its clearly modern yet subtle interpretation of the hull and sail, The NBD building maintains a reference to its context. As it mirrors back to Dubai Creek, the lifeline and origin of Dubai’s beginning as a trading hub, it stands as an elegant reminder of the city’s heritage and history.”

Sumaya Dabbagh, principal at Dabbagh Architects