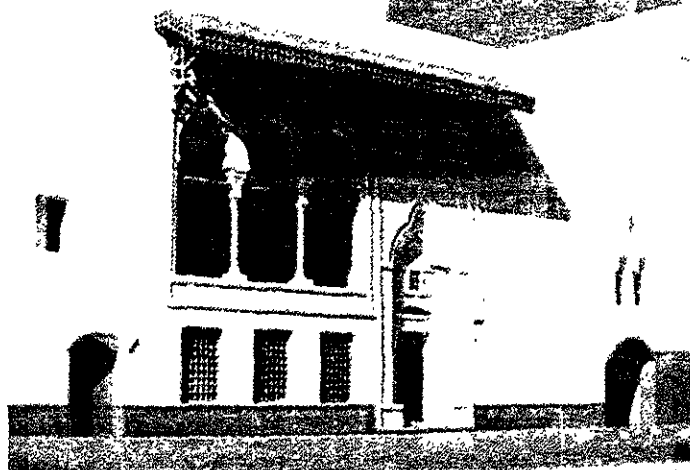
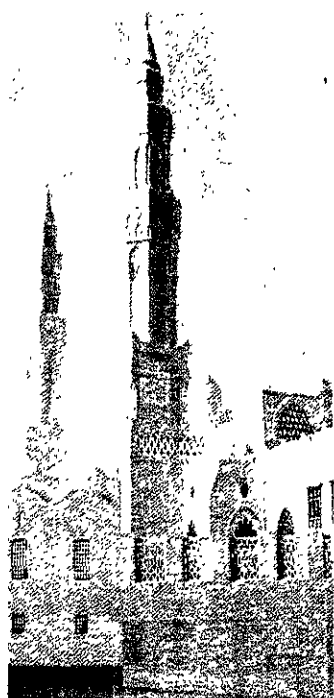


TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE FINDS A ROYAL PATRON (Part II)

By: Haroon Sugich

From: ARTS Magazine

Jeddah of the 1970's was an enormous, roaring boomtown construction site sprawling out in all directions in a half-laid foundations, skeletal rising skyscrapers, upturned earth, the broken refuse of demolition, piles of rebar and pipeline, road-blocks and detour signs. It was here that Abdel Wahed El Wakil found his first creative arena. He was commissioned by Ahmad Abdullah Al Sulaiman to design a palace in Jeddah's fashionable Hamra district. "He had obtained a design whilst in California several years earlier. He approached me with his California design and asked me to give it a "touch of Arabesque"; something to make it look Moorish. I refused and so we began over again from scratch, with a different design philosophy. What is interesting in this exchange is that Wakil, through a combination of persuasive charm and a genuine desire to please his client managed to persuade someone who had no particular interest in or commitment to Islamic architecture to relinquish modernism in favour of tradition. More significantly, the lavish palace not only succeeded in pleasing its owner beyond his wildest dreams but set a trend toward the re-



vival of Islamic architecture in the city of Jeddah.

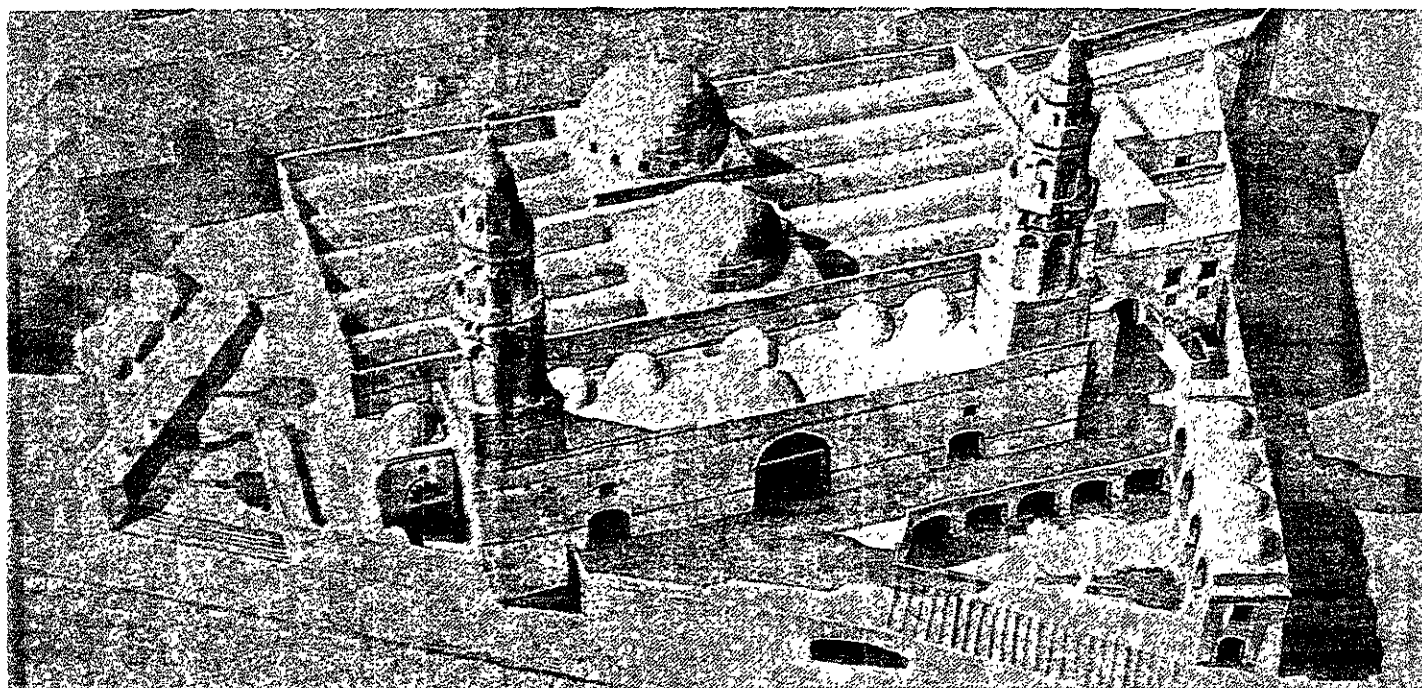
One year after completion of the Sulaiman palace Abdel Wahed El Wakil won the newly established Aga Khan Architectural Award for his Agamy House. Hassan Fathy, in the same ceremony, received the special Chairman's Award for his critical role as the reviver of architectural tradition in Islam.

His Majesty King Fahd's patronage of Islamic architecture has until recently, been less apparent and yet the implications of his involvement are, if anything, even more profound. In the 1970's Prince Fahd, the then Crown Prince, charged Jeddah's mayor

with developing a contemporary architectural style that would reflect the Kingdom's Islamic heritage and its centrality to the Muslim world while conforming to the infrastructural needs of a modern society. Despite the preoccupations of the government with developing infrastructure it had become clear to the heira-pparent that Saudi Arabia was in danger of losing its cultural identity unless steps were taken to reconcile modernity with Islamic tradition. He had quietly taken up the gauntlet.

It took the mayor the better part of a decade before he found an architect who could articulate the vision of the King in his designs, blending the traditional and modern with integrity and depth. The architect was Abdel Wahed El Wakil.

The impact of the Sulaiman palace propelled Wakil into Said Farsi's inner circle of artists and advisers and placed him under the indirect patronage of King Fahd. By the early 1980's, with most of the nation's infrastructure in place, the King began focusing attention on the creation of beautiful mosque architecture. Wakil had already designed the elegant Sulaiman mosque which was constructed on a site directly across from the palace. It



was his first attempt at sacred architecture and it ignited the desire deep within the architect to continue working in this most elevated discipline within Islamic architecture. Among the many beautification projects supervised by the Jeddah municipality, the most controversial has

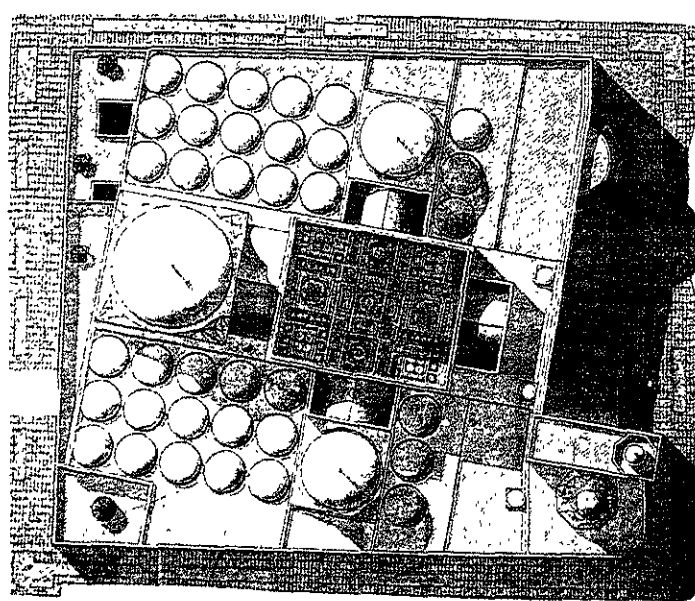
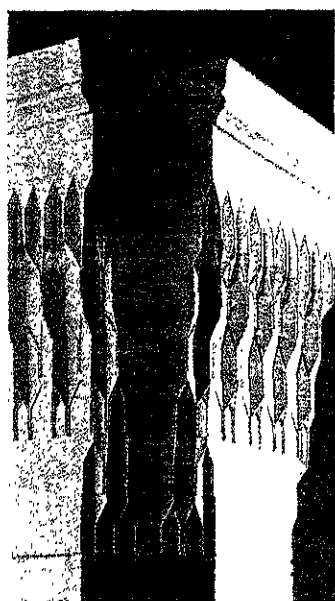
been the decorative sculpture that has been placed throughout the city. Wakil expressed to the mayor his discontent with much of what was on display and the mayor challenged him to create a better sculpture. Wakil accepted the challenge in principle and then countered by offering to design a small mosque as a kind of functional sculpture. Farsi was enchanted with the idea and immediately selected a site on a tiny chersonese standing out from Jeddah's waterfront Corniche.

Wakil created a gracefully stunning design inspired in part by the haunting silhouette of the ancient Geyoushi mosque set on a mountain high above the city of Cairo. Before it had even been built the Island Mosque, as it came to be called, won an international award from the authoritative London-based Architectural Design Magazine and proved that Wakil was not only an in-

spired mannerist, but a gifted classicist. The Jeddah Municipality, in association with the Ministry of Hajj and Awqaf commissioned Wakil to make a series of mosque designs to adorn the Corniche and to provide citizens with ravishing waterside places to pray. Each design is differ-

ent, each has its own thesis, each is modest in scale and each is breathtaking. Wakil's Corniche mosques of Jeddah are becoming architectural classics.

Madinah Road in Jeddah has, in the last decade, been transformed from a quiet residential street at its beginning and a desert wilderness





at its middle and end to the bustling city's main commercial boulevard - a corridor of skyscrapers and shopping malls. Situated along the northbound lanes of the first segment of roadway between the downtown and Palestine street is the site of the King Saud mosque. First erected in the 1950's during the reign of Saudi Arabia's second monarch when the quality of labor and materials available was much lower than it is today. The King Saud Mosque was condemned in the early 1980's as structurally unsound. Under royal decree from His Majesty King Fahd, the King Saud Mosque was ordered razed and rebuilt. Abdel Wahed El Wakil was commissioned to design the mosque that would stand in its place.

El Wakil is the first contemporary Islamic architect to enthusiastically design against a backdrop of modernism. The King Saud presented the challenge of cre-

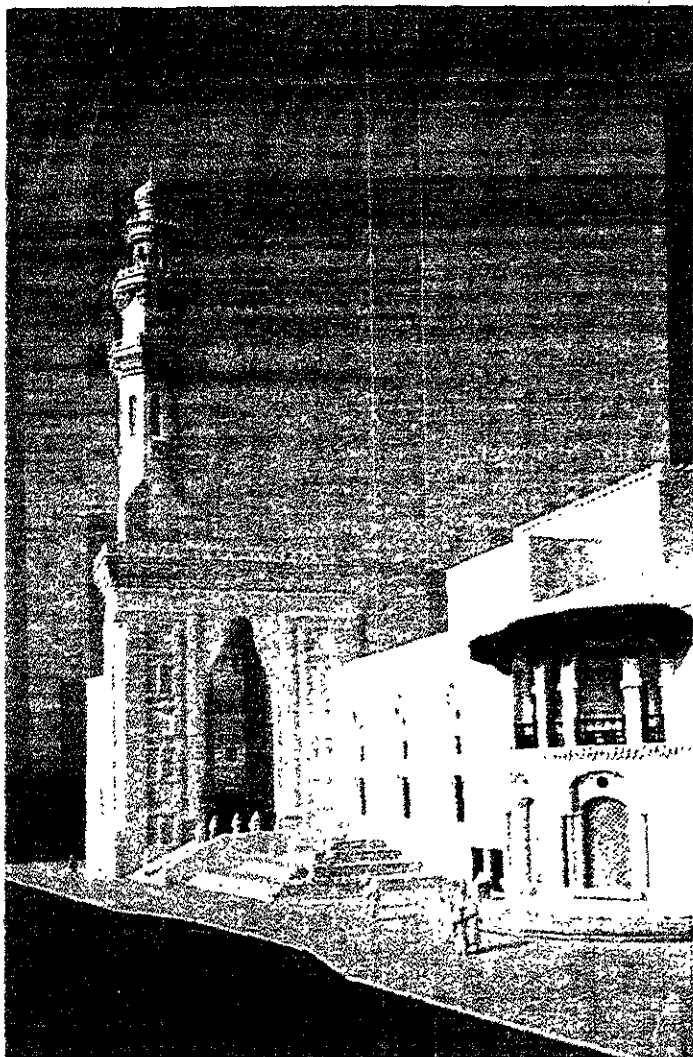
ating a mosque design that would neither clash with nor be dwarfed by the towering monoliths that dominate the skyline. He looked to the massive Sultan Hassan Madrassah in Cairo and adapted elements from this grand architectural masterpiece. The overall design is, however, boldly original, holding its own against the massive forces of modernity with dynamic, innovative elegance and a soaring minaret. The culmination of King Fahd's concerns for contemporary Islamic architecture is centered in the sacred city of Al Madinah Al Munawwara. It is here that the King has chosen to concentrate his patronage. Aside from the ambitious extension of the Mosque of the Prophet that is under way, the King, has commanded the renovation and extension of two the most sacred subsidiary mosques in Islam. Masjidba and Masjid Qiblatain, which

will be funded from His Majesty's privy purse. Once again the architect is Wakil, who is working with Bakr and Yahya Bin Ladin of the Bin Ladin Organization, the oldest and largest continued on page 127 Traditional Architecture finds a Royal Patron - continued from page 50 contracting firm in Saudi Arabia.

Masjid Quba, the first mosque in Islam is set upon an intersection on the outskirts of Al Madinah overlooking one of the city's last remaining date groves. From the moment he began designing Quba, Wakil was enwrapped in the blessing of his task and by its enormous responsibility. When he finished the designs he wept. The building which has taken shape is infused with this intense dedication. One of the distinguishing features in the new Masjid Quba is the architect's reinstatement of the courtyard. "Today there is a tendency to eliminate the

courtyard from mosque architecture as an irrelevant element. The courtyard is among the most important symbolic spaces in the mosque. It is the opening to the heavens. It need not be covered. It should be open. Functionally it allows for spill over. Instead of people praying in the street outside which they do everywhere in Saudi Arabia, they can pray in the courtyard. The courtyard is to the mosque what the garden is to the house".

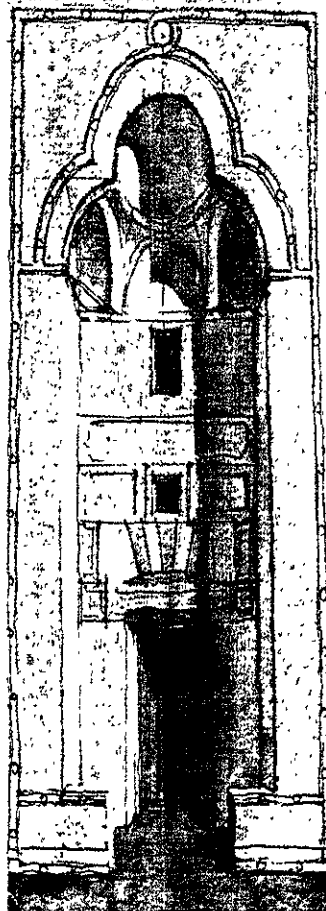
The use of traditional technology in the building of Quba instead of poured concrete and steel has allowed for an unexpected blessing that has nonetheless been inherent to mosque building from the beginnings of Islam. "It is easy to pick up a brick and carry it. There are no machines or precast units. With a shovel and a brick and some mortar anyone can come and build. The site engineer found an old man working on the mosque like



this. He went to find out who hired him. He checked and found he was not even on the payroll. He went back to the old man and said, "What are you doing?" The old man said, "I want to have thawwab (a divine reward)". There was another old man of Madinah who when he saw the unshuttered domes rising up came to us and said, 'The angels are working with you.' because he could not imagine bricks floating like this in mid-air. When a technology induces a believer to say that the angels are present, this is deautilful. This is a human technology rather than a

speculative one. This would never have happened with poured concrete". With Qiblatain the architect was presented with an entirely different challenge. "The act of changing directions must be expressed in the design of the mosque. This is critical. Beyond this Qiblatain has a more rural aspect than Quba". Both mosques have an integrated housing scheme as part of the design. "The mosquetends to be isolated now from the rest of the community. These two mosques are calculated to re-establish the architectural connection between the

community and its places of worship. The mosque should extend its influence over every aspect of society". His Majesty King Fahd ibn AbdelAziz has undoubtedly recognized the reality of this statement and has chosen to focus his patronage on the first community of Islam to revive the inspired traditional art of mosque architecture. With the recent establishment of the King Fahd Prize for Islamic Architecture, with His Majesty's active support of International Heritage Trust and with his support for the genius of Abdel Wahed El Wakil, King Fahd ibn Abdel Aziz has emerged as the pre-eminent patron of Islamic architecture in the Muslim world today. *



Synopsis

* Subject of the Issue:

Green Architecture aims at creating an high efficient building system which copes with the surrounding conditions of the local environment and utilises its natural resources. Using natural renewable resources of energy such as solar or wind energy is considered a crucial issue. The buildings have to be provided with systems and equipments which aim to make use of natural local recourses to decrease the consumption of electricity as a main source of power. Moreover Green Architecture aims at using recycled materials and minimize the amount of wastes. (P. 13)

* Competition of the Issue:

The Agency of Energy Planning in cooperation with the Ministry of Construction and New Urban Communities, called for an architectural competition among young architects and students to apply the principles of green architecture in the design of an urban area of 2500 Feddan, in Toshca to house 100 thousand inhabitants.

Three projects were awarded the first prize equally. The winners are:

* Dr. Rawia Gadallah with Kareem Kesseba, Hassan Ashahat with Magdi Mohamad and Mamdoh Mattar. (P. 15)

* Project of the Issue:

The New German Parliament Building - Berlin

The building was designed by the German Architect Paul Wallot by the end of last century. It was burned in the year 1933. The building was then used after merging East and West Germany. An International competition was held for the regaining the reuse of the building. Architect Norman Foster won the first prize. (P. 22)

* Technical Article

GRC as new building material. (Part I)

written by: Mohamad Reda Abu Shousha (P. 18)