An Interview with cutting edge architect

Hani Rashid

Concrete Conundrums in Hurghada

Around the House Around the Art
Contents

Architecture

International Architect
Hani Rashid profiled
Asymptote partner on design and the changing nature of architecture....pages 30 - 37

Competition Report
An Official Smart Village
Reporting on the official competition for a cyber community....pages 38 - 41

Rediscovery
Le Corbusier's rendition of the Tunisian vernacular
Modern domestic architecture in light of Le Corbusier's North African experience....pages 42 - 47

Visionaries
Medina competition jurors profiled
For each juror biographical information is augmented with an illustrative project....pages 48 - 53

Beyond Spectacle
Metaphorical Entrances of Tourist Villages
Designs to provoke questions about the visual impact and meaning of architecture....page 54 - 57

Local Project
Remodelling a House in Hurghada
Demonstrating the potentials for discussions between architect and client....pages 58 - 63

Fine Arts

International Art Scene
Context Inflecting Content
London Nomad show at the medieval Cairo house, Zeinab Khatoun, discusses the tension between the local and global....pages 68 - 73
Table of Contents

Interiors

Residential Design
Minimalist living
Art is the driving force behind this interior design....pages 64 - 67

As Always

Editorial.... page 6
Medina's Chatline.... page 8
Calendar of Events
Exhibitions, fairs and conferences in Egypt and abroad.... pages 10 - 14
News
A variety of news items from the worlds of architecture and art.... pages 16 - 22
Projects in Progress
Progress report on major architectural projects currently under construction in Egypt.... pages 24 - 29
Listings
Galleries, museums and places of interest, artistically speaking.... pages 76 - 79
No Comment
Our continuing look at architectural atrocities in Cairo.... page 80
With renovations complete on Cairo's early 20th century Stock Exchange building, a new, high-tech trading floor opens in May. But in architectural terms, the modifications to the Bourse are simply cosmetic – not an aggressive response to changing global business practices. In spite of the installation of a new Automated Trading System. This is a disappointment in contrast to architectural developments elsewhere. Take for example, the redesign of the New York Stock Exchange trading floor by US-based architect Hani Rashid (profiled in this issue) and his partner Lise Anne Couture.

But architecture is often relegated to the realm of building and thus denied its role as a tool for social development. At a recent Medina seminar, Egyptian-American architect and scholar Tarek Naga looked at how architecture responds to and affects societal constructs, specifically with regard to the question "Is architecture getting more intelligent?" (see review). The responses from the architecture students, academics and professionals in attendance, however, suggested some reluctance to think deeply about the way people interact with each other and their environment. But whether we choose to think about it or not, architecture is rapidly morphing – even in Cairo.

With the Ministry of Communications & Information Technology investing in the Pyramids Smart Village and new or revitalised business districts emerging in the downtown core, on the Boulaq Aboul Ela corniche, and in the shadow of the Mugattam Hills, it’s surely time for architects and planners to look beyond nostalgic spectacle – meaning gold-leaved capitals and trompe-l’oeil ceilings no less than "Fatimid style" woodwork – as the force that drives design.

Yasmeen M. Siddiqui

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Shazli Al Mansour, Cairo Stock Exchange Trading Floor

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