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A New Era of Design

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RIYAD JOUCKA

Middle East Architecture Network (MEAN*)
Architect

Working at the nexus of design, emerging technologies and local culture, Middle East Architecture Network (MEAN*), led by architect Riyad Joucka, is on the path to redefining a new architectural language for the Middle East by juxtaposing a contemporary approach to design with local materials, using cultural heritage as reference. Having previously worked in cities such as Hong Kong and New York, Joucka is keen to apply his experience and knowledge within the Middle East context.

“The Middle East, and the UAE in particular, has the most potential and opportunities in terms of growth, and a forward-thinking vision for a future of innovation and collaboration. With a young median age population, there is a wealth of talent and potential to tap into,” he says.

MEAN* is currently working on integrating new ideas and methodologies of design into emerging spaces, buildings and products.

“Our portfolio features an array of projects that vary in scale and complexity. The overall theme of the work is to take indigenous culture, materials and building methods as a starting point for responding to the client's brief through meaningful, innovative design. We are currently

working on a few commercial interiors that reflect this method,” Joucka says.

MEAN* has already collaborated with a number of high-profile partners, such as Audi (designing the ‘Audi Innovation Hub’, a pavilion that embodies the brand’s ethos of ‘Advancement through Technology’ while reflecting on the theme of ‘connections’), Spanish brand Nagami (creating a 3D-printed chair featuring undulating patterns that investigates the possibilities of robotic 3D printing for the design and production of bespoke furniture), as well as the Roads and Transport Authority (creating a 3D-printed bus stop scheme that reflects on the strong influence emergent technology will have on the future of our cities). Joucka has recently also revealed a concept for living in isolation – an architectural response to a post-COVID-19 world. House 00 sits on the soaring peaks of Jebel Jais, northeast of Ras Al Khaimah, and references traditional elements of local residential architecture.

“The modern design landscape in the region has been overpowered by ideas that are imported from the west,” Joucka shares. “I believe that it is our responsibility as a new generation of architects and designers to change that, harness local talent and focus on build[ing] a better future for our cities.”

