

# HONOR ME

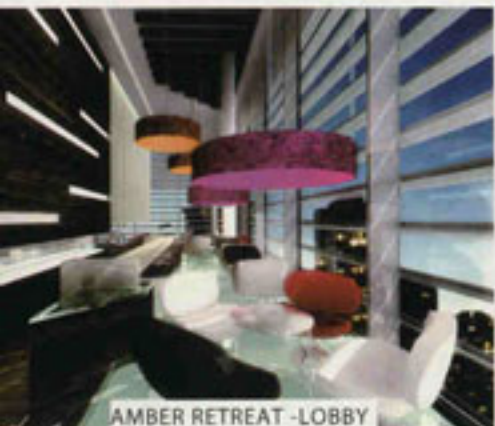
THE ART OF LIVING

JUNE 2008



# HIGH-END EXCELLENCE

With worldwide acclaim for his remarkably accomplished projects, Galal Mahmoud has successfully reached a wide and diversified audience with his designs, stretching from Beirut to Paris and Greece, all the way to the United States. Mahmoud first stepped into the world of professional architecture and interior design in 1987, starting in Paris, later establishing the firm GM-Architects with Lebanese partners in 1997. Today GM-Architects operate on a vast array of projects in different locations around the world, constantly delivering profound excellence and perfection to their clients.



AMBER RETREAT - LOBBY



AMBER RETREAT-ITALIAN RESTAURANT



AMBER RETREAT-LOBBY



AMBER RETREAT-BATHROOM



AMBER RETREAT-OUTDOOR TERRACE

What motivated you to study architecture and what led you into the world of interior design?

A profound interest in all creative expressions, traveling with my parents from the age of five, discovering the ancient cities of the Mediterranean area, and last, a passion for precise and technical drawing and model-making since the age of 12.

You have been quoted as saying, "I am an architect who wants to leave a trace." Can you elaborate on that statement?

God has given us intelligence and a everlasting drive to evolve mankind's living and place in the world; it is, therefore an obligation for every being to leave a trace, each at their own level and scale, and architects are even more exposed to this fact as they have a critical influence on man's well-being and are the first to have provided shelter. Every being is a naturally-born architect with the capacity to provide shelter for their beloved ones as a survival instinct.

A design firm has the responsibility to create work that will have a positive effect on individuals. What, in your opinion, are the main components that support building a new project?

One must comprehend the real needs, analyze and provide a critical and well thought solution-finding process, understand the context in which the project is being built and provide an approach that firstly assimilates the context, and secondly, responds with a modernistic approach, and most important of all, understand that every lived-in space is a lived-in experience that will influence the way you live. Walking through the space, creating the right proportions, integrating and taming the light, playing with colors, working on the tactile effect of finishes and materials and providing the right perspectives all combined together will create the required positive impact.

How has living and studying in the world's most artistic cities affected your perspective towards architecture and design?

The creative process is not born within you and it needs to be constantly nurtured. Visiting and understanding all artistic expressions such as cities, arts, sculpture, and movie making will influence and help you develop a creative process. Learning about others and history will help you understand your own mind and bring out the creative flow. Always be critical about things and learn how to



AMBER RETREAT-BEDROOM



AMBER RETREAT-LOUNGE



AMBER VALLEY-MOORISH SPA



AMBER VALLEY-MOORISH SPA



AMBER VALLEY



AMBER VALLEY

appreciate them. Always ask yourself, why do I like this what is it that produces this effect?

Being internationally exposed to different projects, how do you manage to grant each project its own identity?

By creating a blank page every time, by assimilating the local cultures, living traditions and client needs, each of which will influence my design and provide each project with its own identity.

You started working in Amman on the Crowne Plaza Hotel back in 2001, continuing to work on The Living Wall and Amber Valley along with Foster +. Can you tell us more about these projects, and would you consider establishing full operative offices in Amman?

We were approached in 2001 for the renovation of the Crowne Plaza, and this project has taken a lot of time to be implemented. It seems the project is currently being built, and we hope the original designs as proposed will be implemented with the required detailing, finishing and quality. We are currently building a day beach resort at the Dead Sea, the first of its kind in the region, covering more than 25,000 square meters. It will cater to families, singles and VIPs and it will provide five-star accommodations for day use, such as numerous pools, private day cabanas (your dream beach house by the sea for the day), private day beds by private pools, a children's area, beach bars, restaurants and a day spa on the water.

The Amber Valley resort and spa is a five-star boutique hotel of 100 keys. It traces the history of the Levantine culture through various sleeping experiences. The main building; the fortress that will host hotel guest rooms all with dramatic sea views; the plateau village that will host the villas ranging from 110 square meters to 350 square meters each with its own private pool, home theater and private dining facilities; and the bedouin tent settlement by the sea that will feature accommodations in a five-star setting. Among them will be numerous restaurants, bars and the first Moorish spa with 3500 square meters of a holistic experience.



AMBER VALLEY-MAIN



AMBER VALLEY-BUNGALOW TERRACE

As for the Amber Retreat Hotel as part of the Living Wall multi-use development with Norman Foster and Partners, we are acting as interior designers for an urban boutique hotel. The design is modern yet warm and soothing for the business traveler. Public facilities will link the visitor to the hip Amman crowd who will also be making use of the public facilities. International and local artists will have their works featured through temporary and permanent exhibitions. The concept here is to bring a completely new and modern design to the city of Amman while also encouraging synergies between local and international cultures and thinkers.

What do you think needs to be done to help improve architectural aspects in the Middle East?

Time and critical approaches to every single project. Developers in the Middle East are always in a hurry to commercialize their projects and this rarely leaves the time for architects to think and challenge their thoughts. Another important factor is to encourage synergies between local and internationally-renowned firms on joint-venture projects, as each will introduce their experiences and challenge the other in a constructive and creative manner. ■



EDDE SANDS-BYBLOS LEBANON



EDDE SANDS-BYBLOS LEBANON



LEVANT FUSION



LEVANT FUSION