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28th October 2009 Urban Exchange: The Souk Result of RIBA Persian Gulf Chapter Student Ideas Competition Announced

The result of the student competition 'Urban Exchange: The Souk' was announced at a reception held at the British Embassy in Abu Dhabi, capital of the UAE, on Wednesday evening (21 October).

The announcement coincided with the formal launch of the new RIBA Persian Gulf Chapter, which will provide local support for architecture, architects and co-professionals in the region.

The judges picked out five schemes which they felt gave the best response to the competition brief, and each student team will receive a prize of £500 and a Certificate of Commendation.

They are :

- Shruti Gupta**,
Abu Dhabi, studying at the School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi
- Haitham Mohammed Al Busafi, Aliya A Sattar Al Hashim, Ahmed Abdullah Al Muqbali, Adi AL Farei**,
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
- Nasreen Al Tamimi**,
UAE, studying at Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalunya, Spain
- Esraa Ali Osman Mohammed, Marwa Ahmed**,
UAE University, Al Ain
- Navid Nikpour**,
Islamic Azad University, Dubai Campus

The competition judging panel was chaired by Peter Jackson, Architect Advisor in the HH Ruler's Office, Sharjah, and included Principal Judge Sir Michael Hopkins CBE, Dr Yasser Elsheshtawy of UAE University, Dr Adil A. Al-Mumin of Kuwait University and George Katodrytis from the American University of Sharjah, plus two observers from RIBA Competitions.

Students had been set the challenge to explore new visions and develop design proposals for 'the city'. It set the challenge of re-addressing the nature of street culture and its human activities in an urban context. Students were asked to choose a site in an urban context which they felt was in need of rejuvenation, and come up with ideas and concepts representing a modern interpretation of the Souk.

There were 19 student entries to the competition, and the judges were pleased to see a wide variety of responses to the brief. Schemes had tended to fall into three broad categories : those that focused on the urban grain ; those that were primarily 'building specific' ; and others which had chosen to focus on the process and generic issues around the theme. The result was a great diversity of ideas and approaches and this made for an interesting assessment.

Although no single winner emerged the judges felt there were some quality elements within each of the five schemes selected hence the decision to make five equal Commendation awards.

Jury chairman Peter Jackson commented "While the entrants might be disappointed that no 1st, 2nd, or 3rd prizes were awarded, this was not an easy competition brief. Student architects are generally taught to focus a great deal on the form and function of individual buildings, and as a result often fail to see buildings in relationship to one another, and in particular to the spaces we can create between them. It was these special qualities of urban and architectural design that this competition sought to draw out.

"It is also important to demonstrate that the RIBA, and RIBA competitions are seeking design of high quality, and I believe that many of these entrants show the skill and ability to achieve this. The competition must be a learning experience for those of us who wrote the brief, for the Jury and for the students and their tutors. The Persian Gulf Chapter is very much looking forward to our next competition!"

Sir Michael Hopkins added "The bringing together of the Schools in the GCC region to think about issues of context, place and sustainability, in their related but particular areas, is a very valuable exercise, which it would be worthwhile to repeat I will come back next year to help judge it!"

The judges were highly appreciative to all entrants for providing such an enthusiastic and diverse range of submissions, and for their high standards of presentation.

Images and a summary of the judges' comments are attached with this release.

Urban Exchange : The Souk RIBA Student Competition Award Winners

The objective of the competition was to explore new visions and develop design proposals for 'the city'. It set the challenge of re-addressing the street culture and its human activities to the urban context. Students were asked to choose a site in an urban context, which they felt was in need of rejuvenation, and come up with ideas and concepts representing a modern interpretation of the Souk.

Jury Panel
Sir Michael Hopkins, Principal Judge
Peter Jackson, Architect Advisor, HH Ruler's Office, Sharjah (Chair of Panel)
Dr Yasser Elsheshtawy, UAE University
Dr Adil A. Al-Mumin, Kuwait University, Kuwait
George Katodrytis, American University of Sharjah

The Commended Schemes



Scheme G17 : Shruti Gupta

"This scheme selected the once bustling markets of the Jama Masjid and Red Fort precinct in Delhi, a main aim being to revive the lost glory of Asia's biggest Mosque. The judges noted the high quality presentation and especially appreciated the hand drawings. Although not fully translated into an architectural solution the scheme demonstrates a fascinating analysis, urban vision, and a strong response to the brief."



Scheme G24 :

Haitham Mohammed Al Busafi, Aliya Sattar Al Hashim, Ahmed Abdullah Al Muqbali, Adi Al Farei
"The proposed site is within a beautiful natural park of mangroves behind Qurum beach in Muscat. The main idea is a mega-structure with a souk in the middle, under a multicultural cover of terraced roof gardens. The judges praised the daring quality of the scheme even though it fails to relate to an urban context and lacked depth in sensitivity to landscape and site context. However the judges appreciated its creative approach, the quality of presentation and visual impact of its striking graphics."



Scheme G27 :

Nasreen Al Tamimi
"Set on the coastal edge of Fujairah, this scheme provides an interesting analysis in which the competitor has designed the conditions for a souk rather than a souk itself. The design focuses on creating an intricate shaded geometry linking a series of in-between spaces between scattered buildings on one edge of the city, and attempts to make a place for a bazaar that is accessible and hospitable. Although there is little focus on activities within, or with how people might use the spaces, this was an interesting response to the brief."



Scheme G35 :

Esraa Ali Osman Mohammed, Marwa Ahmed
"This scheme provides an imaginative new gateway area to Al Fahidi Fort in Bur Dubai. The theme is a contemporary solution focusing on the redevelopment of the area surrounding the fort, incorporating underground parking. Whilst the planning of the souk itself and its architecture remain largely unresolved, the competitor has demonstrated a good understanding of scale and some appreciation of the sensitivity of the site."



Scheme G38 :

Navid Nikpour
"This project on a city block adjacent to Dubai's Al Bastakiya district, creates a perimeter souk to frame a neighbourhood. Although the souk is somewhat isolated and the scheme doesn't successfully integrate or transform the fabric of the city, the scheme does create some potentially beautiful public spaces (though not part of the souk). Whilst urban and social issues are disregarded the scheme's interesting ideas are well presented, with interesting analysis and detail."

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