

THE CREATIVE BOLTHOLE IN THE BALTIC: WHY THE SWEDISH ISLAND OF GOTLAND IS ON THE MAKE

MONOCLE

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BEIRUT INSIDE
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The dynamics of dynasty: Do families do it better?

It's all relative: from politics to media to design,
MONOCLE REPORTS on the mechanics of the family firm



"Just wait till I get my hand on the tiller"

Is this bunch the better bet?

"What the flock are they thinking?"

"My brother better not bugger things up"

"Dad has to sell before my 25th"

+1 Lebanon
...
A 32-page national survey

+2 São Paulo
...
A 24-page city survey

"Being on Twitter is not what I call a marketing strategy"

The granddaughter with grander ideas

Marketing director who's buffed up the brand

The dad as dealmaker

CEO who's waiting for papa to go so he can get aggressive

Grandpa as the good shepherd

Chairman of the board and brand guardian-in-chief

The matriarch and the muse

Mum as the real power broker and in-house therapist

The grandson with delusions of grandeur

Technology chief officer who lives in the cloud

11 UK £5
SEK 95
USD \$10
JPY ¥2,310
EUR 12.68
AUD \$12.95
EUR 10.00
SGD \$19.90
DKK 122
CN¥ 110.00

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- 01 Classic 19th-century Lebanese home
- 02 Detail of Ottoman-inspired window
- 03 The exterior and the classical Lebanese landscaped garden



Architecture/ Urbanism

Overview

Lebanon's architecture is a fascinating mixture of very old and ultra-modern, Oriental and western-style buildings. Cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Tripoli and Baalbek are built around splendid archeological sites. Beirut itself sits atop layers of lost urban dwellings, starting with the 5,000-year-old Phoenician foundations and followed by the Greek, Roman and Ottoman. It's a reality that drives developers crazy as archeological teams come in and delay construction.

The civil war of 1975-1990 destroyed Beirut's downtown city centre, which subsequently experienced a rebuilding boom similar to Berlin after the re-unification of East and West Germany. The downtown area was entirely redeveloped by Solidere, a shareholding property company that continues to put up luxury projects by talented Lebanese as well as world famous architects, such as Jean Nouvel and Herzog & de Meuron. In 2006, Israeli bombings destroyed villages in southern Lebanon as well as Beirut's southern suburb. Again, the Lebanese brought in the tractors and concrete blocks, rebuilding everything in record time.

This frenzy for construction – property is one of the largest economic activities in Lebanon – worries many citizens who fear that the architectural heritage, best exemplified by the traditional Lebanese houses with their central hall and graceful arches under a pyramidal red-tiled roof, are disappearing. As Friedrich Ragette, a former dean of architecture at the American University of Beirut, wrote, "In the larger context of the Middle East, Lebanon is a Mediterranean country where a distinctive traditional architecture was developed."

Today, this heritage can still be seen in the villages and towns along the Mediterranean coast or in the countryside, such as Batroun or Deir el Qamar, Beit Chabab or Douma. — CC

Rebuilding Beirut

Beirut is no stranger to spatial transformation, from Venetian, Ottoman to Art Deco or neo-Orientalist, diverse architectural visions have played out across the city. Large-scale rebuilding is not a new phenomenon either – between wars and earthquakes Beirut is the phoenix of the Levant, with an earthquake in the 6th century levelling the old city. The wave of developments since the end of the civil war in the 1990s has been unprecedented however, with construction growing by 11.5 per cent in 2010.

With entire districts such as the Hezbollah-controlled Dahieh suburb reduced to rubble by Israeli bombing in the 2006 war, there's a risk that Beirut's tempestuous history will be lost under smooth concrete. "We're still a city at war – it no longer involves guns but cranes and diggers," says Gregory Buchakjian, a Beirut-based architectural historian.

"There's a split personality between Solidere's privately planned centre and the unbridled developments that surround it." These concerns are echoed by leading architect Nabil Gholam. "Property has no value here, only the land underneath it and the potential value in the air above."

Whatever the concerns may be, the building boom is set to continue (projections for 2011 growth top 14 per cent), and there are some glimmers of hope for future developments. "A new generation of Lebanese clients are trying to break free from tradition," says Gholam, "and this means that architecture is about to get more interesting." With Dubai serving as a reminder of the perils of unchecked development without a local identity, Beirut's new generation of architects are trying to find a contemporary articulation of the city's proud heritage. — JO



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- 04 Plot 4328 designed by Bernard Khoury
- 05 Waqf-Foch office building by Nabil Gholam, which also houses a top-floor apartment with its own courtyard
- 06 Inside Raed Abillama's studio
- 07 Entrance to Saifi 606 tower
- 08 Exterior of Abillama's studio
- 09 Saifi 606 tower

Six top Architecture practices + stars

1 Bernard Khoury / DW5 – A graduate of Harvard's School of Design, Khoury is one of the most internationally recognised Lebanese architects, who sent shock waves when he built a sublimely macabre nightclub on a former killing field. Since then, he has produced bold architectural statements that clash with the insipid tower blocks of developers. Recent projects include a futuristic structure in the mountain resort of Kfardebian (Plot 4328 pictured) and residential towers near the Franco-Lebanese Lycée.

2 Nabil Gholam Architects – Like Khoury, Gholam returned to Lebanon after the end of the 1975-1990 war, having worked with Ricardo Bofill in Spain. He is currently building the regional headquarters of shipping empire CMA-CGM and this 1930s-style Waqf-Foch office building (pictured) is now complete.

3 Raed Abillama Architects – (studio, top and bottom left) Through visible projects such as the Beirut Art Centre and Saifi 606 tower (below), the RISD and Columbia graduate has gained regional recognition. In Paris, he recently completed the new Joseph store and is working with other luxury brands. Aside from architecture, he co-founded ACID, an industrial design company.

4 Vladimir Djurovic – It's hard not to be seduced by the work of this talented Lebanese-Yugoslav landscape architect with a horticulture degree. In 1995, he opened his practice in Broumana in the hills overlooking Beirut. His work reflects an elegant and minimalist approach that has gained global recognition. In 2007, he was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and currently has three projects in Beirut's downtown including Herzog & de Meuron's Beirut Terraces.

5 Youssef Tohme – Having returned from Paris, Tohme still has an outside view on the local landscape. He's currently completing the Campus for Innovation, Economics & Sports, a massive project for the Université Saint Joseph, which masterfully uses poured concrete as a building material. Up in the mountains, he is busy designing cutting-edge villas that blend perfectly with their surroundings.

6 Nadim Karam & Atelier Hapsitus – Short for "happening and situations", the multi-disciplinary Atelier Hapsitus mixes art, design and architecture. A former professor at the University of Tokyo, Karam is famous for his project "The Cloud," a floating garden that hovers over Dubai. Recent architectural commissions in Lebanon include the Hallak eyewear store and a plan for the new HQ of the Lebanese-Canadian Bank. — CC



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