

dream CATCHER

Making clients' wishes come true, is all in a day's work for Dubai based, Italian designer Claudio Modola and his partner Andrea Mathison. Abode2 catches up with the creative duo to find out what it takes to build an award-winning architectural and interior design practice



YOUR PORTFOLIO FEATURES PROPERTIES WITH A DIVERSE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD, TELL US ABOUT THIS?

After starting my career in Italy and working around the world on a freelance basis, in the late 90s I was asked

by a Milanese businessman to design a 3,000 square metre traditional Omani Fort in a seemingly impossible, exposed sea front position in the Lamu Archipelago of Kenya. The Fort became a landmark project, attracting attention from the architectural press and from there, a



variety of prestigious commissions followed. Lamu is a favoured second-home location for a well-heeled, 'push the boundaries' international buyer base and this combination of factors allowed my newly incorporated studio to challenge our creativity in a rather privileged manner, satisfying our clients' desire for aesthetic innovation and with it, return on investment. From there - word got out and for the past two decades we've undertaken a number of key note projects across the wider African continent, USA, Europe and the Middle East.

WITH STUDIOS IN ITALY AND KENYA WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO SET UP BASE IN THE U.A.E.?

Asides the accessible geographical location, Dubai has evolved as a global hub where increasing numbers of expats and foreigners are choosing to live, invest, and spend their leisure time. Architecture is central to this investment shift and as a design studio, we have lots to offer as far as improving the quality of living environments are concerned.

YOU TALK A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE VALUE OF GOOD DESIGN - ELABORATE ON THIS FOR US

Irrespective of whether a building is for private or commercial use, the underlying principle of great design cannot be underestimated. Design fees represent a modest percentage of the overall investment on a construction project, yet it's the quality of the design that sets the project alight - turns heads and allows the structure to speak to its audience.

HOW IMPORTANT FOR YOU IS CONTEXT FOR DESIGN BUILD?

Irrespective of the project's location, the site or plot itself has to stand out, showcase its history, context, empathy with the landscape and climate. From there - the design journey truly begins. The setting, coupled with honest communication with the client, is fundamental to a successful design project.

YOUR CLIENT LIST READS LIKE A WHO'S WHO OF PROMINENT COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS - HOW HAVE YOU ACHIEVED THIS?

Largely by word of mouth referrals. That said, with the proliferation of design focused media in recent years, the benefits of good design are now universal, appreciated and demanded by everyone. As such - we frequently work on projects with tailored budgets.

WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

We have just completed a top-to-toe design of two high end villas on Meeras's Jumeriah Bay Island, in Dubai and we're currently developing a prestigious residential development in Oman for the same client. We also have a number of luxury projects under way in Abu Dhabi, as well as a penthouse apartment complex in Tanzania and a luxury hotel in Kenya.

As to the future - we're scoping out a number of bespoke concepts for restaurant and bar interiors. It's a sector of the market I'd love to explore further.