

# FOCUS

*Design*

## DESIGNERS OF TOMORROW

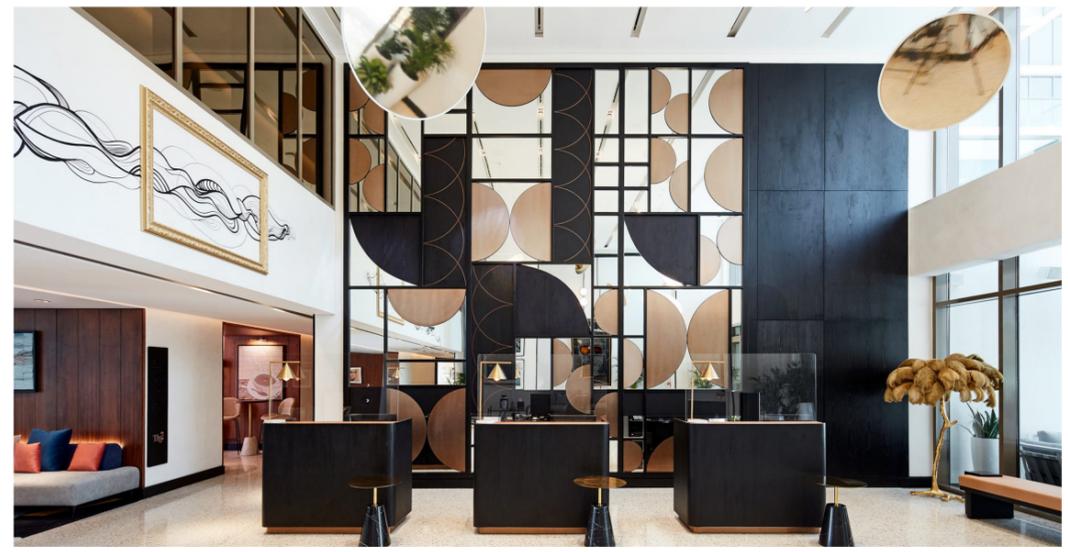
*Five women in design that are rewriting the rules in the UAE and beyond through innovation and excellence*

*Words by SHILPA CHANDRAN*

**F**or International Women's Day 2022, we partnered with UN Women to celebrate the game-changing designers and architects in the Middle East who are among the immense wave of female talent thriving in the nation. They are reshaping norms to carve out new paths of creativity; paths that are inviting brand-new perspectives on architecture and design. From well-known names to budding masterminds, *Harper's Bazaar Interiors* sits down with five regional women en route to inspire the rest of the world.

Mezza House, with interiors by Roar, aims to redefine what a contemporary Levantine restaurant should look and feel like

From top: The8 Hotel on the Palm Jumeirah Island is designed with a colour palette of distinct hues and dusty sunset tones set against a neutral backdrop; Abu Dhabi's Early Childhood Authority is a refreshing approach to design seen in the use of tactile textures, fluid shapes, open plan and playful elements; SENSASIA Stories Spa at Kempinski Hotel, Mall of the Emirates showcases a clever use of space, featuring illuminated arches, grey and brown earthy tones, and natural textures to engage all senses



### PALLAVI DEAN

It's no secret that Pallavi Dean is a force to reckon with in the UAE's design and architecture ecosystem. The Dubai-based interior designer brings 18 years of experience to the field. She says, "Design is the canvas where human interactions take place, memories are formed and experiences are created. It is a powerful tool that influences our everyday lives."

In her capacity as the founder and creative director of interior design and architecture studio, Roar, Pallavi has established an impressive portfolio of around 85 projects across the Middle Eastern region including an art installation she developed in collaboration with Artemide for EuroLuce 2019.

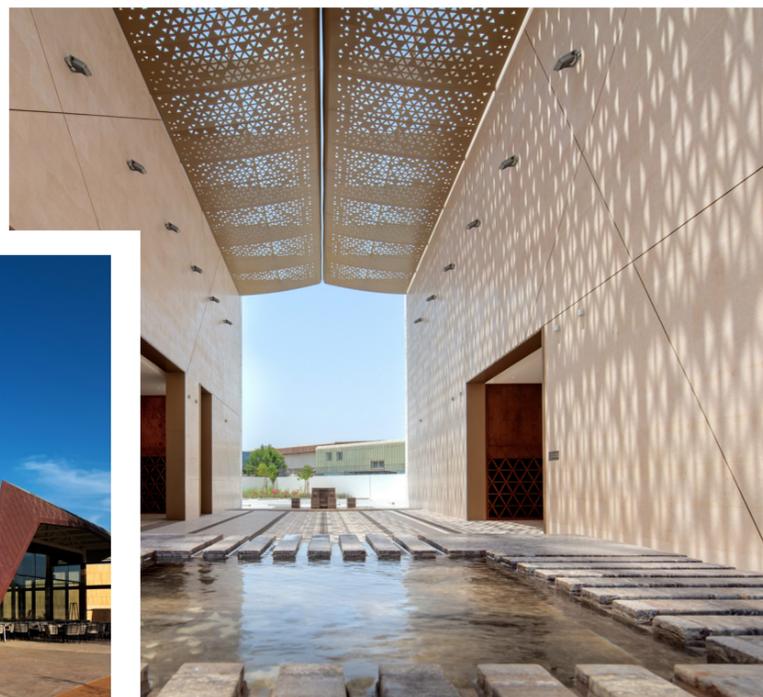
Born in India, raised in Dubai, with time spent working in London and Dubai, Pallavi is a trained architect and sustainability specialist, and was formerly a professor of interior design at the American University of Sharjah. She is also the recipient of many awards, including the Global Emerging Designer of the Year at the FRAME Awards 2019 in Amsterdam.



IMAGES COURTESY OF RESPECTIVE DESIGNERS

## SUMAYA DABBAGH

Among one of the first female architects to design a mosque in the UAE, Sumaya Dabbagh is a pioneer. Her most renowned works include the recently completed stunning 'Mosque of Light', the Gargash Mosque in Al Quoz, and the multi-award-winning Mleiha Archaeological Centre in Sharjah. The UAE-based Saudi national has made it her mission to break stereotypes that limit beliefs about women in architecture. By demonstrating what women can achieve, and how much they can influence change, she has become a role model to many aspiring architects. "Design at various scales or applications can improve people's lives," she says. "Not only by fulfilling an important function but also by creating a memorable experience. Similarly, a good piece of architecture can help build communities." Educated in the UK, she founded Dabbagh Architects in 2008, and in 2017 became one of the first RIBA Chartered Practices in the Gulf region. Sumaya is the recipient of the Principal of the Year Award at the Middle East Architects Awards and was a finalist at The Tamayouz Award for Women of Outstanding Achievements.



Clockwise from above: The external façade of the Gargash Mosque is designed with sacred shapes and decorations; A view of the Mleiha located in the deserts of Sharjah showcasing the region's ancient Bedouin culture; The perforated pergola of the Gargash Mosque controls the intensity of sunlight; Nature, culture and hospitality are reflected in the design of the Mleiha



## MONA EL-MOUSFY

Weaving a bridge from the past to the future is a talent Mona El-Mousfy has mastered. Architect and founder of SpaceContinuum, a research-based architecture practice, Mona has a string of landmarks to her credit, with the most recent being Sharjah's Rain Room Al Mujarrah and her adaptive reuse project, the Flying Saucer; a 1978 restaurant restored to become an art centre. "My architecture practice explores the relation between space, shared social practices, and socio-cultural conditions," she shares. "It values interdisciplinary collaboration and literary and field research investigating context, history and users. It conceives a project as a layering of space continuums across scales, with social interaction and connectivity at its heart and an awareness of the development of cultural meaning." Mona is the Advisor to the Sharjah Architecture Triennial and the Architecture Consultant for the Sharjah Art Foundation, where she has worked on several projects including the successive editions of the Sharjah Biennial since 2005. She has also previously taught at the College of Architecture Art and Design, American University of Sharjah.



From top: An interior view of the renovated Flying Saucer at the Sharjah Art Foundation. The 'Green Crater' pictured above is a sunken circular courtyard filled with lush vegetation and natural light; An alley view of the Al Mureijah Art Spaces that blends urban development and history to house contemporary art



Timelessness and longevity are at the heart of Rania's projects



**RANIA HAMED**

Innovation and authenticity are the driving factors for interior architect Rania Hamed, apparent in her projects. Founder of award-winning boutique firm VSHD Design, Rania ensures her visualisations are, as she says, “not trend-led but synonymous with timelessness and longevity”. She is fascinated by the challenge of integrating traditional culture and technique into contemporary design and strives to introduce this dichotomy in her work. “Design is all about rethinking conventional spatial arrangements. In other words, reliving the space and thinking of new proposals that meet with present and future needs; using an honest design approach, combining refined details, authentic materials and creative use of light.” Based both in Dubai and Montreal, her firm has in its portfolio projects across the world, in Florida, London, Cairo, Amman, as well as Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Rim's narrative-based designs evoke curiosity, with a focus on combining aesthetics, comfort and practicality



**RIM ABOUT SAMRA**

Emerging talent Rim About Samra is an Italian-Lebanese interior architect and a member of Creative Clinic, an award-winning interior firm based in Dubai that designs for hotels, resorts, restaurants and nightlife venues. She moved to Dubai from Beirut following recovery from heavy injuries from the tragic port blasts on 4 August in 2020. To date, she has handled a host of projects including concepts and designs for Jumeirah Group Hotels. “While working in Creative Clinic, I fell in love with the type of work and the variety of the projects,” she shares. “One of the greatest things I learned here is that creativity does not only start with design. We are creating an experience, a story, a narrative that is then translated into a design.”

*ITP Media Group and UN Women are proud to work together to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab States. #IWD2022 @unwomenarabic*

