

# DECORATION

the ultimate in luxurious living ideas

March 2008 – Issue 22

Parisian Pad  
A CALL OF DESTINY

**Symbolist**  
Omar El-Nagdi

a new  
moon

Ehrlich Architects in Dubai

UAE – Dhs 15



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Photo by: Ehrad Pfeiffer

# The Helal Residence Dubai

Steven Ehrlich Architects was founded in 1979 and is located in California, USA. Internationally recognized for distinctive design, the firm's approach to design extends the traditions of architectural innovation and the fusion of technology with cultural and environmental sensitivity. Steven Ehrlich Architects has been honored with seven National American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards and recognition as the 2003 Firm of the Year the American Institute of Architects, California Council.





Left page, top: Women's majilis.

Left page, Left: Entrance.

Left page, right: Dining.

Right page: The great hall.



Photos on this page by: Ehrad Pfeiffer

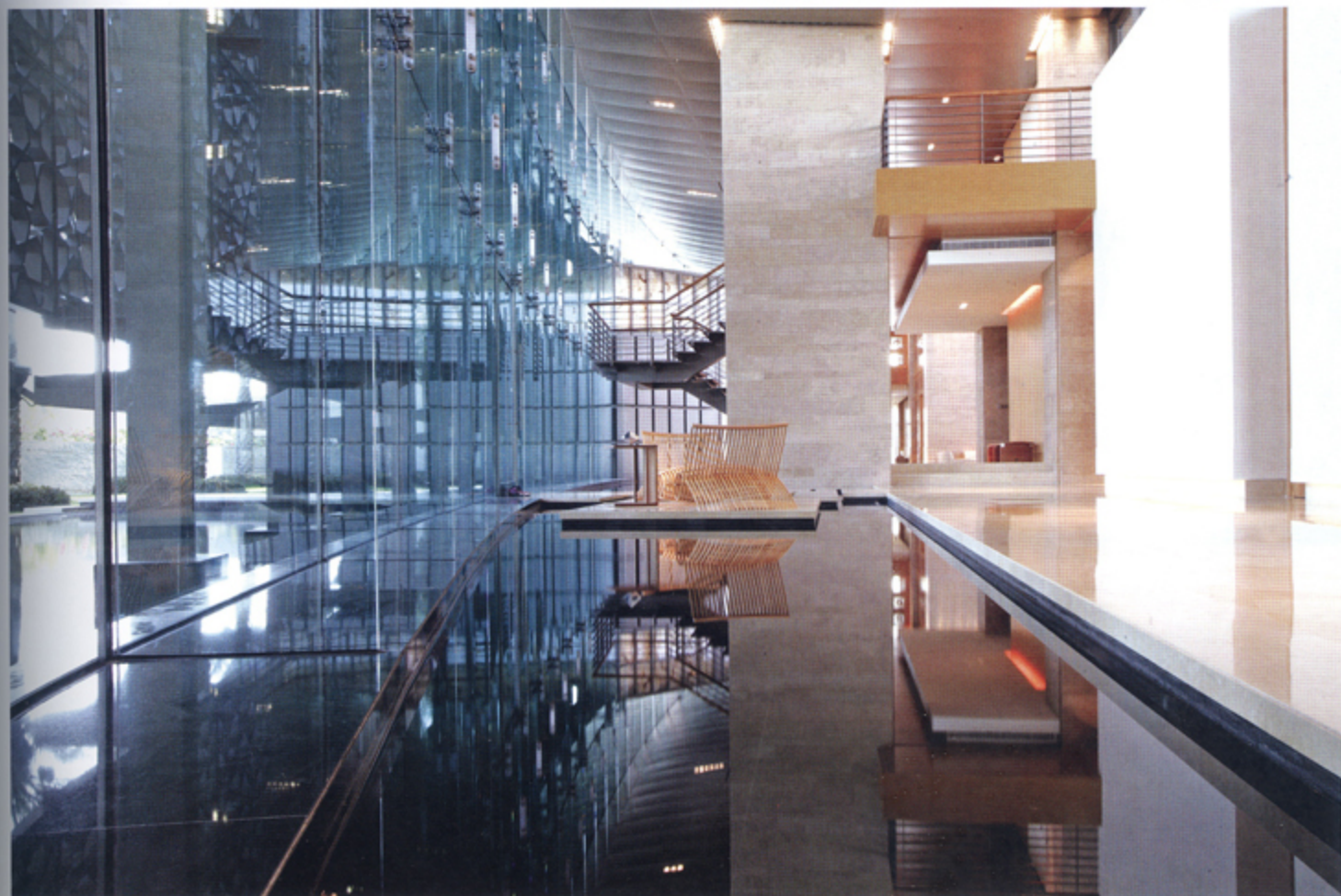


When Architect Steven Ehrlich an LA based architect was commissioned by a UAE national to design his family villa in the Dubai desert, this was a request that he has actually been preparing for all his life. Ehrlich has long been a student of indigenous structures, from Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa through Yemen. Steven Ehrlich was invited by his client to Dubai for one week so as to acclimatize and immerse himself in the local surroundings, culture and importantly to understand the needs of his client and demands of the construction site.

The Ehrlich methodology for the design of all buildings is a straight forward approach to function and an architectural expression concerned with: users and the community, a vernacular response to local climate and culture, the integration of spontaneous social gatherings, the intensity and context of light and shadows, and the power of simple forms and spaces. The Steven Ehrlich firm understands and embraces the importance of people and place and the necessity of expressing the unique characteristics of a community within the context of a functional, well-planned facility.

Islamic culture is embodied and reinterpreted through modern technology and design in this 35,000-square-foot residence, located in the Persian Gulf. Searing temperatures and ample desalinated water allowed the desert site to be transformed into an oasis with pools and landscaping.

Photos on this page by: Irfan Naqi







Top: The cast-aluminum mashrabiya.  
Middle: Open sleeping porch over one of the master bedrooms.  
Bottom: Entrance to mens majilis.

Sheathed in shimmering aluminum, a massive curved roof shelters and unites the compound's series of two-story buildings. In section, the canopy forms a crescent moon, the symbol of new life that tops the minarets of Islam. The canopy is supported by stone-clad columns that function as mechanical exhaust vents; they pierce the roof and project up to the sky, reminiscent of traditional windcatchers in the age before air conditioning. The whole structure suggests a giant Bedouin tent, with the football-field-sized roof, cantilevered 30 feet on each side, casting a giant swathe of shade.

The main entrance is approached through date palm grove aisles. A reflecting pool, which flows indoors and provides cooling, surrounds the front façade. A mashrabiyya, the traditional lattice sunscreen, filters direct sun. Gardens, fountains, shady courtyards, and terraces surround and penetrate the buildings, making it a desert paradise.

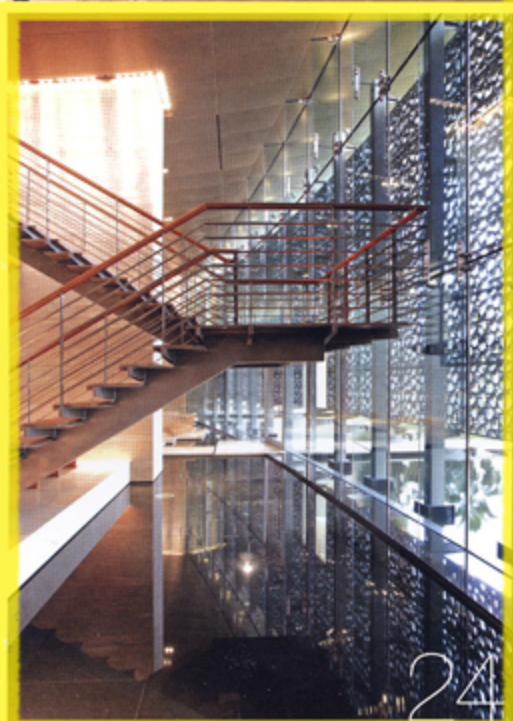
The three-part plan separates the reception area (majlis) for male guests at the west from the women's area behind the central grand hall and the family's sleeping quarters to the east. In a dance between ancient and modern, massive stone walls are counterpoint to large expanses of glass and taut elements of steel. Shadows of contemporized Islamic patterns from the mashrabiyya are cast onto stone floors and shimmer in the reflecting pools.

The executive architect for this project was Godwin Austen Johnson.



Photos on this page by: Ehrad Pfeiffer





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