

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 11-10-2018

AUB celebrates the 50th anniversary of its Department of Architecture and Design

The Department of Architecture and Design (ArD) at AUB's Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA), organized a series of events in 2018 to celebrate the important milestone of graduating 50 classes with bachelor of architecture degrees. A total of 980 architecture alumni have graduated so far from the Department of Architecture and Design. The first graduating class in 1968 included 10 alumni. Class of 2018 included 42. The anniversary events included a symposium that was held this October, followed by an exhibition. "The AUB Architecture 50th Anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate the great contributions of almost 1,000 individuals, trained as architects at AUB since 1963. Ranging from professional architects to urban planners, designers to artists, photographers to scholars, each has been contributing in their own way to a more livable world—a key element of the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture's educational mission," said Professor of Urban Studies and Politics Mona Harb.

The symposium

Held at Maamari Auditorium, the symposium was organized by Professor of Architecture, Urban Design and Planning Robert Saliba. It featured two roundtables entitled "Architecture Itineraries" and "Parallel Itineraries" with presentations by different generations of AUB architecture alumni.

"Our planning for this 50th anniversary event started two years ago. It has been a unique opportunity to reconnect with alumni and revisit the history of the department through extensive archival research, as well as through personal reflections by committee members, chairs, faculty members, and students. Most importantly, this landmark event is the outcome of dedicated and effective work by members of a team who participated enthusiastically and contributed their best efforts," said Professor Saliba.

AUB Provost Mohamed Harajli spoke at the symposium's opening session. "Through world-class research and academic programs, that is theoretically informed and technically advanced, AUB and its architecture department graduate lifelong learners with a leading role in the professional practice both in Lebanon and beyond. All these professional architects, artists, designers, and scholars whom we celebrate today and will continue to celebrate, have been contributing with innovation and a sense of obligation to a more livable and sustainable world," said Harajli.

Dean of MSFEA Alan Shihadeh also spoke at the opening session, reminding the audience of the department's history. He spoke about how former dean Raymond Ghosn and other key figures in the 50-year journey of the department, transformed architecture education in Lebanon and the region by initiating a program that emphasized open-ended design. "The impact of that decision is evident in the achievements of nearly one thousand individuals who hold AUB's BArch degree, and in the enduring, trend-setting influence of AUB's ArD Department in the world of architecture, design, and planning," said Shihadeh.

He also noted that MSFEA and AUB are preparing to broaden Ghosn's initiative by making accessible to students of all majors a design-centered curriculum that can propel a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs, and by reviving an expansive, generative notion of design in the engineering disciplines. "To do this we are working towards establishing a School of Design in MSFEA that will serve as a platform for a new minor in design, open to all AUB students. The School of Design will host our current undergraduate and graduate programs in architecture, graphic design, and urban planning and policy and the majors we plan to introduce in, for example, industrial design and design studies." He added that the school will be housed in a new 15,000 square meter complex on lower campus.

The exhibition

The anniversary exhibition was set up at MSFEA's Bechtel Terrace, featuring more than 240 works by 131 alumni across an array of disciplines and media. It was curated and designed by a team of AUB architecture alumni including Mustapha Jundi, Abir Eltayeb, Ghaith Abi Ghanem, Jad Melki, and Mohamad Nahle.

Designers of the structure of the exhibition explained that to gather 50 years of architecture graduates in one space, they designed an installation that is cut at eye level; and exhibits the body of work below and all the names of the authors as floating lights above. "This provides a holistic connectivity that allows the graduates to read about each other's work in parallel. The plan of the installation responds to the curatorial concept that stems from architecture and expands to different fields."

Curators of the exhibitions commented saying, “We collected over 240 projects: from buildings that tackle the increasing complexity of typologies whether domestic, public, governmental, or industrial to urban master plans in the Arab world and beyond; interiors to everyday objects; as well as art pieces that uncover hidden stories from Beirut to choreographed performances at international theaters. A few alumni also shared publications on urban studies, anthropology, history, geography, and philosophy. This diversity of projects reflects how professional aspirations of alumni developed over time, and how they position architecture at the core of design and non-design fields. It demonstrates how they were able to successfully push the boundaries of an architecture education to expand its impact or to incorporate other fields and ultimately become hybrid professionals.”

The exhibition featured two booklets that were produced for the occasion. The Yearbook (1968-2018), edited by Abir Eltayeb and Aram Yeretizian, narrates the history of alumni, faculty, social life, and events in the architecture program for the past 50 years in a rich timeline format that is punctuated with 16 essays by former and current faculty members and alumni. The Exhibition Catalog, edited by Abir Eltayeb and Mustapha Jundi, documents the collected projects for the exhibition from an interdisciplinary perspective.

“It was a privilege and a delight to embark on a journey that unfolded many facets of the last 50 years,” said Professor Aram Yeretizian, member of the anniversary committee, on reconnecting with some of the first generation faculty members. “Our Department continues to evolve as we look forward to the next 50 years.”

More on the anniversary

Other events to celebrate ArD’s 50th anniversary were a special version of the annual City Debates entitled “Architecture-as-Urbanism: Agenda for the New Millennium” in April, as well as the End-of-Year Exhibition in June. The next event in this series is the Sustainable Design Week 2018 entitled “Crisis as Opportunity,” on October 10-12. The celebrations will close with a gala dinner at AUB on October 29, 2018.

More on the 50th anniversary of the Department of Architecture and Design can be found on the anniversary’s website, which is constantly updated with videos and photos of the events, and includes downloadable PDFs of the yearbook and the exhibition catalog: <http://www.aub.edu.lb/msfea/ard/Pages/arch50.aspx>.

ENDS

Text by Sally Abou Melhem
Writer
Office of Communications
American University of Beirut

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>
Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon