

Light in the Middle East – A Potential for Representation and Innovation

Kardorff Ingenieure Lightingdesign

Light has a central importance regarding the impact of a building and for the nocturnal city. Kardorff Ingenieure Lightingdesign has designed lighted spaces in the Middle East since 2003 – impressively and energy-efficiently.

Not only for interior spaces is light a crucial factor, but also for plazas, streets, and façade illumination. Light allows us to experience a city and assess the qualities of its different urban spaces.

Lighting design is the discipline that makes this possible and can create convincing solutions through precise analysis of a building or the potentials of an urban space. The office of Kardorff Ingenieure Lightingdesign, located in Berlin, has a focus on the Middle East and is supervising projects in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Syria.

Many aspects of the building construction, design, and also the structure of the projects are comparable with our European projects. This forms the basis for utilising our many years of experience when working in international design teams. However, for our task of lighting design, the Middle East does pose special challenges that differ from our European projects.

The major transformation taking place in the Middle East with its rapidly growing cities has led to very large-scale building projects. We often design not just individual structures, but rather entire quarters with their lighted spaces. This is a particularly exciting challenge since we are given the opportunity to design whole urban areas and create basic atmospheres that are especially important for identity and the impressions made by outward appearances.

A second distinctive feature frequently lies in the nature of the client. We are often faced with strong personalities who have clear visions concerning the goals and market positioning of their properties. This leads to demanding discussions and quick decisions that make it possible for us to realise very impressive and unique concepts in the Middle East.

This region's desire to embody an imposing presence is also made evident by the fact that we supervise many high-rise projects that are being erected not because of a lack of space, but much more due to exceptional ambition. Since a sky-

scraper is a landmark in itself, the illumination of its façade and its appearance at night acquire particular importance. For this reason, a high-rise project without lighting design is hardly conceivable.

Another major difference in comparison to Europe is the climate. During the day, the urban spaces can generally only be experienced from within an air-conditioned vehicle, giving the night-time hours great significance in regard to the use of public space and the city as a whole. Promenades, plazas and private gardens become spaces for nocturnal stage settings.

Light plays a central role because it can be used at night to create hierarchies and certain aspects and elements can be pulled into the foreground and emphasised for the viewer.

As a result of the rapid urban growth in the Middle East, the public spaces are often fragmentary: one building has just been completed, but construction is still underway right next door. Light can be used to selectively show or hide and to direct the viewer's gaze.

All international builders are aware of the need to use electrical power in a very responsible way and to implement innovative lighting. In recent years this aspect has rapidly gained increasing importance either due to a restricted availability of electrical power, or because an increase in consumption places strain on the national budgets as a result of the extensive government subsidies. The private users' desire for low operating costs corresponds to the economic interests of the governments for limiting subsidisation.

For these reasons intelligent lighting design will be assigned increased value in the future. We at Kardorff Ingenieure Lightingdesign have specialised ourselves in providing these kinds of solutions.



Al Mas Tower, Dubai, view from Sheikh Zayed Road



Al Mas Tower, Dubai, night-time rendering



Al Mas Tower, mirrored surfaces on the spire reflect the sunlight

Example Projects:

Riyadh, the capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a city that was planned at the drawing board and which unfortunately has hardly any public spaces. There are no plazas, parks or boulevards that allow the city's inhabitants to gather in the evening and enjoy the metropolis.

The idea behind the design of King Abdullah Road was to relocate a six-lane thoroughfare in the middle of the city into a tunnel and redevelop the reclaimed space into a park, or as the Spanish would say, a ramblas. The lighting design for the tunnel, the service roads, and the park was of special significance as the street itself bears the name of King Abdullah.

In Jeddah, we designed the illumination for the building Jameel Square, which offers the most exclusive office spaces in Jeddah on the main boulevard Tahlia Road. The lighting concept gives structure to the façade and makes it sparkle like a jewel.

The projecting stone façade is accentuated with surface-mounted luminaires at its intersecting points. The even circles of light lead to a recognizable pattern at night. By day, the horizontal luminaires throw parallel shadows that continually alter the appearance of the façade.

The forecourt of the building has been spatially structured and illuminated with impressive lights arranged in pairs. Through the interplay of the form, placement and surface of the light poles with the façade illumination, one of the most unique lighted spaces in Jeddah has been created.

The high expectations regarding quality and design for the exterior were also apparent in the selection of luminaires for the interior space. High-quality, decorative lighting fixtures were chosen in close coordination between the client and planner. The lobbies have innovative lighting features that give each floor an individual appearance.

The spectacular results of our lighting design inspired a further client on Tahlia Road to commission us with the Galleria project. The Galleria Jeddah combines a five-star hotel with a shopping mall. The design by Kling Consult is inspired by the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan and our lighting design is modern, variable and unites light and architecture optimally.

This example clearly shows that in the Arab countries, special lighting has to be designed for the holidays of Eid and the end of Ramadan, times of the year when the cities are decorated with festive light.

In Dubai we designed a lighting concept for the Al Mas Tower which houses the gold and diamond exchange. With its 340 m, it is the tallest building in Jumeirah Lake and was constructed on its own artificial island.

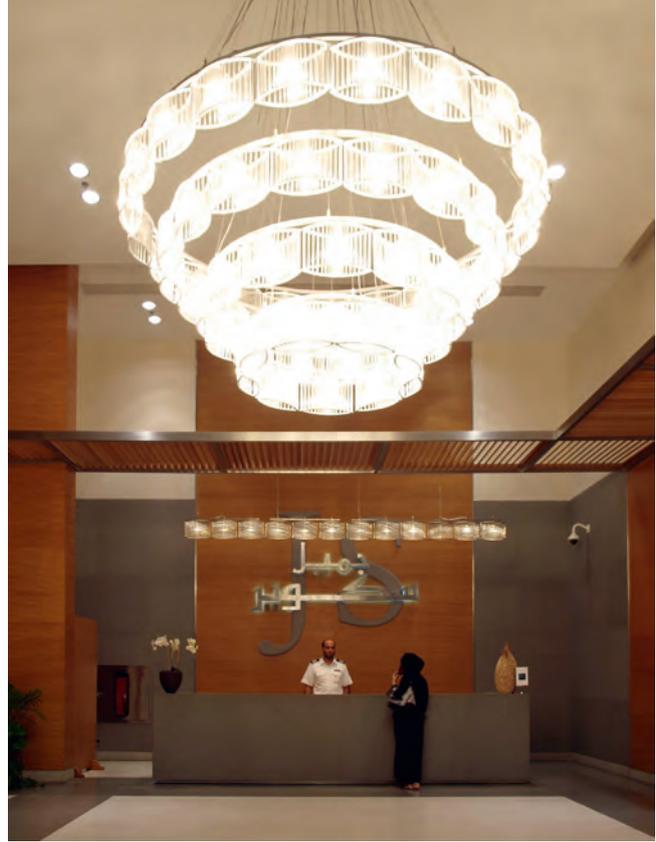
When approaching from Abu Dhabi, the skyscraper is visible from a distance and, as a result of its façade illumination, is a landmark that outshines all surrounding structures in size and elegance. The skyscraper's spire has been illuminated and accented with spotlights.



Jameel Square, Jeddah, the façade sparkles like a jewel



Jameel Square, Jeddah, façade detail



Jameel Square, Jeddah, entrance hall

For the spire, mirrored surfaces were suggested as part of the design which would have reflected the sunlight downwards at any time of the day. As a result, the pinnacle would have sparkled like a diamond. The positions and angles for the mirrored surfaces were determined using simulations of the sun's path.

On the same street, the Sheikh Zahed Road, we designed a hotel for Emirates Airlines consisting of two towers, each one over 300 m high, and integrating 22 restaurants, a wellness spa with over 1,000 m², and a shopping mall.

Among the other projects involving hotels and alongside the Ritz Carlton in Abu Dhabi, is the Palazzo Versace in Dubai, which displays the special style of the house of Versace in the Middle East. It is the second Versace Hotel, after the one in Australia, and demonstrates the great importance that the Middle East carries for the international markets.

Together with the office of Albert Speer & Partner located in Frankfurt, we won a competition in Qatar for the design of four test streets that are to function as a template for the rejuvenation of the streets and public spaces in Qatar. Kardorff Ingenieure Lightingdesign developed the luminaires and all of the urban furniture from benches to rubbish bins for this project.

The proposed design for the lights shows that although we are a European office, we understand the associative worlds and the historical background of the particular countries on a deeper level. With the floating pearl, we were able to find a motif that won the client over.

These examples demonstrate that lighting design in the Middle East has a very special significance and makes a great difference regarding the impact of buildings and public spaces and their value as perceived by viewers.

For us, it is not only a great challenge to participate in these usually large construction projects, but also a great joy to engage in the cultural exchange.

Our close and positive relationships with our clients confirm that great potential lies in these intercultural dialogues.



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