

BEIRUT Observatory

Overlooking the City

ELIE ABS AND SOUHAIL KAYALI HEAD THE BEIRUT BASED ACCENT DESIGN GROUP S.A.L. THE CONSULTANCY GROUP THAT OFFERS SERVICES IN THE ARAB REGION IS LAUNCHING THEIR LATEST ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT, BEIRUT OBSERVATORY, A WAN AWARDED RESIDENTIAL BUILDING THAT OFFERS A SPECTACULAR VIEW OF THE EVER-EXPANDING CITY.

The Beirut Observatory has been awarded this year's WAN Residential Award (unbuilt category). An award that celebrates and promotes the best in international architecture for residential use, the WAN panel selected the Beirut Observatory unanimously because it intrigued and fascinated the judges with its opposition of form between the front and back facades.

This centrally located residential tower takes inspiration from the urban form of Beirut. Situated near the Ring Highway that connects East and West Beirut, and overlooking the city center, Martyrs Square and the seacoast, this residential tower operates as an 'observatory', composed of a smoothly rising stack of glazed-unit apartments, offering diversity while simultaneously creating a sense of unity. The project resolves the opposite demands of maximizing space use based on the plot area, while providing variation in the different apartments.

Cantilevering balconies and terraces take their cue from the typology of the existing urban fabric of Beirut, transferring the previously horizontal spread into a vertical composition, with panoramic views of the city and the sea. Shading louvers protect from the excessive eastern and western exposure while adding privacy and providing an opportunity for a vertical 'green' screen that acts as a unifying element on the façade. This tower synthesizes between the complexity of details and programs, while avoiding the unnecessary display

of architectural gymnastics, which have become a cliché of some contemporary works.

Accent Design Group (ACCENTDG) is the progressive and innovative design practice that sought to build such a modern complex amidst the typically aged buildings scattered throughout Beirut's city. The Beirut Observatory maintains high-standards of production and delivery, while satisfying both international norms and local needs.

The design team of ACCENTDG includes several professional members with specialization and expertise in architecture, interior design and project management. The group's design methodology relies on experimentation and research as a basis for the development of appropriate design solutions. Their aim is to explore

new ideas in design for all types of functions, from institutional to entertainment and touristic projects, individual residences, office buildings and other types, and to deliver solutions that strike the right balance between budget limitations and quality design. ACCENTDG's vision for design does not subscribe to any preset criteria or models, but relies on a creative exploration of different possibilities within the selected context.

The firm's list of realized building and projects in process in Lebanon and the Arab World includes a number of projects that have been selected for publication in hardcopy and in online professional websites. Each project presents a distinctive solution to the particularities of its context, its economic constraints, and its social and cultural parameters.

