



## Alumni Profile

# Blueprint for Success

## Accent Design Group co-founder wins global accolades

By LAU Staff



For Elie Abs (B.A.'97), architect and co-founder of Accent Design Group (ADG), the discipline and practice of architecture has always straddled two domains, uneasily — the commercial and the intellectual, the superficial and the substantive.

These days, he says, there is an acute need for architecture that “comes from within,” that “responsibly answers to current social, economic and environmental challenges.”

This desire to create intuitively is at the heart of ADG, which since 2006 has striven to find personalized design solutions for clients based on various facets of research, while at the same time not sacrificing the aesthetics of their work.

Their refreshing approach to design drew the attention of the international architecture community this past year, winning them a prestigious World Architecture News (WAN) award. “This is a major international competition celebrating and promoting the best in international architecture for residential use, attracting entries from all over the world,” says Abs.

ADG won in the “unbuilt” category for the WAN Awards Residential Sector for their design of the 11,000m<sup>2</sup> Beirut Observatory, a tower inspired by the urban form of Beirut. It is composed of a smoothly rising stack of glazed-unit apartments, “offering diversity while simultaneously creating a sense of unity,” says Abs.

“Cantilevered balconies and terraces take their cue from the typology of Beirut’s existing urban fabric,” he explains, “thus transferring the previously horizontal spread into a vertical composition, with panoramic views of the city and the sea.”

The client has approved the design concept, according to Abs, so it’s only a matter of time before the project goes ahead.

Long before his company skyrocketed into the realm of international award winners, Abs walked the halls of LAU — first as a student, and then, since 2002, as a teacher. He attributes his desire to teach at LAU as “the natural thing to do, sharing

knowledge and experience I gained in Europe.”

“But I never thought of myself as a teacher,” he says. “It was more like a design laboratory where we were experimenting together with the students.”

After receiving his B.A. in Architecture from LAU, Abs went on to obtain a Master of Architecture degree in architecture and urbanism from the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. Looking back, he attributes his interest in architecture to his father, who worked in design and construction and helped cultivate his passion for the field.

“I believe that even within this complex and competitive environment we’re living in, there are plenty of opportunities — we just have to look deeper,” Abs says about the current market for serious architecture. “The challenge will always be to maintain quality.”

