



Concrete, OMA's first completed project in the United Arab Emirates, opens at Alserkal Avenue

The limitless space will transform the cultural ecosystem and possibilities in the UAE.



Exterior of *Concrete*, designed by Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). Image credit: Mohamed Somji. Photo courtesy Alserkal Avenue.

16 March 2017: Alserkal Avenue has inaugurated *Concrete*, its new space in the Avenue and the first project to be completed in the United Arab Emirates by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), founded by Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Rem Koolhaas.

Abdelmonem Bin Eisa Alserkal, patron and founder of Alserkal Avenue, said, “Over the last decade, Alserkal Avenue has grown and evolved organically with the arts and culture scene of the United Arab Emirates. The introduction of *Concrete* marks a new milestone in the cultural advancement of the region.”

At the crossroads of modular design and modern architecture, *Concrete* is a collection of warehouses that have been conserved and re-imagined, offering the dimensions and volume of industrial spaces for a variety of projects. Marking the first instance of such flexible, adaptive architecture in the United Arab Emirates, *Concrete* is set to have a lasting impact on the cultural sector in the region.



At the press conference inaugurating *Concrete*, **Rem Koolhaas, founder of OMA**, stated, “Dubai is one of the cities that has had a deep impact on our work, and I am very happy that this particular building is our first effort here. In *Concrete*, we are not introducing a new shape but instead were able to infiltrate an existing building with an arts institution. This building is totally produced in Dubai; it is not a foreign ideal, and that I think is significant.”

Concrete was led by **Iyad Alsaka, OMA partner**, who said, “The Gulf is an important region for OMA, and we are happy to have been able to collaborate with an organisation like Alserkal Avenue, whose vision is so similar to our own. With this project we wanted to keep the interior as neutral and flexible as possible, while transforming the existing exterior so that it would stand out from the surrounding buildings.”

Concrete will now provide a space for international arts and culture events to travel to Dubai. Alserkal Avenue’s collaboration with OMA advances the organisation’s mission to promote progress in the arts and architecture, with *Concrete* as a leading reference point for urban design in the region and beyond. Confirming Alserkal Avenue’s commitment to locally based talent and expanding the architectural conversation in the region, the interior design and engineering was completed by Dubai-based companies.

Vilma Jurkute, director of Alserkal Avenue, said, “The OMA team has brought their unique aesthetic and thoughtful approach to urban architecture to the Avenue, and in doing so, they have created a space that has started a dialogue for architectural evolution in the UAE.”

With multiple configurations, the 600-square-metre *Concrete* has double-height ceilings, movable walls and a translucent facade that can be positioned to create seamless indoor-outdoor experiences. *Concrete* is a responsive, multi-disciplinary space that was created with the capacity to host large-scale art exhibitions, symposia, conferences, conceptual fashion presentations, film screenings and corporate events, as well as private functions.

Concrete has opened with *Syria: Into the Light*, the Atassi Foundation’s largest-ever exhibition and its first in the MENA region since its formation last year. The exhibition will be on view until 3 April 2017.

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More info: alserkalavenue.ae | concrete.ae | Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:
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Editor's Notes:

About Alserkal Avenue

Located in Al Quoz, Dubai, Alserkal Avenue is the region's foremost arts and culture neighbourhood. Since it was established in 2007, Alserkal Avenue has grown to become an essential platform for the development of homegrown artistic and cultural initiatives, supporting a vibrant community of contemporary art galleries and alternative art spaces, together with design, media and industrial studios. In 2015, in addition to its commitment to the community, Alserkal Avenue affirmed its position as an arts organisation with the launch of Alserkal Avenue Programming. The programming arm produces an annual homegrown programme for local, regional and international audiences, working primarily with artists living and working in the MENASA region. An Artists' Residency is scheduled to launch in March 2017, further enhancing the organisation's breadth and scope.

www.alserkalavenue.ae

About *Concrete*

A multi-disciplinary space conceptualised by Alserkal Avenue, *Concrete* is the first building in the UAE to be completed by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), founded by Rem Koolhaas. Located in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, *Concrete* is an adaptable venue whose ability to metamorphose to bring creative visions to life makes it suitable for international, museum-grade exhibitions as well as events across art, design, fashion and the performing arts.

www.concrete.ae

About OMA

OMA is an international practice operating within the traditional boundaries of architecture and urbanism. AMO, OMA's research and design studio, applies architectural thinking to domains beyond. OMA is led by nine partners—Rem Koolhaas, Ellen van Loon, Reinier de Graaf, Shohei Shigematsu, Iyad Alsaka, David Gianotten, Chris van Duijn, Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli and Jason Long—and maintains offices in Rotterdam, New York, Beijing, Hong Kong, Doha, Dubai and Perth.

www.oma.eu

About Atassi Foundation

Atassi Foundation is an independent non-profit initiative, founded by Sadek and Mouna Atassi to promote Syrian art and culture. It aims to celebrate Syrian art by exhibiting it, enhancing its global visibility and supporting creative production of young talents. The Foundation achieves this by organising and curating exhibitions; fostering intercultural exchange in collaboration with international arts and culture institutions; and supporting research and publications on Syrian art and culture. The Foundation's ambition is to create a sustainable and informative platform for Syrian artistic expression and knowledge.

www.atassifoundation.com