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CORPORATE BROCHURE





The beauty's in the detail

Yousif Mirjan, managing director of Dubai-based marble contractor, Dar Al Rokham, talks to Gay Sutton about creating the architectural heritage of the future, and expansion beyond the Middle East



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ome of the most stunningly beautiful and complex architecture can be found in the traditional buildings of the Middle Eastern Gulf States, where marble, stone and plaster work flows in complex shapes or is assembled as rich mosaics. Today's architecture, in this affluent and rapidly developing region, is equally stunning and is providing the world with some of the most ambitious and visionary buildings of the modern era.

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Marble continues to play a key role in these monumental visual creations—not merely as cladding, but in the highly detailed and complex designs which can only be produced by skilled engineers and craftsmen.

With a pedigree of some 34 years specialising in marble work for the construction industry, Dubai-based Dar Al Rokham has harnessed the traditional skills and knowledge of the region’s most gifted masons, and combined that with the latest and most effective design, engineering and manufacturing technology to establish an enviable reputation as a world class marble contractor. As a result, the type of contracts the company targets are those most suited to this level of expertise and capability: either very large and complex, or requiring a great amount of detailing and craftsmanship.

The company currently has over 2,000 staff on its payroll and these are employed at the factories, warehouses and permanent offices located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and the Qatari capital of Doha, as well as on construction sites throughout the region. This level of expertise and experience is also in great demand further afield. “We’ve carried out work in London, Morocco, Barbados, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran, and Qatar, and at the present we are tendering for many jobs in Iraq as well,” explains managing director Yousif Mirjan.

“The greatest challenge for us is that no two jobs are the same. We don’t work like accountants who use the same accounting methods and system for every company,” he says. All the designs and detailing are bespoke. “To manage this, we have a very large engineering department with over 40 draughtsmen who draw up the job in minute detail to enable the factory to produce the work.”

The factories themselves are equipped with the very latest machinery and tooling and these are updated regularly. Machinery is often purchased specifically for the more complex projects such as the prestigious new Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi. This was an enormous project that required around 100,000 square metres of marble for the

Mapei

Mapei has enjoyed a long-term professional relationship with Dar Al Rokham, who is considered one of the pioneering marble and stone contractors in the region. Mapei’s innovative range of sealants, adhesives and chemical products for building as well as its unrivalled site and technical support service continues to add value to Dar Al Rokham’s quality installations, and has proudly been associated with many of their prestigious projects.

internal work and 300,000 square metres of granite for the external landscaping.

“It was perhaps the most challenging job we have completed so far,” Mirjan says. “Partly because the detailing was exceptionally difficult and partly because of the quantity of marble involved.” Some of the marbles specified in the contract were Crema Valancia, Dark Emperador & Crema Marfil from Spain. “We required in excess of 100,000 square metres of Crema Marfil, and had to take the complete output of the quarry, which resulted in a shortage of the material worldwide.”

The company’s reputation is built on the foundation of engineering and manufacturing excellence, so recruitment and training play a major part. The policy is to take on new engineering staff straight from university and continually develop them through further investments in training. Meanwhile, masonry is a skill that is literally dying out in many organisations. Not so at Dar Al Rokham: the traditional skills are highly prized. Although many of the masons have been with the company since it started they are now retiring in increasing numbers, and the company is investing a considerable amount in capturing those skills and passing them on to future generations. Each factory has a large training area where new recruits are brought in and the skills of the trade are taught. “I visit the training



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area regularly,” Mirjan says, “and see the old masons teaching the young ones in exactly the same way they were taught. It’s very pleasing and it’s something we’re very proud of.”

Dar Al Rokham is currently working on one of the largest and most ambitious projects in Qatar. Known as the Heart of Doha, this is essentially an urban redevelopment scheme located in the centre of Doha and divided into five phases. Marble work is a key aspect of four government buildings which are part of phase one. “This project entails extensive detailing, but it is also a green project,” Mirjan says. The aim is to achieve the highest LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) status possible.

Under this exacting global standard, points are awarded or subtracted across a very

Saudi Arabia. In the next phase the company hopes to source marble from Qatar itself. Meanwhile, the factory itself utilises the most energy efficient equipment, and waste marble is recycled into mosaics or supplied to external mosaic companies.

In every country where marble is produced, the company employs representatives to handle the inspection and procurement, and this has eradicated much of the uncertainty from the procurement process. “We are always being asked for unusual examples of marble and we source accordingly,” says Mirjan. Marble can come from all corners of the world: anywhere from Brazil and Canada through to China. “In fact we were recently asked for marble from Afghanistan, and that was a challenge because of the situation there.”



The company has enjoyed year-on-year growth throughout its history, and is currently in the process of finalising the last elements of its footprint in the Middle East. “We are establishing offices in Riyadh and have a five-year plan for growth in Saudi Arabia. And we are looking at the possibility of developing a presence in Iraq if the situation improves a little more,” Mirjan says. “Outside the region there is a huge market in Europe, and we are already



wide range of energy and environmental achievements. For Dar Al Rokham, that means sourcing as much as possible of the materials within a 500 mile radius of the site, and recycling as much of the waste materials as possible. For such a high specification project, a few products have had to be sourced from further afield, but 90 per cent of materials have been procured within the specified radius, from quarries in Oman and

very active in London. We are also looking at Africa where there are various jobs that require the quality we offer. And finally, we’re looking at India, which is growing very rapidly.”

The outlook is good; and with many major international construction projects requiring high levels of marble-working expertise, Dar Al Rokham may well establish itself as a household name in the years to come. www.daralrokham.com ■

