

Anarchitect wins 'Outstanding use of American Hardwood in the Middle East' award for 'No.57 Boutique Cafe'

American white oak helps evoke a Scandinavian freshness coupled with a New England crafted quality

September 21, 2015 - Anarchitect, an award winning international architecture, interior architecture and design practice based in Dubai with collaborative studios in London, has won the 'Outstanding use of American Hardwood in the Middle East' award for 'No.57 Boutique Café' at the Commercial Interior Design (CID) Awards 2015, which took place on Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at the JW Marriott Marquis Hotel, Dubai. The award, which was sponsored by the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry for the fifth year running, was presented by Roderick Wiles, AHEC Director for the Middle East and Africa, to Anarchitect's Jonathan Ashmore and co-collaborator on the No.57 project, Tarik Zaharna.

Anarchitect was praised for its "well presented and completed project". The judges described the design as clear, well explored and effortless in execution. Crafted materiality and a sense of intrigue all in a relatively small space shaped the design approach of Anarchitect, who envisaged the restaurant as a natural evolution of the famous dinner club events created and run by their clients for the last couple of years. In addition, the judges highly commended the HSBC Office in Etihad Towers by Artillery Architecture Interior Design for its "comprehensive use of wood with nice detailing which goes beyond floor finishing". Other nominations for the award included the 'Tabu Bar' by MMAC Design Associates and 'Townhouse Fairmont Residence' by Alfred Johnson Design.

According to Ashmore, the decision was made to work with a refined palette of three main materials for the overall project. The light and airy bistro uses American white oak plank floors, custom made tables with carrara marble tops and black powder-coated metal details. Constructed from hollow square section powder-coated steel with solid American white oak shelf inserts, the bespoke storage wall and kitchen pass was carefully designed to accommodate all types of crockery and bottles.

Material composition is then reversed in the dining area to include marble floors, American white oak table-tops and custom-built joinery and banquets, which offers a contemporary elegance for late afternoon and evening dining.

“The project looks great and functions exactly as we planned it. No.57 was a solid and well detailed canvas upon which we wanted our clients to grow and add their own styles over time, just like a residential project. The project was also a seed in a new location with an interesting client to hopefully act as a catalyst for the wider surrounding community to take inspiration. We have had a great response internationally for the design of the project and also positive feedback from the clients, staff and visitors for the overall look, feel and functionality for the space. Having worked with white oak on previous projects, we will continue to work with it on future projects both in the Middle East and internationally,” said Ashmore.

Architect also designed all of the custom joinery pieces and timber wall panelling using American white oak solids and veneers with an open grain. According to Ashmore, the freestanding banquets and the raised rear nook with feature credenza in the dining area stand out against the carrara marble floors, crisp mirrors and clean lines of the walls and ceilings. White oak was preferred for its tone and prominent grain to achieve the desired look for the joinery. It was important that the wood looked natural and so a clear-matte lacquer was used to protect it, which also opened up the grain to contrast the solid smooth finishes of both the marble and powder-coated metal finishes elsewhere in the project.

“American white oak is widely available and is a popular choice with architects and designers in export markets around the world, due to its color consistency and the high volume of square edged lumber production, and veneer availability. Suitable for flooring, furniture, joinery and also certain structural applications, white oak is one of the most versatile of the many hardwood species available from the United States. At this year’s CID Awards, white oak was well represented, but it was also great to see a broad range of other American hardwood species used in variety of creative and well-designed applications,” concluded Wiles.

About AHEC:

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the U.S. hardwood industry, representing the committed exporters among U.S. hardwood companies and all the major U.S. hardwood production trade associations. AHEC runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, specifiers, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply. In addition, AHEC also produces a full range of technical publications. For more information, please visit: www.americanhardwood.org.