

# DEFINING SPACES

Making It 1:1

**M**aysam Alnasser has had the opportunity to work in big international architectural firms yet she felt unsatisfied due to the lack of direct interaction between her and the clients. She believed that it was important to build a relationship with her clients and hence she launched 1:1. We find out the story behind the name, the brand and Maysam's passion.

## What made you set up 1:1?

I have always been interested in the impact, spaces have on human behaviors and psychology and how to design around that aspect. Having worked in relatively big international architecture firms and on bigger projects in hospitality and commercial design, I felt I was getting away from that personal, one to one relationship with the client. I wanted to start my own design studio where I would have a personal relationship with the clients for whom I would be designing their most intimate spaces; I wanted to design it around their lives. Also, my interest in other design and art fields encouraged me to create this workshop like space where I get to experiment my concepts and ideas freely with no restrictions. It is like a lab for my own private mistakes and my questions.

## What does 1:1 specialize in?

1:1 is a design studio dedicated to conceptual architecture, interior and furniture design, introducing a holistic approach that goes beyond just the architecture but also into providing a conscious mix between art, architecture and psychology.

## How has the start up journey been so far?

It has been good so far. I wanted my freedom to experiment when it comes to design, which I probably would not have got, if I were working in a company, and this motivated me to set up my own shop. I participated in a few exhibitions around the Kingdom, which allowed me to explore the market related to architecture and design, and I did a bit of freelance work as well. Even after I took the leap of launching 1:1, I was working only through my website and my marketing was primarily word of mouth. I had a lot of support to launch my studio at the Riyadh Mall, from the likes of Tamkeen, BDB and BBIC. Apart from the financial support, what really made a difference was the education we gained: in terms of setting up a business, and managing its day-to-day functions.

## Do you have any background experience/education in this field?

I graduated with a Masters degree in Architecture from Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland in 2007. I have also worked in an architectural firm in Scotland, then at Davenport Campbell Architecture and at COWI Gulf in Bahrain.

## What are your main influences while you are designing a place?

The person I am designing for, the use/ function, the context and relation to the other built form around the environment. In addition to my own concepts, elements and tools I translate all those forces into a space.

## What has been the most exciting moment so far?

The start of each project is exciting... To feel that you're about to merge in a new family, to understand them, to design their most intimate spaces.

## What are the main challenges you face in this industry?

Changing people's perception about design is a challenge. But above all "time" is the biggest challenge we have. It is our biggest competition...!

## Do you have any regional/local role models?

I personally love the Contemporary Japanese architecture which is very minimal in nature while maintaining the identity and celebrating spaces like the inner garden and courtyard.

## Any advice for young entrepreneurs?

Find something that you're passionate about. Be creative. Be prepared with your business plan/ studies and research. Find the appropriate financial support through Tamkeen, BDB & BBIC. Don't give up; as there will be so many obstacles. Work hard and drink a lot of tea!

## What plans for the future?

To have impact on culture through the built form. **BIG**

