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Abu Dhabi's Wahat Al Karama wins 2017 American Architecture Prize



A memorial to the UAE's heroes and a celebration of the nation's unity, Abu Dhabi's Wahat Al Karama (Oasis of Dignity) has been announced as one of the winners of the 2017 American Architecture Prize.

One of 13 winners in the prize's cultural architecture category, the Oasis of Dignity was selected by a 36-person international jury that included the veteran British architects Will Allsop and Graham Morrison, dRMM Architects co-founder Sadie Morgan, Dan Howarth, the United States editor for influential online architecture and design magazine, Dezeen, and Jennifer Siegal, award-winning founder and principal of the Los Angeles-based firm Office of Mobile Design.

Established last year, the American Architecture Prize is an annual award that assesses projects according to criteria such as design excellence, innovation and function in the fields of architecture, landscape and interior design. This year it announced awards across 42 categories.

Other winners in the 2017 cultural architecture category include: Hariri Pontarini Architects' Bahá'i Temple of South America in Santiago, Chile; CetraRuddy Architecture's Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York; Mangera Yvars Architects' Faculty of Islamic Studies at the Education City campus in Doha, Qatar; and the Da Chang Muslim Cultural Centre in Hebei Province, China.

Completed last year, the centrepiece of Wahat Al Karama is a 90-metre long monument comprising 31 tablets which symbolise the support between the UAE's military, the families of its servicemen and women and the country's citizens in the face of adversity.

The commemorative landscape and its associated memorial, Pavilion of Honour, amphitheatre and visitor centre was designed by the British artist Idris Khan in collaboration with Brisbane-based architects bureau^proberts, Urban Arts Projects and engineers Robert Bird Group, while the scheme's master planning and landscape design was carried out by the engineering giant AECOM.

Clad with more than 850 cast aluminium panels, sections of the tablets were sandblasted and stamped with poems composed by the UAE's founding president, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan; Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE; Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and the Ruler of Dubai; and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of UAE Armed Forces.

Wahat Al Karama's Pavilion of Honour, which is positioned at the end of a memorial walk that follows a water feature, has internal walls clad with more than 2,800 plates cast from 10 tonnes of recycled aluminium that were sourced from UAE decommissioned military armoured vehicles.



