

PIN-UP

POWER

MAGAZINE FOR
ARCHITECTURAL
ENTERTAINMENT
ISSUE 21

OFFICES!
BATHROOMS!
BRUTALISM!

FEATURING
RICHARD
ROGERS,
AMALE ANDRAOS,
ALEXANDRE
DE BETAK,
MOS ARCHITECTS,
BERNARD KHOURY,
ROBIN MIDDLETON,
PHYLLIS LAMBERT,
GCC, ZAHA HADID,
VALERIA NAPOLEONE,
EYAL WEIZMAN,
AND MUCH
MORE...

NEW POWER
GENERATION:
FAMILY, BURO
KORAY DUMAN,
CHARLA P
HYMAN &
HERRERO, EZE
ERIBO, FOAM,
HUSBAND WIFE,
ONLY IF, SPACE
EXPLORATION,
AND YOUNG
PROJECTS



Fall Winter 2016/17

USD 20.00



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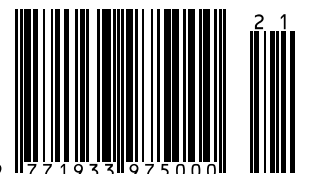
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SOLID GOLD

ARTIST COLLECTIVE GCC FINDS OUT WHAT POTENTATES' DREAMS ARE MADE OF

What do the King of Saudi Arabia, the Emir of Kuwait, the President of the United Arab Emirates, the Sultan of Brunei, the President of Turkmenistan, and the President of Equatorial Guinea have in common? They are all on the extraordinary client roster of French architect Xavier Cartron, palace designer to

potentates and oligarchs the world over. Cartron designs other types of buildings too, from hotels in Cameroon to mega-mansions in Moscow and the suburbs of Kuwait City, not to mention a nightclub in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. We first came across his work while researching the provenance of things that are usually taken for granted in the Gulf, like palace architecture, summit decoration, and conference-table design. Such miscellanea of power — seemingly dull and ubiquitous objects, images, and information — have always been at the heart of the things that we as a collective are interested in. A staged photograph of a head of state, the extremely ubiquitous ceremony of an official ribbon cutting, or the obscure rituals and protocols of international summits might all seem trivial, especially

when compared to the obvious significance of the politics behind the event. But this detritus, these disposable props of power, these pseudo-events all deserve a second viewing and further investigation. People in the region live under regimes where access to power is strictly limited and transparency is rare, so the officially distributed images of power in action or leaders' public appearances are the only tangible connections between rulers and the ruled. The first artwork that GCC did as a collective was a 1:12-scale version of a gargantuan hexagonal table that was used at a summit of the actual GCC — the Gulf Cooperation Council. Aesthetically, it belongs to the same school of advanced architectural pastiche to which Cartron subscribes, a kind of vernacular of Gulf officialdom, where European historical references and "Islamic" motifs meet the elephantine proportions of Abu Dhabi mega hotels — a rare kind of dowdy, maximalist restraint.

Cartron, who is in his early 50s, granted us a brief phone interview during which he explained that he never intended to design palaces. In the early 1990s, he began working at Saudi Oger, a multi-billion-dollar Riyadh-based construction company that is entirely owned by the family of assassinated Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. While designing palaces for the company, Cartron used his connections in the region to start his own offshoot business. He currently runs two offices, one outside Paris in Fontenay-sous-Bois, and the other in Abu Dhabi. Cartron says his 43 employees — 30 in France, 13 in the UAE — are capable of designing anything, from customized curtains

and tableware to 100,000-square-foot lobbies. He is also a big believer in scale. Of his design for a particularly imposing palace lobby currently under construction in Abu Dhabi, he says, "300 feet by 300 feet! The ceiling of the tallest cupola is 180 feet high! We designed it so that you can read all the patterns as if they were at the same scale as something close to you — from eye level to the highest point in the ceiling. You need to have a lot of experience to be able to imagine that." Cartron is also the first to admit that architecture is inherently

political, and that it's always been this way. "If it weren't, we wouldn't have Versailles — and that's my favorite building!"

THE GCC COLLECTIVE WAS FOUNDED IN 2013 IN DUBAI AND BRINGS TOGETHER A DIVERSE GROUP OF ARTISTS CONSISTING OF KHALID AL GHARABALLI, NANU AL-HAMAD, ABDULLAH AL-MUTAIRI, FATIMA AL QADIRI, MONIRA AL QADIRI, AZIZ ALQATAMI, BARRAK ALZAIID, AND AMAL KHALAF.







