

The Young Architect –Adib Dada

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Born and raised in Beirut, Adib Dada earned his architecture degree at the American University of Beirut and a Master's Degree in the Interactive Telecommunications Program at NYU in 2011. He's currently pursuing a BSpecialist certification from the Biomimicry Institute in Arizona. His interests lie in the dialogue between architecture, living systems, technology and art, which he aims to pursue through his firm TheOtherDada.

What are your favorite buildings in town?

Too many modern buildings to count, a lot of which have been unfortunately demolished. Three disparate buildings really stand out for me though; an old building in Sanayeh which looks totally out of place, with a bizarre mishmash of styles, columns, tiles, bricks... a building that by any conventional means is an aberration but somehow it has an incredible presence and intimate scale. The Pink house in Gemmayze, tucked in a cul-de-sac off rue Gouraud, is a great old Lebanese house with an unconventional pink [rather fuscia] color enveloped in greenery. And finally, Khalil Khoury's Interdesign building in Clemenceau, a futuristic building from the 70's, which was way ahead of its time. An oddly beautiful and imposing concrete structure, it symbolizes for me the successful collaboration of an adventurous client and architect which we haven't seen much of lately in Beirut.

Along with engineering prodigee and MIT graduate Aya Bdeir, you've founded Beirut's first 'media lab' –can you tell us more about it ?

A lack of government initiative is leading to an increase in guerrilla-style, community-driven projects and initiatives. As such, Aya Bdeir and I are co-founders at KARAJ, Beirut's media lab for arts, architecture and technology, housed on the first floor of a typical Lebanese house in Mar Mikhael. The aim is to provide an open platform for experimentation to artists, designers, architects and programmers through lectures, exhibitions and workshops. We offer a cross-industry and cross-disciplinary model for making, learning and sharing; we

reach out to young people to offer an alternative learning culture based on collaboration.

Finally, any recommendations for a day trip out of town ?

The best day trip would be to rent a boat and see Lebanon from the coast, but you can also do it by car. Head to Batroun and take a dip in the cleanest and bluest water in Lebanon. Stop by Chez Magui or Jammal for lunch and then take a stroll around the old Batroun souks, making your way to the Phoenician wall and the St Georges Cathedral. If possible push on to Tripoli to visit Oscar Niemeyer's fair grounds that were never completed; a hauntingly beautiful collection of decaying structures with big bold forms.

A day trip to the Bekaa valley. An essential stop for a labneh sandwich at Massabki's dairy shack, then to the chateaux where you can visit the cellars and try the various Lebanese wines. Have lunch at Ammiq's new Tawlet restaurant, set in the biosphere reserve and where you can sample organic wines and dishes made by local home-cooks, all the while taking in the expansive view.

For a mountainous experience, hit the road and head to the Al Chouf Cedars Nature Reserve. Head south from Beirut, crossing Damour and exiting the highway 2km further at the Beittedine Bridge. From there, drive through Moukhtara, then straight to reach Maasser al Chouf, a smooth and truly picturesque ride. The reserve itself showcases millennia-old Lebanese Cedar trees.

Read more on Adidb Dada, get contact details for his recommendations and discover more interviews of Beirutis –from Denmark's Ambassador to one of Lebanon's foremost writers –in our Beirut Guide.