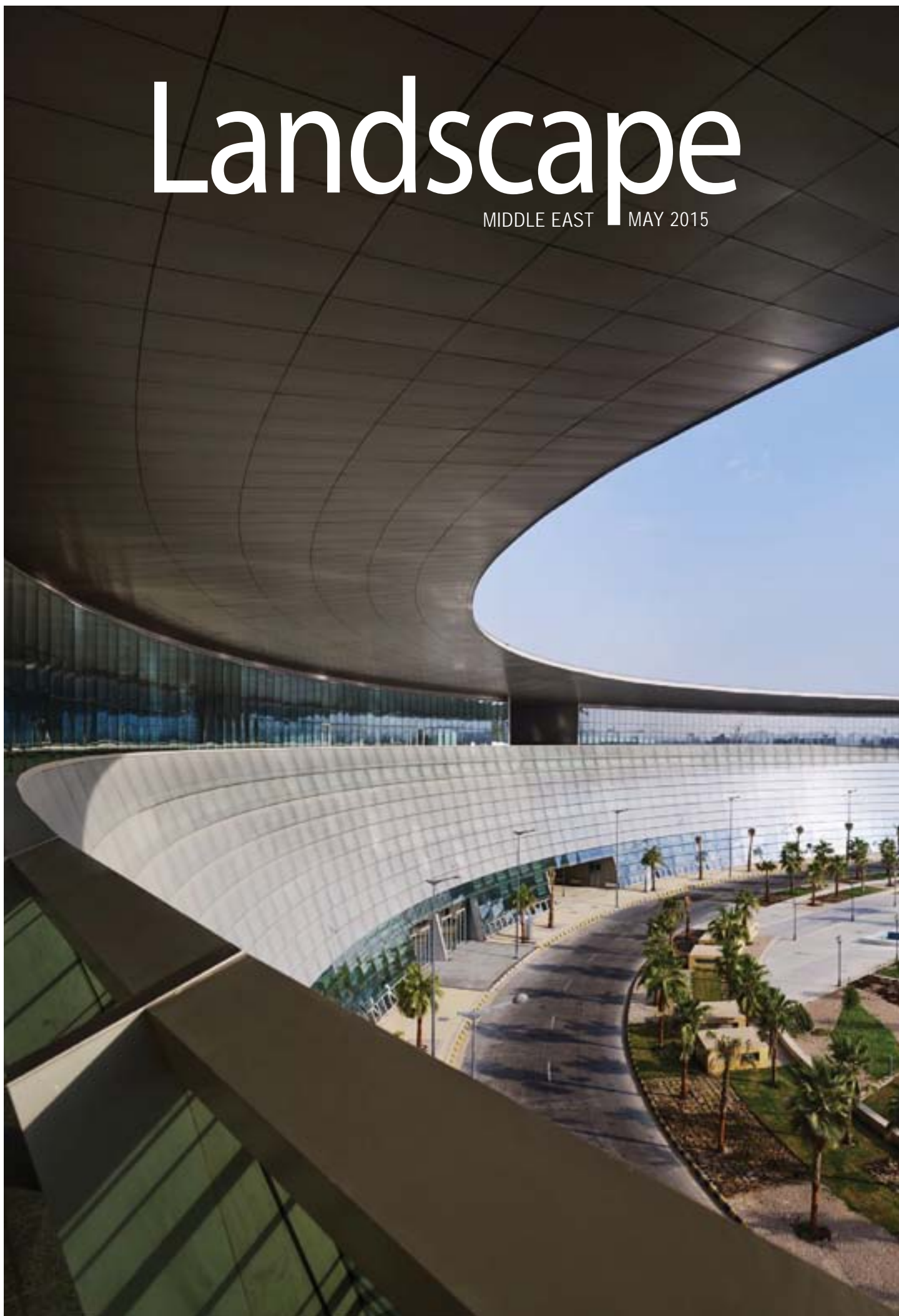


# Landscape

MIDDLE EAST | MAY 2015



# News & Events



## Reinventing the vernacular: Bridging the past with the future of the Kingdom

**R**einventing the Vernacular is an academic research project to raise awareness on the importance of the restoration of historical villages in the Kingdom. It is the first of a series of educational research projects across the Kingdom, which are headed by Anna Klingmann, Director of the Architecture Program at Dar Al Hekma University in Jeddah.

What began with a passionate interest in the unique cultural landscape of Asir is now a broader research initiative at the intersection of art, architecture, science and education. The project's mission is to provide effective strategies to bring the Kingdom's important architectural heritage into the future by reclaiming abandoned historical villages with advanced sustainable technologies.

"Reinventing Asir" took place from 18 February to 5 March with a series of events held in Asir and in Jeddah to highlight and raise awareness of the diminishing heritage of Asir. The project was led by Anna Klingmann, Sima Refae and Lubna Yasin of Dar Al Hekma University and was supported by a student team of Samia Khan, Farah Aqrabawi, Nadine Lingawi and Lujain Badrig. The project involved a diverse team of researchers and artists who contributed to the cause of raising awareness and engagement of the regional cultures in Saudi Arabia and beyond

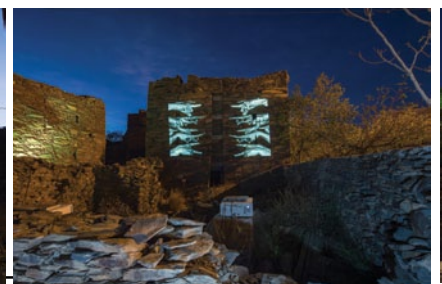
**Al Okas:** The village was used as a canvas to project artwork from local artists such as Abdullah Hammam, Shadia Alem and Dana Awartani who are internationally known for their distinctive regionally based artwork. It also included an installation from world-

renowned fashion designer, Yahya Al Bishri and light projections from Norwegian video artist, Anne Senstad. Other projections included time lapse videos of artwork such as 'A Tribute to Fatmah Abu Gahas' by internationally recognized artist Hend Al Mansour. The event also displayed local involvement from artists of Meftaha arts village in Abha and majilis painters – a genre of painting used in Asir.

The event included a three-day symposium and was attended by many visitors who came

from the surrounding communities, from Abha, Riyadh and from Jeddah. International researchers and artists, members of the German and French consulates, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, Dar Al Hekma faculty and students were amongst the many who had made their way to the Al Okas.

Talks by international scholars such as French ethnographer, Thierry Mauger were the highlights of the event. Thierry Mauger had spent 10 years researching the region while living in the city of Taif about 30 years ago. He fascinated the audience with his photography of the region's unique culture. Other talks included works of researchers such as Andres Lepik of Germany who curated architectural exhibitions for the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Ulrike Freitag who is dedicated to the extensive







research into the culture of Arabia. Novelists Abdullah Thabit and Ahmad Abu Dahman also joined the talks to give the attendees well-rounded insights of the region's culture.

**Jeddah:** The event in Al Okas was followed by an exciting series of events in Jeddah that were held at the French consulate, the German consulate and Dar Al Hekma University.

**The French Consulate:** Thierry Mauger gave a private talk at the French consulate and walked the audience through his discovery of the region 30 years ago. His photography exhibition of Asiri houses was open to the public.

**The German Consulate (*Asir Then and Now*):** Anna Klingmann showcased her photography of historical Asiri houses taken within the last year to contrast Thierry Mauger's earlier work and to create a comparison of *Asir Then & Now* bridging a 20 year span of change in the region, which was discussed between Anna Klingmann and Thierry Mauger during the night.

**HSDA Symposium (*Reinvention of the Vernacular*):** A weeklong symposium at Dar Al Hekma held workshops and talks by international architects and researchers including Nicolas Jérôme Hünerwadel and Thomas Hildebrand – two architects from Switzerland, Hillary Scruggs, an architect and developer from Texas, Andreas Ruby, a curator and publisher from Germany, Wilfried Hackenbroich from Berlin and Thierry Mauger who presented a kaleidoscopic overview of vernacular architecture from around the world. The symposium concluded with a lively panel discussion, which was moderated by Anna Klingmann, to question the future and measures that could be taken to protect the rich heritage of Asir. The panel included Thierry Mauger, Yahya Al Bishri, Abdullah Hammas and Faris Thakfan who had come to join the discussion from Abha.



For further information about this initiative, please visit our website [www.reinventingthevernacular.com](http://www.reinventingthevernacular.com) or contact Anna Klingmann at [anna@klingmann.com](mailto:anna@klingmann.com).

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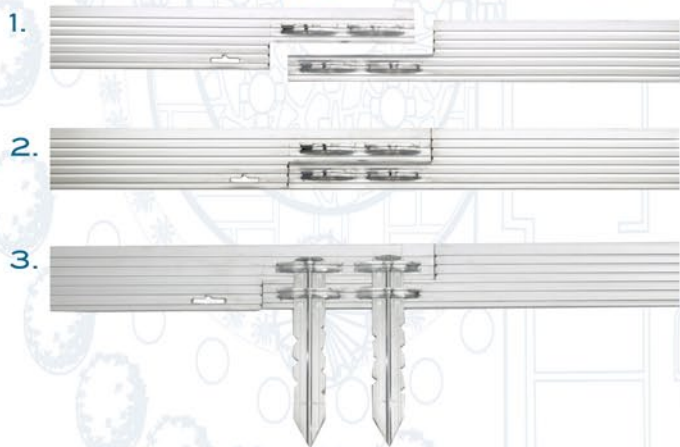


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