

THE MASTER ARCHITECT SERIES

ARCHGROUP

Turning Imagination into Reality

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PREFACE

Ar. Ashok Korgaonkar

Founder and Managing Partner, Archgroup

When passion is the driver, success becomes the route to actualise one's dreams. From an over-enthusiastic young boy with an exceptional imagination, to the lead architect and head of a dynamic architectural practice in the Gulf and in India, I have paved my journey, collating like-minded zealous young minds, whose hearts beat with the built form. Right from the start, even as a fledgling practice, our energies have been focused on creating works of quality, which is now the hallmark of our practice.

With recognition came greater responsibility, as clients patronised our firm to achieve greater architectural feats, paving the way for opportunities to make significant contributions to the Dubai skyline.

Twenty-five years of architectural discovery and the unrelenting zeal to learn – to accomplish – has led to an extensive, significant body of work that has been appreciated not only by peers, but also the layman – the direct users of our edifices. Encouraged by such positive feedback, this monograph documents our working philosophy through a selection of our architectural accomplishments with the hope that it may encourage others, especially young architects, to follow their dreams, even when the end is not in sight.

INTRODUCTION

Archgroup was established in 2004 as an 80-member team of architects in Dubai, though the seeds of growth were sown back in 1992. Growing from strength-to-strength: first a villa, then a school, a hotel, mini-airport facility-cum-institute; the firm grew rapidly and came to be recognised as one of the leading architectural firms in Dubai in a matter of a few short years. At a time when an emerging market like Dubai was testing its economic and infrastructural waters, this young practice rose to the challenge of playing an active and significant role in chiselling its skyline. Today, Archgroup stands loftily with the appellations of *largest*, *tallest* and *first-of-its-kind* as mere passing references in its burgeoning architectural repertoire.

Developing a strong skill-set in building design, structure, master planning, MEP and project management, Archgroup made tangible inroads, conforming to government regulations and the demands of a high-profile clientele, building a demanding and dynamic portfolio using integrity as its sole differentiator.

Archgroup is helmed by Ashok Korgaonkar, an architect, visionary and strong believer in action, who had started his career as a young architect in Dubai in 1982. Ar. Korgaonkar worked his way up to establish his first firm in 1992, gathering a passionate team that unanimously shared his commitment and vision. Twelve years later, destiny jolted him to a fresh start, when Korgaonkar established Archgroup with a dedicated team and the ever-growing allegiance of his clients. His team matched the firm's growing portfolio by flourishing both creatively and technically, honing their skill-sets under his able mentorship. The firm stands for a focussed, pre-emptive approach to building design and management; its innate value-add being its visionary stance and attention to detail. Adopting best practices of the industry, an ingrained due diligence and rigorous design methodology are customary to its services. Its underlying philosophy is defined by 'commitment-transparency-accountability', which builds on the trust of quality and timely deliverables.

Archgroup's organisational systems in terms of quality management, construction methodology, team-based approach, high level of technical expertise, and regular upgradation of skills and software have helped deliver a range of projects with emphasis on timely delivery without any compromise in quality. Combined with client-servicing during and after project completion, this has built enormous client loyalty, from both individuals and corporations.

The capability of handling all aspects of a design – from macro to micro level - has earned Archgroup the reputation of a one-window service-provider for driving projects on fast-track basis, benefiting the client with quick turn-around from concept to completion, for any type of development, delivering the optimum combination of aesthetics and functionality.

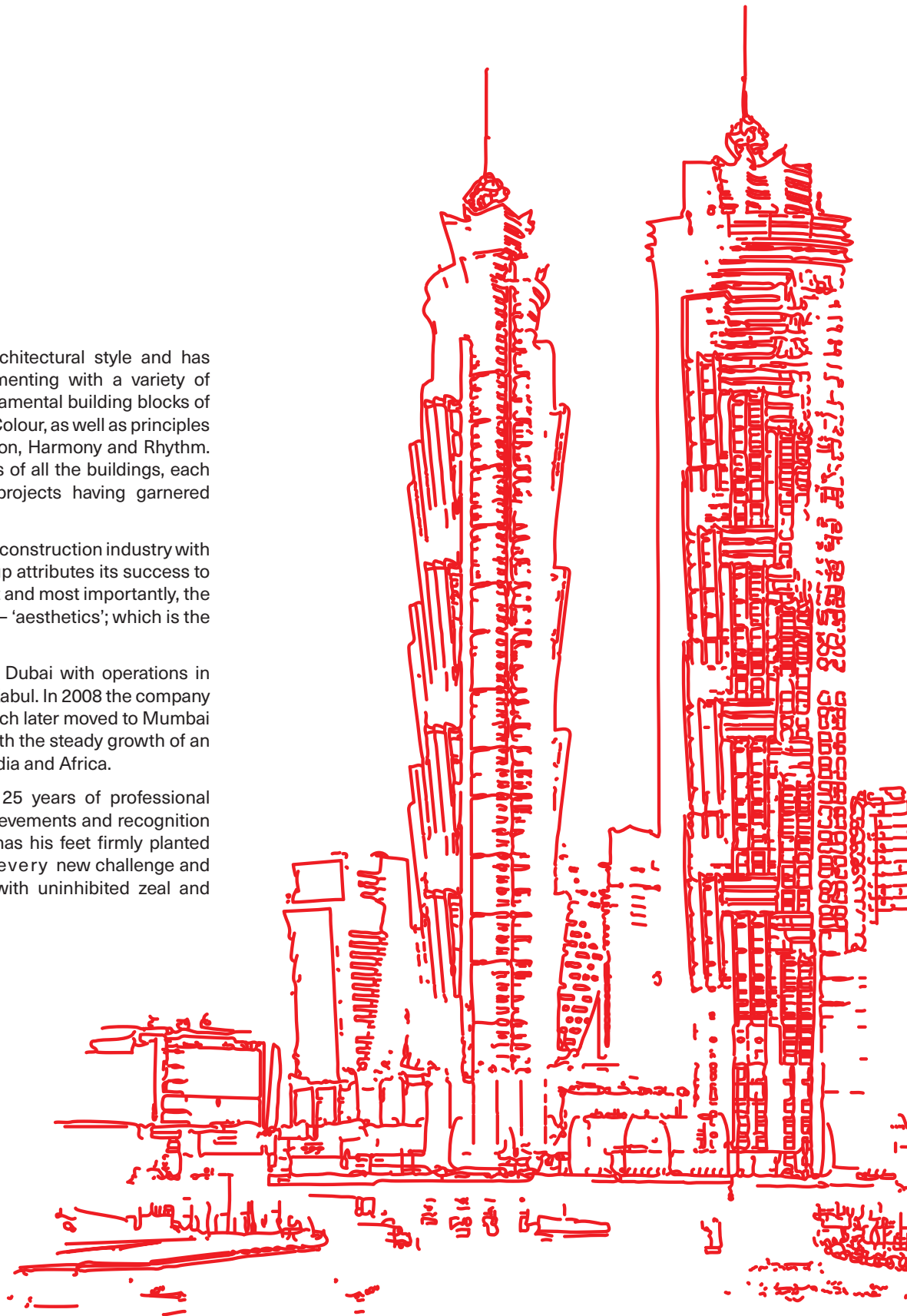
The company boasts a work culture that believes in equal opportunities for professional growth and knowledge-sharing, which has resulted in immense staff loyalty. This further promotes team-building and a healthy competitive spirit that reflects positively in the firm's work. Each project is approached with as much enthusiasm and passion as if it were the very first. Each edifice is characterised by a sensitivity in building design – bespoke, yet generically hallmarked by open spaces, thematics, ample natural light and ventilation, user-friendliness, climatic sensitivity, and environment consciousness. Archgroup buildings are contextually attuned, maximising on the benefits for clients, delivering value for money. The fact that there is almost always an element of intrigue in the edifice and that 98 percent of built forms correspond to the concept proposed, is evidence that every single detail is carefully considered.

Archgroup chooses not to adhere to an architectural style and has consciously evolved over the years, experimenting with a variety of forms and styles, always in sync with the fundamental building blocks of architecture – Line, Form, Space, Texture and Colour, as well as principles of architecture – Balance, Emphasis, Proportion, Harmony and Rhythm. This self-discipline is evident in the elevations of all the buildings, each with a distinct identity, with innumerable projects having garnered prominent media attention and accolades.

Competing in Dubai's fast-paced and evolving construction industry with myriad local and international firms, Archgroup attributes its success to fulfilling clients' expectation for quality, budget and most importantly, the elusive, unquantifiable aspect of architecture – 'aesthetics'; which is the core underlying all Archgroup projects.

Archgroup has its parent company based in Dubai with operations in other cities including Abu Dhabi, Nairobi and Kabul. In 2008 the company branched into India with an office in Pune, which later moved to Mumbai and continues to follow the parent footprint with the steady growth of an impressive portfolio of works and clients in India and Africa.

In November 2017, Korgaonkar completed 25 years of professional practice in Dubai. Despite his numerous achievements and recognition as a leading architect in Dubai, Korgaonkar has his feet firmly planted in humility. An eternal optimist, he relishes every new challenge and continues to approach each new project with uninhibited zeal and passion for design.



REMINISCENCES

Ar. Sanjay Sen

Executive Director, Archgroup Dubai

My association with Archgroup started earlier than its official inception date of 2004. Furthermore, I would not be mistaken if many of my colleagues, with whom I have had the privilege of working since I joined Ashok in 1995, share the same belief. The reason is that we always considered ourselves as the same team, who became Archgroup from 2004.

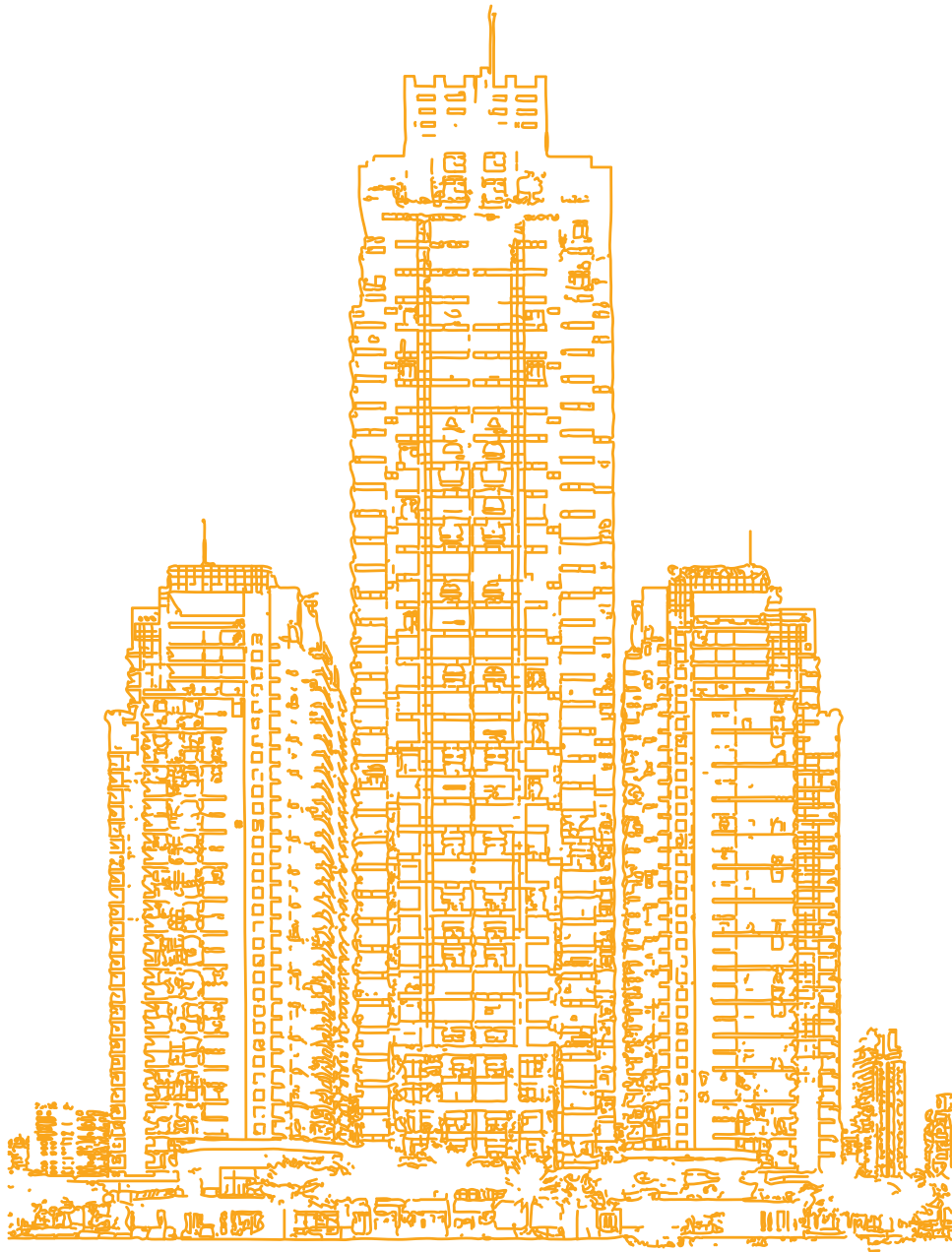
Therefore, to express what Archgroup means to me, I will delve further into the past, to the time I first started working with Ashok. When I joined him, I was still quite raw, with just four years of work experience at a few renowned Delhi firms. In Ashok's fledgling practice, I was fortunate to find a refreshing and balanced approach to architecture. Our work philosophy had few basic unwritten principles, which put equal emphasis on the dilemmas faced by architects every day – whether it was design versus functionality, aesthetics versus economy, details versus buildability, creativity versus management, individuality versus teamwork, each aspect had its own place and merit, as long as it benefited the client and the project. Our mantra did not sacrifice one for the other.

We were prolific, and our team and portfolio grew every year, so much so that by 2004 our strength had exceeded ten-fold. By then, we had also completed some landmark projects and earned ourselves a considerable degree of repute among our peers in Dubai. One could attribute such sustained growth and maturity in our works to good fortune, diligence and commitment. Indeed, all of them were instrumental, but good times do not last forever; and we had suffered our share of business lows. So, what lay behind such dedication that helped us grow and sustain in times of crisis?

It was the synergy born out of our shared belief in Ashok's leadership, which helped shape not only our buildings, but our destiny too. The collective will forged by our common belief and individual aspirations was the force behind our growth then, and it is still at work today.

Today's buildings are complex creations – each one built by the joint efforts of the core disciplines of architecture and engineering, plus other specialities such as interiors and landscape, signage, and so on. At Archgroup, we covet the onerous role as Lead Consultants in every such endeavour. Our Design and Construction Heads steer the creative and engineering process, co-ordinating the inputs of each discipline at every stage of the project. They can resolve any issue, thanks to the bedrock of shared experiences and knowledge base, going as far back as 1992.

Twenty-five years after Ashok started this journey, we are compiling our works in this volume, to share what teamwork can achieve. On this propitious occasion, I would like to thank Ashok for mentoring and leading us by example at every step. I would also like to acknowledge my kindred colleagues. Their professional integrity and contributions have brought many a success to the firm. I am confident that like me, the majority of them are still enthused by the challenge of each new project. Like me, they too look forward to the gratifying moment of pointing at a building and being able to say, 'It's an Archgroup Project'.



“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.”

—Henry Ford

VISION

Ar. Abhijit Purohit

Executive Director, Head of India Operations, Archgroup International

My growth story is interwoven with the progressive growth of Archgroup. Working for almost a decade at Archgroup in Dubai was a very invigorating experience for me. Early exposure to some incredible projects on a large scale in terms of magnitude and scale, not only broadened my vision and understanding of the dynamics of the discipline, but also reinforced me with the confidence required to successfully manage such projects.

With constant guidance from Ashok, I was able to work through the entire process of turning dreams into reality via a systematic involvement, starting from design inception up to tendering of the project.

The learning curve was fortified by constant interaction and dialogue with superiors and engineers to lay a strong foundation – putting the architectural approach in a more pragmatic context and direction. I learnt to conceive projects in a logical fashion, right from the concept stage. There is now a more cohesive approach towards design at the onset. It also ensures that what has been conceived as a concept is delivered without much of a deviation from the original aesthetic and functional organisation. I learnt that it is not just the form of the building that must be appealing, but also what goes on inside. How well the spatial experience has been organised, along with the other disciplines, is the key to a successful project.

The ethos of Archgroup revolves around achieving a balance between practical ideas and sensibility regarding good aesthetical judgment. The key differentiation is the collaborative approach between all the disciplines at various stages of the project, which helps to reduce the gestation period of a project, and consequently impacts the economics of the project, with better savings for the clients.

Our work is not restricted to a strict architectural language or style, but rather to a balance of our client's desires and the dialogue that we achieve through investigation of the manifested constraints of planning and budget.

While our design studios are highly collaborative, fuelled by the energy of our architects and engineers, the vital inspiration is the desire of our clients and the will and talent of our architects to achieve it.

It has been a decade since we established the practice in India. In this very challenging market, we are evolving, changing and adapting to dynamic and volatile local challenges, while maintaining the company's ethos. Our team in India is young and energetic and is fuelled with a proficiency of international views and experience, attributed to the presence of seniors, who migrated with the company to India. The basis of the firm in India is to hire the best young talent and then train it with the sense and sensibility acquired during the long tenure with Archgroup. However, the main challenge lies in retaining dynamic minds through the entire life cycle of a project. With the project life span in India being longer than typical elsewhere, it sometimes becomes difficult to keep straying minds motivated for a long period of time.

Overcoming all challenges, with our focus and integrity directed toward our clients, we have successfully completed many projects in a short period of time. We are now associated with leading corporate organisations and developers in India, who have trusted us with repeated projects.

As in Dubai, in India too, we have excellent credentials in the spheres of hospitality and high-rise architectural projects, and this list of achievements is growing. With our experience and creative team, we can handle a project of any scale from design inception to execution.

Having established ourselves in India, we are now looking at providing similar level of services in various other countries, starting in North Africa. This ensures that our clients get the best of our talent and experience, on a conservative budget. We have already been involved with designing and developing landmark projects in Kenya.

My aspiration is to place Archgroup at the topmost rung of architectural practices in India.

HH SHEIKH BUTTI RESIDENTIAL TOWER

AL MAJAN, DUBAI

HH Sheikh Butti Residential Tower is a 35-storey project located in Al Majan. The neighbourhood is opposite the City of Arabia, accessible from Emirates Road and will become part of the Dubailand downtown precinct designed to house over 85,000 people within this community.

The tower offers residents various layouts and configurations – two-bedroom as well as three-bedroom apartments, distributed over a total of 270 apartment units. Retail units on the ground floor will enjoy roadside access and a double-height entrance lobby will provide a grand entrance for the residents and their guests. Ample parking space is allocated at the basement and three podium levels, while amenities such as a swimming pool and gymnasium occupy the fourth podium level.

A highly efficient HVAC system is in place, with Variable Refrigerant Flow system and Fresh Air Handling Units, individually controlled thermostats for apartments, fresh air inlets and exhaust ducts from apartments improving energy efficiency and providing the utmost comfort to the residents.

“This contemporary and illustrious residential tower comes equipped with ample community facilities and exhibits the utmost efficiency in planning.”

Lighting control systems ensure and enhance user comfort, with programmable timers, photocells, motion sensors and override switches, which ensure energy saving – for instance, external and façade lights are connected to photocells and timers, while corridor lights are controlled through motion sensors and timers.

The external façade treatment is simple, contemporary and repetitive in nature, ensuring a polished look. Façade lighting further enhances elevation features.

This is a highly functional tower implemented with careful planning and judicious use of materials.

Project status: Projected/expected completion 2018

Client: HH Sheikh Butti Maktoum Juma Al Maktoum

Programme: Architecture, structure, MEP, quantity surveying, project management

Built-up area: 70,292 m² (756,617 ft²)

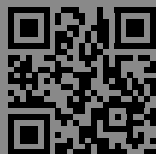
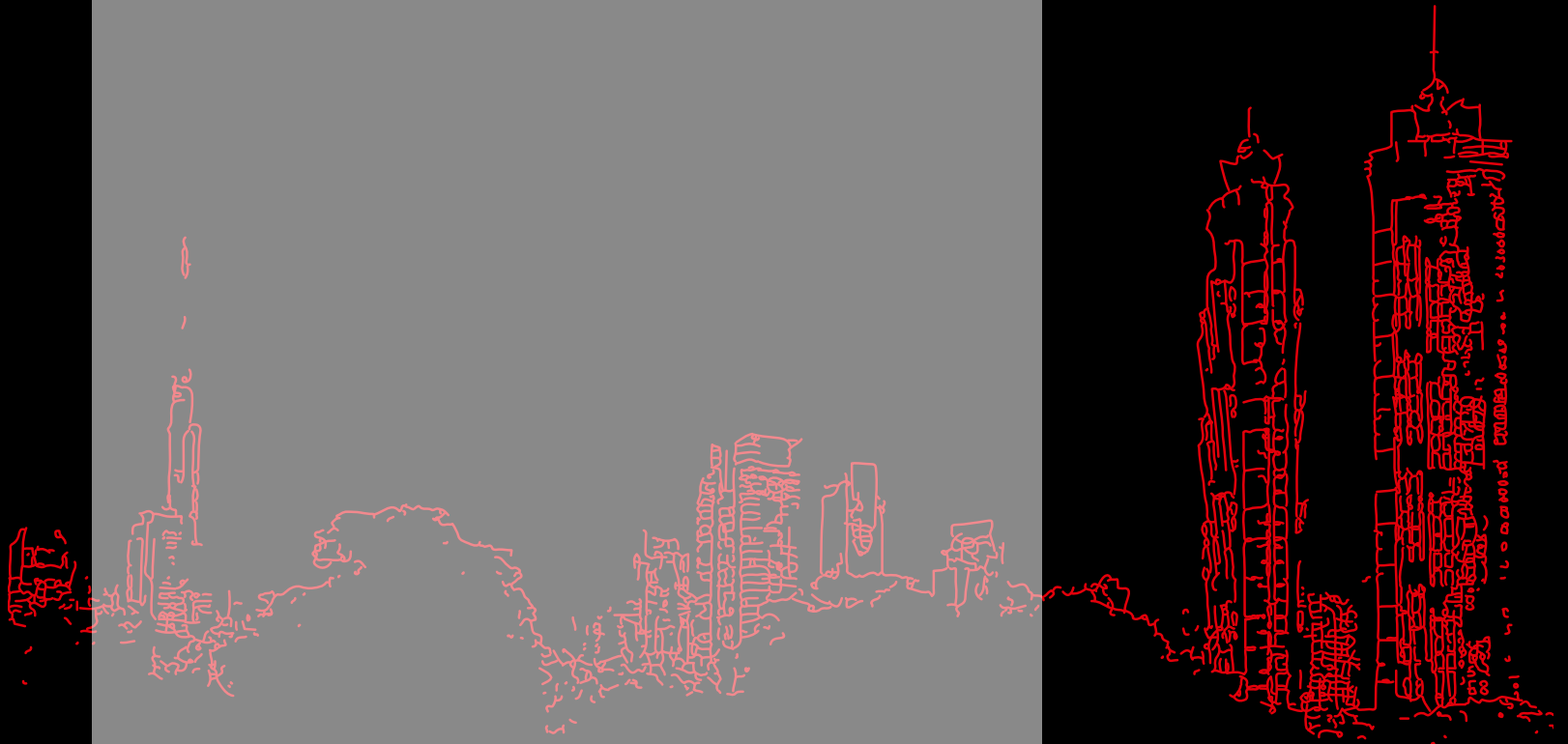
Site area: 0.6 hectares (1.4 acres)

Project cost: AED222 million



This monograph showcases the trajectory of an empire built by the sheer dint of its driving success. Archgroup has gained international recognition as a comprehensive service provider in the architectural segment, with special focus being on its prolific and vital role in dominating the skyline of the UAE's world-class destination, Dubai. The firm's work has now become synonymous with epithets such as 'tallest', 'highest' and 'longest' across the Gulf region.

Inside, the richly illustrated pages chronicle close to 100 projects by Archgroup, both built and in progress. Each work provides insight into the values, design-thinking and process-oriented approach that is the firm's signature, making this volume a valuable resource that goes beyond the study of the built form to talk about the firm's inimitable ethos that guides its design candour.



ISBN 978-1864707465



56000



\$60.00 [USA]
£45.00 [GB]

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