THE 'BEHR' ESSENTIALS

A one-on-one with BEHR CHAMPANA, architect & designer of The Dubai Towers, Dubai



From creating science fiction comic gravitating towards towers of colourless characters as an adolescent to creating architectural wonders as an adult, Behr (BC)- Well I think every project has its fantasyworld. Vice President of international architectural firm TVS International, talent. Having grown up in Puerto Rico, Orleans, Champana is the perfect balance an architect you cannot have any limits. of warmth and city-dweller sophistication. In a rendezvous with A&E, he speaks with Gayathri Krishnan of the "candle flame" that ignited the idea of The Dubai Towers, the developers have a very "bottom-line" and the personal enlightenments along the

Did you always want to be an architect? in high school, I wanted to be a plastic fiction comic book characters, my friends was quite confused about which way to go.

At that point, I was dating the daughter of the best plastic surgeon in Puerto Rico and I went into his library and I started going through his books and as destiny would have it, I pulled a book out of his shelf and it was about operations on children with deformities. The book showed images of these children before and after the surgery country, even with modern architecture you and the children were still struggling with remnants of the deformities which truly irked me. So much so that, it completely so there are no limits, no matter what kind put me off of the idea of becoming a plastic surgeon because the level of empathy I felt for those children was far more than I could bear. I thought to myself that if I couldn't that fascinated you and why? completely rid a child of his physical challenges because of the limits of surgical techniques or technology, I wouldn't be able in my life because that's when I knew I vehemently.

glass and cement?

Champana dwells in the reality of his own opportunity which is based on client objectives and one has to be sensitive to that. You have to remember that you are Behr is an inspirational and positive creating a project according to a client's force to reckon with a talent for honing specific vision. Their goal might be to augment real estate value, or build a home and educated in Tulane University in New for themselves, and that cannot limit you; as

I have been working abroad since 1992 and found that, especially in the States, mentality and when I started working in South America, Europe and even in Dubai for that matter. I was respected more as an architect and was valued for what I had to Behr Champana (BC)- Well, when I was offer as a designer. But nothing can deter you, for as an architect you have to evolve surgeon. But since I was pretty good at and be willing to change. So the more you drawing and sketching, especially science travel, the more exposure you get to different sensibilities, technology, complexities of often told me I should be an architect. Both projects and so on. The greatest architects plastic surgery and architecture were about are ones who've evolved and you can clearly creating something unique and new and I see that evolution when you compare their earlier works to the current. And I want to be an architect who is constantly learning

> As for working with colour and vibrance, we have done projects in Aruba and that was totally vernacular. We did the research on the area, the architecture, the culture and infused all that into the design. So with each can blend the creative with the contextual. It is an art that is challenging and exciting; of design parameters are laid out for you.

What was the first architectural structure

(BC)- The Pompidou Centre in Paris was one of the most amazing things I had ever seen. I was always very keen on figuring to live with myself. It was a turning point out what direction I was going to take as an architect and designer and early on, in couldn't be a plastic surgeon, and I started second year of college, what I did find was pursuing my other passion, architecture, that you've got to let the essence of building come out. The Pompidou centre did not look like a museum yet the structure served Reigning from a place like Puerto Rico that purpose with such inventiveness. They where colour and vibrance are such a exposed a lot of the mechanical systems, big part of the cityscape, does it feel and building systems on the outside, giving odd to be an architect in a world that is more space to exhibit and I thought that was



that the essence of a building will always reveal

landmark and they were looking for something

that had never been done and something that

symbolized Dubai. The Falcon had been done in

Abu Dhabi. The Palm had been done, and the

Sailboat had been done as well. Dubai has a lot

of history but to be able to turn that into an

abstraction and then into a building, is not an

easy task and some good projects had already

been developed, so it was tough. We started

working on the project in October 2004 with

Sama Dubai and in a few months we were

asked to show something concrete design-wise

The city was at the cutting-edge of construction,

construction-management cultural integration.

had the largest man-made island, the tallest

building in the world which had been announced

recently; so as I thought about it more I realized

pushing the limit.

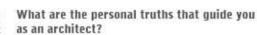
unique design?

genius. That made me realize the direction I that Dubai was at the forefront of every kind development, it was always looking forward. would take as an architect because it taught me

itself to you and you have to make something During that time I had made a visit to Istanbul unique out of that. It is not about being safe or and saw the Blue Mosque and one thing that as an architect? commercially viable: it is about exploring the struck me was that all the chandeliers that concept and purpose behind the project and had lit the mosque were candles. Hundreds of that's when it came to me; Dubai was providing Speaking about pushing the limit- tell us about the Dubai Towers, Dubai and its the world about how to manage construction and cultural integration. "Enlightenment" was after a good creative process. (BC)- The shape of the Dubai Towers, Dubai is the concept and it was a great and new symbol inspired by the flames of a candle. The Dubai of Dubai that was not the Falcon, or the sea or Towers was conceptualized to be an iconic

> I had 5 teams working on the project and every time we had an idea for design before the one had a lot of potential and then we worked on it

together; we presented it to the client and they loved it, and the rest is history.



(BC)- I'm after the creative process; the joy that I find in finding the right solution to thousands of candles illuminated the mosque and something is overwhelming. I could be just as happy designing someone's garage expansion that illumination not only to the region but to or a doll house for a little girl as I am doing the big architectural projects because I'm just

> Because of the position I am in my company today. I get involved with the concept planning and also mentoring members of my team. I'm not about making the history books; if I see someone who is striving to be better than they best they can be.

What is your definition of success?

or measure what I've achieved. It is about going after something, establishing the vision on how to achieve it and pursuing that vehemently, way. Success is far more spiritual than what we understand and it's so very personal; something achievements and your life.





with the flame of the candle, we were neverable are, I will do my very best to make them the to satisfy the client. I never really shared my idea of enlightenment, but I had started sketching the idea on napkins and made a mental picture in my mind. The idea was so out of the box that (BC)- My definition of success is how I perceive it was hard to explain and after eight weeks the client was getting very nervous and so were we because I knew there were bigger architectural firms lurking, wanting the job. So that's when because success is not about what's at the end and after master-planning I started thinking, we knew we had to go to the next level and be of the road, it's about what you learn along the a lot more abstract and symbolic. That's when I shared my idea with my team and explained the concept, and they laughed. My team said that can not be coloured by someone else's "that's not a building" and didn't take it too view of you, it is your own perception of your seriously but one of my architects, Howard Chen, said that he liked it and that he thought it

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