

# GET TO KNOW DAOUSSER CHENNOUFI...

WE SPEAK TO THE CEO AND PRINCIPAL, DAOUSSER CHENNOUFI TO DISCUSS HIS BACKGROUND, BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY, OBJECTIVES AND FAVOURITE PROJECTS.



**Emirates Projects:** Can you tell us about your background; where were you educated and what was your first job?

**Daousser Chennoufi:** I have always had an artistic mind and was fascinated by innovative, unique designs and colours. Advancing in years, I started to be interested in architecture and it became my passion. That was the moment when I decided to become an architect and eventually obtained a Master's degree in architecture in Tunisia – my motherland and my beloved country. Therefore, my professional journey started in Tunisia, where I got a chance to develop a design concept for a resort in Tabarka – a city in the north-west of the country. I put all of my ideas for architecture and interiors into that project.

**EP:** What was your thinking behind Draw Link Group (DLG) and what were your objectives?

**DC:** DLG reflects my vision in life, it is my passion. I invested all I had into the company; it is an amalgamation of my personal and professional life. It tells a story of having

an honourable and fascinating goal in life, a sense of possibility, of perseverance, and a spirit of risk taking. I started in Tunisia and moved to Dubai where I saw better business opportunities in my field.

**EP:** What do you think is your greatest achievement and what is the firm working on now?

**DC:** I think each of the achievements we have realised have been great. Two of our latest projects, of which we are very proud, are:

- DLG started expanding to Sub-Saharan Africa two years ago and invested a lot in market research and market visibility. That venture turned out to have a good Return of Investment (ROI), since we have been awarded three hospitality projects (Hilton Hotel Five-Star, Marriott Hotel Five-Star in Kampala, and a Destination Resort in Zanzibar). All of them are under development now, and they are going to be our future reference in the African region.
- DLG is now a part of the launch of the

first industrial concrete 3D printing firm, Concreative LLC – a company specialising in concrete additive manufacturing with fully integrated services. This takes in innovative technology to merge architect' ideas and engineers' constraints, concrete 3D printing expertise, and the design and manufacture of highly complex shapes.

**EP:** Looking back, which projects are you most proud of and why?

**DC:** Since I began my career, I have always looked for projects that could impact positively on society, with their ideas, outlooks, and attitudes. I admit I have been lucky to be presented with the right opportunities. So, looking back, I see many projects I feel proud of, such as Roberto's Restaurant in Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), which we designed in 2012 and had the honour of redesigning and refurbishing in 2018. Within a very short timeframe, just three months, we managed to achieve amazing results.

Other projects include the award-winning Intercontinental Dubai Marina and 72 Hotel

in Sharjah, in 2015 and 2016 respectively, and the Marriott Hotel in Kampala, the first one in the Sub-Saharan region. Of course, there have been many others too.

**EP:** What have been your biggest challenges?

**DC:** There are always challenges in each industry, especially in such a fast-growing and competitive market like the GCC. I would say, creating innovative design solutions while respecting the culture and the heritage of each community, offering a valuable vision and unique identity to each project – this is the main challenge. The other one is to accommodate a suitable budget to fulfil our clients' needs and meet their requirements.

**EP:** How would you describe your business philosophy?

**DC:** The DLD philosophy is to create a concept for hospitality projects that offer

more than just a comfortable overnight accommodation. Its about the guest experience, this is our priority. A hotel should display a unique lifestyle, not to be a replica of something created before. Research and Development (R&D) is the cornerstone of our business model, and we are endlessly pushing the boundaries to create intelligent designs and exciting new environments for our clients. Even the most basic hotel concepts do not need to be conventional and ordinary due to budget constraints.

**EP:** Do you have any mentors that you really look up to?

**DC:** Not really. However, I always invest heavily in myself and my team to remain up to date in our field and to keep pace with market demands and end-user expectations. I also travel extensively and attend many social networking events, which helps me to understand customer feedback, which we take into consideration when we design

other projects.

**EP:** If you could do it all again, would you do anything differently?

**DC:** I can't say I would, no. Everything happens for a reason, and every decision made now or in the past has an underlying rationale. However, I wish I could have had a chance to meet some people a little earlier, some of them later, and some of them ... never!

**EP:** How have you ensured the highest performance standards possible at DLG?

**DC:** Being a good listener and keeping a positive attitude are the qualities of a smart operator. I consider teamwork and synergy to be the key points of our success. We care for our employees and invest a lot to maintain the positive energy within the company, such as regular team-building activities and training.

**EP:** How do you see the firm progressing over the next 10 years?

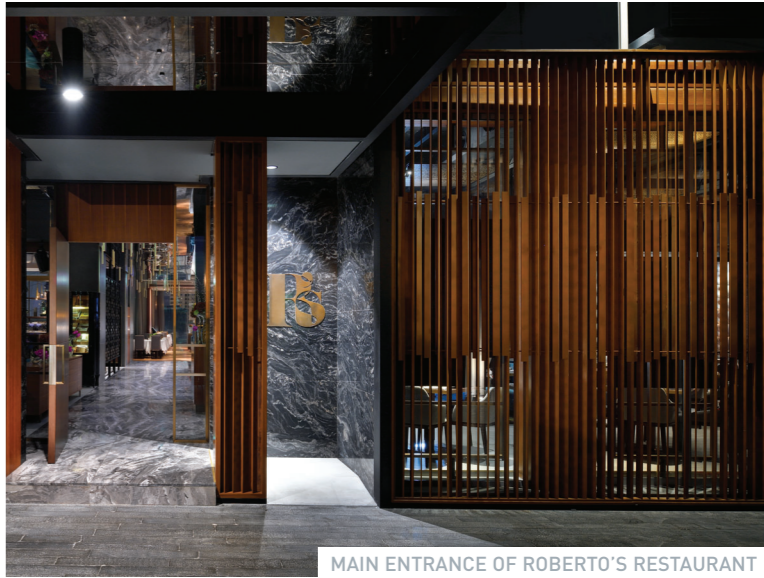
**DC:** We will continue to maintain our good reputation as a professional, innovative, and client-oriented design firm internationally. We will also diversify and expand the fields of our core activity by creating complementary design solutions to serve our clients in a better way, and to always surpass their expectations.

**EP:** What are your interests outside of work and how do you relax?

**DC:** I love travelling and exploring new cultures, meeting friends and new people, playing sports (mainly squash or swimming). What inspires me most of all is the idea of discovering unknown worlds, because one trip, one incident, can change your life – and in the blink of an eye it will never be the same.



CONCIERGE DESK INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, DUBAI



MAIN ENTRANCE OF ROBERTO'S RESTAURANT



THE LOBBY OF INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, DUBAI



ROBERTO'S RESTAURANT, DUBAI INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE