

Jacquelyn Bell

Simplicity, aesthetics, and attention to detail: the makings of an architect

“The response that I get is what keeps me going, it’s not something I expected,” says Sultan Al Samhan calmly, as he explains the driving force behind his art. Sultan is a senior in the architecture program at Iowa State University. In his free time he also paints and draws, typically creating intricate mandalas.

Originally from Kuwait, Sultan received a full-ride scholarship after high school and came, with a friend, to the relatively small town of Ames, Iowa. Knowing very little about Iowa, he came to America with the intention of moving to California after a year.

“I ended up loving it here, you have a lot of time to think on your craft. It’s the complete opposite of the way I grew up.”

He is now in his sixth year at Iowa State and will be graduating in the spring.

Sultan has always been interested in art. His father is a high-end wedding planner back in the Middle East. This is where Sultan attributes his attention to detail and passion for aesthetics.

“He was always good at leading people around and telling them what to do, how to make his vision turn into something.”

His passion for art outside of architecture was sparked about a year ago when he was sketching out a tattoo for a friend. He also dabbles in filmmaking, painting, and sketching. Most of his video editing skills have been self taught. He creates his art mainly for his own enjoyment

but sometimes sells stickers, prints, and occasionally an original piece. He proudly explained having an exhibit on display at the Stomping Grounds Cafe in Ames last spring.

“Right now it’s a really exciting time, I feel like, to be an architect, things are changing faster than they’ve changed,” he remarked about the current state of architecture. To be an architect you need to have an eye for detail. Sultan’s classes have prepared him to think about the flow of a whole city as well as the importance of something as simple as a doorknob. He has learned to account for the physics, function, and aesthetics of a building. The past six years have been a lot of work and all-nighters, but he said he would do it all again, except maybe with a minor in psychology.

Sultan idolizes architects that show a sensitivity to materials and pride in their craftsmanship. He appreciates hand drawn work and creative criticism. He claims to have developed a thick skin from all of the critiquing that is involved in architecture. He has learned that “with time and passion you can do anything.”

Sultan dreams of designing nontraditional residential homes and villas for wealthy clients, focusing on environmentally friendly innovations. He is also playing around with the idea of getting a master’s degree in Europe or designing buildings in Dubai.

Sultan said that architecture has helped to open his mind. He is driven by the response he gets from others and his passion for art, but admitted that money and women were also driving factors for his diligence in architecture. He is creatively inspired in times of extreme sadness or happiness. He loves to travel and aspires to one day create a building in every continent. Sultan values the simplicity and attention to detail required in all forms of art. He is looking forward to seeing the progression of architecture in the future.

