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CEO MIDDLE EAST LEGACY



LW Design Group - A legacy of vision, collaboration, and global design excellence

Jesper Godsk, Founder and CEO of LW Design Group, on creating designs that redefine the industry

COVER STORY

LW Design Group:
A legacy of vision, collaboration, and global design excellence

A HOMEGROWN INTERIOR DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE FIRM THAT IS NOW GLOBALLY CREATING MARKET-DEFINING DESIGNS THAT ARE REDEFINING THE INDUSTRY

LW Design Group, Dubai's most prominent design and architecture firm, continues to shape the landscape of the built environment with its unwavering commitment to excellence and a legacy rooted in friendship, collaboration, and a shared passion for design. With a rich history originating in Dubai and expanding its influence globally, LW Design Group stands as a beacon of inspiration and innovation, leaving an indelible mark on the skyline of Dubai and beyond.

Founding forces

Jesper Godsk, the Founder and CEO of LW Design Group, plays an essential role in carrying forward an extraordinary legacy. In 1999, Godsk, along with Lars Waldenström and Morten Hansen, recognised a gap in the Dubai interior design market, which was predominantly associated with extravagant opulence. Their collective vision was to bring the essence of minimalist Scandinavian design to the forefront of the region, marking a significant turning point that propelled LW to unprecedented heights.

However, the origins of this success story can be traced back two decades earlier, to 1976, when Waldenström embarked on a journey that involved taking five flights from Sweden to Dubai for a business meeting, driven by his quest to uncover opportunities for a Swedish company. Through a fortunate series of events and fortuitous encounters, Waldenström found himself commissioned as a designer for custom-built palaces. Waldenström's determination to succeed, coupled with his adeptness in forging connections with people, led him to cross paths with Hansen and Godsk.

> "WE SEE OURSELVES AND ALL OF OUR COLLEAGUES AS A FAMILY, WHO CARE FOR EACH OTHER AND ENJOY CREATING FANTASTIC PROJECTS TOGETHER"





↑ **Creative leaders.** (From left to right) Pooja Shah-Mulani, Jesper Godsk, Lars Waldenström, Adrian Battisby, Andrew Harms and Rachel Kidd

Subsequently, in 2003, Colin Doyle established LW Architecture, further enhancing the LW brand with its modern and contemporary approach to architectural design. With an impressive portfolio encompassing luxury villas, residential complexes, commercial spaces, and hospitality towers, LW Design Group's Architectural Division has become an integral part of Dubai's urban fabric. Additionally, Cristina Wakamatsu, Partner and Design Director for Architecture, has cemented LW Design Group's Architectural Division in the South American residential market — a role she spearheads from the company's office in São Paulo, Brazil.

Collaboration and camaraderie are fundamental to the ethos of LW Design Group. This is evident in their unique approach to client interactions, which embodies an authentic Scandinavian spirit. It fosters an environment that is frank, honest, informal, and highly productive. As experts in hospitality design, the team at LW Design Group recognise the significance of creating a welcoming atmosphere, and this philosophy permeates their meetings. An informal set-up allows clients to feel comfortable, encouraging open and fluid discussions about their design aspirations and vision. LW Design Group believes that this nurturing of relationships and fostering of trust with clients brings a personal touch to every project.

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The number of LW Design Group offices around the world – Dubai, Hong Kong, Sao Paolo and Denmark, with Riyadh on the horizon

Under Godsk's guidance, the company has grown from its humble team of three in a small office behind the Dubai Zoo to a global practise of 160 people. With a solid foundation, the company was set for global expansion, leading to the establishment of LW offices in Hong Kong, São Paulo, and Denmark, with current plans to expand into Saudi Arabia. These international ventures allowed LW Design Group to gain international recognition, proving its adaptability and setting the stage for future success.

Next generation

With new opportunities comes new leadership, which for LW Design Group is Adrian Battisby, Rachel Kidd, Pooja Shah-Mulani, and Andrew Harms. "Next year, LW will celebrate its 25th anniversary, so identifying the four individuals that will be responsible for developing the legacy is the biggest achievement I could wish for," Godsk states. The new leadership has been a carefully planned transition over the last eight years, with Jimmy Hansen, Partner and CFO, at the helm of this milestone progression.

"Each with their own personality and skillset, when combined, form the strongest leadership team to carry LW Design Group forward into the future while preserving our core DNA. We see ourselves and all of our colleagues as a family, who care for each other and enjoy creating fantastic projects together," Godsk explains.

Adrian Battisby, Partner, Senior Director of Interior Design, heads LW Design Group's Hong Kong office. He has played a pivotal role in expanding the company's presence in the Asian market. His meticulous attention to detail and ability to seamlessly merge functionality with aesthetic appeal has been instrumental in LW Design Group's success. With extensive knowledge and experience in space planning and operational flow, his contribution to all aspects of designing luxury hospitality projects is widely appreciated by owners and operators. Godsk, acknowledging Battisby's commitment and professionalism states: "Adrian is by nature a very charismatic personality, who can capture people's attention and present ideas with such passion and flair."

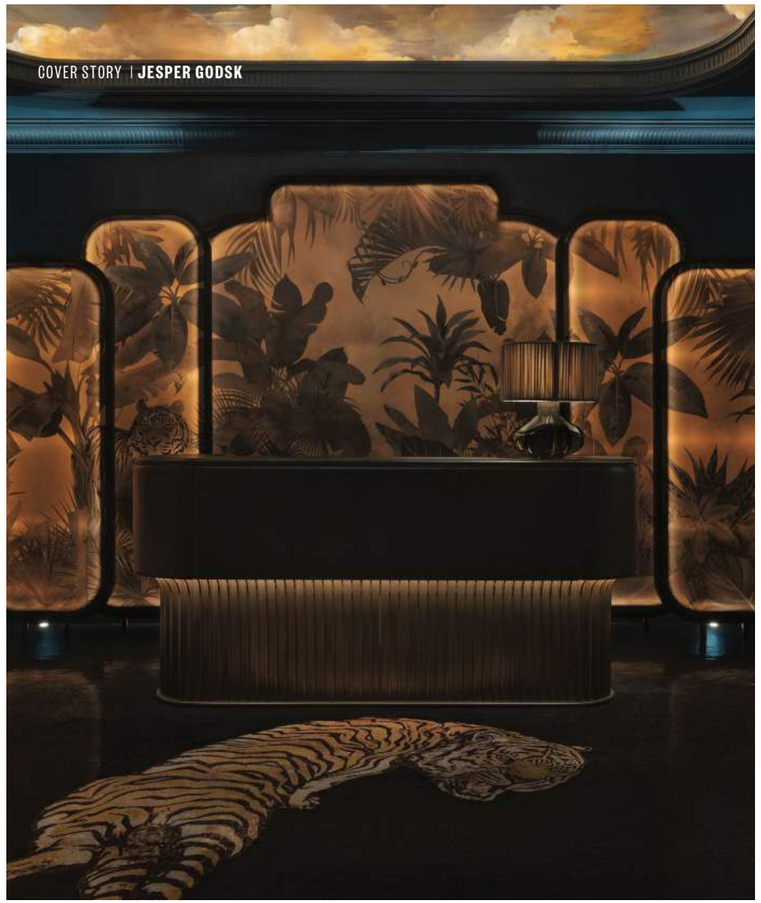


↑ **Spaces with impact.** The Dubai Edition - an iconic hotel in Downtown Dubai where Interior Design & Architecture by LW are woven together seamlessly to create a unique luxury experience

Rachel Kidd, Partner and Design Director of Interior Design, plays an instrumental role in creating exceptional designs and storytelling for both hospitality and residential projects. LW Design Group's reputation for upscale and luxurious hospitality projects is exemplified by Rachel's success in attracting clients who seek the same level of sophistication for their homes. Godsk says: "Rachel is so gifted in her way of creating strong narratives from the briefs we are given and being able to translate them seamlessly into incredible spaces where her attention to detail, furniture, and accessories has resulted in LW being one of the market leaders in interior design."

> "WE HOPE THE FUTURE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESENT LW WITH EXCITING NEW PROJECTS ACROSS THE GLOBE"

Pooja Shah-Mulani, Partner and Design Director of Interior Design, is a driving force behind LW Design Group's design philosophy. Shah-Mulani infuses each project with profound meaning and emotional resonance, showcasing her remarkable ability to blend functionality, aesthetics, and cultural influences, earning her an esteemed reputation among clients and industry peers. Shah-Mulani's dedication to nurturing a happy work culture has fostered an atmosphere of creativity and motivation within the team, inspiring them to deliver exceptional design solutions consistently. Godsk reveals:



↑ **Chic.** Blind Tiger - A mysterious yet playful speakeasy bar in Jumeirah Al Naseem, Dubai

"Pooja has a natural openness and flair which engages everyone around her. She possesses so much knowledge, which covers all aspects within our industry, which is why LW is respected for not only being a design firm but also is seen as a reliable partner with clients and operators."

Andrew Harms, Partner and Technical Design Director, upholds the highest design quality standards through meticulous attention to detail. He has been instrumental in developing the business from a commercial and delivery aspect which has set LW Design Group apart in the industry, earning them a well-deserved reputation for excellence. Godsk emphasises the significance of Harms' contribution, stating: "Andrew has enabled LW to create a more flexible approach and react efficiently to the ever-changing demands on projects while maintaining quality throughout all the design and construction stages."

As LW Design Group continues to redefine design boundaries, the expertise and vision brought forth by Battisby, Kidd, Shah-Mulani and Harms solidify the firm's position as an industry leader. With their collective dedication to pushing boundaries, cultural influences, and unwavering commitment to excellence, LW Design Group stands poised to shape the future of architecture and design on a global scale.

1999
The year in which LW Dubai studio was set up in the emirate

Redefining design

As the firm expands its horizons, LW Design Group aspires to create unique hospitality projects, leveraging the endless possibilities and innovations it offers. Projects like Bab Al Shams, inspired by a narrative of a lost princess and her souvenirs, and iconic hospitality projects like The Dubai Edition, Waldorf Astoria in Kuwait, and Raffles Shenzhen contribute to LW Design Group's innovation-driven design portfolio.

The legacy of LW Design Group goes beyond an evolution in management; it is a testament to the firm's people-centric approach and its impact on Dubai's urban fabric. Starting with elite residential projects and soaring mixed-use towers, LW Design Group has evolved into a provider of signature hospitality projects and high-scale architectural as well as F&B endeavours, such as Bushra by Buddha Bar, Chic Nonna in DIFC, City Social in Grosvenor House, and Blind Tiger in Jumeirah Al Naseem, to name a few. The growth trajectory demonstrates the firm's ability to adapt and thrive amidst international competition.

Embracing the legacy left by its founders, the third-generation leaders infuse LW Design Group with their unique strengths and vision. They have expanded the firm's presence in new markets, fostering collaborations with renowned architects and designers worldwide.

LW DNA

The LW DNA, nurtured by the founders and carried forward by the third-generation leaders, remains a defining characteristic of the company.



↑ **Architectural minds.** (Left to Right) Colin Doyle, Jesper Godsk, Lars Waldenström and Cristina Wakamatsu

The LW DNA encompasses a deep commitment to creating designs that transcend trends, stand the test of time, and evoke emotional connections with their occupants. It symbolises the friendship, collaboration, and shared passion for design that set LW Design Group apart in the industry. With its sights set on competing with international players, LW Design Group continues to redefine the boundaries of design and leave a permanent mark on the global stage.

The future

"To continue to develop our legacy, LW's priority is to get stronger, not bigger," Godsk says of the brand's vision for the future, adding: "Our reputation is now recognised globally, and our dream when we started back in 1999 of being an international design firm has now been achieved. Every new project is a unique experience, and we hope the future will continue to present LW with exciting new projects across the globe."

> "TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP OUR LEGACY, LW'S PRIORITY IS TO GET STRONGER, NOT BIGGER"

As the legacy of LW Design Group continues to unfold, it serves as a testament to the power of vision, collaboration, and the enduring impact of design. With the company's footprint firmly making a mark around the globe with its four offices, LW Design Group stands at the forefront of the design industry, inspiring and innovating for future generations.