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Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

Brick panels on the Pixel high-rise complex in Abu Dhabi

The Makers District on Al Reem Island in Abu Dhabi is set to quite literally rise above the norm. This area is being developed into a creative hotspot, conceived as a counterpoint to the typical residential and commercial buildings found locally. Within sight of the cultural melting pot with its groundbreaking architecture on the neighbouring Saadiyat Island, a new high-rise complex has been completed by the internationally renowned Dutch firm MVRDV. The project's name speaks for itself: 'Pixel'. The classical cuboid form of the seven high-rises is fragmented in a pixelated style, breaking down into small, colourful cubes that converge towards a central plaza. This design flourish is accentuated by elements from MOEDING. Façade sections are adorned with innovative brick screens in 14 pastel shades, defining a distinctive character and subtly referencing the site's history.

Outstanding in multiple ways: with the Pixel complex, MVRDV has delivered a striking inaugural piece for the new Makers District on the eastern side of Al Reem Island in Abu Dhabi. Spanning an area of 18 hectares, the developer IMKAN is creating a modern urban quarter here, aiming to counter the prevalent trend of isolated architectural landmarks and set new standards for creative communal living. The architects addressed this brief in the residential complex by arranging the seven high-rises in an unconventional layout. Instead of a linear arrangement, the complex forms a circular block that appears to playfully flow around a central square. This project also breaks with convention by inviting outdoor living. While life in the capital of the United Arab Emirates usually unfolds in air-conditioned interiors, the central square is designed to encourage

people to linger outside. The varying heights, positions, and formal designs of the surrounding buildings and the public plaza are optimised to provide maximum shade and air circulation. Enhanced by greenery and water features, the outdoor space could become a valuable component of the complex, especially in the cooler months. The unique surrounding architecture also contributes significantly to the area's overall appeal.

Mixed-use with integrative power

The seven high-rises accommodate 525 residential units, as well as offices, commercial spaces, retail outlets, and dining establishments, spread across a total area of 85,000 square metres. The distribution of use is arranged vertically: while the plaza and its adjacent levels are dedicated to public and communal functions, the lower floors are reserved for work, commerce, a fitness studio, a medical facility, educational spaces, and start-ups. The upper floors house private residences, completing the mixed-use concept. The architecture is designed to foster interaction among the various occupants, thereby promoting social exchange and creativity. This is also reflected in the design itself. Each high-rise's rigid, grid-like cuboid structure disintegrates into smaller pixel-like cubes towards the centre. These 'pixel' cubes form bay windows, loggias, terraces, or green roofs, gradually extending into the courtyard.

Local and historical references in façade design

The materials and façade design were intended to convey a sense of modesty while also impressing with numerous details. For example, smooth concrete surfaces on the façades transition into finely structured textures. The graphic pattern of the formwork skin was designed by artist Nicole Martens, who drew inspiration from the surface textures of oysters and shells. Another local reference is created through pixel-like brick panels, which serve as shading and privacy screens on the projecting cubes and open spaces. The façade elements are executed in 14 glazed pastel colours, reminiscent of the iridescent inner surface of a shell. This design once again nods to the site's past and its pearl divers. The play of colours continues inside the buildings, with each assigned a unique shade, offering both orientation and identity.

Newly developed brick screens as defining elements

The distinctive façade elements are made from the newly developed SERATON® brick screens from MOEDING. This innovative product line, which holds several international patents, provides architects with unique design possibilities. Bricks of varying sizes, colours, and arrangements can be mounted along a grid system, granting a high degree of individuality to the exterior shell. The colour and shape of the panels can be customised in collaboration with the designers. Larger gaps are also possible, allowing for varying degrees of permeability. In Abu Dhabi, too, the project thrives on perfection – down to every single pixel. The SERATON® panels are tensioned onto stainless steel cables and secured with stainless steel balls in such a way that the substructure remains invisible. This fine detail, continuing the cube motif and featuring an extraordinary, pearl-like colouration, turns the façade element into a true work of art on the Pixel project.

(5020 characters incl. spaces, excluding headings and captions)

Project information

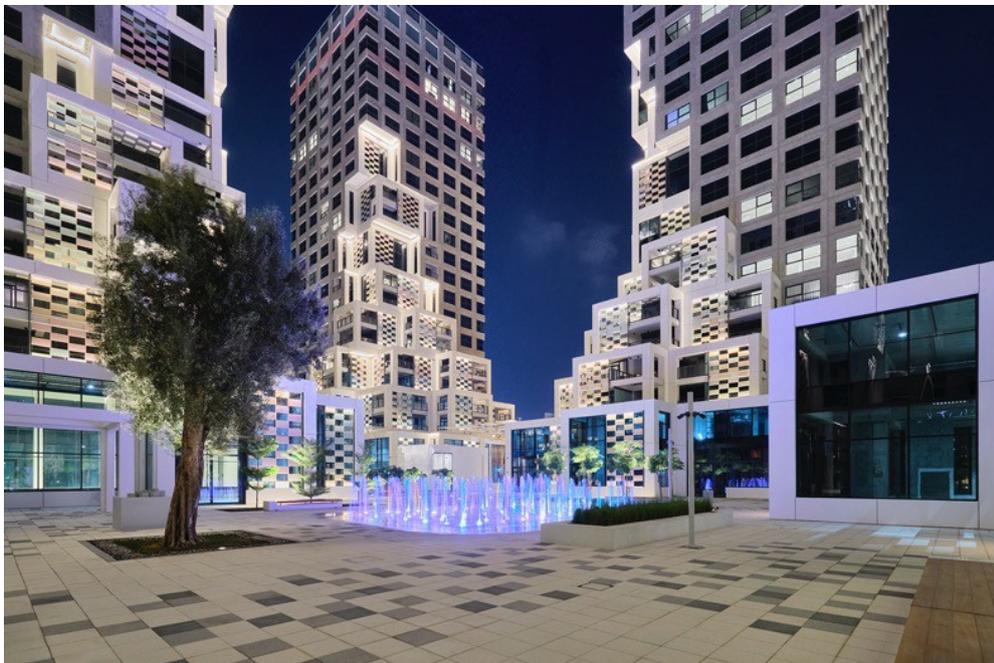
Project name:	Pixel, Abu Dhabi
Client:	IMKAN, Abu Dhabi
Architects:	MVRDV, Rotterdam
Façade lining:	MOEDING SERATON® brick screens (glazed)

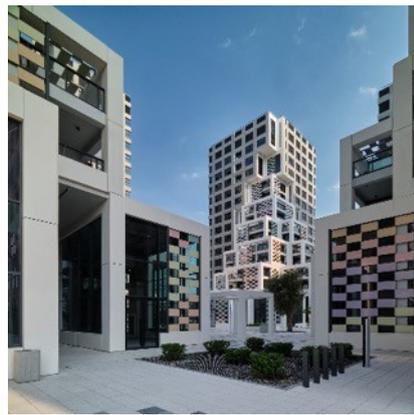


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Figures:





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Seven high-rises of varying sizes and mixed uses are grouped around a public square, marking the first completed project of the new Makers District in Abu Dhabi.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photos: Jon Wallis Photography



Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

The plaza serves as a creative melting pot and meeting point for the diverse user groups of the building complex. Plantings, water features, and gastronomic offerings enhance the outdoor living quality, which is atypical for Abu Dhabi.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photos: Jon Wallis Photography



Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

The pixelated composition exudes a strong graphic power, ultimately defining the unique character of the project.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photos: Jon Wallis Photography

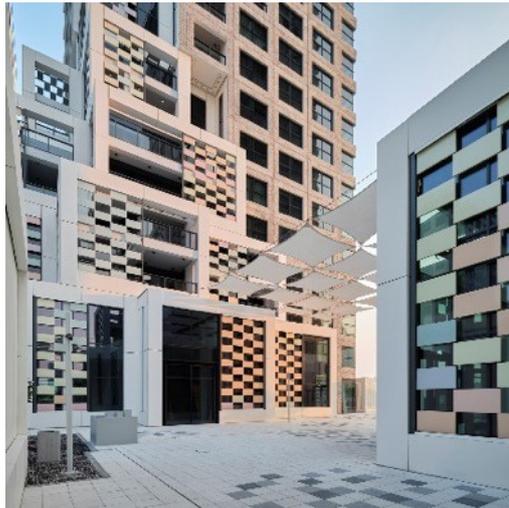


Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

The brick elements from MOEDING, executed in 14 glazed pastel shades, shimmer due to their colour arrangement, resembling the iridescent surface of a pearl.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photos: Jon Wallis Photography



Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

The brick panels serve as sun and privacy screens for the protruding cubes from the high-rise blocks. Horizontally positioned, they also function as roofing.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photos: Jon Wallis Photography



Graphic composition for a creative hotspot

The SERATON® brick screens from MOEDING are mounted on a stainless steel substructure, which remains invisible, creating the impression that the individual elements are floating.

Architecture: MVRDV, Rotterdam

Photo: Jon Wallis Photography