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ALUMNI

AHMAD JABASSINI

Shaping the course of architecture

Gensler Architectural Designer and Academy alumnus Ahmad Jabassini talks about his time at the university

By Caroline Andrade

Academy of Art University School of Architecture (ARH) alumnus Ahmad Jabassini has a curious mind-set and was always interested in knowing why things were made a certain way. Having studied architecture closely for many years, he became a keen observer of his surroundings and was curious to find out how design could reflect the history and heritage of a space and respond to the needs of its users.

Jabassini joined leading architecture firm Gensler at its Los Angeles office in May of this year as an architectural designer. At Gensler, he is actively involved in the design process, and works with a team that develops an idea, builds it in both 3-D and physical models, and ultimately develops it into architecture. "I love working on these types of works, and the design process," said

Jabassini in a phone interview. "Gensler is one of the best architectural firms in the world,

and I feel very comfortable working with talented architects and designers from all over the

world," he said. "The working environment at our office is great, and we all perform as a team to

achieve our goals and ambitions for shaping the future of cities."

A native of Syria, Jabassini was fascinated by the role that architecture and buildings played in representing civilizations and the ambition of cities. To him, architecture is the proof of the things that we can't see; it is the balance between art and engineering. A reflection of the invisible and a social act that could improve the world by making form and function follow humanity, which is why he decided to pursue a career in it.

He transferred to the Academy, where he took all of his classes online and received his B.Arch degree in 2018. Following graduation, he was a part of the AIA Pasadena & Foothill Design Awards 2018 jury.

According to Jabassini, the Academy helped him hone his skills and made



Gensler Architectural Designer and School of Architecture alumnus Ahmad Jabassini presenting his thesis at the Academy in 2018. Photo courtesy of Ahmad Jabassini.

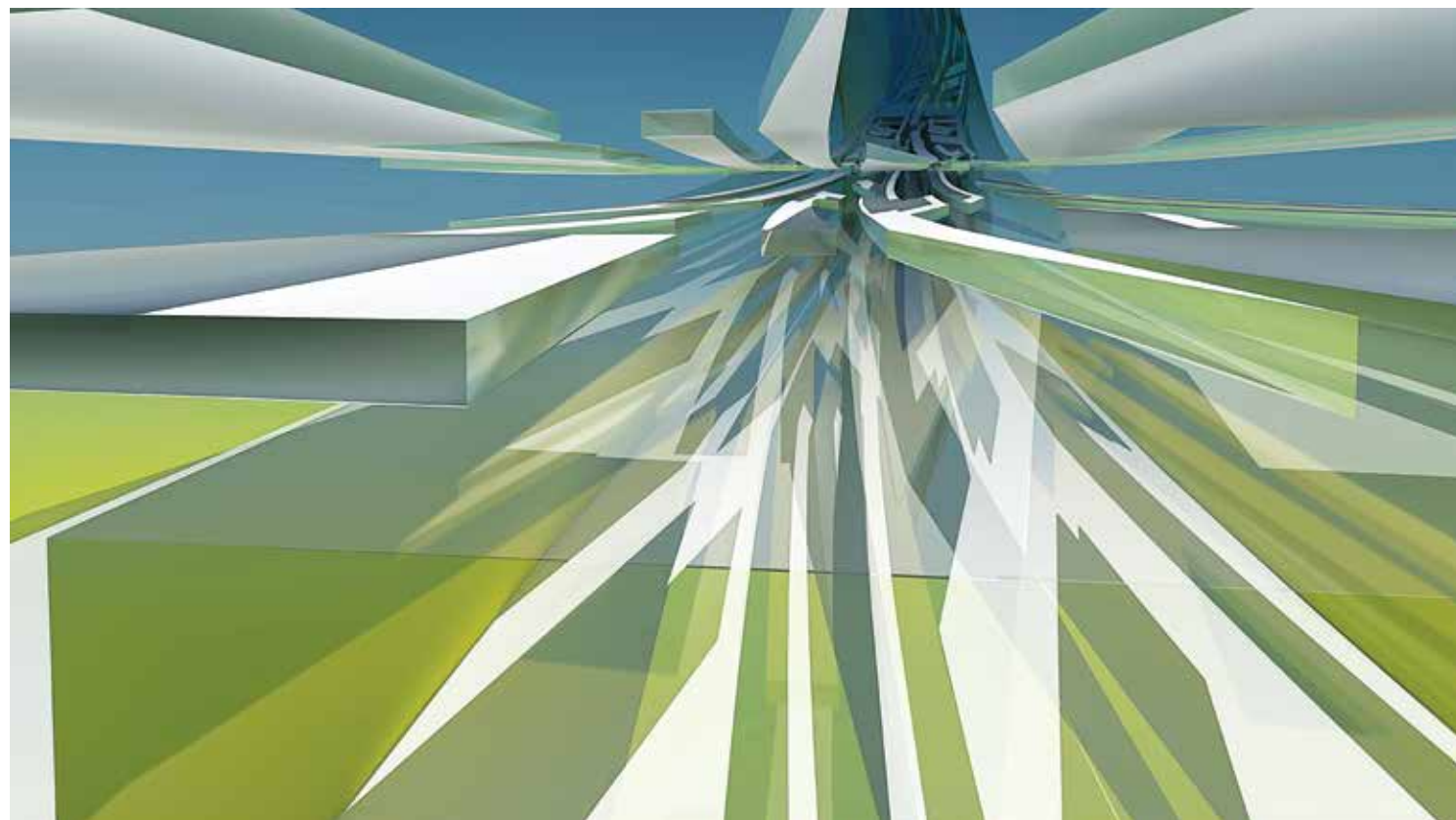
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an impact on his thinking style while preparing him for real-world experience. “It was a great learning experience for me. I got a lot of support from my instructors to learn how to express myself and be myself in every work [project] I do and follow my passion,” he said.

“The instructors made sure we are following the building code, making sure we are on the right path. They tried to introduce us to the working environment—an office environment after graduating—and [explained] how a portfolio is very important. All these elements helped me a lot in my [transition] from a student to a designer in the professional world.”

ARH instructor Karen Seong had Jabassini in her Studio 7: Tectonics and Structure (ARH 410) class and found her former student very driven. “He’s one of the most hardworking students, I’ve ever



(Above and below) Photo renderings of Ahmad Jabassini’s thesis project, “The Museum of Life.” Images courtesy of Ahmad Jabassini.

taught,” she said. “He stayed motivated throughout all 15

weeks which is tough to do. It’s a very intense studio, and it

requires new skill acquisition in terms of technical skills, and how you manipulate tools, but also conceptual thinking. Students have a hard time sustaining the momentum throughout the program, but he just kept pushing all through the semester.”

Beaming with pride over his role at Gensler, Seong said, “It’s well-deserved. When the opportunity with Gensler materialized, he was ready. He had held jobs before, he had exposed himself to architecture and had [received the] education. He was able to articulate and communicate what this profession means to him, personally.”

For Jabassini, the studio class taught by Seong changed his perspective on what the

future of architecture should look like. He also credited ARH instructors Philipa Ra and Mini Chu, who gave him the opportunity to develop a vision and ideas with freedom and support in the thesis studio (ARH 550) class.

For current ARH students, Jabassini expressed that it is important to take time and develop a portfolio “with storytelling elements which reflects your way of thinking and ambition.”

“In a job interview, try to show your strength and give confidence to your work so the interviewer recognizes that in you.”

Caroline Andrade is a Publications Staff Reporter for Academy Art U News.

