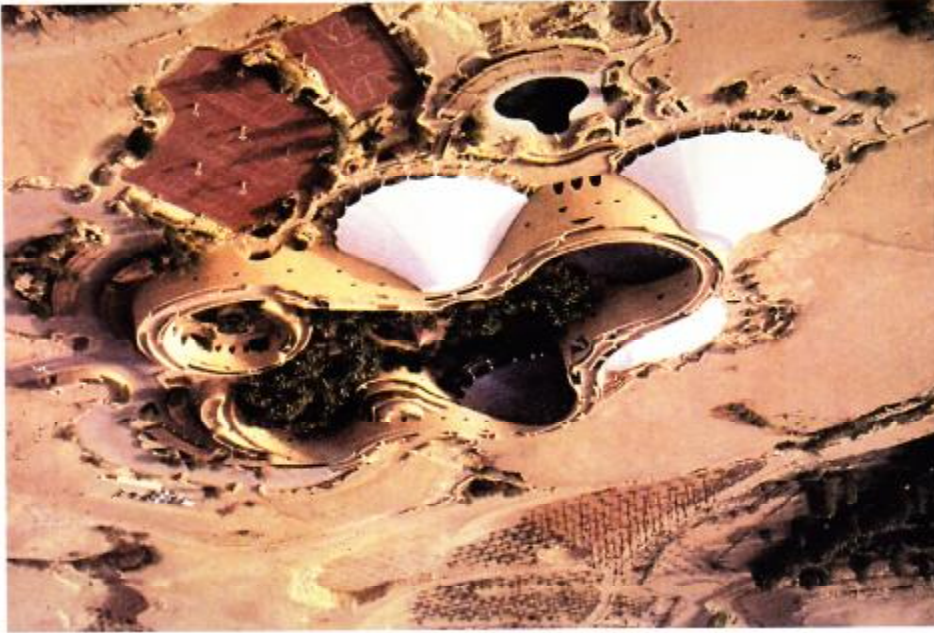


OHO Joint Venture (later First Otto, Büro Happold, Omran Architects), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1988
 Originally designed as a diplomatic club for the international community, the palace has a dramatic promontory site overlooking the valley of Mecca. Drawing on Otto's expertise in hybrid structures, it is an imaginative combination of traditional types – bringing together the fortress and the tent – in a beautiful garden, oasis-like setting.



So where are the boundaries of 'Iranian architecture' and which are the true representation of our societies, for thousands of years. From an architectural perspective, the key elements that have been shaped by a sense of order and concept of space that has emerged from this continuous culture. There are many similarities in the architecture of monuments in Turkestan (on the Chinese border of Kazakhstan), Samarkand and Bukhara (in Uzbekistan) in the east, and the Mogul architecture of northern India, to the domestic and monumental heritage of Caucasus in the Russian Federation and Azerbaijan, tombs and madrasas in Anatolia, shrines and mosques in Iraq and finally souks and urban architectural heritage in Dubai and Doha, with buildings in the Iranian plateau.

The sheer size of the lands and number of peoples that various Iranian dynasties ruled for over 5,000 years also created opportunities to bring together thinkers, builders

In the search for a better understanding of the architecture of a specific city, country or region, a whole range of approaches can be taken to history, climate, material and social context(s). However, in most cases, it is convenient and expedient to single out a particular building, or even a neighbourhood, and look at it as an isolated object, immortalised in time; glorifying selected buildings or urban fabrics; criticising the current condition through a lens of false nostalgia for an idealised past. A number of articles in this issue of *AD* eloquently describe architectural history and heritage as a source of inspiration (and sometimes obligation) for designing for the future. But the most exciting aspect of the built environment is its complexity and behaviour in time. What we as architects find truly difficult is to derive inspiration from the life and spirit of this heritage and to understand its meaning and symbolism rather than just the formal aspects. Our buildings are not isolated from our cities, societies and cultural values. Today we feel much more a part of the larger world than our ancestors. As global, our sense of civic responsibility needs to extend beyond our homes, neighbourhoods, communities and cities. It is, therefore, the architecture and urban spaces we seek to create that represent a material manifestation of our behaviour, and