

CONCEPT DESIGN



BlankPage

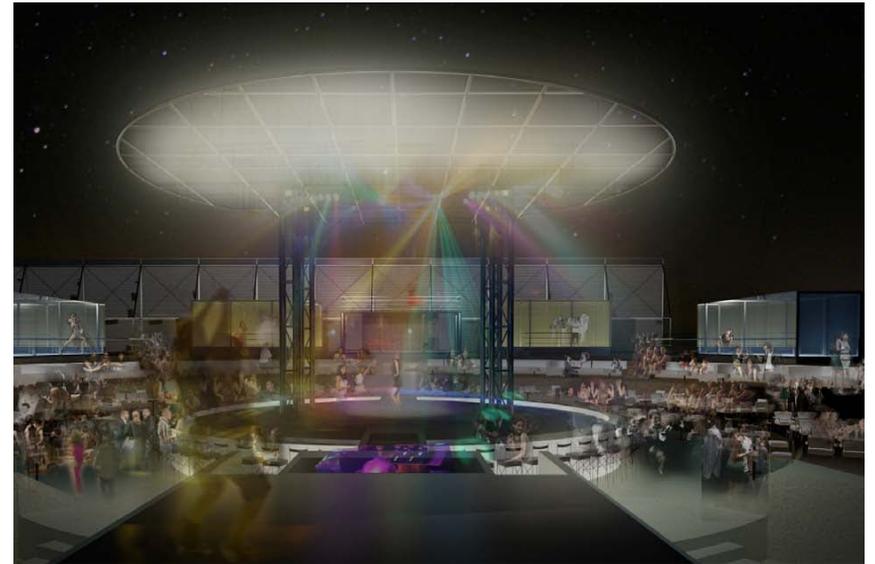
A Piece of Land Art

PIER 7, A NEW CONCEPT BY CRYSTAL GROUP, IS COMING TO BEIRUT THIS SUMMER. THE BY THE SEA NIGHTCLUB ON THE DORA SEASIDE IS THE FIRST INVESTMENT OF ITS KIND IN BEIRUT'S OUTER METROPOLIS. DESCRIBED BY ITS CREATORS, BLANKPAGE ARCHITECTS, AS A "WORK OF LAND ART," PIER 7 IS SET TO OPEN THIS SUMMER, AND IS HIGHLY ANTICIPATED. CURVE GETS CHATTING TO KARIM NADER, A PARTNER AT BLANKPAGE ARCHITECTS.

Words: Emily Holman
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Tell us about yourselves.
BLANKPAGE Architects is Karim Nader, Walid Ghantous and Patrick Mezher. BLANKPAGE was founded in 2000, and is a collaborative design studio of architects, urban designers and artists.

BLANKPAGE is a great name. Can you explain why you chose the metaphor?

Driven by the desire to produce architecture of high quality and craftsmanship, the studio's goal is to start every project from a blank page. So we have the 'opposite' of a style, if you like. The idea is that one starts from scratch every single time; we come up with a solution that is custom-made to suit the client and to the site.

How long has Pier 7 been in the making?

Our work began in 2009. There were earlier versions of the project that were not by BLANKPAGE, The Crystal Group [the owners] approached us when they had decided they wanted Dora as the location. So Pier 7 has been, in terms of design, two years in the making.



Why did you take the project on?

It is a very interesting project, very unique. The site is highly unusual, so we see it as a great opportunity to create something innovative, something exceptional.

So tell us about Pier 7.

Well, the choice of the site is the client's vision. They wanted to create a night venue outside the boundaries of known Beirut. This was visionary on their part – to choose an industrial landscape that is also by the sea.

When considering the creation for the nightclub, we had two main onsite inspirations. There is the industrial context: the gas stations, gas tanks, factories and store spaces. On the other hand, there is the inspiration of the sea, or 'the natural,' that is the horizon, the sea, the shore, the wind, the sunset.

So we were inspired by both aspects, and we wanted to infuse our design with these characteristics. We integrated them into the design, and they became parts of the architectural language.

The surrounding arena comes in spacious circular layers. For those looking for a more secluded party, there are suits on one of the layers where by each location has its own bar, lounge area, bathroom and terrace. This is great for private tailor made parties.



How?

Firstly is the metallic wall that is both the wall and entrance of the nightclub. It is a barrier; it creates a separation between the road and the project. But furthermore, it is also a sign. Like a billboard, it marks the presence of the nightclub. What is happening inside is hidden but also signposted by this wall. It is enormous – 80 meters long by 10 meters high – so it fits the scale of the highway; it is big enough to be seen by a speeding car. In terms of materials, it is reflective, with red neon strips and gloss. Its language is the language of industry – the metal, the red from the car lights and from the gas station.

Inside, the inspiration is more natural. The lobby is inspired by the sunset, colored in gradations of

red, orange and yellow. Naturally, clubbers go to a nightclub after sunset, and we wanted to play on that. We also wanted to preserve for them the possibility of experiencing that sunset.

Within the club itself, there is a metallic structure which is to be called 'The Cloud'; it is a device that is used for the sound and light effects, and it is above the dance floor and bar. The surrounding arena – where the tables are placed – is an arena in the Greek style: circular and concentric – and of course, open air.

It looks almost like a performance area. I believe there are plans for it also to be used for shows, for the hosting of DJs; anything that might enhance the clubbing experience:

singers, groups, dancers. The club stage design is definitely something to look forward to seeing. Using state of the art technology and design, the unprecedented club stage design will definitely revolutionize the party scene in Lebanon.

Why the name, Pier 7?

It is the idea of a pier. Coming out of the sunset lobby is a pier, entering the sea. So you bridge the gap between landmark and water. And of course, it also means that you can access the sea; this is a potential future element of the nightclub, that you will be able to access by boat.

Pier 7 will be offering a new experience to night scene in Lebanon with a special modern Japanese cuisine as well as fresh signature cocktails which will be made exclusively for Pier 7 by international mixologists with the collaboration of the No. 1 bartender in Lebanon (who is part of Crystal Group)



What materials did you use?

In the tiling of the nightclub we used sandy colors, in connection with the sandy shore. For the sunset lobby and main outdoor wall, we used steel and aluminium to maintain the connection with the industrial language. And the sunset lobby is dominated by red, orange and yellow; so its floor is made of glass of these colors. Its walls are of perforated fabric, and are also in gradations of red, orange and yellow.

What's next for BLANKPAGE?

Right now we have two villas under construction and an office building. Many collaborations are under study, both for entertainment and also for residential projects. But who knows?