

AD

MARCH/APRIL 2016
MIDDLE EAST

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST • GENIUS DESIGNS • INSPIRING ART • LUXURIOUS HOMES

FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE



A glorious
celebration
of the Middle
East's finest
art, style
and design

*The Arab global star ruling
the "boys' club" of architecture*

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

H A D I D
Zaha

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Visit the *Les We Forget* exhibition until June 18

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could be of any significance. One student once asked: how would anybody care about a picture of my sister and her first tooth?" For a country often imagined to lack tangible remains of its history, Bambling had an inkling that these untapped materials and the questions they raised could plant the seed of a unique enquiry into the past. At the end of the first year, the *Les We Forget* initiative counted 14 photographs, shared by the eight students and their families.

Word got around Zayed University that Bambling's Curatorial Practice course was cool. 23 students registered for it the following year, each adding new photographs and new items to the project until a qualitative leap was accomplished. Students began establishing similarities between the photographs: the same autumn leaf background, the same enthusiasm for picnics in the desert, the same shots of make-pretend telephone conversations, the same ruffled dresses sent by family members living abroad, the same Eld candy bags remembered by all so fondly, the same love of family. The students recorded trends and established shared memories, enriching them with their individual feelings

and emotions. A project that had started out with a handful of hesitant students flourished as they realised that their individual efforts were creating a story that was bigger than the parts that composed it. Says Bambling: "They started telling the story of the past". And this is indeed what adds a deeper texture to the incredible work of archiving and storytelling on display at Warehouse 421.

For Bambling, the project was always much more than "gathering all photographs that Emirati citizens took between 1950 and 1999". It was about delving completely into the curatorial practice: developing the willingness to look at old things with a new eye, formulating and owning the memories surrounding the various pictures through use of the first person voice and finding liberation in agreeing to share what had become, by the end of the fourth year of the course, a slice of Emirati history in its own right. Bambling remains humble about her role, preferring to credit the students themselves with the courage to be curious and think outside the box. "So many women worked so hard and so many families became a part of this. The exhibition and the book are entirely theirs, I merely helped mentor the process," she says.

"The female students registered for the course were reluctant to bring actual photographs into class"



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