



# BUILDING A CAREER

## THE INTERVIEW

Bethel Teferra of WSP is working on Dubai Mall and Zayed Museum

**B**ethel Teferra has been in the UAE for just five months – but already she is working as an engineer on two of the biggest projects in the region.

The 24-year-old, who was brought up in Montreal, Canada, is one of the latest intake of talent working at WSP Group and among her current projects are the extension to Dubai Mall and the Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi – which will see pillars rising from the desert sands containing exhibits tracing the rich heritage of the entire region.

And she says everything about her work across the Middle East is thrilling.

“I imagined Dubai to be like this” Teferra says raising her hands just above her head. “But in reality it is like this” she says as she raises her arms as high as possible.

“I wanted to work somewhere awesome – and where is more awesome when it comes to building construction and design than Dubai?”

Teferra studied building engineering at Concordia University in her home city which was a course merging many disciplines.

“It took in planning, design and construction,” she says. “There was also a very strong emphasis on sustainability and the effect of buildings on the environment. Structural engineering was a speciality for me and I also had the chance to

work on projects in Montreal as well as study. These included historic buildings which date from the time of the industrial revolution and which are very important to the city’s heritage. The task was to keep what was there and expand on it.

“Some of the buildings I worked on are among the largest brick-built structures in North America and the aim was to keep the historical architectural aspects – yet modify and retro-fit them for use in the 21st century, whether as offices, retail or residential properties.

“From that internship and my studies I knew I wanted to be involved in challenging projects which advance the field of engineering on a global scale.

“I thought – ok where can I best achieve that? Well, in Dubai.”

Teferra then launched herself into cyberspace and started googling.

She typed in “best engineering firms in Dubai” and the first name which came up was WSP, she recalls laughing.

Teferra then contacted the company directly stating her references and the projects she had been involved in.

After graduation and the presentation of a ceremonial Iron Ring – which is given to all Canadian graduates in engineering and is part

“I wanted to work somewhere awesome - and where is more awesome than Dubai?”







Teferra is working on engineering solutions for Lord Foster's museum design.

of a pledge to work for the good of humanity and observe the highest professional standards.

"I told the company I didn't want to be involved in anything mediocre – I wanted to push the current limits of what is achievable," she recalls. After conversations via Skype, Teferra found herself with a new job in a place she had never visited – but where she had set her heart on working.

"In North America, Dubai has this reputation of being a sort of luxury place," she says. "But when I came here I thought I'd arrived on

another planet. I was inspired and knew I was in the right place – the best place to be when it comes to top-quality engineering.

"I take the Metro and look out along Sheikh Zayed Road and everywhere I look I see something really amazing and iconic."

Teferra recalls the time she was informed she would be working on the Dubai Mall extension, which will see new hotels, restaurants, retail properties and parking on a 270,000m<sup>2</sup> site.

"I just looked up and said 'I dreamt about it and here it is,'" she

#### ► The Zayed National Museum

has been designed to reflect the late ruler's love of falconry with the towers over its galleries suggesting a bird in flight.

As well as space for exhibits it will include leisure facilities and a performance arena.

Lord Foster said: "It has been a great privilege to work on the Zayed National Museum, to carry forward Sheikh Zayed's vision and to communicate the dynamic character of a contemporary United Arab Emirates."

"We have sought to establish a building that will be an exemplar of sustainable design, resonating with Sheikh Zayed's love of nature and his wider heritage."

“

**I wanted to be involved in challenging projects which advance the field of engineering on a global scale.”**





Teferra's task  
- working on  
the Dubai Mall  
extension

says. "It's a challenging project but I have a team leader, Andy Veall, who gives off a zen-like calm even in the most problematic of situations. He is someone that I know I can learn from and who really inspires me."

Teferra is now looking forward to heading off to Abu Dhabi and getting on site at the new Zayed National Museum which has been designed by UK-based Foster+Partners. It will focus on the life and work of Sheikh Zayed-five times president of the UAE - and also reflect the culture and heritage of the country.

"It will be one of the most amazing buildings in the world when it is finished," said Teferra, who ends her interview with her philosophy of life: "Aim for the sun and land among the stars".

“

**I didn't want to be involved in anything mediocre. I wanted to push the current limits of what is achievable."**

► **The Iron Ring** is a piece of jewellery worn by Canadian-trained engineers, both male and female, as a symbol of the obligations and ethics associated with their profession.

It is presented to graduates in a private ceremony known as The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer which started in 1922. Writer Rudyard Kipling formulated the ritual at the request of a professional body called The Corpora-



tion of the Seven Wardens Inc. or Société des Sept Gardiens Inc.

Kipling said: "The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer has been instituted with the simple end of directing the young engineer towards a consciousness of his profession and its significance, and indicating to the older engineer his responsibilities in receiving, welcoming and supporting the young engineers in their beginnings."

Traditionally the rings are made from the steel of a beam from the first Quebec Bridge, which collapsed during construction in 1907.

Seventy-five workers died in the collapse which was attributed to poor planning and design by the overseeing engineers.

This understanding may have its roots in a common practice of attaching a symbol of an engineering failure, such as a bolt from that bridge, to a chain that is held by participants in the ritual upon which they swear an oath to work for the good of mankind.