



# Aqua Architecture

• By Michael Denman

THE DEMAND FOR ANIMATED WATER FEATURES IS GROWING BY THE YEAR AS PROPERTY OWNERS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES GET WISE TO THE DRAW THAT THESE CREATE AMONG THE PUBLIC. THIS IS ESPECIALLY EVIDENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AS DEVELOPERS IN THE REGION RACE TO OUTDO EACH OTHER IN PROVIDING MORE AND MORE STUNNING LEISURE FEATURES TO RAISE CONSUMER TIME SPENT IN THE AREA'S SPECTACULAR SHOPPING AND ENTERTAINMENT CENTRES.

**F**or instance, the dramatic and striking water features created by Crystal Fountains, which form an integral part of the extension of the massive Burjuman Center in the heart of Dubai city centre.

On the retail side, space has almost trebled to 800,000 sq.ft from 300,000 sq.ft at BurJuman, which caters largely to an audience of middle-upper income customers.

Retailers include Louis Vuitton, Donna Karan, Cartier, Escada, Christian Lacroix, Ines de la Fressange, Salvatore Ferragamo, Bally, Stuart Weitzman/Moreschi, Virgin, Tod's and Paul Smith, Polo Ralph Lauren, Zara and Massimo Dutti.

With the expansion the number of stores and cafes in operation has increased to approximately 300 including the flagship store of SAKS Fifth Avenue in the Middle East. The development has also added a further office tower and a series of residential apartments.

Commissioned by the owner, and working closely with architects KPF and retail designer Eric Kuhne & Associates, Crystal Fountains was integrated into the team to oversee the design and implementation of the water element of the project. This comprises a collection of various water features located in the "water hall" of the retail element of the



▲ Burjuman Center, Dubai

scheme, together with a handful of water features in the gardens of the apartment, and lower office floors.

A total of 18 distinctly different water features accompany the visitor from their arrival at any of the three car park basement entrances through three levels to the ground floor, first floor, second and upper level of the mall.

This unique collection of water forms explores water under multiple expressions be it welling, foaming, bursting, spouting, raining, flowing over sculptured marble, onyx, stainless steel or granite. These come in a variety of forms creating clear streams, water

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walls, water falls, cascades, lily ponds, water under glass, sequenced water effects, laminar streams, and misting effects.

While the water takes on multiple shapes and forms as it interacts with the generous and sophisticated lines of the outstanding surrounding architecture, the feel remains that of a seamless fluid journey for visitors as they explore and discover the varying textures and forms that make up the center with its multiple halls, pavilions, courtyards and malls.

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This project is a true example of how water can be used as an effective design tool to create different forms and expressions for the enjoyment of visitors in retail centres.

The latest trends also rely on the animated aspect of water often used in larger gathering spaces to create periodic shows that further attract and entertain the shopper.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than at the Al Kout Mall in Fahaheel, Kuwait where Crystal Fountains has created stunning fountains. Visitors to Al Kout are treated to a variety of water features which, elegant during the day, are transformed at night into a visual extravaganza. What these features provide are visual attractions and meeting points that offer an array of choreographed water experiences dramatic, playful, refreshing or relaxing. With rapid increases in technology the animated displays are computer-controlled and are invariably combined

with customized lighting effects in certain cases choreographed to music.

In this way it is very easy to create diversity with these water features. Sometimes they can be still reflective pools during quiet periods of the day or night or they can be dramatic features with dancing streams and jets, and coloured lights for peak shopping and family entertainment.

One of the most exciting developments in water features is in lighting and more specifically high performance LED technology where Crystal Fountains is developing a complete range of industry specific fixtures and accessories that is in the process of transforming lighting for water features. The technology uses the latest RGB digital colour mixing technology which allows Crystal Fountains to create infinite palettes (12 million-plus) and create a whole collection of colour fading and scrolling techniques, which offers mind boggling combinations for animated solutions and a truly versatile animation tool for feature lighting.

Whilst the company has been working with this technology for over two years it is only until recently that the first wave of projects are coming on steam. One of the first is the Zlote Terasy project in Warsaw, Poland, inaugurated in February, which features a 20 metre-long, four metre-high water wall incorporating the high intensity LED lighting. A pop jet feature allows kids to interact with the water element at the entrance to the mall, and an exterior table top feature incorporating leaping jets and LED lighting is included that can be effortlessly transformed into a stage for promotional events.

Another is the Easton Town Center project in Columbus, Ohio, USA where



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Crystal Fountains upgraded the award winning (International Council of Shopping Centers design award 2000) to incorporate the new technology bringing a further dimension to the water feature at night.

In the Middle East, look out for some of our most creative work – in numerous projects including fountains for Burj Dubai, Messila Beach, 360° in Kuwait, King Abdullah Economic City in Saudi Arabia, and Smart Village and Uptown Cairo in Cairo, Egypt. 