

Sarah Abu Dareb named inaugural recipient for architecture scholarship for women

Young student looks to art and leading female architects for inspiration

- ◆ Inaugural recipient of **Frasers Property Master of Architecture scholarship** recently revealed
- ◆ Scholarship will support Sarah through two-year master's degree

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Sarah Abu Dareb has a creative bent. She loves art and at one point in her young life, thought the best way she could bring her art to the world was by building her own gallery.

This simple idea introduced Sarah to the world of architecture. Sarah was recently named as the inaugural recipient of the Frasers Property Master of Architecture (Urban Transformation) Scholarship for Women at Western Sydney University.

Having already completed a Bachelor of Architecture and Environments undergraduate degree, the Master of Architecture scholarship and qualification will help Sarah achieve her career and artistic ambitions.

Forging a career in architecture will require Sarah to draw on all her creative reserves, but it's a challenge the 21-year-old student is prepared for.

"I did a lot of design projects in the undergraduate course but now with the master's degree I will have a real opportunity to look more specifically at particular precincts," Sarah says.

"I am really interested in the architecture of public spaces, including commercial buildings, retail centres and big, urban environments.

"What strikes me about these places is the gathering of people, what opportunities people have to interact with each other and how the environment promotes interaction or inhibits it.

"It has always fascinated me, with large developments, how a site can be empty for years and then be transformed by architecture into a thriving environment that attracts people to it. It's made me want to understand the process of how all of that works. How did the place go from nothing to something?

"Now that I am becoming more informed through my studies, I can't help but notice architecture everywhere, what works and what doesn't, how buildings reflect light or impact on sound. It's so fascinating to me."

Sarah says this year's experience with quarantine and isolation during the pandemic will have an influence on architectural design in the future.

"I already entered one design competition for a quarantine facility with friends. There's no doubt that there will be a lot of emphasis on public safety having gone through this. How do we design places where people can gather, but do that safely?"

In the future, Sarah hopes to make her mark in the industry on big projects, the types of places where the buildings become icons, like the Sydney Opera House.

She finds inspiration from the life and work of Zaha Hadid, one of the world's most successful architects. Sarah says she identifies with Hadid's Iraqi background and is galvanized by what she was able to achieve as a woman in a male-dominated industry.

"When I saw her work, as a woman, it made me want to do something equally ambitious and impactful. At university, most of the buildings we studied were designed by men. She is one of the few women who had been rightly recognised for their contribution to architecture," Sarah says.

“It would be a dream to have a career like Hadid. When I researched Hadid I found all these pictures of her surrounded by men. It made me question: where are all the women? What must that have been like for her?”

“Being the first recipient of this scholarship means a lot to me, I am really ready to represent the growth of women in this industry and I would love to be a world leader, like Hadid, one day.”

The Frasers Property Master of Architecture (Urban Transformation) Scholarship for Women at Western Sydney University is for two years. Through the scholarship and her connection with Frasers Property, Sarah will benefit from opportunities to grow her network and boost her work experience, helping her to launch her career at the end of the master’s degree.

“Receiving this scholarship from Frasers Property is a huge honour and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities it will provide. I think it’s great that Frasers Property is so supportive of women in the industry. It will make a big difference for me and my future,” Sarah says.

“Like Hadid, I come from an Iraqi background. My father and mother were caught up in the civil war – it was an incredibly tough time. They were able to come to Australia and had to quickly adapt to the new culture and new language, but they made their way creating a living from nothing.

“All of this spurs me on. I can’t wait to get started on my master’s degree, I want to get right into the program, I am so ready to learn more about the way buildings work and the fact it’s this new program in the heart of western Sydney is so exciting.”

Ranna Alkadamani, General Manager People & Culture, Frasers Property says the scholarship reflects the company’s gender equality commitment.

“It’s important that we support women at every stage of their career but it’s particularly important in these formative years if we are going to see real change in the industry,” Ms Alkadamani says.

“Frasers Property is committed to being a proactive voice for women in the industry, and this is another way we can continue our support of future leaders. We really look forward to seeing what Sarah will do with her master’s degree.”

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