

# Tomorrow's Architecture

Perspectives from the Visionaries

Immerse yourself in a refined dialogue where the future of architecture unfolds with quiet clarity. This exclusive interview is part of our “Tomorrow’s Architecture” series—a carefully curated encounter with the visionaries who are redefining the built environment.

At Zora, we celebrate the thoughtful intersection of experience and vision, inviting you to dive into this exclusive interview with Nadia Saki— Associate and Learning and Development Education Advisor at Foster + Partners— and engage with a legacy of architectural excellence.



# Perspectives from the Visionaries



## Interview With Nadia Saki

Would you share insights into the country and cultural context you come from, and the experiences you gained prior to embarking on your professional architectural journey?

I come from Iran, a country with a profound architectural heritage that seamlessly blends history, culture, and identity. Growing up in an environment where architecture is deeply intertwined with tradition, I was fascinated by the way spaces shape human experiences—whether through the intricately designed Persian gardens, the timeless elegance of traditional courtyards, or the mesmerising geometrical fractal patterns in Persian architecture.

before embarking on my professional journey as an architect, I developed my passion for designing inclusive and equitable spaces while attending the University of Tehran's Faculty of Fine Arts prior.

I became deeply committed to making sure that architecture is a tool for well-being, social cohesion, and accessibility.

To broaden my perspective before stepping into the professional world, I actively sought out global learning experiences—participating in IAAC's Global Summer School and the Bauhaus Summer School in Weimar, Germany, where I revisited the fundamental principles of architectural design. These experiences exposed me to cutting-edge computational design, and hands-on interdisciplinary collaboration, further shaping my approach to architecture.

Transitioning into a global setting studying at UCL in London and working at Foster + Partners, I have continued to incorporate this sensitivity of location, culture, and human experience into my practice.

Ultimately, my experience has provided me with a distinct perspective on architectural education and career advancement. It has strengthened my conviction that when cultural heritage, sustainability, and modern demands come together in a meaningful, progressive conversation, the most compelling architectural solutions are produced.



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## Interview With Nadia Saki

How has your education at UCL London, a leading institution in global higher education, influenced your career and shaped your role as a Learning and Development Education Advisor? We would love to hear any key insights from this experience that have impacted your approach.

One of the most valuable aspects of my time at UCL was the exposure to thought-provoking discussions on architectural theory, ethics, and practice, reinforced my understanding of how education can be a transformative tool—not just for students but for professionals navigating complex career trajectories.

I worked as an Architectural Designer for the first 4 years of my time in Foster + Partners which directly influenced my role today, where I work on developing learning frameworks, supporting architectural professional qualifications in the UK, and enhancing structured pathways for architects seeking professional registration.

A key insight I carry from my UCL experience is the importance of bridging academia and practice—ensuring that education does not function in isolation but remains deeply connected to real-world architectural challenges. This philosophy guides my work in fostering a learning culture at Foster + Partners, where education supports both individual career growth and the collective advancement of architectural practice.





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As a part of one of the most influential architecture brands in the world, what challenges or uncertainties did you encounter before and after joining Foster + Partners? How did you navigate them? Additionally, what advice would you offer to young architects aspiring to follow a similar path?

Joining Foster + Partners was both exciting and challenging. Before joining, I was uncertain about the transition from academia to a fast-paced, global firm, where precision, collaboration, adaptability, and intense hard work were key.

Once I joined, I had to quickly adjust to the firm's dynamic pace. I overcame these challenges by staying proactive, listening actively, and building strong relationships.

Observing experienced architects, embracing continuous learning, and maintaining flexibility allowed me to integrate smoothly into the firm's environment.

Advice for Young Architects:

- 1.Listen and Learn – Absorb knowledge from mentors, peers, and every project you encounter.
- 2.Network – Build meaningful connections within and beyond your workplace, and always listen.
- 3.Embrace Challenges– See uncertainties and obstacles as opportunities for growth and innovation.
- 5.Stay Resilient and extremely passionate – Passion and persistence are key to overcoming setbacks and finding success.

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Can you describe the key elements that you feel have played a crucial role in bringing you to Foster+Partners?

**Strong Educational Foundation** – My studies at UCL London honed my critical thinking and design skills, preparing me for a global architectural practice and broadening my ability to network across diverse disciplines.

**Adaptability & Problem-Solving Mindset** – Architecture is about navigating constant challenges. I developed resilience and a solutions-oriented approach, essential qualities for thriving in a dynamic firm like F+P.

**Collaboration & Networking** – Actively engaging with mentors, professionals, and teams helped me build valuable connections, opening doors to new opportunities.



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## Interview With Nadia Saki

As a Learning and Development Education Advisor at Foster + Partners, what are your key responsibilities? What core skills are essential for succeeding in this role?

### Key Responsibilities

As a L&D Education Advisor at Foster + Partners, my role focuses on supporting professional growth and architectural education within the practice.

My key responsibilities include:

- Managing Professional Qualification Pathways – Supporting architects through Part 3 studies, apprenticeships, and ARB accreditation.
- Developing Learning Frameworks – Designing and delivering training programs, lectures, and structured learning initiatives.
- Advising on Career Development – Providing guidance on professional progression and learning opportunities within the firm.
- Collaborating with Industry & Institutions – establishing partnerships with universities, accreditation bodies, and industry experts.

### Core Skills for Success

- 1.Strong Understanding of Architectural Education & Accreditation – In-depth knowledge of ARB, RIBA, and professional qualifications in the UK and globally.
- 2.Strategic Thinking & Program Development.
- 3.Communication & Mentorship – Engaging with architects, mentors, and accreditation bodies while providing clear guidance and support.
- 4.Collaboration & Stakeholder Management – Working with teams, senior leadership, and external partners to enhance learning opportunities.
- 5.Adaptability & Problem-Solving – Navigating evolving industry standards and ensuring training remains relevant and impactful.

Ultimately, this role blends education, professional development, and strategic planning, ensuring that architects at Foster + Partners receive the right support to thrive in their careers.





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## Interview With Nadia Saki

Is there a particular project you have worked on that stands out to you? What makes it unique or especially meaningful?

I led the facade package team for the Saudi Expo Pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025, throughout the design process and working closely with external consultants and internal teams.

This role required strong coordination and communication to ensure the design achieved both technical and aesthetic goals, while blending cultural significance with innovative design.

The pavilion's massing draws inspiration from the organic shapes of traditional Saudi villages, fostering a deep connection to Saudi Arabia's rich cultural heritage.

The fast-paced construction program added an extra layer of challenge, requiring efficient problem-solving and adaptability throughout the process.





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In your opinion, what are the the key drivers for the success and growth of emerging architecture practices seeking to establish their identity, and what key traits or mindsets should young architects cultivate to excel in this evolving field?

### Key Drivers for Emerging Architecture Practices

For new architecture practices looking to establish their identity, success depends on:

- 1.A Distinctive Design Ethos – A clear, well-defined architectural vision that sets them apart.
- 2.Integrating climate-conscious design, digital tools, and material innovations to remain future-proof.
- 3.Strong Digital Presence – Leveraging websites, social media, and publications to build credibility and reach a global audience.
- 4.Strategic Networking & Collaboration – Engaging with clients, institutions, and interdisciplinary experts to expand influence.
- 5.Business & Project Management – Understanding the financial and operational aspects of running a practice.

### Key Traits for Young Architects:

- 1.Curiosity & Continuous Learning – Staying ahead of new technologies, methodologies, and industry trends.
- 2.Resilience & Adaptability – Embracing change, setbacks, and new opportunities as part of the journey.
- 3.Strong Communication & Networking Skills.
- 4.Entrepreneurial Thinking – Understanding the business side of architecture and being proactive in seeking opportunities.
- 5.Ethical & Impact-Driven Approach – Prioritizing socially and environmentally responsible design for long-term relevance.

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If you could look back to ten years ago, what advice would you give to your younger self at the start of your professional path?

If I could look back ten years, I'd tell my younger self to be kinder and more patient with yourself.

Early in our career, there's so much pressure to have everything figured out, but it's okay not to have all the answers right away. Trust that growth comes from experience, and each step—whether a success or a challenge—helps shape you into the professional you're meant to be.

I'd also advise myself to take more risks and be less afraid of stepping outside of my comfort zone. Don't hesitate to ask questions, build a network, seek mentorship and make friends—the connections and knowledge you gain will be invaluable in the long run.

Lastly, I'd encourage myself to stay curious—the world of architecture is vast, and there are endless ways to evolve. Never stop learning, and continue to build your network.



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## Interview With Nadia Saki

As we conclude, is there a question you feel is often overlooked, or a key insight you'd like to share that has not yet been addressed?

One question that is often overlooked is «What does success look like to you?» In architecture, we can get so focused on external measures—awards, recognition and clients—but success is ultimately about the impact we create and the personal fulfillment we find in our work.

For me, success is about creating meaningful connections, continuously learning, and helping those around me. That's one of the main reasons I started focusing on the educational aspect of architecture—because it allows me to impact others while also growing alongside them.

The world today can feel overwhelming, but I always remind myself to enjoy it as much as possible. Embrace the journey, take moments to pause, and appreciate the beauty of what you're creating, both professionally and personally.



As we have unveiled this conversation, anticipate forthcoming dialogues within Architects of Tomorrow—a Zora-curated series featuring luminaries from esteemed institutions such as Zaha Hadid Architects, Foster + Partners, Bjarke Ingels Group, UNStudio, and other icons reshaping the design landscape.

Join us at Zora in celebrating the art of architecture and the inspirations that quietly pave the way for tomorrow. To follow the ongoing narrative, we invite you to stay connected.

