

# COME TOGETHER, RIGHT NOW, OVER ME

*Coworking Spaces Make Their Debut in Gouna*

In the world of start-ups and creative industries, co-working spaces have long been the go-to choice for offices. These membership-based workspaces serve as a shared, communal setting for independent professionals to work together. Unlike traditional offices, coworking spaces have people from all different kinds of work, companies, ventures and projects which helps kill office politics and childish competition, giving people the chance to actually work without the pressure to fit in or impress anyone.

Researchers have been raving about coworking spaces for years with studies showing how well employees thrive and feel about their work environment compared to employees who do their jobs in regular offices. So we were curious: What makes the design of coworking spaces so effective to its employees moral?

To find out, we interviewed founder of design firm Human Nature Ramzi Makram-Ebeid, about GSpace, the first ever coworking space in Gouna.

**Human Nature is known for its custom creative designs when it comes to office spaces. How was working on a co-working space any different than working on a traditional office space when it came to the actual design process?**

The main difference was that I was designing for an end client that I did not know. With a regular office, I learn about the company culture, their structure, their workflow, and I use that to create the most effective design for them. With GSpace, we didn't know all that. We needed to create a space that would allow for work yet be flexible enough for others to enjoy too.

There's a plethora of amazing coworking spaces around the world, and you can virtually visit most of them. We did a lot of researching about them to see what we believed would work in Gouna and what wouldn't.

But the coolest aspect of this job was the great team spirit. OHD (Orascom Hotels and Development) is a huge company with loads of achievements around the world, but somehow I felt like I was part of a start-up. I think I worked with 200 people for GSpace. We all had a common goal, we worked our asses off, there was no drama or bullshit, and I think this energy is reflected in what we created.

**As the first of its kind in Gouna, what is GSpace all about?**

GSpace is efficiency, it's a space that's motivational and facilitates work. First off, you're in a community with an awesome infrastructure (commutes don't pass 10 minutes), great weather, endless things to do, a fun and interesting mix of people and it's laid back. You actually look forward to the day, and if you work in Cairo, that in itself is a tearjerker. Secondly, GSpace gives you everything you need to work in one space: power, internet, comfortable seating, large work areas, printers, meeting areas, chillout areas, indoor areas and outdoor areas. You just need to rent and move in. And lastly, GSpace is a community; you have start-ups to well-established companies working side-by-side, learning and growing together.

**What are the most important elements when it comes to a co-working space to make it a successful work environment?**

Functionality. That seems obvious, but people often think more of what their office will look like then how their office will function. For example, I need large writing surfaces (I never did an office that didn't have wall writing surfaces), good lighting, a super comfortable chair, a large work surface, strong Internet, abundant power sources, storage facilities and visual calmness.



Visual calmness, not to dis Cairo again, is something I crave and find lacking in our capital. And that doesn't just mean white. You can have a calm place with a variety of different finishes and colors. It's the functionality element that makes it calm (for example, I don't do accessories for the sake of accessorizing). If everything around you truly serves a function, you won't have clutter or chaos. You also have to create a visually calm background, because when you have many different types of people, jobs, brands and colors, it can get crazy. So you need to create something that will allow all these differences to exist without becoming a visual eyesore, which will result in a less efficient space.

**How do you approach new projects? Do you like to apply a signature aesthetic to each project or do you let the project do the choosing for you?**

I think functionality, minimalism and a strong regard for the space are my top three factors when it comes to design and life. The older I get, the more I see that design really does reflect your life philosophy, and I find that to be super interesting. I want to grow as a person and as a designer, and a big part of that is being open to change and new experiences.

Each new project is just that, new. And that's one of my favorite parts of my job – the newness. I'm always going to be minimal, I love natural materials and working with loads of natural light. But, I also like trying new things and working in a different way. For GSpace, for example, I wanted the place to look professional but laid back. Beachy yet sleek. Serious and yet fun. Have an identity but be subtle enough for the renters to shine as well. And, most importantly, I wanted it to be what I see as "Gouna-esque".

**GSpace has already created a fair amount of buzz for its concept and design; what's the next step for the project?**

Phase 2! We did Phase 1 in just over two months, and that's including design and implementation. Even though all of us were very happy with the outcome, we were also very tired. So we gave ourselves more time to finish Phase 2.

Phase 2 was going to be the "private offices" area. But the good thing about phasing is that you get to learn along the way. For example, the project manager kept getting requests for small-size offices, so we created smaller offices in Phase 2 then we had originally planned. We also have meeting rooms, rooftop areas and more landscaping – you'll be able to work and chill in the outdoors, morning and night.

# OUR FAVORITE COWORKING SPACES ACROSS THE GLOBE

With coworking spaces becoming such a hot commodity - according to Deskmag's Global Working Survey 2017, there has been a global increase from 5,800 in 2014 to a projected 13,800 in 2017 - we rounded up some of our favorite spaces from around the world when it came to design aesthetics. **TL**



▲ WEWORK WEIHAI LU (SHANGHAI, CHINA)



▲ BETAHAUS (BARCELONA, SPAIN)

▼ CREW COLLECTIVE (MONTREAL, CANADA)



▼ HUBUD (BALI, INDONESIA)



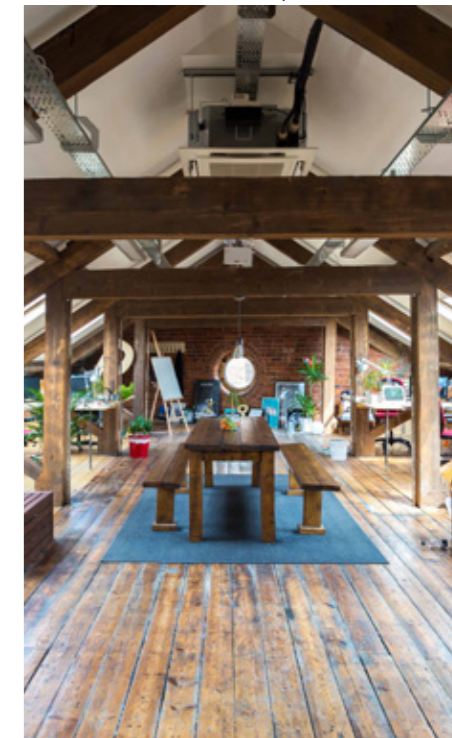
▲ THE FARM (NEW YORK, UNITED STATES)

▼ DUKE STUDIOS (LEEDS, ENGLAND)



▲ B. AMSTERDAM (AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS)

▼ MINISTRY OF NEW (MUMBAI, INDIA)



**TL** *With a BA in International Business from GWU and a Professional Interior Design Certification from UCLA, Ramzi established the boutique interior, furniture and product design firm, Human Nature in 2007. Since then, Human Nature has been the designer behind a variety of commercial and residential projects, as well as several bespoke furniture pieces.*