

AJ 40 under 40: Jayden Ali

It has been a busy 12 months for Jayden Ali, having been shortlisted for the Camden Highline competition and reaching the final bidding stages for work on Enfield Council's £6 billion Meridian Water masterplan.

In many ways, this past year could be seen as a breakthrough moment for the ambitious 32-year-old East Ender, who studied at the University of East London and The Cass, worked on the 2012 Olympics while at Allies and Morrison, and went on to found JA Projects in 2017 before being shortlisted to curate the British Pavilion at last year's delayed Venice Architecture Biennale.

Key to winning such wider recognition has been a series of projects in east London – including a teaching space at Cherry Trees School, Bow, for children with behavioural difficulties and collaborating on the landmark Diddy's café and bar in Hackney featuring a programme of cultural happenings.

Finalist scheme in Enfield Council's recent Meridian Water intergenerational housing contest by JA Projects (with Studio Weave)

The motivating force behind Ali's rapid development has been his drive to upend the 'entrenched dynastic culture that pervades architecture' and ensure cities value and celebrate the 'immaterial networks, connections and support structures' that underpin society.

For JA Projects, this means deploying a 'performative, collaborative and accessible' approach to every scheme – three words that also neatly sum up Ali's confident and engaging personal style.

Milestones

2014 Starts three-year project with Cherry Trees School, Bow, addressing issues faced by boys with severe and complex emotional difficulties

2017 Founds JA Projects. Joins Robert Mull to teach the Global Free Unit at the University of Brighton and collaborates on Diddy's café, bar and community space in Mare Street

2018 Accepts role as senior lecturer within the spatial practices department at Central Saint Martins

2019 Shortlisted to curate the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and joins Open City as youngest member of its board of trustees

2020 Finalist in Camden Highline competition in collaboration with Feilden Fowles and J&L Gibbons Landscape Architects. Shortlisted with Studio Weave in Meridian Water intergenerational housing contest

