



The Aga Khan Award for Architecture

ARCHITECT'S RECORD

CONFIDENTIAL

I. IDENTIFICATION

Project Title The Cultural Park for Children, Sayeda Zinab, Cairo

Street Address Qadry & Abouel-Dahab Str. Sayeda Zinab

City Cairo Postal Code _____ Country Egypt

Telephone _____ Facsimile _____ Telex _____

II. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE

A. Architect/Planner

Name Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim

Mailing Address 61 Mohy-Edin Abou El Ezz Str. Dokki

City Giza, Cairo Postal Code _____ Country Egypt

Telephone 3602858 Facsimile 3473323 Telex _____

B. Client

Name Ministry of Culture

Mailing Address 1, Shagaret Edorr Str. Zamalek

City Cairo Postal Code _____ Country Egypt

Telephone 3402195/3403629 Facsimile 3406449 Telex _____

C. Consultants (e.g. Engineers, Economists, Sociologists, Historians, etc.)

Name Community Design Collaborative - Caravan Cairo

Mailing Address 61 Mohy Edin Abou El Ezz Str. Dokki

City Giza, Cairo Postal Code _____ Country Egypt

Telephone 3602858 Facsimile 3473323 Telex _____

D. Master Craftsman/Contractor

Name El Giza General Contracting Company

Mailing Address _____

City Cairo Postal Code _____ Country _____

Telephone 3930351, 3930466 Facsimile _____ Telex _____

III. USE

A. Specify type(s) of use Street Development, Cultural Facilities; Library, Ateliers, Yards, Terraces.

B. User(s) or Occupant(s) Children, families and local community.

1. Occupation/Profession School children, families

2. Income Level (check one) _____ High _____ Medium ☒ Low ☒ Mixed _____

C. Specify any change(s) between planned and actual use: Park boundary initially proposed as a wall, evolved to a string of community, and cultural facilities serving both the Park and the neighboring community. Several changes between the planned and the actual took place in the library; the yards and the terraces.

IV. PROJECT TIMETABLE

(Please specify year and month)

A. Design: Commencement 1983 Completion 1985

B. Construction: Commencement 1987 Completion 1989-1991

C. Date of Project Occupancy Oct 1989 Street development completed.

V. PROJECT ECONOMICS

(Please specify amount, currency and date of transaction)

	Amount	Currency	Date
A. Total Initial Budget	<u>1.350.000 E.L.</u>	<u>Egyptian Pound (EL)</u>	<u>1985</u>
B. Cost of Land	<u>--- (Govt.)</u>	<u>---</u>	<u>---</u>
C. Analysis of Actual Costs			
1. Infrastructure	<u>200.000</u>	<u>EL</u>	
2. Labour	<u>379.500</u>	<u>EL</u>	
3. Materials	<u>1.270.500</u>	<u>EL</u>	
4. Landscaping	<u>Paid by the Governorate</u>		
5. Professional Fees	<u>50.000</u>	<u>EL</u>	
6. Other			
D. Total Actual Costs (without land)	<u>1.900.000</u>	<u>EL</u>	
E. Actual Cost per sq.m.	<u>275*</u>	<u>EL</u>	
*Calculation based on areas including Buildings, such as the library as well as landscaping and terracing.			
F. Cost Comparison			

Please indicate how the costs of this project relate to typical building costs in the country (check one):

Average _____ Above Average ☒ Below Average _____

G. Sources of Funds

1. Please indicate the percentage of funds that came from:

_____ Private Sources 100% _____ Public Sources

2. If funding was public, what percentage was from:

Local Sources 100% National Sources _____ International Sources _____

VI. CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

A. Site and Building Area (please indicate in square metres)

1. Total Site Area 12.500 Mt2 (including site area of Abouel-Dahab Str.)
2. Total Ground Floor Area 6900 Mt2 (Incl. floor area of Abouel-Dahab Str.)
3. Total Combined Floor Area 7700 Mt2
(including basement(s), ground floor(s) and all upper floors)

B. Construction and Technology

Describe the structural system and the basic method of construction. For restoration projects, please describe the techniques used in the conservation of the original structure.

Stone masonry construction, using local lime and sand stone, bearing walls as supporting system with stone roofs, vaults and domes as necessary. The stone is used as structural as well as finishing material. The Very light reinforcement is used to offset unequal settlement expected due to the infill nature of the soil.

C. Description of Materials

(please also indicate if locally produced or imported and whether fabricated on-site or elsewhere)

1. Foundations

R.C. Foundation (continuous).

2. Principal Structural Members

Sand or limestone bearing walls.

3. Infill

Limestone walls, wood or metal works.

4. Rendering of Facades or Exterior Finishes

Natural limestone (carved)

5. Floors

Sand stone, limestone and hard Bazalt or red rocky stones.

6. Ceilings

Wood work, or internal texture of the limestone.

7. Roofing

Limestone vaults and domes. R.C. Flat roofs are used when necessary.

8. Other elements (please specify)

Marble and mosaic tiles are used in fountains. Decorative tiles are used as well.

D. Type of Labour Force (please indicate percentage)

75% Skilled Workers 25% Unskilled Workers

E. Origin of Labour Force

☒ Domestic ☐ Foreign

VII. GENERAL GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Please describe the local climatic and geographic characteristics and the extent to which these have been taken into consideration in the design process.

Hot and rid climate:

Temperature:	Max: 41°C	Min 12°C
Relative Humidity:	Max: 75%	Min 50%

VIII. EVOLUTION OF DESIGN CONCEPTS

Please describe the history of the project, from its conception to its final construction and actual use.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PROJECT

The Cultural Park for Children, as it is now, is a complex of several buildings with gardens and elements of lanscape inbetween. The notion of the Park applies more to the evolutionary process of its design and construction than to its appearance and configuration. Situated in Sayeda Zinab, an old and vibrant community of about 2 million people, the site occupies some 2-1/2 acres of land of a long neglected and badly deteriorated Park called El-Hod El-Marsoud Garden.

The Park includes a children's library and ateliers, video and computer rooms, fountains, green yards for games and recreation, a boulevard lined with palm trees now developed into the main spine of the park with fountains, seats and setting for games and instructions; outdoor terraces which include small theaters, places for artwork and exhibition, use gardens, informal theaters, and grounds for future developments including children's museum and theaters. An essential component of the Park comprises a street development consisting of a string of small cultural facilities connecting the Park to the neighboring community. Abouel-Dahab Street development includes an information corner and a café, a public fountain acting as a community seat and connected to an out-reach library open to the street; steps, shops, studios, small plazas for exhibitions, festivities and community occasions. This development, about 200 meters long, run parallel to the entire north side of the Park and connects to the neighboring community through several alley ways.

The Street development was not part of the original scheme, its incorporation into the design, and hence, the construction of the project highlights one of the most interesting and significant aspects of this project. The Street, now, along with the park as a whole acts as a nucli for a much larger and more significant process of upgrading and regeneration, whose domaine might very well stretch beyond the boundaries of the local community to reach the entire district of Sayeda Zinab.

The following statement would attempt to outline the evolution of the design concept from the conception to the actual construction. Hoping this brief outline will succeed in accounting for the unusual experience of this project.

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IX. PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

In what way is this project important ? Please describe the aspects of the project which represent a particular achievement (for example the technical, economic, or social achievement, or its response to culture, climate, etc.).

The significance of this project lies in 5 major domains:

1) Theoritically

The project represents a major work from the stand point of the theory of Architecture and Design. Many theorems and propositions have been made, including some of the work of this Architect - that dealt with the intricate relation between the Cultural process of local communities and its creative expression in Architecture. This project does not make a claim on that relationship, but in fact materializes many of its aspects.

2) Gontextually

The project is situated in the center of an extremely complex and layered urban fabric, which dates back to the beginning of the Arab-Islamic settlement in Egypt (The Tolonite Dynasty). Yet, this rich and enormously valuable fabric is in rapid state of deterioration. None of the restoration, or planning approaches proposed or partly implemented in this area helped to overcome this deterioration. The Park complex and Abouel-Dahab Street development promises to be a nuclei of a major upgrading and regeneration process.

3) Architectual Expression

The project used local materials and employed local crafts and technology. Yet, the resulting architectural expression is free from stereo-typed forms. The language is one which is contemporary and authentic at the same time. The use of generative geometry and the different processes of transformations employed in generating the different forms account for this feature.

4) Impact on the Community

The use of community rituals and ceremonies in the design and construction process helped to communicate the most subtle images about the project to the general public and to engage the community and the builders alike in this process.

5) Academically

The project and its process have become the focus of many academic inquiries, several publications, course works and research projects been undertaken in relation to the project. A major research was sponsored by the National Academy for Scientific Research included Abouel-Dahab Street as one of its pilot projects.

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X. PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. The materials described below are the minimum requirements for project presentation. These materials will be used in the preparation of standardised presentations to be constituted by the Award office and reviewed by the Master Jury. Subsequently, they will form part of the permanent Award archives and may be made available for public consultation.

The submission materials should be clearly identified and should not be bound or mounted. For slides and photographs, a list of captions should be provided for each image; the name(s) of photographer(s) and date(s) of photography should also be specified.

1. Map indicating location of project in city, community, neighbourhood, or landscape.
2. Ten (10) photographs; preferred and maximum size for A4 presentation (18 x 24 centimetres).
10 more photos are submitted to cover several aspects of the project and its details.
3. Twenty (20) slides; 24 x 36 millimetres.
4. Drawings; preferred and maximum size for A3 format presentation (29,7 x 42 centimetres).
Site, Roof, and Massing Plans;
Floor Plan(s);
Elevations;
Sections.
5. Curriculum Vitae, or Firm's Prospectus.

- B. The submission of additional materials is encouraged. Please specify any appended materials not listed above.

Plans for the upgrading project of Abouel-Dahab Street. Independently sponsored by the Ministry of Housing and the National Academy for Scientific Research.

more drawings are submitted to cover the following: (these drawings are not numbered).

- * *Street development including the Park and its surroundings (on Qasbi St.)*
- * *Plans for the Preliminary Design Scheme (the Competition entry).*
- * *Plans, Sections, and elevations for the Final Scheme.*
- * *Drawing showing the Basic geometry employed to develop the Final scheme towards working drawings.*
- * *Drawings illustrating the Foundation*
- * *Ceremony and details.*

- C. Please indicate other sources of information on the project(s), e.g. publications, personal contacts, etc.

- Egyptian Gazette Jan 1991
- Al Banaa, Dec 1990/Jan 1991
- Mimar, 21 1990
- Alam El Benan - 102/1989, 107/1990
- Middle East Time - May 1990
- Aga-Khan Program for Islamic Arch. Harvard/MIT *
- *Space For Freedom, AKA. 1989*
- Cairo Today, Dec 1989
- Theories and Principles of Design in Islamic Societies, 1987 *
- Al Ahram, Dec 1983
- Al Wesam, Oct 1983
- Mimar, 8, 1983

* *these two items are the same.*

Please note: The submission of this Record is a prerequisite to candidacy for the Award. All information contained in and submitted with the Record will be kept strictly confidential until announcement of the Award is made. Subsequently, such material may be made available by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and you hereby grant the Aga Khan Award for Architecture a non-exclusive licence for the duration of the legal term of copyright (and all rights in the nature of copyright) in the Material submitted to reproduce the Material or licence the reproduction of the same throughout the world.

Signature _____

Name (please print) Architect Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, PhD Date /1991

All materials should be forwarded to:

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Award Procedures
32, chemin des Crêts-de-Pregny
1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland

Telephone: (22) 798 90 70

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Telex 415 418 AKA CH

1) The Preliminary Scheme: Setting the Order (See sheet No. attached)

In 1983, the Ministry of Culture here in Egypt sponsored a national competition to develop the site of El-Hod El-Marsoud, as a Cultural Park for children. Original program included the elements outlined above, but, made no mention to the neighboring streets or the community. On the contrary, the program included explicit mention of the security hazards and the need to have strong boundaries of the projects. Our entry won the First Award on the merits of its basic conception and order.

Historic and culturally significant symbols within the environment of the project and in the context of its surrounding community were identified, decoded and unlocked to rediscover the basic principles of order which underline the form of these symbolic elements and their meaning. Here, the relation between order, geometry and myth was explored. The minaret of the nearby Ibn-Tolon Mosque was the focus of this inquiry.

The structure of the physical order derived from this process is similar, but not identical to the cosmogony of buildings in context of traditional and more esoteric approaches. Yet, the rationality and explicitness of the approach made it acceptable and more comprehensive to designers and all participants in the team, or the competition group. The most important aspect of this step is that it linked a contemporary building program to the deeper structure of the community: its myth and symbols.

2) The Final Scheme: Establishing the Basic Geometry

Following the preliminary design, the order of the scheme was made concrete through the development of a basic geometrical construction, once the symbolic link between the program of the Park and the community's myth and symbols was established, a geometrical construction is developed in which the essential aspects of this symbol was established into a sort of generative geometry which provides a matrix, or a field within which the different functions of the project can be located. This geometrical field represents the matrix in which elements can obtain their cultural significance and acquire their meanings.

Existing trees of the Park were located as pivotal points with this matrix, the spiral geometry organized the different activities, and guided the formal development of each space. The helical form of the minaret has now become a complete system of organization rather than an explicit form or shape.

3) Working Drawing and Bidding Documents: Setting up a Ritual Process of Bldg

Here is perhaps the most significant development of this process. We asked ourselves, how can we produce a set of working drawings, specifications and rules and conditions for buildings, which continue to account for this symbolic process of the community. We realized that the crux of the matter is to be able to produce a construction document which allows for changes and creative interruption of community participation, that the first level of engaging the community in the design process on the level of symbols was rather simple. The most difficult

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is to engage its creativity & productivity. We knew that the current practice of bidding and contracting will make that engagement impossible. So, we have to devise a way in order to allow designers, craftsmen and the entire building community to act creating and to have a genuine impact on shaping the building as it goes under construction. This process will be expanded to allow the general community to take part as well.

Hence, a critical step followed the construction of geometry, the first we called "coordinates" a system of coordination of space which is ritually organized. As opposed to the conventional organization of space which is based on preconceived coordinates: i.e. "grid", this system establishes a set of dynamic rules which allows the concrete design to develop as the creative process evolves and responds to the interaction with the community. Proportions and progression of spaces substitute the conventional grid system, hence, the act of design development and construction become more generative, in fact regenerative, or in other words ritualistic.

4) The Process of Construction: Enacting "A Modern" Building Ceremony

The following step in this process dealt with actual building activities. Here, we were aiming at the development of a framework for encounters between the different participants in this ritualistic rule system. Cultural ceremonies of the community were taken as a model for the design process. Not merely as a metaphor, but as appropriate and still a living mechanism which is capable of linking the culture of the community to its building process.

Starting with ground breaking ceremony (see slides), the entire construction of the Park was conceived through a series of events in which the basic structure of the community (myth, rituals, beliefs and traditions) were once again linked to the production of building. (see slides of construction process).

The building ceremony here meant a reconstruction and a re-enactment of the entire design process from its symbolic, geometrical to its ritualistic aspects. The series of events of construction helped to internalize the meaning and the power of link made by the architect between the culture and the building hence the individual inquiry characterizing any creative process turned to a community wide process, an awareness and alertness to that relationship. The process became an act of awaken the deepest of the sentiments and energies of the community.

The outcome is marvelous buildings, an empowered community, a myth unlocked or perhaps a new myth created.

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