

The Omrania | CSBE Student Award for Excellence in Architectural Design

Jury report October 8, 2009

The jury is delighted to see such a diverse group of entries from all over the Arab world and hopes submissions to the Award will increase in the future as such an activity can only improve our cultural landscape.

The jury noted a diversity of themes with a particular focus on challenging topics that are of special relevance to the Arab world, such as sustainability, peace, and the preservation of identity. The topics are meaningful. However, their translation into projects only reached a significant level of development and maturity in some of the projects, and did not live up to the potentials of such undertakings in other cases.

Several projects show promising architectural directions but contradict their themes and contexts. Also, a few projects are over-designed, faddish, and even engaged in visual acrobatics.

The three prize winners exhibit restraint in their solutions and show solid alignment to their theme, site, and context. Their solutions are concise and convey their concepts very clearly. They are unpretentious, humble, authentic, understated, yet powerful.

Although the second- and third-prize projects were not developed to their full potential capacity, they steer clear of acrobatic formative tactics and present solutions that have high potential for becoming resonating environments, once developed with guidance.

All the winning entries and honorable mentions, however, fall short on thorough climatic/environmental analyses and do not integrate imperative sustainable strategies.

Some projects were quickly eliminated for being conventional, banal, and unimaginative, including those that are poorly presented in terms of clarity of approach and feel of graphics.

Many projects are characterized by the use of excessive textual information and visual images. This has resulted in over-clutter and “visual noise.” Some presentations are too busy that they detract from the project itself.

The jury was disappointed with the quality of some presentations, particularly regarding the incorrect use of semantics and basic grammar, as well as the misspelling of words.

FIRST PRIZE

Rasem Mazen Kamal, Heba Abdul Munem Al Najada, and Yousef Zaki Sayyed Ahmed
'Ain Ghazal Interpretation Park

This project provides a strong sense of place, a very well-resolved scheme, a rigorous design approach, and a site-sensitive solution that shows maturity through its methodical approach and project expression. It also incorporates a high-quality investigation of the development of building details and roof structures. Its forms integrate well into their context and contribute to effectively linking two nearby urban areas. We also found the idea of a living bridge over the highway particularly powerful.

The project, in addition, incorporates a “story-telling” approach that encourages a sequential exploration of the site, thus giving value to archeology and the history of the place. It also effectively conveys the feeling of an architectural dig as well as captures and preserves the excavation of the site as a conceptual driver of the design.

The design provides a good sense of the integration of landscape elements (trees and water). Its materials are clearly thought-out and articulated, resulting in rich, soulful places. Moreover, the character of each of its components offers a pull factor that keeps the visitor interested and engaged.

Finally, the project’s presentation is very effective.

Comments for improvement

The poetic gestures found in each architectural component are somewhat absent in the overall combined expression of the project buildings on the site. There also are potentials for making the project a more subtle expression by developing the overall scheme to blend more effectively into the earth and the surroundings. Moreover, the project can be made less imposing in its totality; in fact, a well-thought-out landscape layer can help achieve a more discrete and subtle intervention within the context of the surroundings.

We encourage the designer of this project to further develop the presentation and present it to the relevant authorities to propel it into the realm of implementation, thus providing a bridge between academia and a real-life solution.

SECOND PRIZE

Saud Abdulaziz Al-Mutawa

A Moment of Regret and the New Beginning

The jury members appreciate the student’s bold decision to address such a unique and culturally-controversial theme: that of women’s abuse. We can feel the passion and sensitivity expressed in this design, which has transformed a potentially defensive building type into an embracing environment that is both humane and architecturally powerful. The deliberate organic disposition of the buildings on the site is appropriate for this healing retreat and very much in line with its conceptual direction. The monolithic gestures of the buildings and spaces evoke a sense of silence and serenity that allows for healing and spiritual reconciliation.

The project relates well to its site. Moreover, the negative space carved out of the existing natural setting creates a sense of detachment, and is therefore successful in transforming an

urban plot into a healing sanctuary. The sense of arrival and unfolding of the building particularly provides for an appropriate therapeutic experience.

Comments for improvement

The translation of the narrative (mapping of the stab wounds) is too literal and arbitrary to the solution. The project in fact needs to be further developed - especially in terms of architectural character - without losing its monolithic expression. There also is a need to further develop the internal components and rooms as intimate spaces needed for contemplation and individual healing.

THIRD PRIZE

Farah Afif Kassab

Urban Plank: Projecting the City of El Mina Back to the Sea

The concept of reconnecting people with the sea is the strongest aspect of the project. The project expresses a clear sequencing of a narrative linking the city and the sea, and the siting and positioning of the building shows a well-developed example of an investigation of urban issues and a good understanding of the urban context.

The project expresses a coherent sense of planning that incorporates simple architectural plans to resolve a functional program. The jury members appreciate the reductionist approach of formal exploration through modeling to arrive at a simpler solution.

The rooftop for viewing the city and the sea could become a viable destination for the city.

The project's presentation is effective, especially in its depiction of the old town.

Comments for improvement

The project needs further development in relation to materials, skins, and facades. In this context, the extensive use of glass facades is climatically questionable. Moreover, the quality of the internal spaces needs to be further defined and articulated. The roof areas also need further development, and the option of engaging with the sea beyond the visual should be further explored. Perhaps the project's ample open-air spaces can be exploited as opportunities for accomplishing this.

HONORABLE MENTION 1

Tahereh Mohammad Hossein Rajabi

Bani Yas Scaffolding (Parametric Dubai: Emerging Poly. Morphi. City)

This project is commendable for exploring a unique intellectual concept with a promising density. It exhibits a good sense of place and geometry, as well as a strong juxtapositioning and balance between the temporary/mystical and the progressive/dynamic. Once more fully resolved and developed, the project has the potential to become an evocative destination. The design,

however, still falls short of developing its concept. It is worthy of further investigation as it remains an example of paper architecture.

The presentation is exemplary: concise and effective. Its subtlety effectively reflects the mood and spirit of the concept.

HONORABLE MENTION 2

Liyan AlJabi, Basma Hameed, and Mohammad Al Jabi
'Ain Ghazal Interpretation Park

This well-presented project provides another strong approach through which a simple solution is developed for resolving a complex program and a challenging site. The design manages to articulate inherent views available from the site with only a few gestures. It provides a simple and strong statement: that of the building as a balcony onto the archeological dig.

The project shows both an understanding of the site and sensitivity to context. Although it is conceptually strong, the translation into details falls short of achieving the anticipated results.

Finally, for both the First Prize and Honorable Mention 2 projects, which deal with the same program, we commend the students for selecting a site of paramount importance to Jordan and for providing poetic solutions that are sensitive to heritage values.

Jury members:

[Saleh Al-Hathloul](#)

[Vladimir Djurovic](#)

[Khalid Nahhas](#)