Expansion Building, Marrakesh

The brief for this building contained two parts: to provide the required office space for the regional headquarters of the Banque Commerciale du Maroc, and to include ten, moderate-income class apartments for sale or rental.

Located in the commercial district of Marrakesh’s new town, dating from the early part of this century, the site has a complex form. It is situated at the point of a block facing an intersection of several streets and is hence rather narrow. Furthermore, the codes require that buildings on one of the streets have arcades, which added to the difficulty of finding a satisfactory geometrical solution.

In order to emphasise the public nature of the bank’s role, any feature which might evoke the notion of private apartment building has been played down or eliminated. Moreover, strong imagery and a sense of movement have been sought and developed. Thus, the end of the sidewalk arcade has been underlined by the round volume at the corner which rises through the whole height of the structure. This angle treatment is further dramatised by a kind of spiral beam that turns the corner of the building. In this way the whole is endowed with some of the quality of signpost or ‘cairn’ that was desired. The small cement brick facing of darkish red and the red-ochre tint given the reinforced concrete as it was treated during construction render it basically compatible with Marrakesh’s dominant colours yet give the building a character of its own.

Below: View of the main façade with arcades and corner column. Bank occupies only the two lower floors.
Right, above: View of the Expansion Building illustrating the volumetric treatment of corner site and the contrasting dark red and red-ochre materials.
Elevation of the facade with arcade and bank entrance.

Section through the building.

Upper storey plan showing layouts of some of the residential apartments.

Mezzanine level, overlooking the main lobby of the bank, for offices.

Ground floor plan showing the entrance to the bank (under the arcade) and the main hall. Entry to the apartments is on the opposite facade, next to garage ramp.
Left and above: Views of bank's main lobby and tellers' counters.
Left, below: Portion of the bank's main lobby occupying the cylindrical volume on the corner of the site.
Top: Main hall of the bank.
Right: Bank lobby seen from the entrance with offices for consultation.
Right, below: Waiting area outside mezzanine offices in the bank.