SAUDI ARABIA: KING SAUD UNIVERSITY - AL GASSIM CAMPUS

Project Data
Location: Al-Gassim, 100km north of Riyadh.
Client: King Saud University.
Architects: Kenzo Tange Associates, Tokyo.
Contractors: Consortium: Conseco International Ltd., UK, Krikor Baytarian and Somait Engineering (engineering for master plan and full infrastructure design).
Site area: 775ha.
Floor area: 1413,000 sq.m.
Cost: £300 million
Inception: Master plan approved in 1985
Completion: 1993

The new campus for King Saud University will consist of four faculty buildings, sports facilities, a new teaching hospital and a separate women's college. The campus will also provide residential accommodation for 25,000 students, teaching staff and their families. Kenzo Tange Associates were commissioned to draw up the master plan, draft an academic plan and design the infrastructure.

Architect’s Statement
When we visited the site of the university in 1984, the first thing that caught our eyes from the aeroplane were round-shaped green patches of various sizes scattered in the desert. These were the fruit of efforts to create agricultural fields by pumping up ground water from several hundred metres below the ground using special irrigation techniques. The image of these beautiful green fields became the basis of the master plan for the university. The vision was that of an oasis in the desert.

Three 'oases' of educational and research facilities (one for male students, one for female students and one for a teaching hospital) are planned in the south by the highway, while the north and west of the campus are devoted to staff residences. A recreation zone for common use has been designed between the academic zone in the south and the residential zone in the north.

In the male student area, a round plaza of 100 metres in diameter forms the central point, while four galleries extend towards the periphery. The major roads from this lead to different departments. The buildings of each department are designed to surround a central patio. Galleries and semi-outdoor space contribute to the ordering of the campus.

In the residential zone, housing units surrounding the patios are connected by walkways reserved for pedestrians. The impression is one of a collection of carpets of arabesque patterns covering the whole campus.
1. Central oasis (administration)
2. Gallery
3. Student social centre
4. Accommodation
5. Parking