

Charles Boccara

Charles Boccara was born in Tunis in 1941, then moved to Morocco where he completed his secondary education. His professional training was at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he did a diploma project concerning the City of Fez. Mr Boccara returned permanently to live in Morocco some 15 years ago, working first for the well-known architect E. Azagury in Casablanca before setting up his own practice in Marrakesh.

His volume of production over the last decade throughout the country is phenomenal. Interviewed in Marrakesh by MIMAR editor, Brian Taylor who was immediately caught up by the architect's irrepressible enthusiasm and optimism for his present work, including a first theatre for the city and a large housing project at Hay El Massira, it became clear that Mr

MIMAR: How does it happen that an architect such as yourself opens a practice in Marrakesh, a city with a magnificent architectural heritage but hardly a centre of rapid economic development?

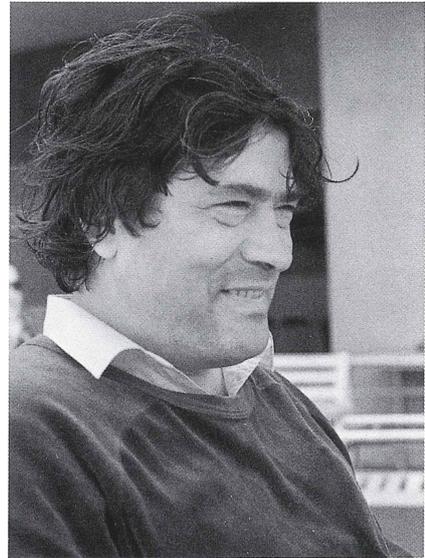
Boccara: I was born in Tunis, and hence I am a child of Mediterranean culture and of this part of Africa. Following my early youth in Tunisia, we moved to Morocco, where I did my secondary education in Casablanca. My architectural training was at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, but my diploma project was for the city of Fez and I spent a year there in preparation. So, you see, although I could have chosen to stay and to work in Paris, I didn't hesitate to return to Morocco. It is above all a country where architecture and the language of building exist still today within strong traditions. To build in Morocco brings me considerable happiness on a personal level. Why? Because I am working for people who appreciate what it means to *inhabit*.

MIMAR: But why Marrakesh specifically?

Boccara: Partly, I guess, out of being timid. After working for a couple of years in the Casablanca offices of Elias Azagury, I felt the need to start out on my own. However, the great fear one has is that of not being called by a client. Since competitions did not exist in Morocco at the time, the terrifying question is how to be selected for a job? I came to Marrakesh as sort of a refuge; there was no other architect practicing in the city at the time, nor for my first 4 or 5 years here. Clients came to see me simply because I was the only architect, and I felt obliged to answer most requests.

MIMAR: You have said that over the years your principal clients have been in

Boccara has had the opportunity to treat a wide variety of building programmes. Inquisitive by nature, which leads him to strike out simultaneously in new directions, Boccara is frequently prone to reevaluate such things as decorative detailing in a given project already underway. The building industry in many countries of the developing world still allows for this somewhat flexible approach to actual construction; Mr Boccara is typical of this approach, modifying on the site where he works closely with all of the craftsmen and contractors, economising here, elaborating details there, in ways that architects in the West find less and less possible to do. The exuberance of the man's personality filters through into a richly diverse architecture.



the public sector, that is to say, governmental institutions. What are the advantages, or disadvantages, of working for a public client as opposed to a private individual?

Boccara: In this respect, I feel much more at ease with a State institution, perhaps because of my own temperament. My relations with public clients have tended to be less changing, more permanent, where the people I've dealt with shared a desire to do something well, wanted to create a work of architecture over time. Private individuals, on the other hand, seem to me to be interested much more in *immediate* results. State clients have greater determination and wider, more universal ambitions; moreover, curiously enough, I've noticed that the introduction of architectural elements of a traditional nature seem to stimulate a more positive response, even greater appreciation in certain bureaucratic realms where orga-

Interview by
Brian Brace Taylor.
Photographs by
Christian Lignon.
Drawings courtesy of the
architect.



nisation and efficiency are highly valued. Finally, His Majesty Hasan II's own speeches have encouraged the use of traditional materials, and, better yet, the integration of traditional spaces, with simplicity of forms, high ceilings, arcades, etc.

MIMAR: One remark you made recently particularly struck me, namely, that the client is always right. Does that mean that when you meet with incomprehension on the part of a client, one who refuses to be flexible at all on an important point, you yourself acquiesce?

Boccara: No, but at the same time, by my generally good-natured, generous spirit, I ask myself then why I should necessarily be the one that's right? I am not always sure. So, during the first encounters with a client, on the level of

Apartment house with terraces in Marrakesh, 1975.

ideas, if he or she really wants something I don't feel I should impose my own judgement. In a way, I am there to aid a client, with all his faults.

MIMAR: Now do you conceive doing so?

Boccara: Ideally, there are two ways of going about it well. One is to take a set of ill-conceived ideas or poorly formulated questions — for a private residence, let's say — and find a good answer. The other way I would do is to proceed by deception. What I mean here is being slightly deceptive in what I say but *not* in my architecture. For example, if a client asks me for a house in the style of a Berber casbah or a Swiss chalet in the middle of

Marrakesh, to accept to do it but in the end to offer him a beautifully Moroccan, Arab residence. The trick is to make him perceive the Moroccan Arab dwelling as the Berber or Swiss-style house he originally admired.

MIMAR: What's the secret?

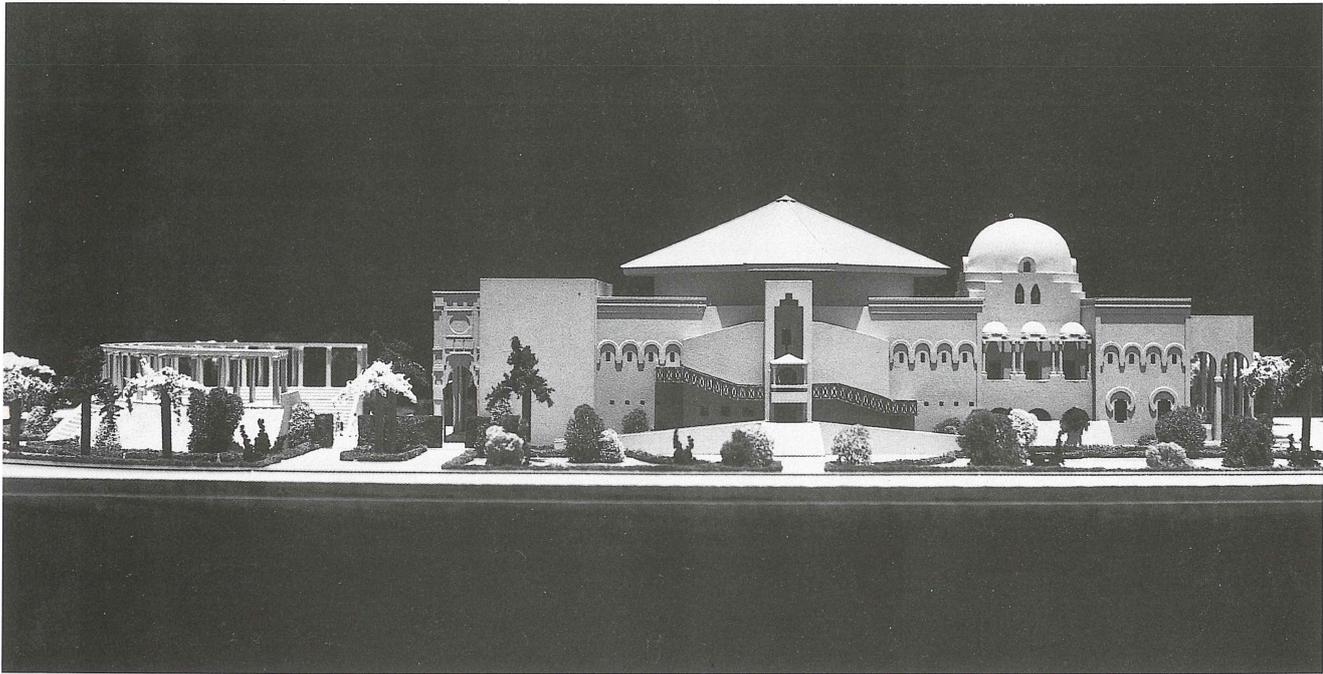
Boccara: Well, it's a little bit like the behaviour of a film-maker. When you ask him questions about his original intentions with regard to a scenario of a given film, his answers are often, usually, irrelevant to the beautiful film he has achieved. There's a degree of illusion involved. Conclusion: in our profession it's necessary to have a client with precise ideas at the outset, but we should always be aware that the true client is really posterity, the future.

MIMAR: It is characteristic of much construction in Third World countries still today, as opposed to that in the West, that many things are often decided, altered, even torn down and redone on the building site itself. Do you find yourself drawing up everything in detail beforehand, or do you change a great deal on site as the building progresses?

Boccara: In fact, I changed a lot in the past when I designed fewer details; hence, I wasn't really changing things, just continuing my reflection on the site. Since then, with a greater workload, I have to be more efficiently organised: a precise overall vision of a project, and the production of detailed drawings before construction begins. Nevertheless, it does happen that I can refine certain aspects — before we get to the finishings, such as wall surfaces. I have a particular affection for the treatment of walls, whether it's through a continuity created by an overall coating applied to a wall surface or the exposed brickwork of an arcade beautifully executed.

MIMAR: How do you reconcile the richly decorative ornamentation, which you have used in your recent work and which is so much a part of Moroccan tradition, with your 'modernist' architectural training in Europe?

Boccara: It's true, I was (and am still) greatly influenced by the tenets of the modern movement in the West. We were taught that applied ornamentation was to be avoided and that emphasis should be upon the articulation of volumes in space and upon visible structural solutions. And I did begin my career with an architecture which abstained from ornamentation. But, being loquacious by temperament and wishing



Model of the municipal theatre now well under construction in Marrakesh.

to make people happy, I did make large gestures of a decorative sort, of enormous scale, like placing cubical volumes one upon the other. I guess my natural exuberance, and a fear of being architecturally boring, lead me first to introduce a multitude of things into a single building; sort of like a ghetto where there are a variety of things happening at once.

However, I have come to realise that beautiful, simple volumes are truly admirable. I have returned to simple, clear geometric compositions into which Moroccan and Arabic ornamentation can find its place. These decorative crafts, still exist in Morocco, so why not utilise them? If I conceive a marvellous room with a very high ceiling — at 5, 6 or 7 metres high — then why not enhance its presence with beautiful woodwork? My craftsmen have a dozen types of ceilings they can produce. I select the type, and I can even choose the principal colours, e.g. pink, blue, traces of gold, or just natural and then I leave them the freedom to create the decorative patterns as they see fit. It's the juxtaposition of simplicity in the volumes and rich articulation in the detailing that I like and that is still possible in Morocco.

MIMAR: I've noticed that you like to introduce elements recovered from older buildings into your new work. Are you able to do so on a regular basis?

Boccaro: I am enchanted by memories of the past (yet I very rarely look back at my own buildings!). To tell the truth, it is a pleasure for me to utilise older

elements, like old wooden doors, old windows, marble washbasins, wooden columns, or even plumbing fixtures from the 1925 era, to create a certain *collage* effect. Hence, some of these elements become transformed from their original function, such as wooden columns from a baldaquin bed employed to hold up a pergola. Private clients, I have observed, love to go hunting for these kinds of objects once they get involved. On the other hand, public or State, clients are much more difficult to convince of this approach.

MIMAR: In terms of new work that incorporates traditional craftsmanship, are you finding it relatively easy still, or harder and harder to obtain craftsmen who can execute good quality work?

Boccaro: In general, unfortunately, craft trades are tending to disappear through lack of work. When I first started practice in Morocco, glazed enamel tiles imported from France were much more expensive than locally-produced *zelliges*, those hand-cut, small ceramic tiles in a large range of colours and geometric shapes which are applied to wall surfaces in traditional architecture. The bourgeoisie of the time preferred imported tiles. Today, the reverse is the case: the *zellige*-work is 2 or 3 times as expensive as the other. But it is hard to find craftsmen to execute the really fine quality *zellige*-work of the past.

MIMAR: You began your career here

with a number of constructions in reinforced concrete. What brought you to build with mud and various types of brick?

Boccaro: Well, it's part of a necessary research by architects in this region of the world. Discovering the qualities of earth as a building material is truly rewarding: the range of colours, its temperature both when wet and dry, its required thickness. One can't imagine, for instance, a wall constituted of earth only 10 centimetres thick. Thus, we're talking about a heavy wall, an inexpensive one, which you can easily demolish if you make a mistake. Another quality: I think it's a material with a kind of self-censorship incorporated. By that, I mean it's difficult to build something ugly with earth: when there's too much, or wrongly used, it shows immediately. Nothing which is not directly linked to compression is structurally out of place.

Moreover, what is admirable in having to build earthen walls of 80 centimetres or *one metre* in thickness, is that a doorway is no longer just a hole one passes through in a fraction of a second, but a small tunnel. It can be decorated or not, but in any case a 1-metre thick door becomes a threshold between interior and exterior, or between two rooms. It's a material I enjoy working with very much. The *Kissaria* in the city of Ouarzazate was a fascinating programme and the results you can see of building with earth are the best example of what I'm doing with this material right now.

Housing, Assif, Marrakesh

Project Data

300 attached dwellings, 1975-78. 128 apartments and public facilities, 1978-83.
 Client: E.R.A.C. (Establishment Régional d'Aménagement et de Construction).
 Architect: Charles Boccara, with Hossein Tafgui and Boujema El Bayed.
 Total area (built): 39,200 square metres.
 Contractors: Koutoubia Co, and Assalam Co.
 Materials: Reinforced concrete and brick.
 Cost: Attached dwellings — 74 million dirhams (Approximately US\$20.1 million).
 Apartment units — 18.5 million dirhams (Approximately US\$5 million).

Assif is a northern suburb which has grown in only ten years to a population of 100,000 persons. The public authorities, in the form of the E.R.A.C. (Establishment Régional d'Aménagement et de Construction), decided to build 300 individual family units as rowhouses. Later, in 1981, the same organisation commissioned a more architecturally imposing complex on an adjacent site with 128 apartments, a *kissaria* (commercial facilities), 70 shops and neighbourhood activities.

The rowhouses suggest the model of colonial house-types, appreciated by the new urban classes, with something of the aspect of "villa" on the street façades. The vocabulary includes a porch, garage, front garden, balcony or loggia, and a certain formal symmetry. In spite of these satisfying signs for future owners, the rowhouses remain rather introverted, as tradition would have it, vis à vis the street while opening onto an inner patio.

The apartment-house solution, which is a highly urban typology, attempts to

reconcile traditional concepts of missing housing, commerce and other neighbourhood activities around streets, passageways, a gallery, courts or plazas. A degree of monumentality was introduced: double-height gallery, accessible roof terrace, etc. while also including amenities such as the *riad* (enclosed garden) or urban *piazza*. Individual apartment units were conceived on the model of traditional Arab houses, with a central room taking the place of the *Oust ed dar* or a reception area open to a trellised terrace.

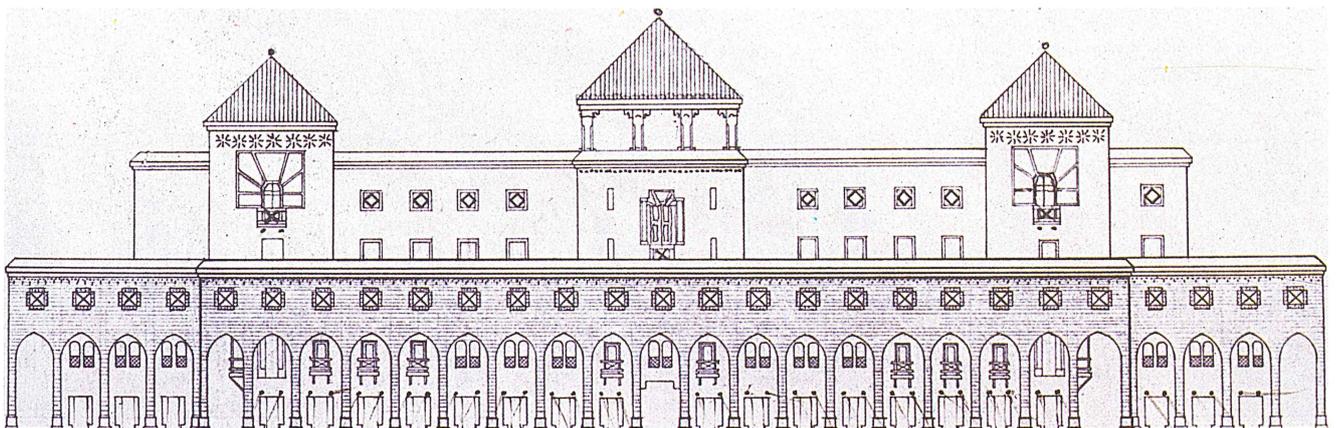
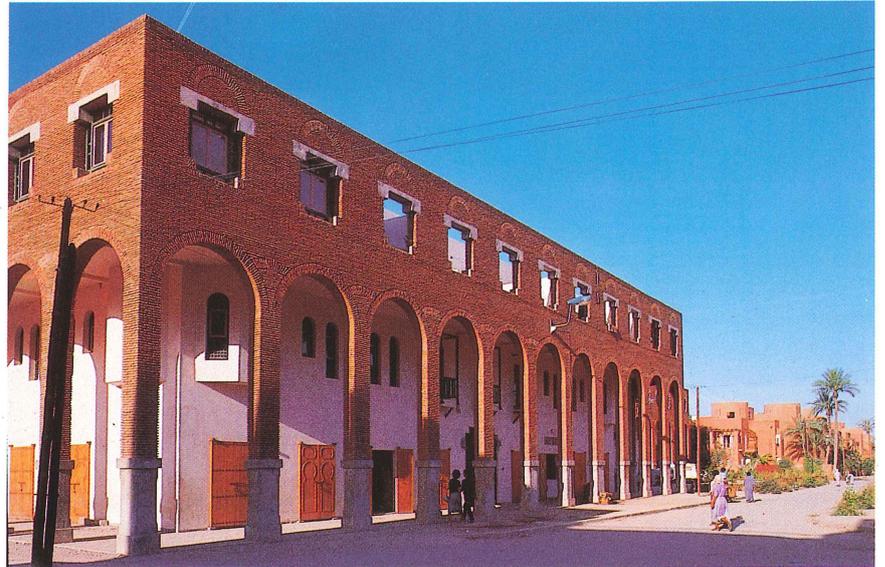
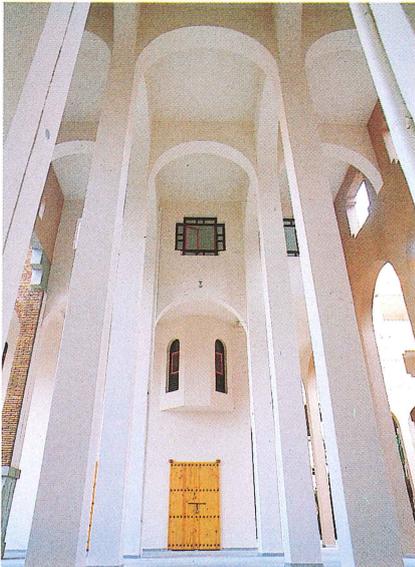
Below, left: Gallery in the apartment complex, with small shops on ground level and apartments in the upper storeys.

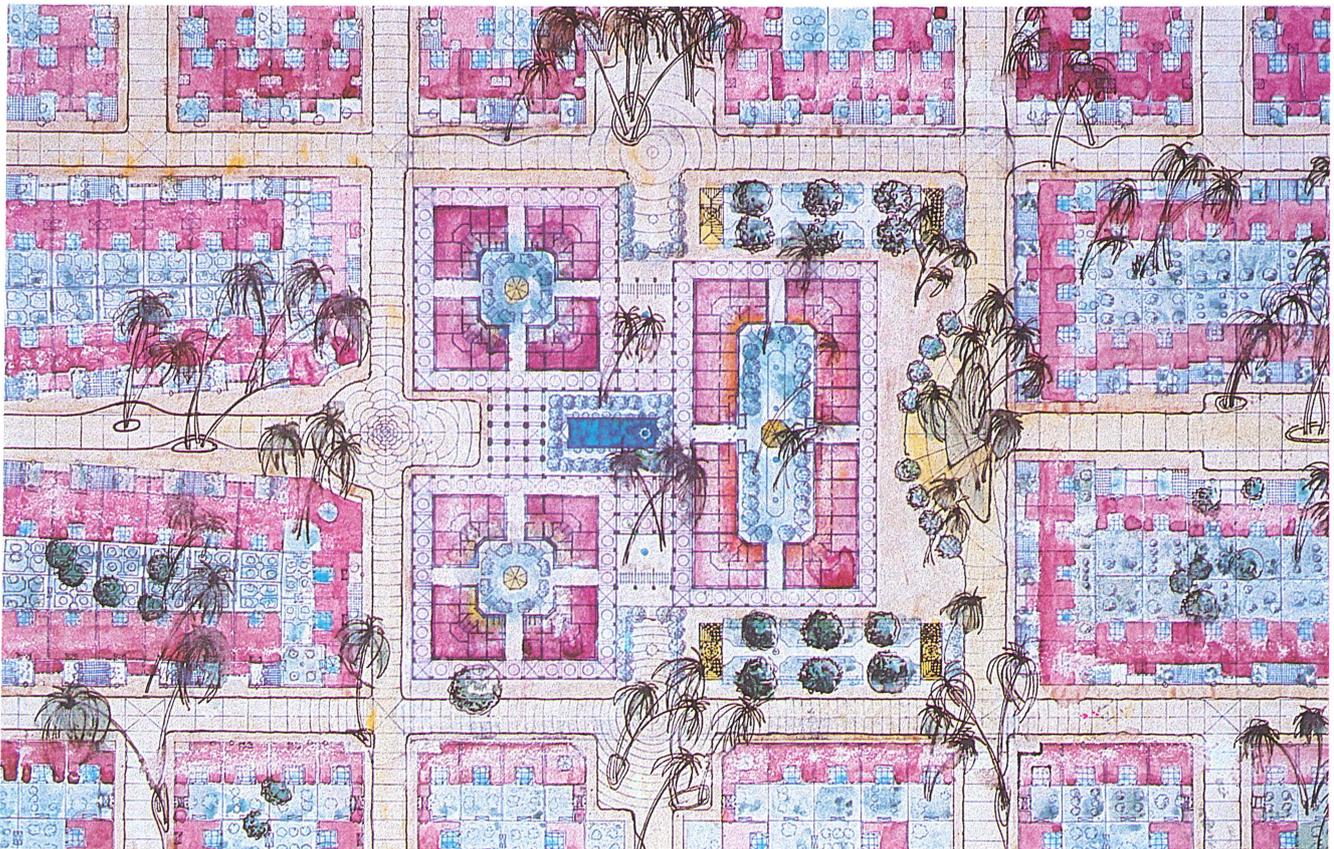
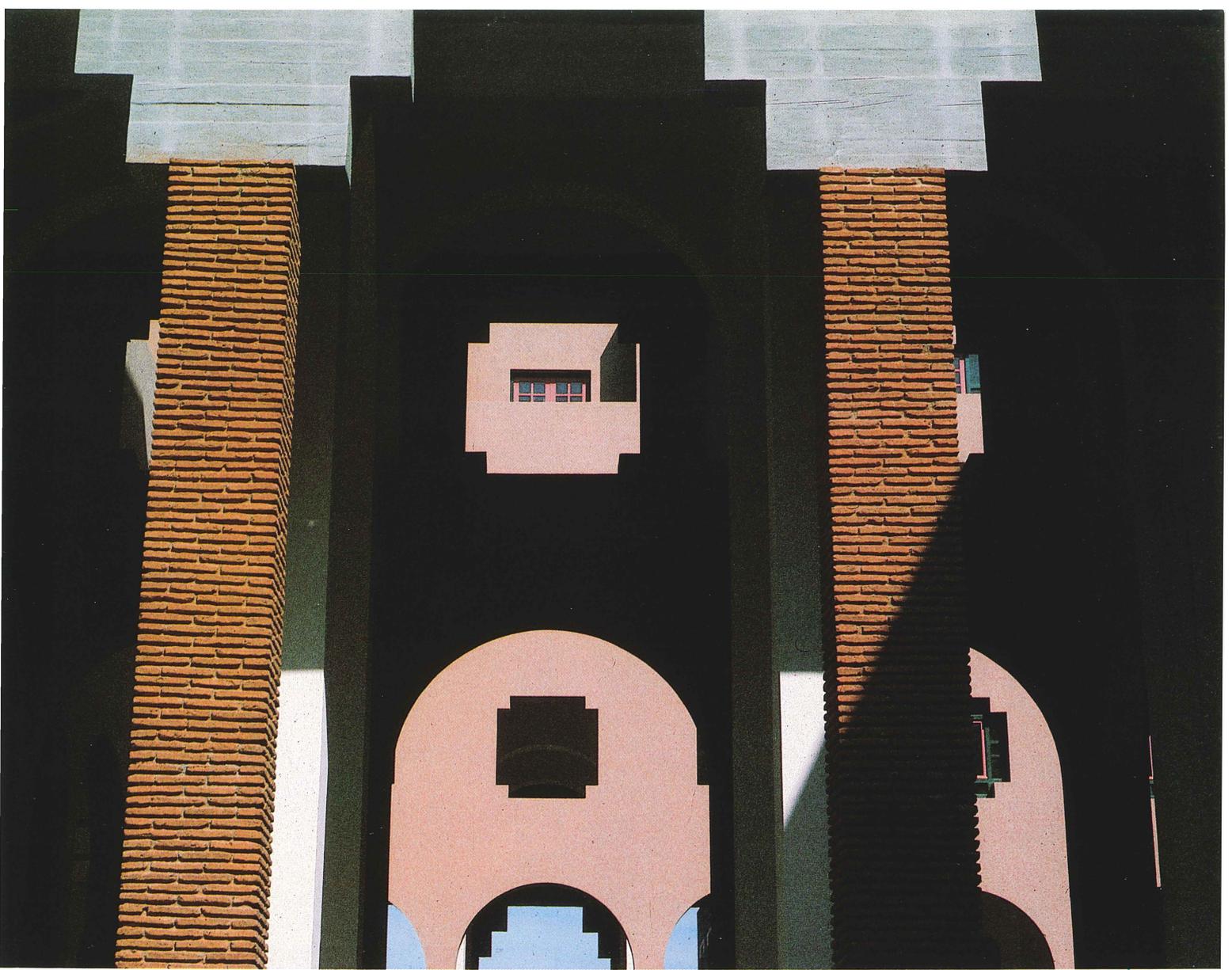
Below: Shopping arcade with gallery of apartment complex, and individual rowhouses in background.

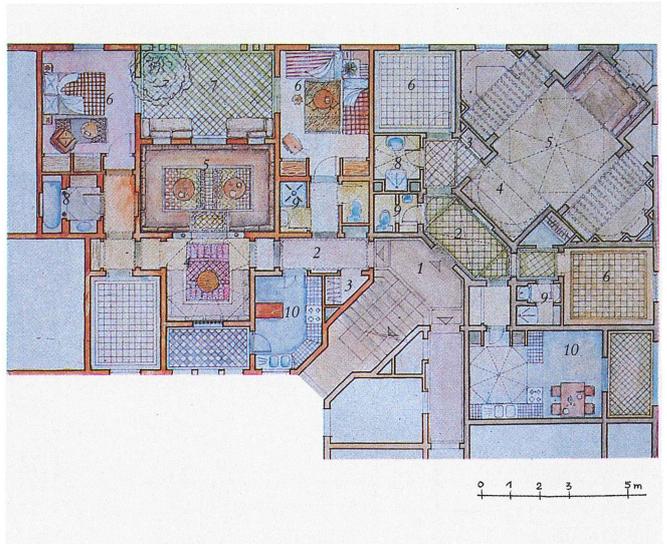
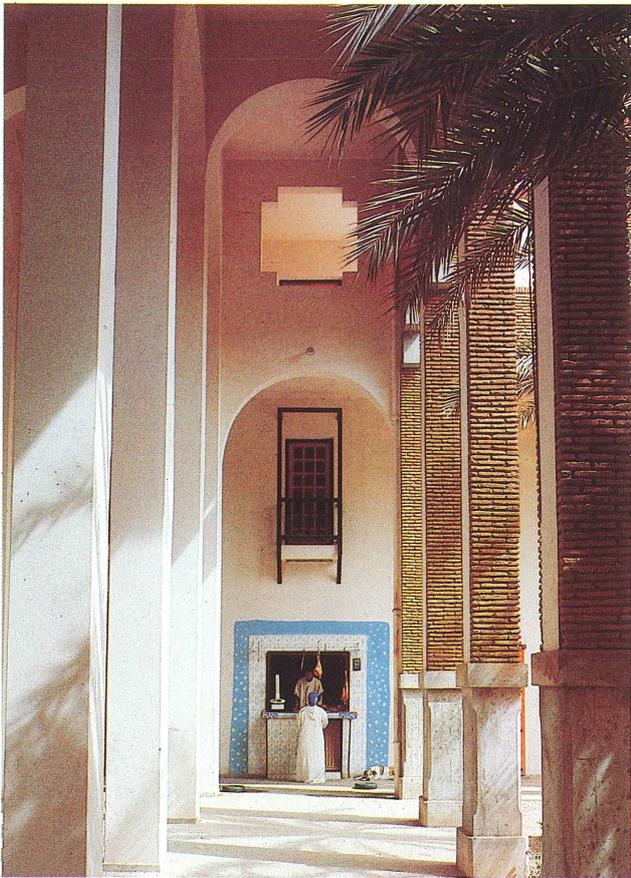
Bottom: Drawing of an elevation of apartment and shopping complex.

Right: Detail of gallery brickwork and terrace windows on upper level.

Right, below: Site plan of Assif neighbourhood, apartment units in the centre, individual rowhouses at the periphery.







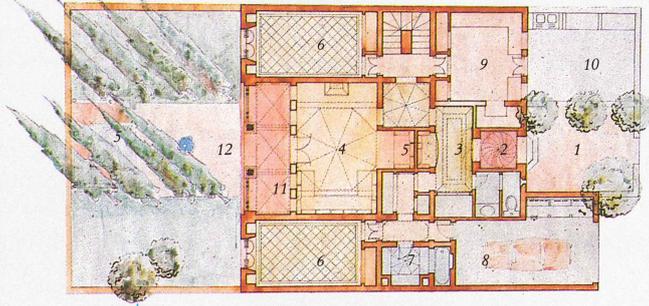
Left: Public spaces for circulation of residents. Ground level commerce includes a butcher's shop where the owner added his own decoration. Photograph: B.B. Taylor.

Above: Plan of two apartments on the second floor of the apartment complex.

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|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Landing | 7. Patio terrace |
| 2. Entry | 8. Bathroom |
| 3. Clockroom | 9. WC |
| 4. Family room | 10. Kitchen |
| 5. Salon | |
| 6. Bedroom | |

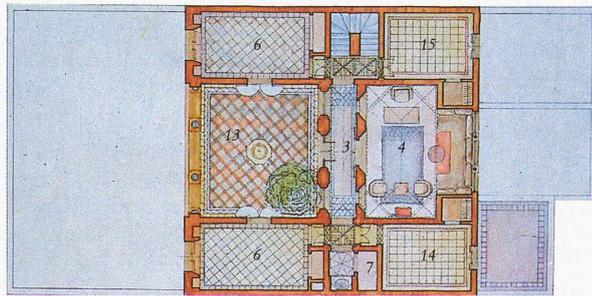
Below: View of an inner courtyard, inspired by the traditional riad, in the apartment complex.





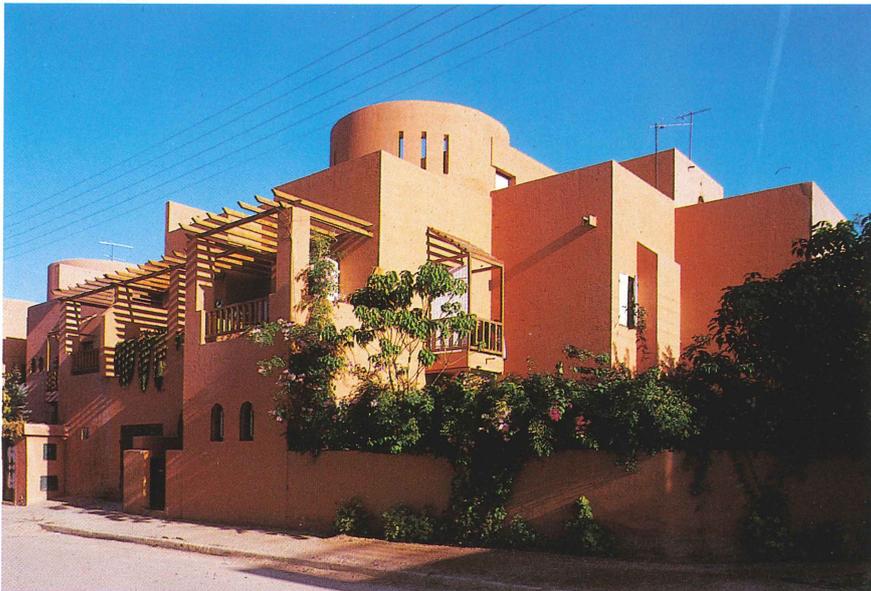
Ground floor plan of a row house.

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|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. entrance garden | 6. bedroom | 11. loggia |
| 2. entry | 7. bath | 12. garden |
| 3. vestibule | 8. garage | 13. upper level terrace |
| 4. salon | 9. kitchen | 14. office |
| 5. b'hou | 10. service court | 15. laundry |



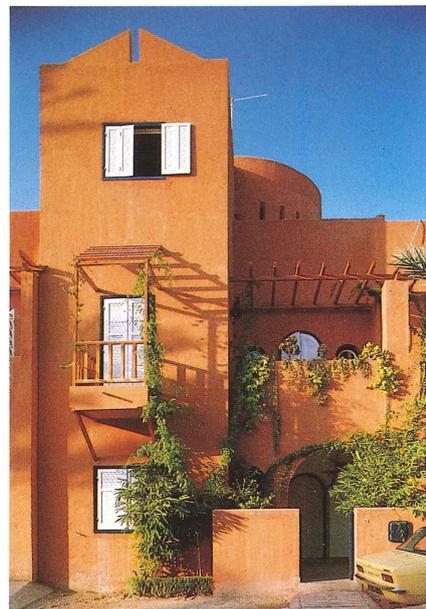
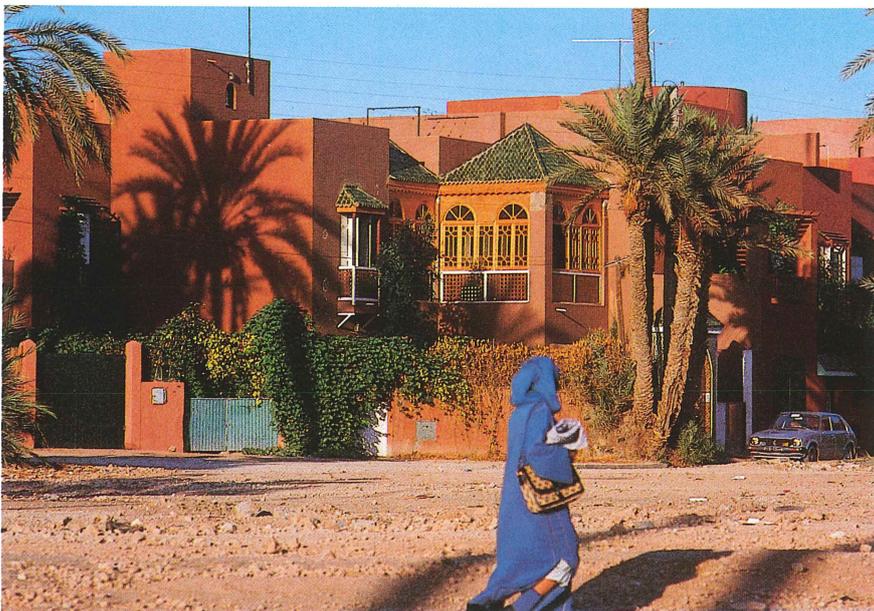
First floor plan.

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Left: Rowhouses completed in first phase of construction at Assif.

Below, left and below: Rowhouses, completed in 1978, have been modified to meet each owner's needs and tastes.



Hospital Mosque, Marrakesh

Project Data

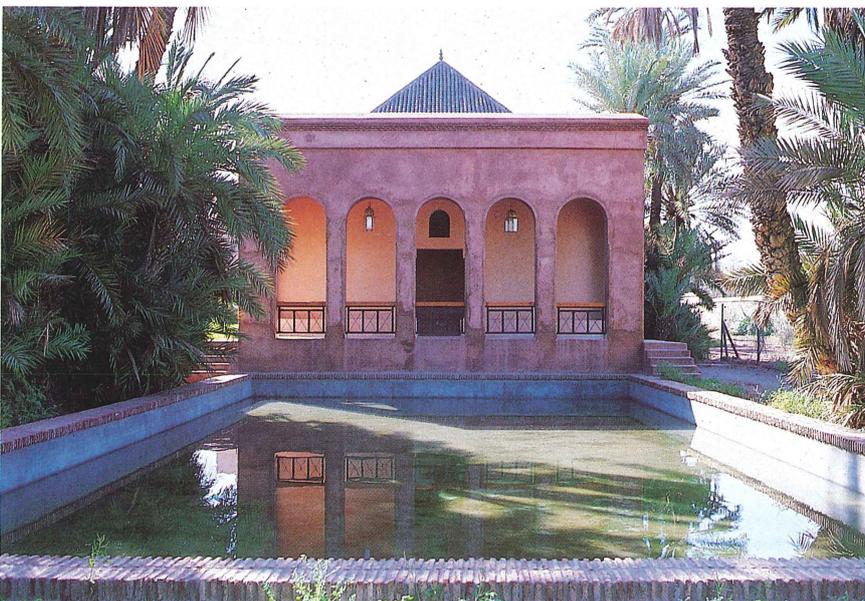
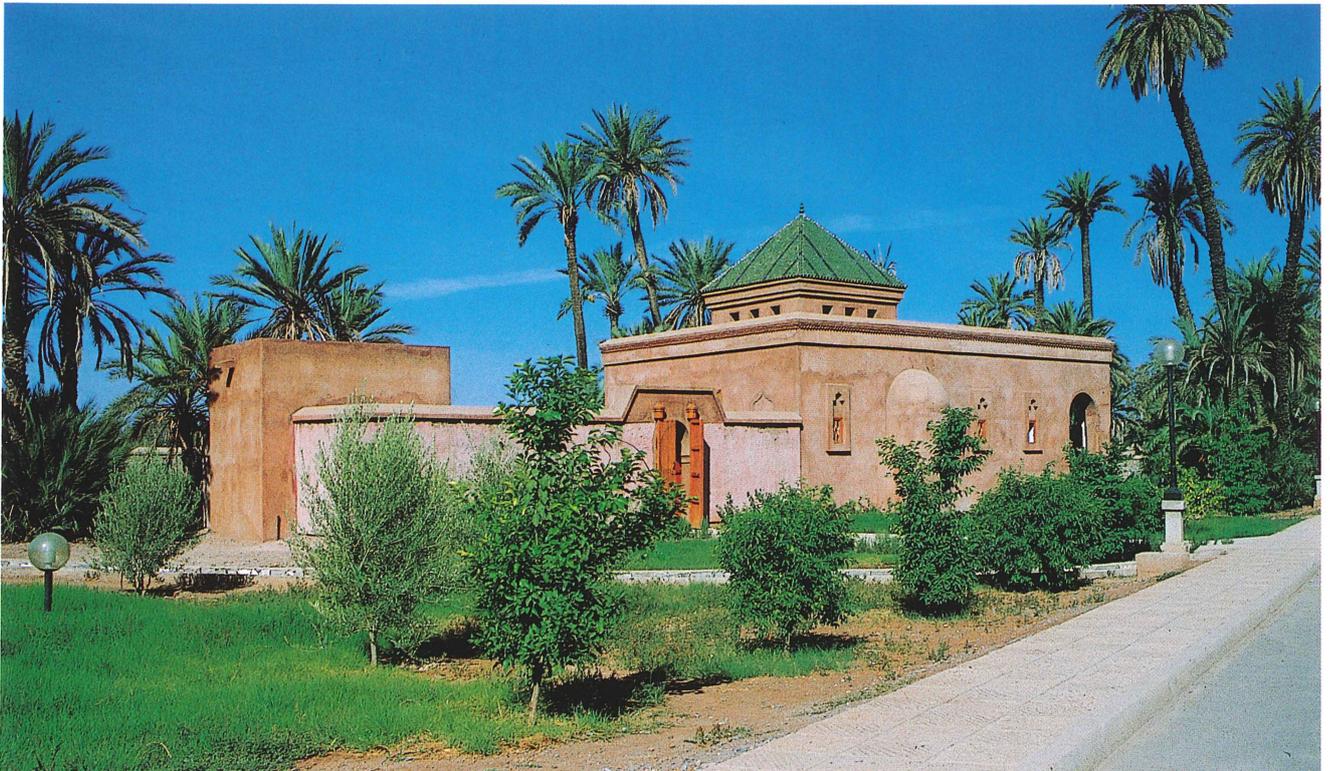
Client: Avicenne Hospital.
Architect: Charles Boccara.
Completion date: 1982.
Total area (built): 420 square metres.
Contractor: Somagec.
Materials: Pisé, mudbrick, fired brick, tadelakt, eucalyptus.

A large hospital (see MIMAR 14) of 300 beds — servicing 600 to 700 persons including staff and visitors — included a prayer hall into its overall programme in order to accommodate the daily needs of practicing Muslims. Wishing to demarcate spatially the sacred from the profane, we included a garden to provide the necessary transition.

The complex has: a planted courtyard (*sahn*) with fountain for ablutions; a second court with access to the *bit el ma*; the prayer hall, based on a square plan

with pillars and arcade; *mihrab*, coordinated with the cupola to indicate the direction of Makkha; a vast porch overlooking a pool on the north side of the prayer hall, for meditation, convalescence and relaxation.

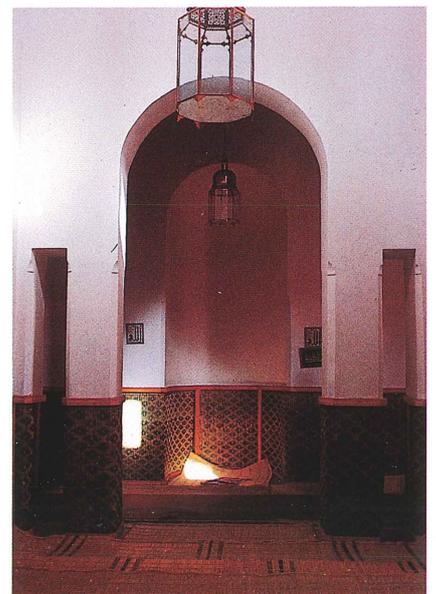
To achieve this mosque, it was decided to use only materials coming from the earth: pisé, dried bricks of a traditional kind, fired brick, eucalyptus and laurel wood ceilings, *tadelakt* coating of wall surfaces.

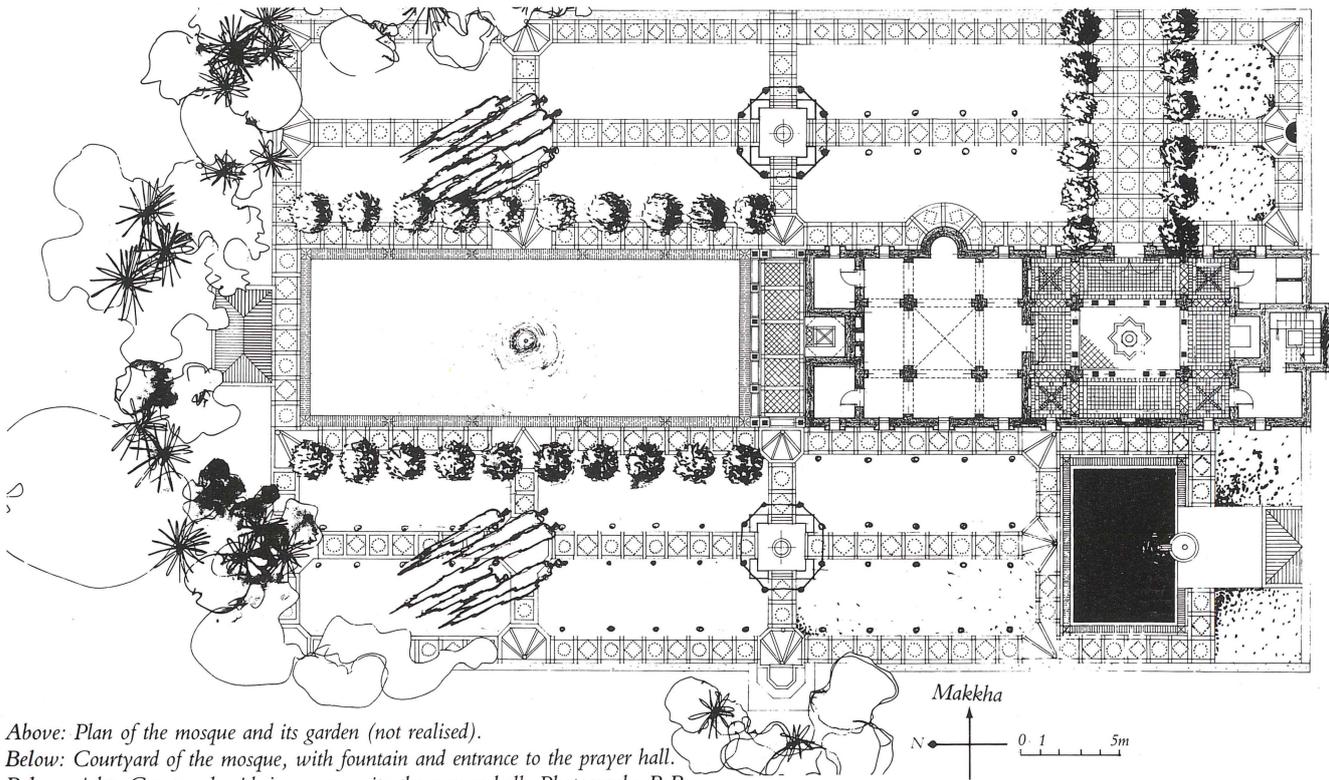


Above: The mosque seen from the east, the mihrab on the right and the entrance to the court on the left.

Left: North facade with pool in front of the porch.

Below: Interior of the mosque, the mihrab. Photograph: B. Boujemaâ.

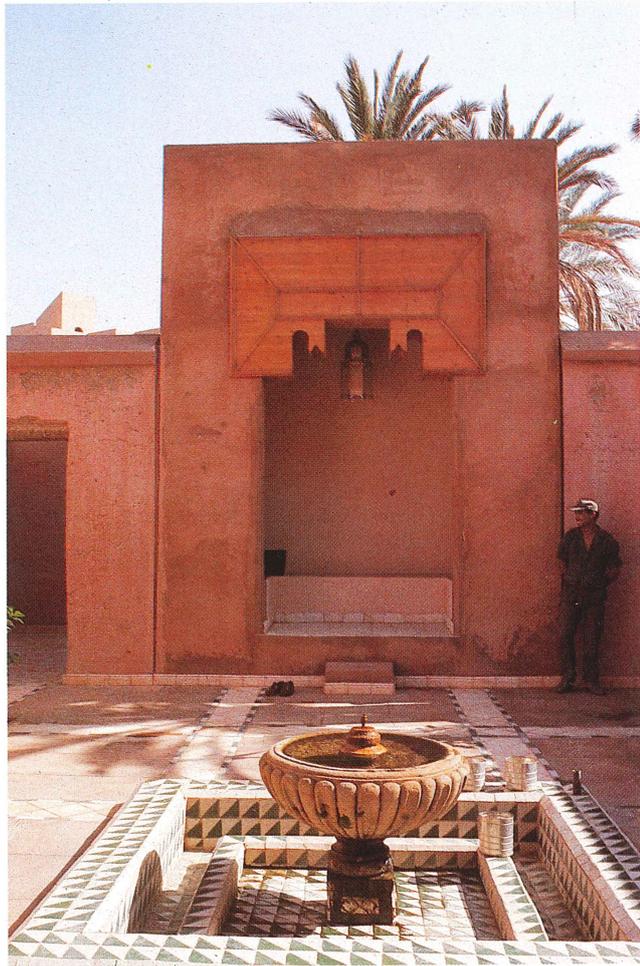
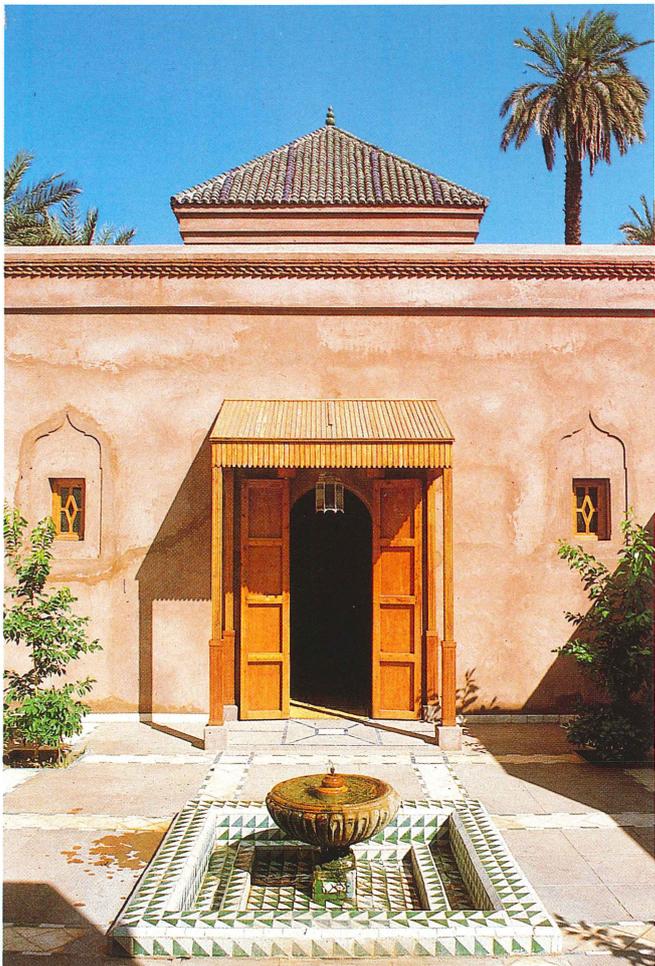




Above: Plan of the mosque and its garden (not realised).

Below: Courtyard of the mosque, with fountain and entrance to the prayer hall.

Below, right: Courtyard with iwan opposite the prayer hall. Photograph: B.B. Taylor.



Abtan House, Marrakesh

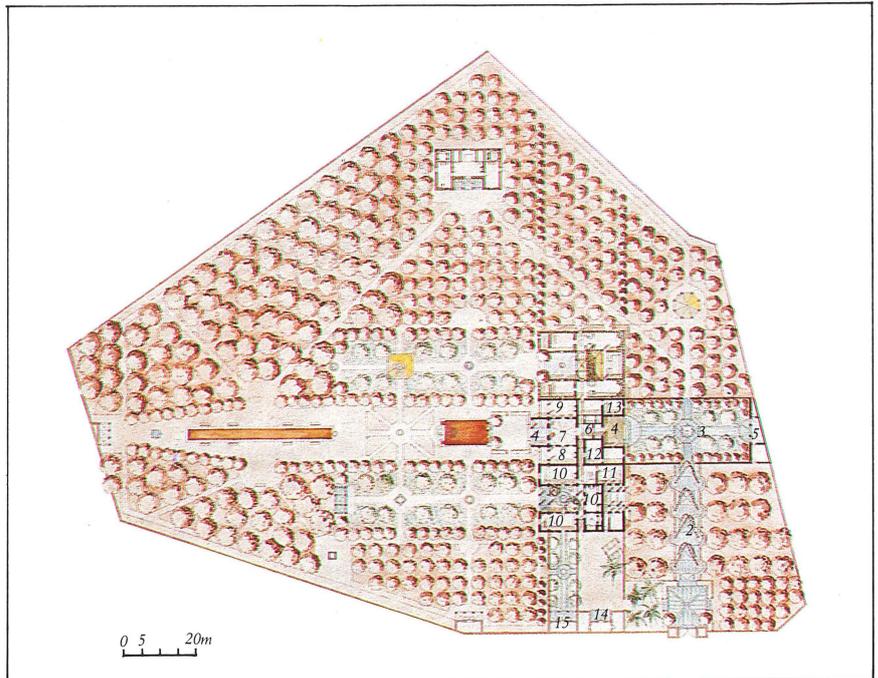
Project Data

Client: Mr. Abtan.
 Architect: Charles Boccara assisted by Anne Berger.
 Completion date: 1984.
 Total area (built): 810 square metres.
 Contractor: Enterprise Natba.
 Materials: Stone, brick, enamelled terracotta, cedarwood.

Located in two hectares of land in the vast residential palm grove outside Marrakesh, the Abtan house is composed spatially into three distinct entities typical of a traditional patio house: (A) private rooms for family life organised around a planted patio; (B) reception area, with a traditional patio which is covered here to become a central salon or *oust ed dar*, and gives access to the dining room and Moroccan sitting-room; the Moroccan salon opens onto a (C) labyrinthian garden-house, entirely open to the sky created entirely of vegetation and wood.

These distinct units offer views of typical Moroccan *riads*, a mosaic of orange, olive and palm trees, etc. some perspectives more private, intimate than others.

While the principal structural material is stone (quite common and relatively economical in this region), hand-made bricks are frequently used. Finishings include *tadelakt*, *zellige* (mosaic) and cedar for most woodwork.



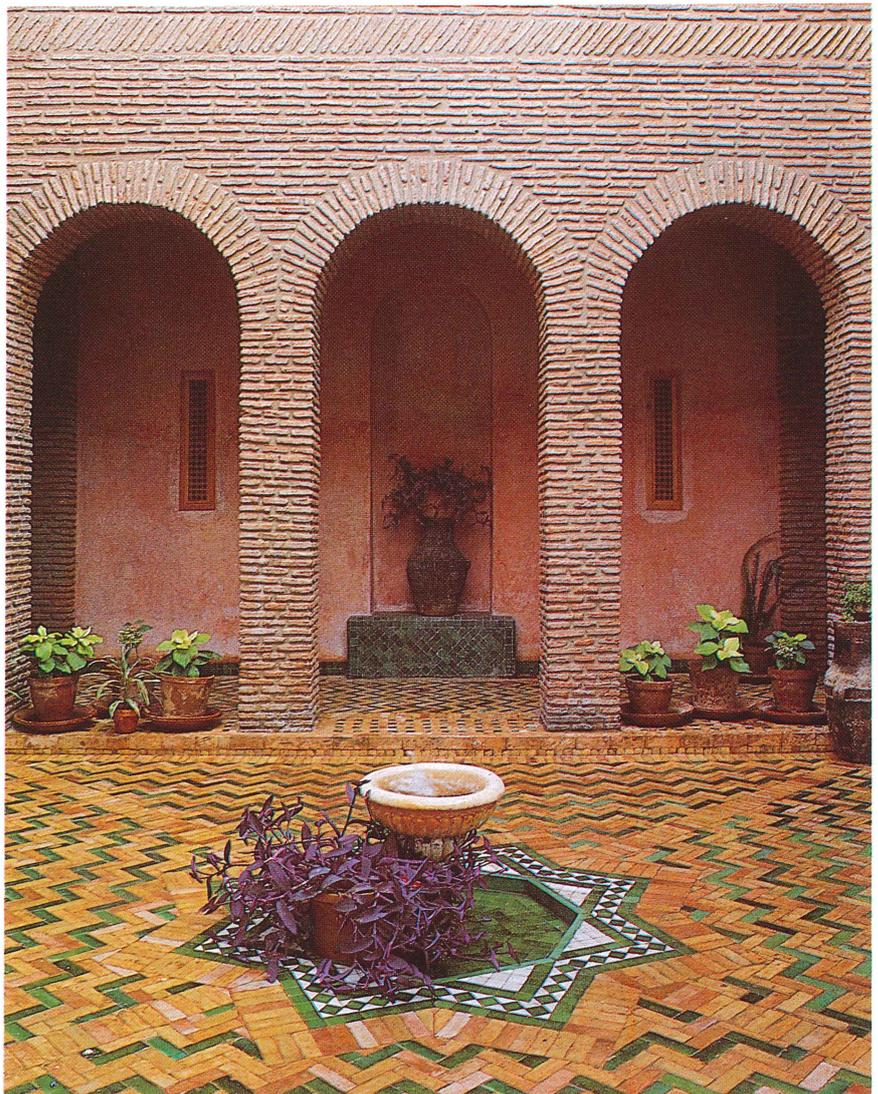
Right, above: Site plan.

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|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Entrance | 10. Bedroom |
| 2. Gallery | 11. Kitchen and service |
| 3. Riad | 12. Pantry |
| 4. Loggia | 13. Office |
| 5. Kiosk for musicians | 14. Guardian's house |
| 6. Hall | 15. Atelier |
| 7. Main salon (<i>oust ed dar</i>) | |
| 8. Dining room | |
| 9. Moroccan salon with <i>doukhana</i> | |

Right: View of courtyard with fountain and glazed tile paving in the residential part of the house.

Far right: Reception wing of the Abtan house as seen from the garden site, with pool in the foreground.

Overleaf: View of reception hall from above. Elaborate *zellige*-work decoration on the floor, and a Moroccan lamp hangs from a cedar wood ceiling. Photograph: B.B. Taylor.







S.O.S. Kinderdorf, Ait Ourir

Project Data

Client: Moroccan Ministry of Social Affairs and S.O.S. Kinderdorf.
 Architect: Charles Boccara, assisted by Anne Borger.
 Completion date: 1984
 Total area (built) 3,530 square metres.
 Contractor: Enterprise Marocaine de l'Atlas.
 Materials: Stone, brick, wood, tadelakt.

Ait Ourir is a city of 20,000 inhabitants located in an agricultural region 34 kilometres from Marrakesh. The programme, jointly formulated by the Moroccan Ministry of Social Affairs and the international organisation S.O.S. Kinderdorf, entailed creation of education facilities for orphans living in a familial atmosphere. Children of different ages and sex live in houses and participate in family activities. A mother organises daily life within the specific cultural context of a family and collective model.

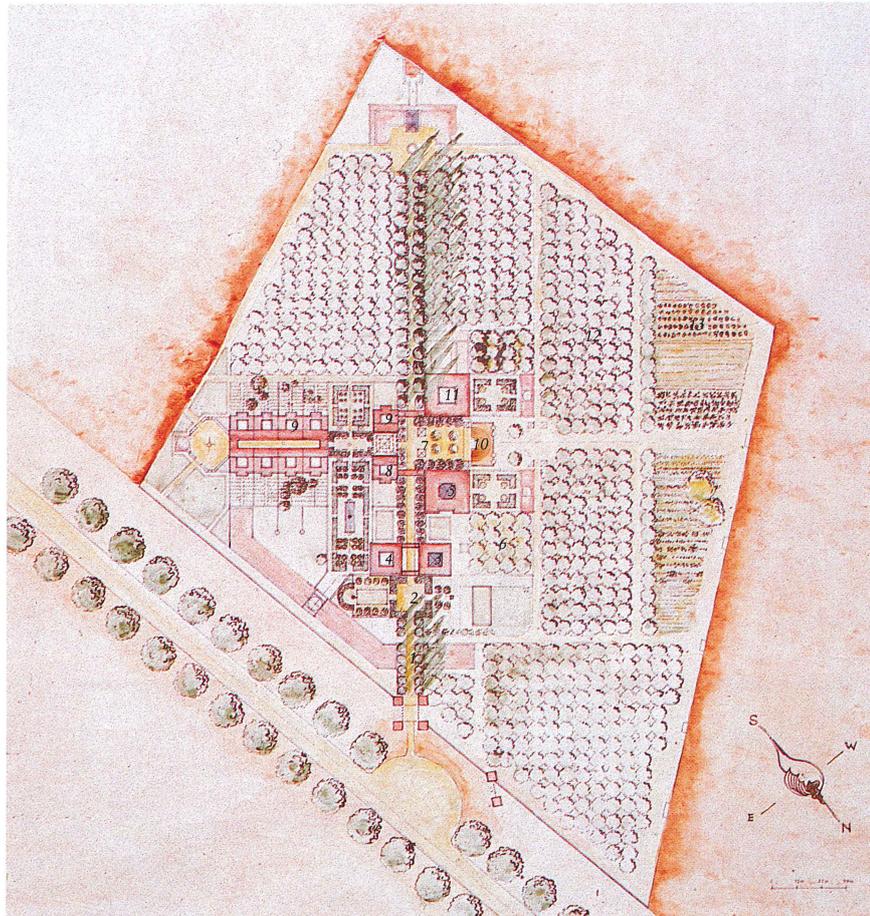
The existing site possessed much vegetation and a double row of apricot trees provided a natural main axis to the complex. An enclosed garden (*riad*) acted as reception area, bordered by the creation of two voluntarily identical buildings: one with an open patio for guests and "aunts" for children, and another with covered patio, for the administration. To the south, a village square was included to encourage an outdoor social life for children and visitors. The actual houses for the children's family life are situated along a kind of street, linking community life to the kindergarten, atelier and amphitheatre.

Houses have been conceived as traditional entities with rooms giving onto open patios. A loggia makes the link between family life on the patio and the gardens around each house.

Masonry construction was adopted, utilising a pink stone from the region and tinted mortar. Coloured cement tiles are used for flooring, while wall finished are of *tadelakt*, a lime coating treated with black soap and tinted pink, giving an extremely smooth impermeable surface. Traditional wooden ceilings, economical and attractive, were also included.

Right: Typical house for children.

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Entry | 7. Patio |
| 2. Hall | 8. Loggia |
| 3. Kitchen, service court | 9. Toilet |
| 4. Livingroom | 10. Washroom |
| 5. Doukhana (small salon) | 11. Family vegetable garden |
| 6. Bedroom and-living | 12. B'hou (small salon) |

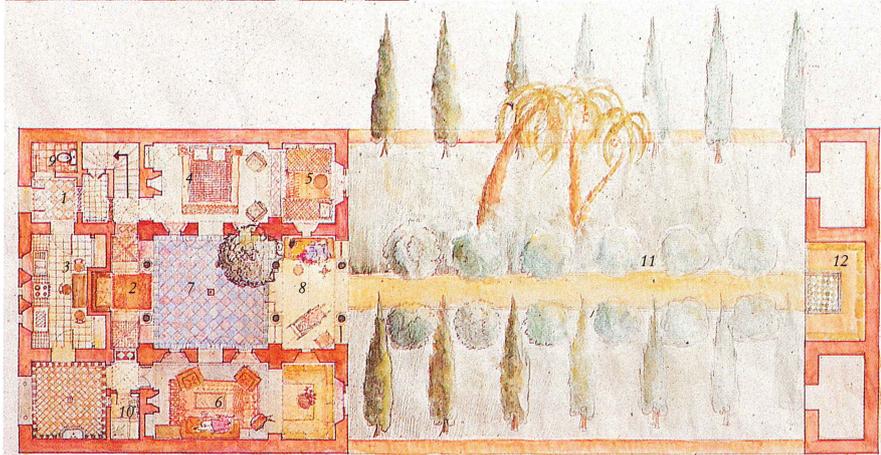
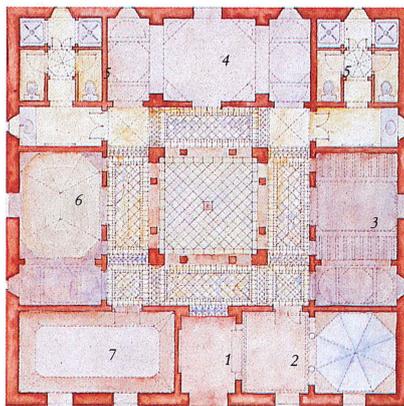


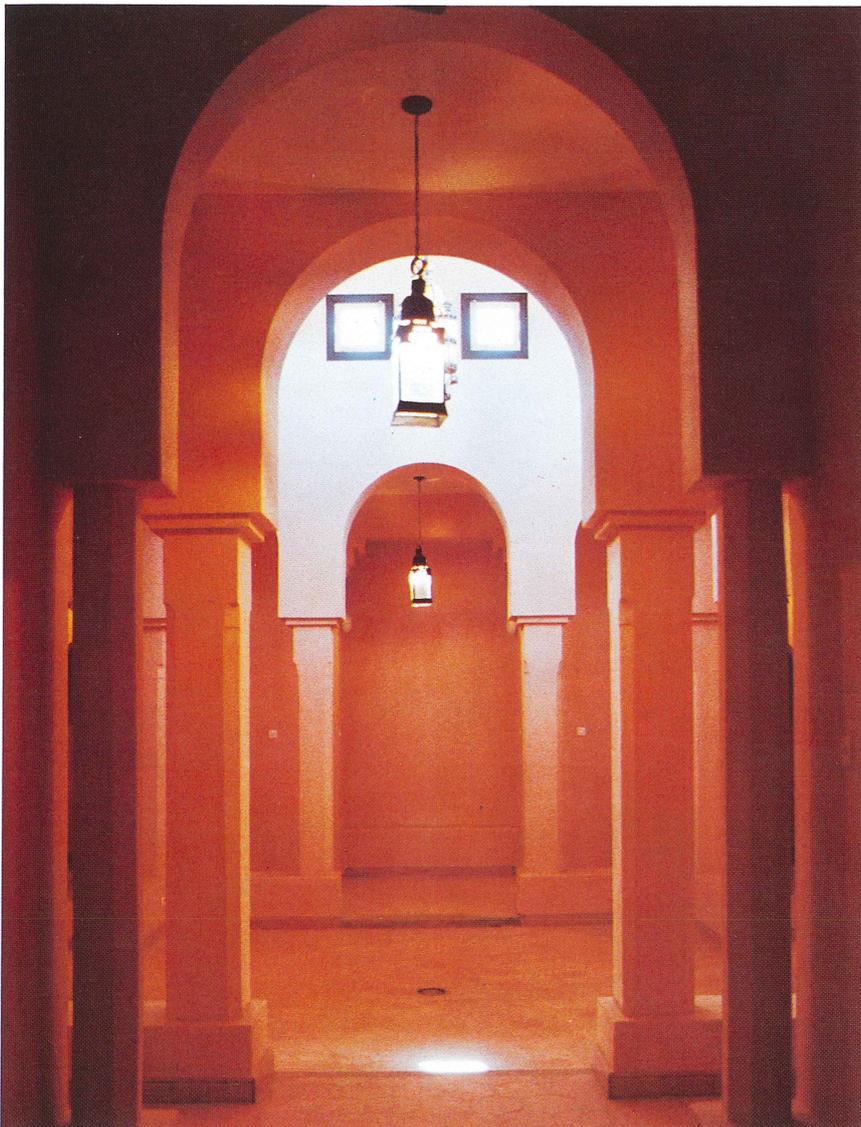
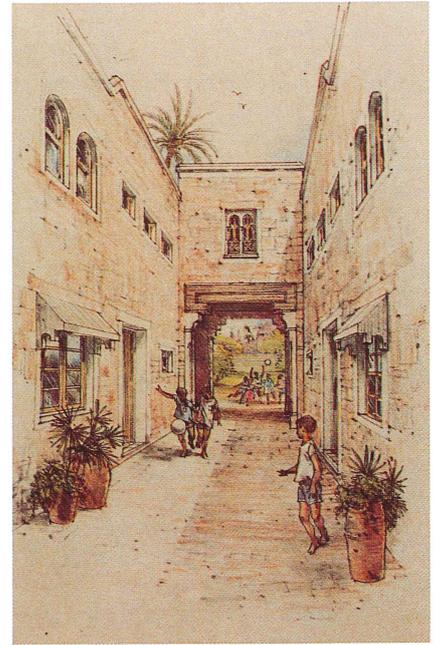
Above: Site plan.

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|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Entrance riad | 8. Director's house |
| 2. Reception area | 9. Family dwelling |
| 3. Pavilion for guests | 10. Open-air amphitheatre |
| 4. Administrative services | 11. Service building |
| 5. Kindergarten | 12. Fruit orchard |
| 6. Recreation area | 13. Vegetable gardens |
| 7. Village plaza | |

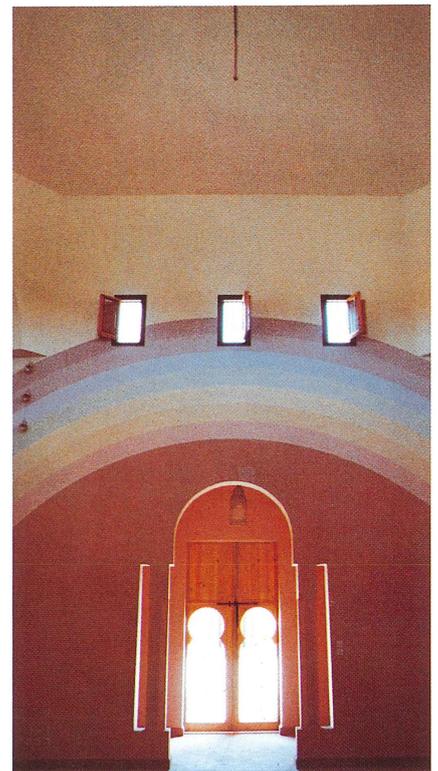
Left: Plan of the administrative building.

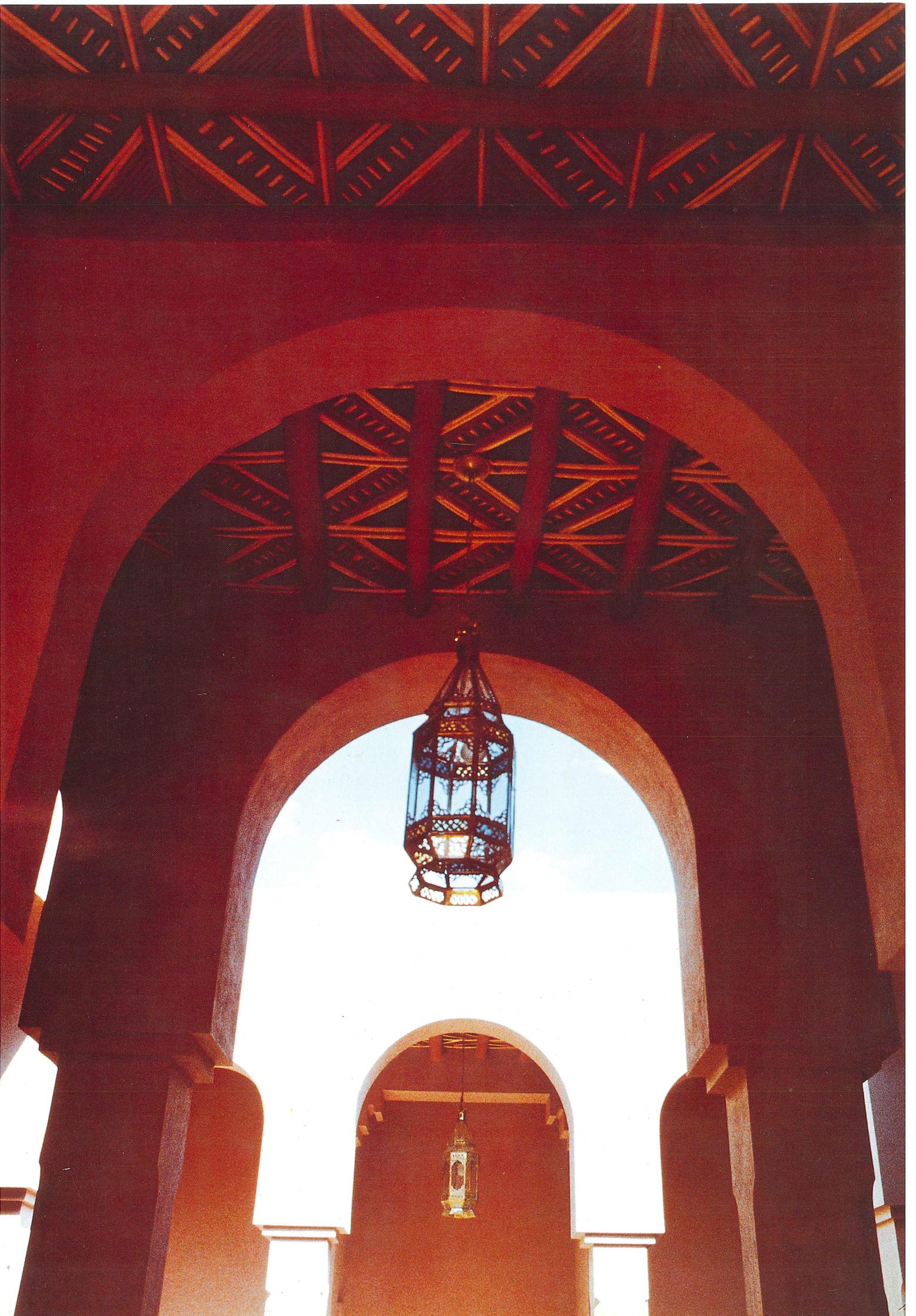
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| 1. Entrance hall | 5. Toilets |
| 2. Reception | 6. Library |
| 3. Director's office | 7. Reading and study room |
| 4. Meeting rooms | |





Left, above: View of inner courtyard and entrance to administrative building.
 Left: View of covered courtyard and surrounding gallery of the administrative building.
 Above: Study sketch for the "street" along which the family houses are arranged in the village.
 Below: Interior view of the kindergarten.
 Right: Detail of a traditional south Moroccan wooden ceiling, composed of eucalyptus or palm beams and laurel branches and employing polychromatic motifs or natural finishes. It is used in several buildings of the village, e.g. the guest house.





Commercial Centre, Ouarzazate

Project Data

Client: Ministry of the Interior, Province of Ouarzazate.

Architect: Charles Boccara, assisted by E. Mouyal.

Completion date: 1984.

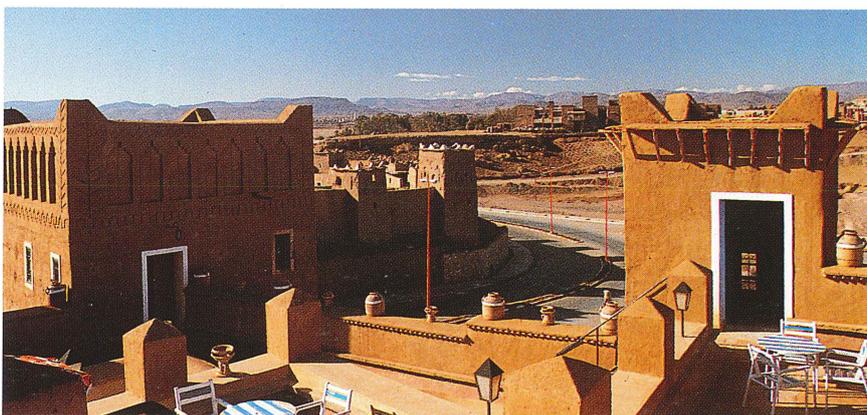
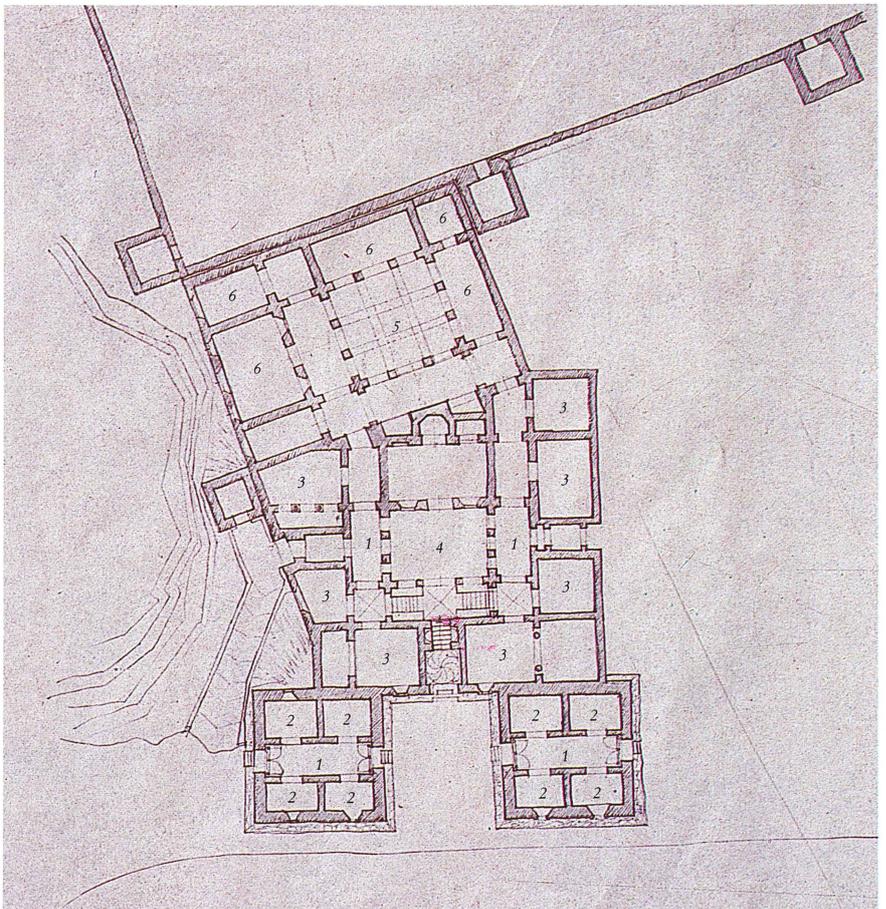
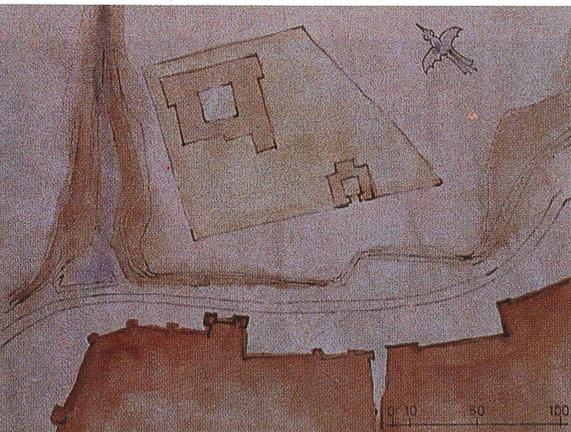
Total area (built): 654 square metres.

Contractor: Enterprise Dihi.

Materials: Pisé, dried brick, zelliges, cedarwood.

The provincial authorities in the city of Ouarzazate proposed a programme for over 20 shops, craft workshops, a hall for exhibitions and exchange of products, a cafe-restaurant, and 8 guest rooms. A particularly advantageous site was selected at Taourirt on the outskirts of the city, 4 hectares just next to the superb ancient casbah of Glaoui with its ramparts of earth. As this historical monument is located on a main tourist route into the Draa, Dades and Todraa valleys, the new *kissaria* situated nearby could be expected to attract a considerable clientele.

Although not specifically asked to do so, the architect set for himself the objective of creating an appropriate place of entry to the casbah itself, and to hide as much as possible several neighbouring industrial buildings of doubtful aesthetic interest. Hence, the architectural vocabulary he opted for: immense earthen ramparts within which the shopping complex was placed. Materials, such as the *pisé*, brick, *zellige* tiles, cedar, and the decorative motifs in earth were chosen after a study of other structures in the region of Ouarzazate.



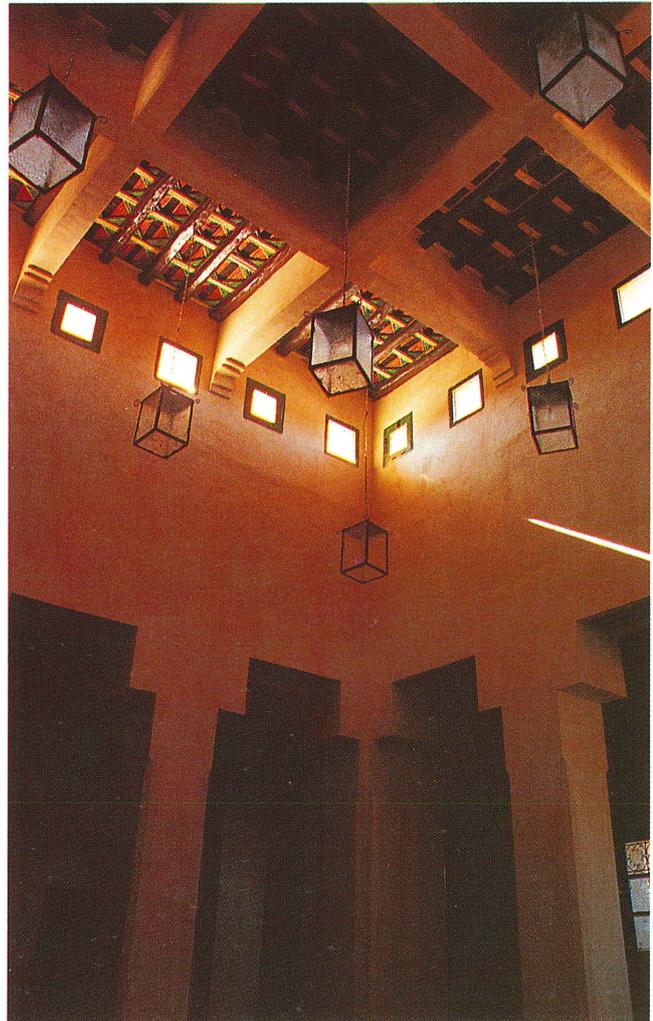
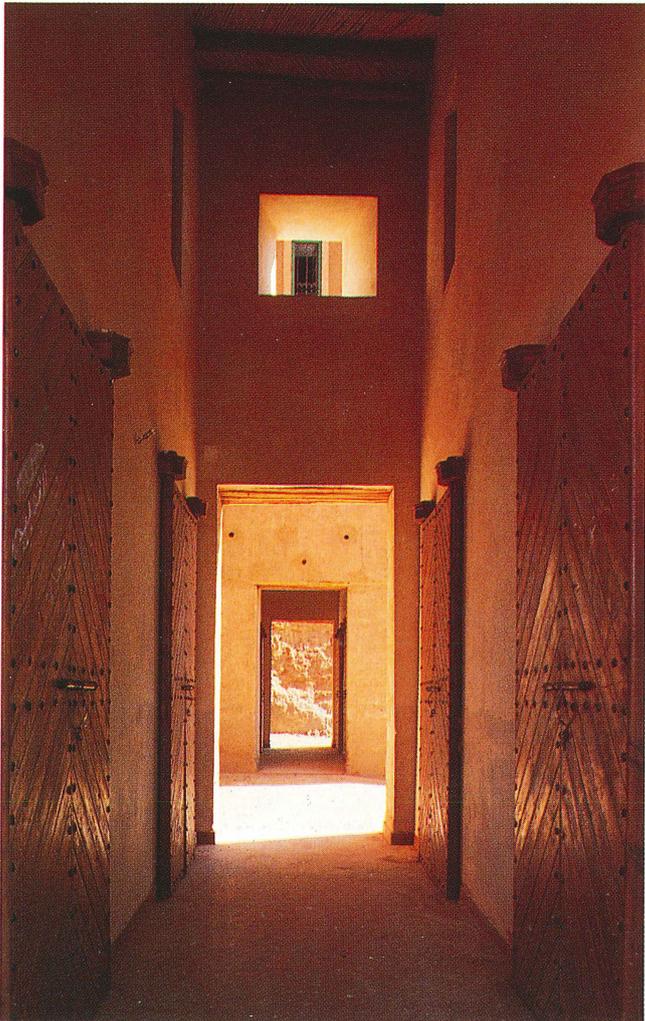
Above, left: Sketches of site for Kissaria opposite ancient casbah. Top sketch — before architect's proposal; sketch below shows the completed project. Above: Plan of the Kissaria, or arts and crafts commercial centre.

- 1. passageway
 - 2. shops in the towers
 - 3. ateliers for craftsmen
 - 4. open-to-sky patio
 - 5. central exhibition
 - 6. small museum
- Left: Terraces for the cafe restaurant and guest rooms.

Right, above: View of the Ouarzazate Complex, with the Glaoui casbah at right and the new construction at left.

Right: Interior view of passageway between towers, with shops.

Far right: Exhibition hall.



Hotel Tichka, Marrakesh

Project Data

Hotel with 146 rooms, including 8 suites.

Client: Lebanese-Moroccan Consortium
"Paradise Palace Hotel".

Architect: Charles Boccara, assisted by
William Willis.

Completion date: Expected to be completed in
1985.

Total area (built): 14,600 square metres.

Contractor: S.M.E.C.C.

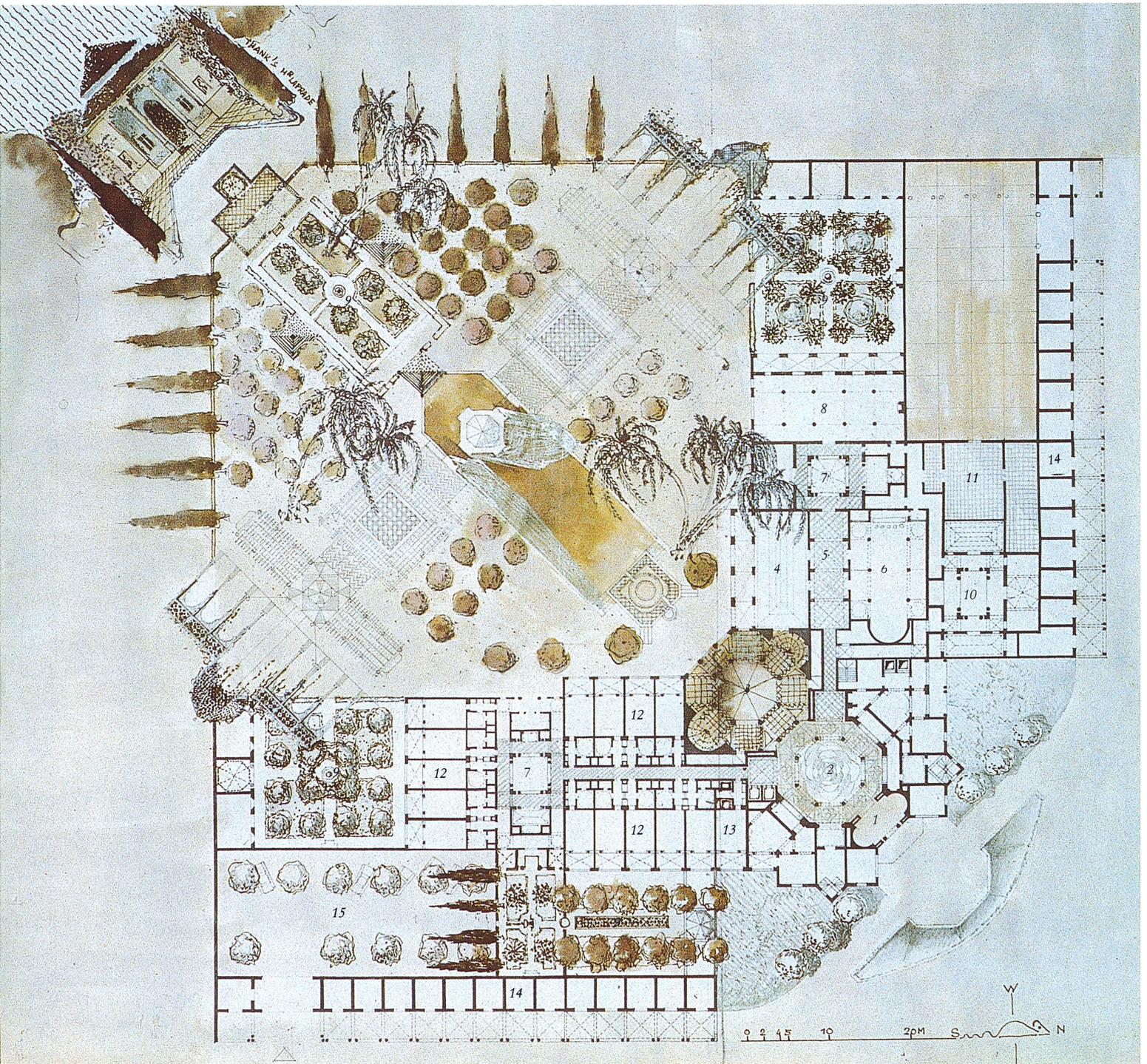
Materials: Reinforced concrete, fired bricks,
stucco, zelliges, chiselled plaster, painted
wood, tadelakt.

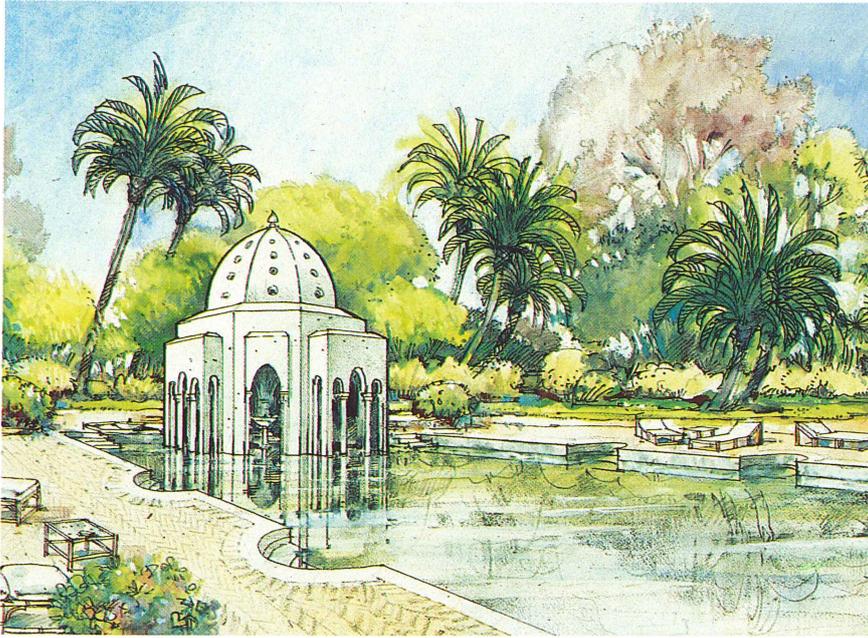
This hotel complex for the mixed Lebanese-Moroccan "Société Paradise Palace," north of Marrakesh, is nearly completed. The architectural *parti* adopted was that of a monumental building inspired by the qualities present in palaces at the beginning of the century: the pleasure of promenades, with calm patios, *riads*, shaded retreats and fragrances; potential for drama or the spectacular in the spaces provided, where narrow passageways alternate with vast halls and high ceilings; and finally, mysterious lighting effects.

Nevertheless, attention was given both to integrating the hotel with the urban scale of the street and to isolating it within a carefully arranged garden, such

as is found in traditional residences, with fountains, pools, trellises and kiosks. In practical terms, there was the double concern of providing easy, even stimulating, possibilities for clients' movement throughout and of ensuring the usual norms of surveillance, technical and logistical activities (services, cleaning, etc.)

The structure is basically of reinforced concrete bearing walls (15 centimetres) and floors, the requirement of which severely limited the architects' options. However, traditional brickwork was employed as surface finishing, with *zelliges*, mosaic, incised plasterwork, stalactites, polychrome painted woodwork and coloured *tadelakt* for decorative richness.





Left: Site and ground floor plan, Hotel Tichka.

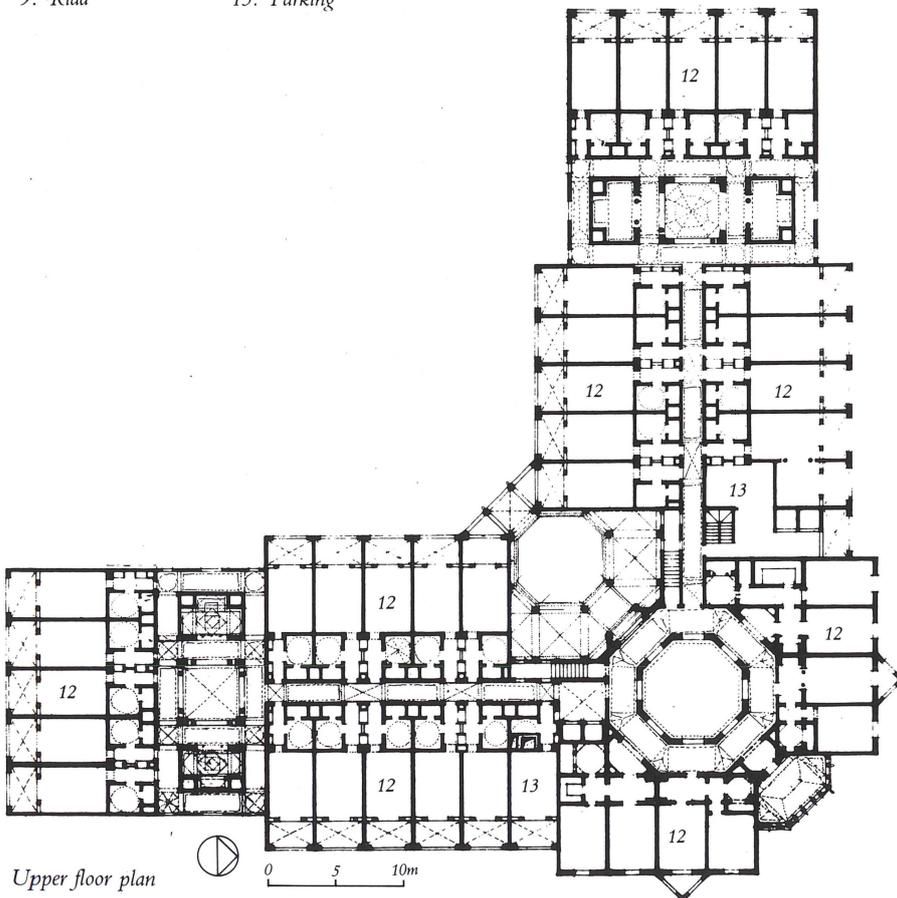
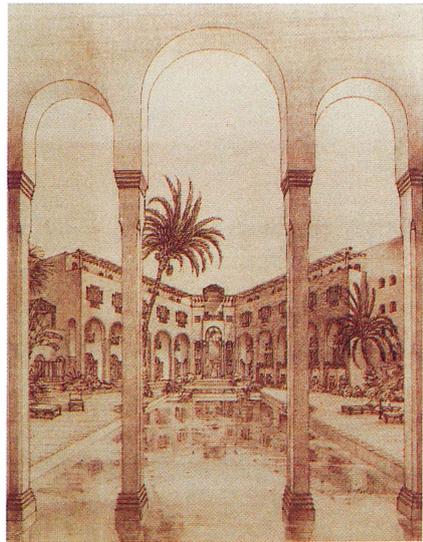
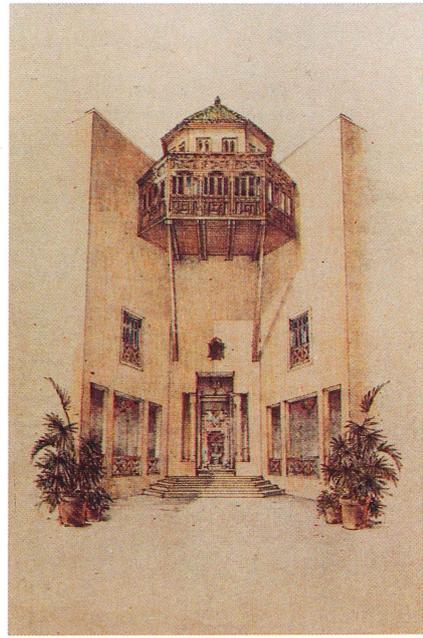
- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. Vestibule | 10. Moroccan salon |
| 2. Entrance hall | 11. Upper level kitchen (main kitchen is in basement) |
| 3. Main salon | 12. Guest rooms |
| 4. Salon | 13. Service |
| 5. Gallery | 14. Shops linked to the street |
| 6. Bar | 15. Parking |
| 7. Patio | |
| 8. Restaurant | |
| 9. Riad | |

Above: Watercolour rendering of small domed pavilion located in the garden pool of the hotel.

Above, right: Perspective sketch of the hotel's main entrance.

Right: Sketch of garden facade of the hotel with swimming pool, seen from the small domed pavilion.

Right, below: Type of traditional brick surface finishing found in the hotel.



Upper floor plan

Urban Redevelopment, Safi

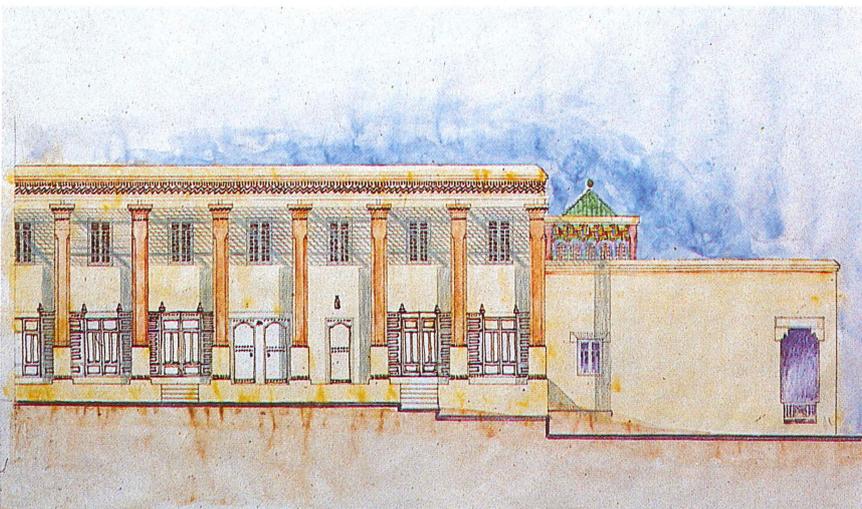
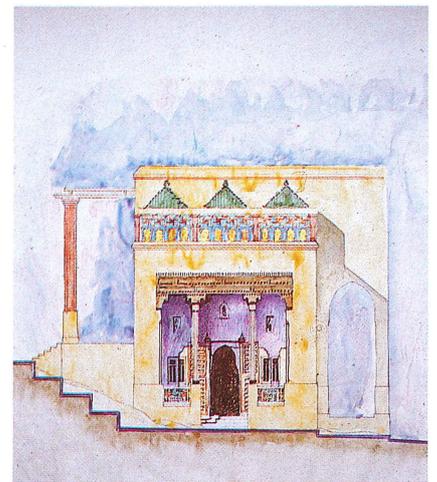
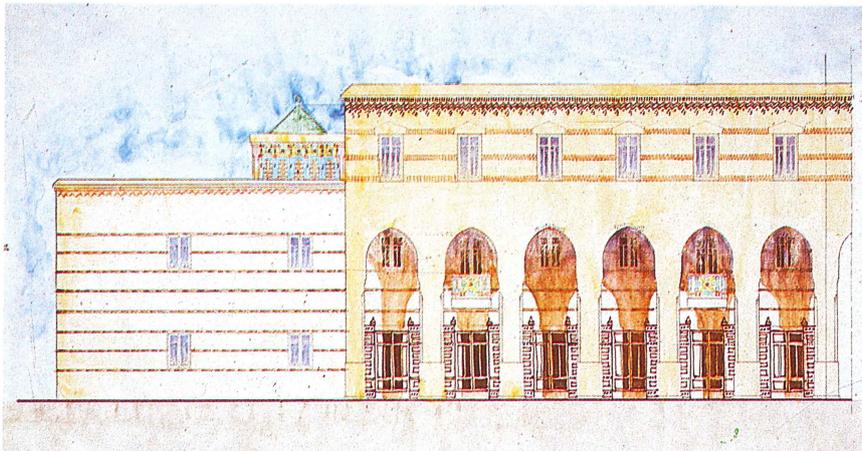
Project Data

Urban renovation, involving new commercial, cultural and residential functions for the city of Safi, Morocco.
Client: Ministry of the Interior and E.R.A.C. Tensift Marrakesh.
Architect: Charles Boccara.
Total area (built): 17,230 square metres.
Contractors: Enterprise Pinscloux, and Enterprise S.Mm. Mc.G.E.

Safi, a city located on the Moroccan coast between Casablanca and Agadir, was in need of a master plan which could unite two distinct entities, an upper pole of activity situated on the heights above the sea and a lower pole. Moreover, the three historical centres of the city — *r'bat*, or commercial street, a pedestrian zone, and the administrative and touristic zone — were segregated from one another.

A new governor of the region sought out the architect with the intention of providing new dynamism and growth

for the city through an overall physical plan which could unify and give greater coherence to the present city centre. The group of new structures, to house diverse activities, is focused around an urban park. The buildings themselves are designed in a style reflecting both the Muslim Moroccan architectural heritage and a classicising vocabulary of ancient and modern times. A portion of the plan, bordering the park at the lower level is under construction.

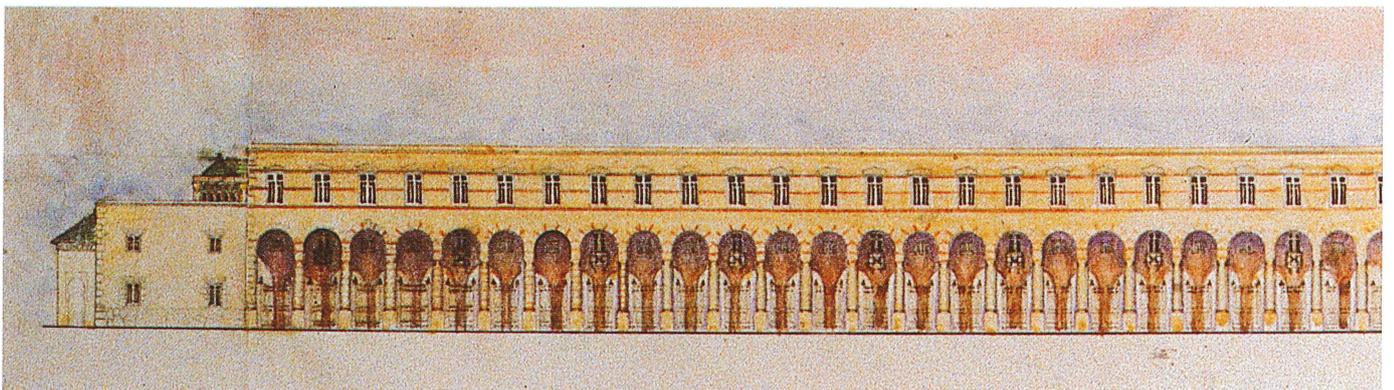


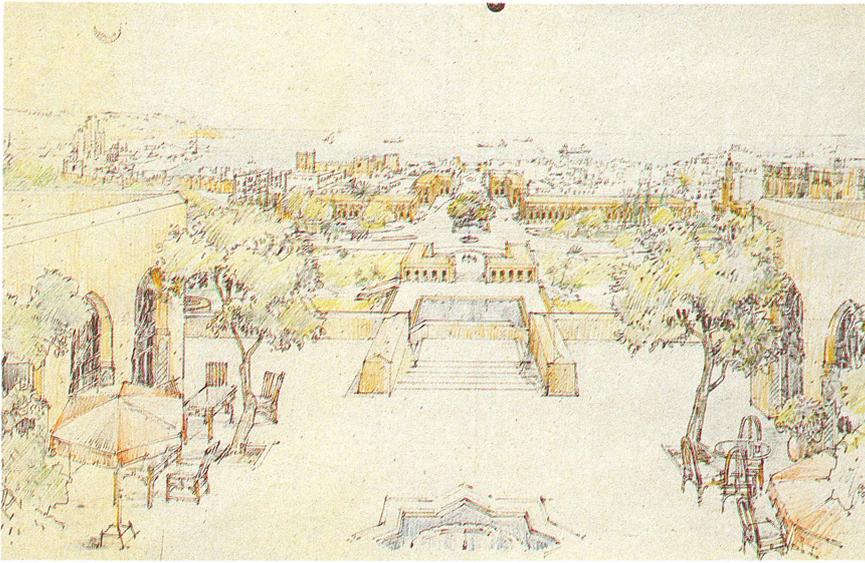
Above, left: Elevation of the long building with shops facing Driss Ben Nasr street.

Above: Facade elevation of the end of the long building facing the park, to be occupied by a bank.

Left: Facade of long building on the park, with shops on the ground floor and offices above.

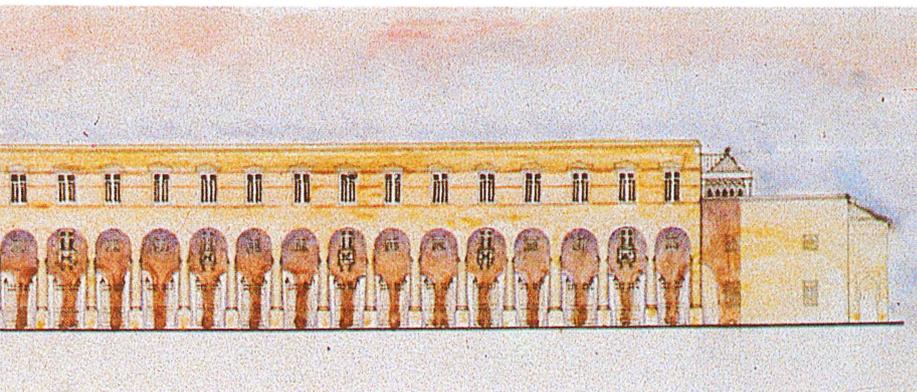
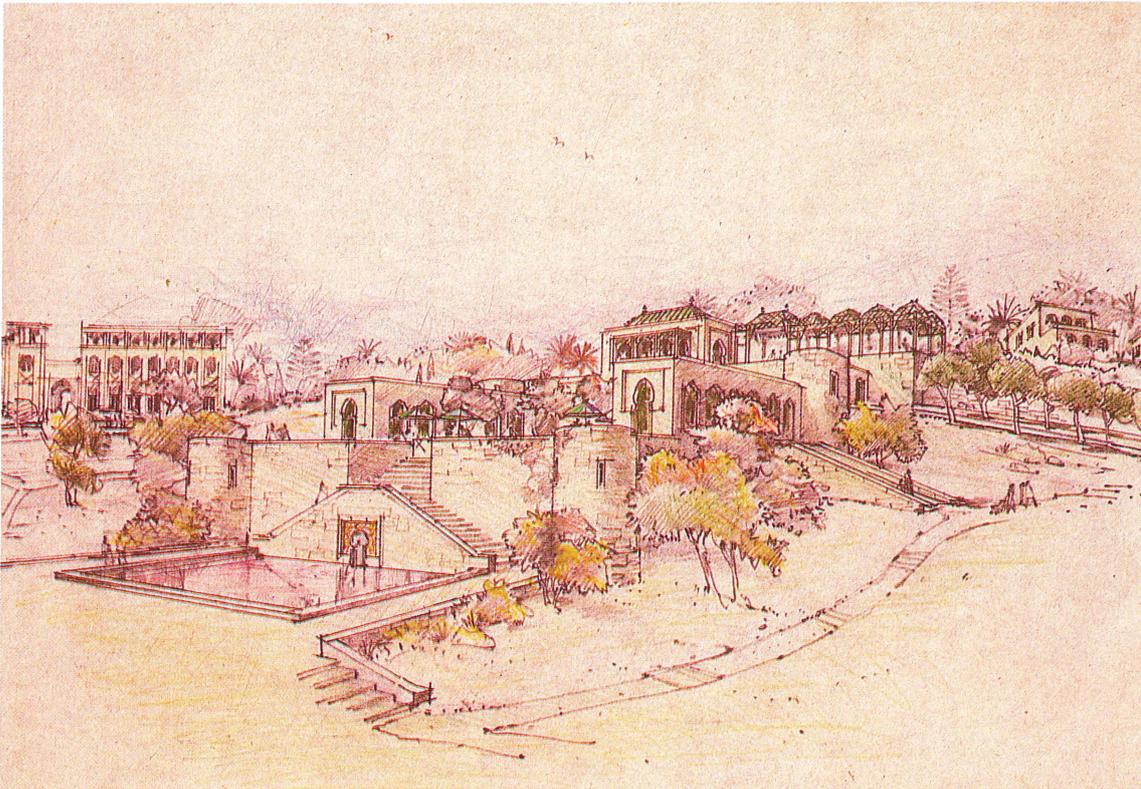
Below: Elevation on the commercial street Driss Ben Nasr.





Left: View from the platform with cafe and cinema, looking down upon the park, the new building, the old city and the port.

Below: View from the semicircular park towards the public outdoor spaces, with cafe, cinema, hamman, and housing (to the left and right).



... continued from page 6

The combination of old and new architectural styles is common in many parts of Asia. The article on Bangkok illustrated this very well as did the one on Indonesia. What seems to be difficult is to use this from the past in our new societies which should look forward and not back. This to my mind is an important task for modern day architects to confront.

Johan Darmavan
Bandung, Indonesia



More comments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for a very fine publication. I have been reading MIMAR since its first issue became available and find its contents a continuous wealth of information and beauty. It is time that the West became more aware of issues in architecture from the viewpoint of those living and working in developing countries. I commend your staff on its ability to offer profiles of high quality, dealing with projects of architects who might otherwise continue their masterly work in obscurity.

John Mokrycke
Architect, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

I am an architectural student at the Polytechnic of North London school of architecture. I came across your magazine by chance and I was very impressed by its contents. I am surprised after searching through all the best architectural bookshops in London, and the RIBA library, that your magazine is so underpublicised in this country.

At the same time, I feel your magazine has a unique and well considered coverage. I would like to read the back issues as well as taking up a subscription. I would like to know if you could offer me a student discount.

I would also like to bring your magazine to the attention of the architectural schools in this country. I am confident that they will be very interested.

K. Al-Jalili
London, U.K.

Until now the British readership has been poorly serviced by MIMAR, but we are pleased to inform you that the magazine is available in London (at the RIBA Bookshop, Triangle Bookshop, etc) and other cities, or directly from our distributors the MIT Press in London. They are also handling subscriptions.

As you know our normal subscription rate is US\$36 per annum. Starting this year we are offering a reduced rate of US\$30 per annum for students — please see the subscription information page for details.

Thank you for your support. Anything that you can do to bring MIMAR to the attention of schools or individuals will be much appreciated. — Editors

Congratulating you for the rich, highly valuable contents of your magazine, I take the opportunity to express my joy of seeing my long-lasting aspirations realised with the publication of a magazine encompassing a familiar horizon, exuding a sympathetic atmosphere, and reflecting the justified hope of the blue-, not red-orient in the future.

Reasserting my respect for this spiritual institution of yours, I implore you to

refrain from including advertisements likely to alter its ambience.

H. Amir-Ardalan
Mondan Constructing Architects & Planners,
Tehran, Iran.

We share your concerns. Unfortunately, due to economic pressures and our specialised and relatively small (though widespread) readership we are going to be forced to look for advertisements. We will however limit these so as not to effect the look or readability of the magazine. — Editors

... Needless to tell you how impressed I am by the substantive quality of the magazine as well as by its presentation and the excellent photography. For amateurs of architecture like myself it is a real delight and an agreeable pedagogical exercise to go through the issues one after the other.

Mahdi Elmandjra
Rabat, Morocco

The Readership Questionnaire

I am pleased to mail you back the "Readership Questionnaire" which I have answered as best as I could. I think that your way of encouraging readers to answer by giving US\$1 per response is a very positive one (although I personally do not need this stimulation) since you intend to use it for helping schools of architecture in Developing Countries.

Francois Kerboul
Professor at the Ecole Africaine et Mauricenne
d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme de Lome
(EAMAU), Togo, West Africa.