Jawahar Kala Kendra
Jaipur
1986–

This cultural centre for the city of Jaipur, is dedicated to the memory of India’s great leader Jawaharlal Nehru. Ideas for the building, sited in an open field near the university in a new part of the city, formed in Correa’s mind; but it was not until 1986 that the concept for the building was finalised.

The centre is an analogue of the original city plan of Jaipur drawn up by the Maharaja, a scholar, mathematician and astronomer, Jai Singh the Second, in the mid-17th century. His city plan, guided by the Shipla Shastras, was based on the ancient Vedic mandala of nine squares or houses which represent the nine planets (including two imaginary ones Ketu and Rahu). Due to the presence of a hill one of the squares was transposed to the east and two of the squares were amalgamated to house the palace.

Correa’s plan for the Kendra invokes directly the original navagraha or nine house mandala. One of the squares is pivoted to recall the original city plan and also to create an entrance. Each of the squares is defined by 8-metre high walls. The building programme has been “disaggregated” into eight separate groupings corresponding to the myths represented by that particular planet: for instance, the library is located in the square of the planet Mercury which traditionally represents knowledge, and the theatres are in the house of Venus, representing the arts. The astrological symbol of each planet is directly expressed in a cut-out opening along its external wall. The central square, as specified in the Vedic Shastras, is a void: representing the Nothing which is Everything. The flooring pattern in this square is a diagram of the lotus representing the sun.

The plan of Jaipur city based on the nine square Yantra in which one square is displaced and two central squares combined.

Ground plan of the Nāt-Mandir in Konarak (left), corresponding to the divisions of the Yantra of the Nine Planets or Navagraha (right). The symbols of the yantra are: square = Venus; bow = Mercury; snake = ketu; triangle = Mars; lotus = the sun, at the centre; sword = Rahu; crescent = the moon; circle = Jupiter; man = Saturn. Based on the Mandala Sarvasva.

Jantar Mantar or observatory at Jaipur.

Beautiful old colour drawing.

City Palace, Jaipur.
Architect's sketch of the entrance facade.