



Cultural Park for Children

Cairo, Egypt

<i>Address</i>	Qadry & Abou El-Dahab Street, Sayeda Zinab Cairo, Egypt
<i>Architect</i>	Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim Cairo, Egypt
<i>Client</i>	Ministry of Culture Cairo, Egypt
<i>Consultants</i>	Community Design Collaborative Cairo, Egypt
<i>Contractor</i>	El Giza General Contracting Company Cairo, Egypt
<i>Design</i>	1983 - 85
<i>Construction</i>	1987 - 89
<i>Occupancy</i>	October 89
<i>Site Area</i>	12'500 m ²
<i>Ground Floor</i>	6'900 m ²
<i>Total Floor</i>	7'700 m ²
<i>Costs</i>	
- Land	government owned
- Global	1'900'000 EGP 2'280'000 USD
- Construction per m ²	275 EGP (average) 330 USD (average)
<i>Exchange</i>	USD = 1.2 EGP Egyptian Pounds

<i>Programme</i>	Cultural Park for Children - redevelopment of an existing, delapidated green area - construction of buildings as cultural facilities for children within a landscaped park, comprising <ul style="list-style-type: none">. entrance. library and workshop. main fountain. green area. palm-tree promenade
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1992 Award Cycle

1140.EGY



- . terraces
- . open air theatre
- . structures for the use of the local community
- . children's museum
- . theatre

connect the park to the neighbouring community, is an essential component of the layout and was added to the original brief. The construction of the buildings and the park was achieved through a series of ceremonies and events aimed at encouraging community participation.

Project

In 1983, the Egyptian Ministry of Culture sponsored a national design competition to develop the site of El-Hod El-Marsoud as a cultural park for children. The winning design by the architect Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim rejected aspects of the original brief, in particular the suggestion that the park should have strong boundaries because of the security hazard. Instead, the project encouraged community participation in the construction and organisation of the park. The street development, comprising a string of small cultural and information facilities which

Site

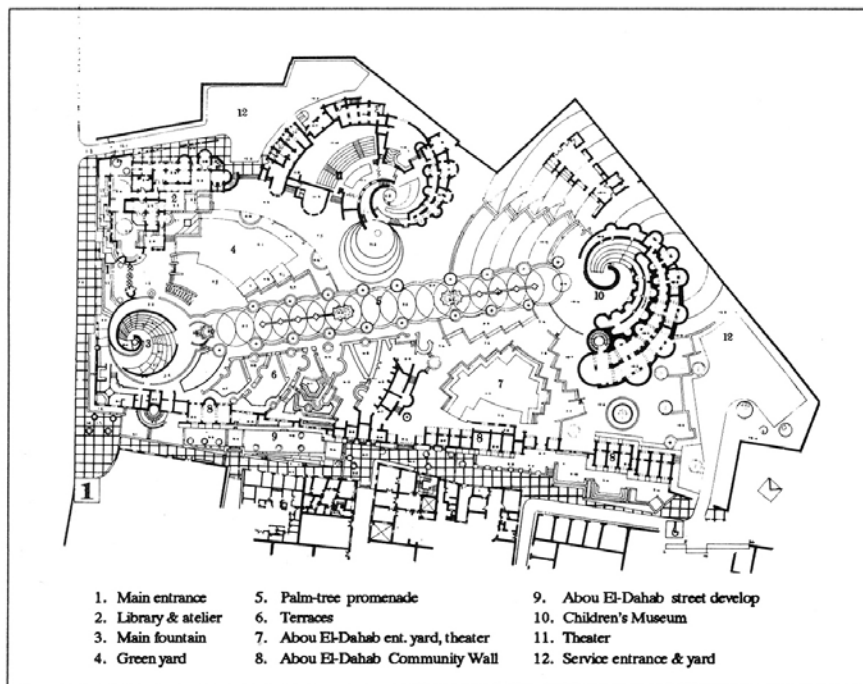
Sayeda Zinab is an established and vibrant community of Cairo with a population estimated at approximately 2'000'000 people. The site consists of 1.25 hectares of green space formerly known as El-Hod El-Marsoud garden. It is bounded by Qadry Street, Abou El-Dahab Street and other community facilities such as the youth centre and children's hospital. The surrounding area has an extremely complex, layered and historic urban fabric, much of

1. Street/wall enclosure, with existing urban fabric in the background

which is in an advanced state of deterioration. Ibn Touloun mosque is nearby. Existing trees on the site were incorporated into the new design. The climate is hot and arid, and summer temperatures can attain 40°C.

Description

The northern side of the park is bounded by the -200 m long- street development which played an important rôle in encouraging community participation. The concept of this street is to provide a walled enclosure for the park which actively encourages use of the park by offering cafeteria and information facilities housed within the boundary wall. The «wall» -rather than preventing access as is the case with traditional park railings or balustrades- is permeated by a series of openings to allow access to cultural facilities buildings beyond. The existing palm-tree promenade links the fountain near the main entrance -both visually and physically- to the children's theatre at the opposite end of the site, while the library and theatre provide a sense of enclosure at the south side of the site. The architectural language of the buildings is a deliberate effort to offer a contemporary yet authentic expression, free from stereotype forms. Community festivals and ceremonies were used as a means of encouraging participation in the construction process -myth, ritual belief and tradition were linked to the process of building, in the view of the architect.



2

Construction

Loadbearing walls of local limestone and sandstone support stone domes, vaults and roofs. Light reinforcement was used to accommodate any structural movement through settlement due to the inconsistent nature of site infill. Timber screens, trellises and balustrades were hand crafted by local craftsmen. Marble and mosaic tiles were used as a finish for the fountain. The labour force and construction materials were of local provenance. The project was funded from national government sources.

Project Significance

The northern street «wall» is a particularly notable concept in park layout and design. The street has had success with local residents and the park is now the focus of considerable commu-

nity attention. The active participation of the community in the construction process via ceremonies and events is an innovative concept. It is hoped that the project, which is essentially the redevelopment of an existing green space, may stimulate similar efforts in upgrading and regeneration.

Building Type 044 & 529
 1992 Award Cycle 1140.EGY

2. Layout plan