The Academy provides intensive football training and a school education for about 70 rigorously selected students aged between 13 and 18, and is designed to encourage focus and a sense of community. It is located on a fairly flat agricultural plain on the outskirts of Salé, on the right bank of the Bouregreg River, opposite the capital Rabat. The site covers nearly 12 hectares and is buffered along the road to the north-west by a stand of old eucalyptus trees that were preserved and added to.

Once past this screen, the five buildings of the residential academy are revealed, respectively accommodating administrative, sports, teaching, lodging and catering functions forming a campus. The blocks are arranged like a traditional introverted douar (hamlet) around a central “village square”, while the football grounds occupy the other half of the site. The concept of the douar draws on a sense of belonging to a place that is familiar, secure, comfortable and centred, and the arrangement of the buildings around the central square encourages communication and a clear sense of community.

The buildings present massive plain white walls pierced by varied groupings of carefully placed large or small openings that maximise thermal flows and introduce natural light and views over the open landscape or into the enclosed inner courts. The white facades are also broken up by areas of local ochre-coloured stone that enhance the rhythm of the strong contemporary design and anchor the buildings to the ground. Local skills, methods and materials were used throughout.

In response to climatic conditions, each block is developed around a central landscaped patio, which facilitates ventilation and increases the natural light in the main spaces. In striking contrast to the exterior white, each inner patio is painted a vibrant colour that reflects an aspect of Morocco: ocean blues, fertile-plain greens, southern ochres...

The chromatic moods of these inner courts are designed for relaxation, apart from the life of the “village square”, and are enriched by the careful planting of their thematic gardens – a tropical garden, an Andalusian garden, a dry garden. These help to underline the quality and separate identity of these inner spaces whereas the landscaping and careful selection of drought-resistant, low-maintenance planting around the exteriors and in the borders play a major role in tying all the parts of the whole together.
MOHAMMED VI FOOTBALL ACADEMY
Salé, Morocco

CLIENT
Association Mohammed VI de Football, Rabat, Morocco:
Mohcine Benyacoub, president
Nasser Larguet, director

ARCHITECT
Groupe 3 Architectes, Rabat, Morocco:
Omar Tijani, Skander Amine, principal architects

PROJECT MANAGER
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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
MB Paysage, Rabat, Morocco:
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ENGINEER
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PROJECT DATA
Site area: 2,500,000 m²
Total built area: 9000 m²
Cost: 15,250,000 USD
Commission: June 2007
Design: June 2007–March 2008
Construction: July 2008–March 2010
Completion: September 2010

GROUPE 3 ARCHITECTES
Groupe 3 Architectes is a Rabat-based architecture firm founded in 2000 by Skander Amine, who graduated from Braunschweig Technical University, Germany, in 1999, and Omar Tijani, who graduated from the Paris-La Villette School of Architecture, France. The firm has a multidisciplinary and a culturally diverse team of 30 collaborators whose professional expertise is constantly nurtured by the emerging collective intelligence. Driven by the shared conviction that each project is unique, the firm’s partners develop an ambitious vision for each architectural and urban project, and are able to deliver innovative responses in accordance with the urban, social and cultural contexts. Alongside this qualified team of landscape, facade, acoustics and sustainability specialists, the firm’s partners’ proposals are built on fully integrated design solutions, and their commitment to research and development has allowed them to bring their combined expertise to bear on a diverse range of projects across the world.

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