**Drawing the Line!**

French NGO-Architecture & Développement's (A&D) work at the Ariana Cinema became the foundation stone for the NGO's latter public centric projects. And when seen from the point of view of their Architect Jean Paul Lemedjedri, architecture was simply drawing the line between the rationale of necessity as against an imagery drawn from metaphors.

Photographs: Courtesy the Architect (A&D)

In most cases, design is the response of our sensibilities to a context and a client brief. When rebuilding in a situation like Afghanistan most designers would respond with metaphors that draw from the emotional rhetoric of the space and situation. So when one hears Architect Jean Paul Lemedjedri talk about the buildings that he has drawn up around Afghanistan, his clinical "there is nothing special about these buildings, they are built as they must be" first takes you aback and then registers as a necessity when one sees the local people's desire to simply return to a normal way of life again... a school just as a school should be... a university building as regular as their daily chores. The perspective seems in contrast with most urban architects, acclimatized to the marketability of a project. To architects like Jean Paul who have built essential buildings in war and disaster situations in Africa and Iraq architecture remains the maximisation of the minimum rather than the search for metaphors or graphical impressions.

Says Jean Paul, "I believe people should do what they specialise in doing. In case of the cinema Ariana many people said in 2003 that a cinema is not needed in a land where people don't have food... health and schools are not important. But I feel since the initiative came from the film industry, they should build what they specialise in and offer their industry's progressive hand via specialised technique and equipment". And as for himself, Jean Paul does what his genre of architects specialise in, "When my family and friends ask what kind of architecture I do, I always give them the example of two kinds of doctors in France... first the specialists with their big clinics with polished nameplates and the other along the countryside providing the required service where none is available. My service is of architecture where it is needed and there is no one to provide... I think only of the building and its objective nothing more... the constant is the project to be built." Probably it is this focus that allows architects like himself to deliver 12 institutes in 6 months in his earlier mission in Iraq. With the successful completion of the Ariana Project, Jean-Paul became the obvious choice as the architect for the projects initiated by the Embassy of France in Kabul along with A&D. However in comparison to Ariana Cinema in this case the architect would be a solitary reaper who would design and execute in-situ.
Sayed Djamaluddin Teachers Training Institute

The first project was a result of the French Co-operation for Education in Kabul. An eminent location but with a building torn down by war was what Sayed Djamaluddin Teachers Training Institute offered the architect. The institute lay in a zone where the war had claimed in addition to the human victims most buildings. As a result like most educational establishments in post-war Kabul, the center had insufficient number of buildings for teaching the burgeoning candidature that was signing up. The first action was to knock down the delirious bits of walls that remained on the site. While this was started in November of 2003, the brief called for the architect to rebuild the project to meet the schedule of the next year's winter program. The architect interacted with teachers' groups to garner the requirements of a central administration building and supporting teaching spaces. The Afghan Ministry of Education validated the project brief and an invitation to tender was launched to about seven local building firms. After the return of their tenders, work was able to begin at the beginning of January 2005. The building configuration was made up of the main administration edifice along with a linear running library and classrooms building.

The admin offered a volumetric interplay that housed administration, accounts, reprography and teachers' staff, as well as an auditorium with a capacity of 120 seats. This auditorium itself was seen as an achievement of architectural techniques as they set off new audio-visual technology and the essential underground heating system. The monochrome of earth construction, signature statement of the Afghan landscape, washes on the internal walls as mud plaster, carried out under the supervision of Laurent Cocquemont from Globtroterre. The second building, offers a double-floored library with a single storey arm with 10 classrooms, a...
multi-activities room and offices. Both buildings were planned with furniture, central heating system and the most essential electric generator of 100kVA for the power struck situation of Kabul. With time being a constraint along with the confirmation to what had been the existing plan. The latter was converted into an advantage as the basic plan of the old building also offered Jean Paul stone foundations that were preserved in good state. Supported by the old schematic plan a layout was worked out as per individuals work patterns. The load bearing system was replaced by a framed structure capped by a wooden trussed roof with galvanised sheeting. Space was optimised as old volumes were maintained with the functions getting interchanged. Thus more space and functional requirement were accommodated in the revised plan.

The RCC structure accounted for the building’s earthquake resistance by allowing structural joints between building volumes. These volumes themselves work as isolated grids to individually combat the quake pressures as they rise out of the old stone foundations. Once the building was worked out and its structural system cast, light and ventilation with a very transparent circulation pattern completed the picture. Exposed bricks were especially treated and polished to be worked into a facade where the architect tried to confirm to an existing scale while revitalising diluted local patterns, his one lease to sentiment. While the technique was known it was the new volumetrics of the built form that became a lesson for the local workforce. Jean Paul hadn’t realised in the process he was establishing an architectural signature for the future works done by A&D and the Embassy of France in Afghanistan. By sticking to essentials and instigating adventure by default the Teachers Training Institute of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani in Kabul met the deadline to find its place again as the main training Institute in Afghanistan welcoming 1333 students, 75% being women, and training 940 teachers in service among whom there were 16 women. It also became symbolic as another rejuvenated stitch in the torn fabric of the Kabul urbanscape.

Fact File
Project: Sayed Jamaluddin Teachers Training Institute
Location: Kabul
Client/beneficiary: Ministry of Education, Afghanistan
Supported by: Embassy of France in Kabul and (Architecture & Développement)
Architect: Jean Paul Lempjedi (Architecture & Développement)
Design team: Jean Paul Lempjedi
Project Area: 2250sqm
Administration building: 900sqm
Classroom: (10+ meeting rooms)+ Library -1350sqm
Contractors: Omari Co. Ltd
Assistant supervisor: Naqiband Gulam
Construction (cost): 620000 Euro
Funding agency: French Embassy, Kabul
Initiation of Project: March 2005
Completion of project: April 2006
No of students accommodated: 2700 (70% women)
Teachers: 80
Staff: 35