

A GATHERING PLACE THAT EMBRACES NATURE

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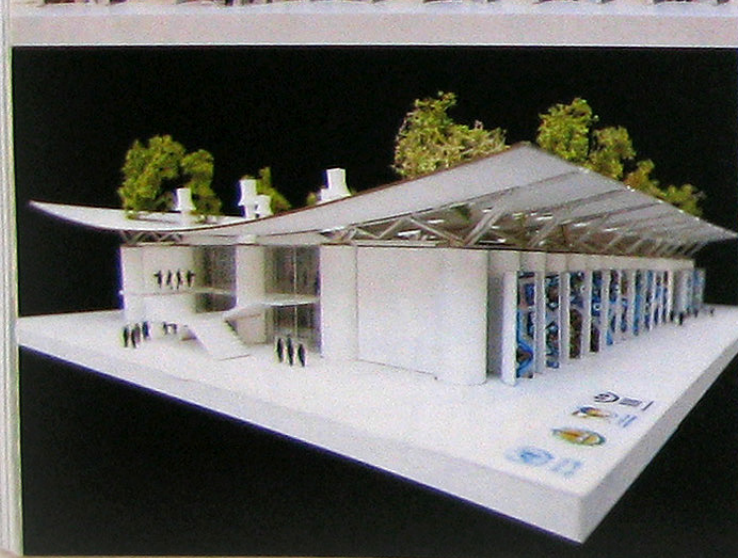


A circular honeycomb of a building with a steeply angled roof and expansive openings that explode with trees and plants, L'Assemblée Radieuse in Libreville, Gabon, by Work Architecture Company, puts the area's natural riches proudly on display. "Our idea was to utilize the incredible ecologies of the country, by creating three iconic gardens to organize the project and provide the building's main visible expression," says Dan Wood, principal at the New York firm.

Slated to be completed in time for the 2014 summit of the African Union, the five-storey, 18,950-square-metre structure is enveloped in screenlike walls made from African limestone, designed to shade the entire structure. The angled roof funnels rainwater inside, through the gardens, over an internal waterfall and into a cistern for later use – but it also serves as a beacon. "By angling the roof, the voids of the gardens and the rooftop water feature will be clearly visible from the city below," says Wood. "The roof therefore becomes the most important public face of the building." work.ac

A SCHOOL THAT EMPOWERS A CITY

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Can architecture be a force for good in Gaza? With predictions that the blockaded city will be uninhabitable by 2020, Bologna architect **Mario Cucinella** has been exploring a solution since 2010, when he and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East sought a way to provide the region with better learning environments for its children, as well as desperately needed access to water and electricity.

The design of his 3,500-square-metre **Green Schools** (20 in total) takes into consideration the local climate and Islamic architecture. Trees grow through the building's concrete and earth pillars, with their canopies shading the overhanging roof. Holes cut into the roof enhance ventilation, solar cells and solar heaters provide surplus energy for the community, and underground

tanks collect rainwater for the school and for irrigation.

Originally due to break ground in 2013, the pilot project has been stalled for financial reasons, but Cucinella believes it still has a positive impact, in principle alone. "Gaza is a microcosm that epitomizes the bleakest scenario the Middle East and the world might face if the environmental conflict is not addressed," he notes. "This concept has already raised awareness among professionals and the general public about the possibility of transforming the built environment from a problem to a solution for the sustainability of our cities." mcarcitects.it

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AN ECO-MARKETPLACE FOR ALL

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With its canopy of giant petals, the competition-winning proposal for an open market in Old Town Casablanca, by Rotterdam's **TomDavid Architecten**, emphasizes inclusivity: it would welcome both licensed and illegal vendors. As principal Tom van Odijk explains, "Both markets are a vital piece of the Casablanca economy. We make no distinction between the two, but approach the use of the space

naturally, without the hassle of rules and regulations." In scouting for ideas, the architects immediately recognized the need for low-maintenance solutions. To allow air to circulate, they devised a sunshade made from segments of high-density concrete, a common material in the local architecture. The enormous slanted petals would gather rainwater to clean the square daily, flush toilets, and

keep the roof damp to exploit evaporative cooling – "a natural air conditioner, like sweating," says van Odijk. To further improve sanitation, the firm devised garbage disposal holes, so litter can easily be swept away to an underground service level. While there are no firm plans to develop the concept, a similar structure could be built in the future: "It's not an expensive design." tomdavid.nl



Workshop Architecture seeks to do for Toronto what Friends of the High Line did for Manhattan. Unlike the original High Line, a neglected elevated railway, Toronto's Green Line comprises a loose collection of well-trod green spaces along the hydro corridor, a five-kilometre stretch of private-public land dotted with power transmission towers. Many of the streets, parks and playgrounds

on this midtown route receive public funds, but it lacks a unified, holistic vision, so the firm launched an ideas competition to get local communities and the city thinking about how to devise pedestrian and cycling links throughout the line. While there are no plans as yet to develop the winning concept, to be announced in May, Workshop associate director Helena Grdadolnik sees the initiative as an opportunity

to spur long-term change: "Many other areas in the city have ravine parks, for strolls and to get from point A to point B off the road. It wouldn't take much to make a continuous pedestrian and cycle route across the corridor's length, as it passes through many neighbourhoods." [AZ greenlinetoronto.ca](http://AZ.greenlinetoronto.ca), workshoparchitecture.ca

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A GREEN ROUTE THROUGH THE CITY

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