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KALKERI LEARNING CENTRE

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The intent was to create an adaptable set of spaces for the children, within the constraints of a tight budget, logistics and available resources. It was an exercise in creating a learning environment that is resilient, energy-efficient and richly layered while building in scalability and replicability.

What is the project about?

Kalkeri Sangeet Vidyalaya is located in a quiet valley near the city of Dharwad in Karnataka, South India.

Established on three acres of land a short distance from Kalkeri Village, the school consists of simple buildings made from traditional materials. In this peaceful setting, the children enjoy the tranquillity necessary for their academic studies, music practice and performing arts activities. KSV provides education in academic subjects, Hindustani Classical Music, Bharatanatayam Dance and Drama. In addition – food, accommodation and healthcare are all provided free of cost.

The project for a library, art studio and labs for this village music school is the first 'formal' built structure on the campus. The project was built over 90 days in collaboration with a team of Canadian university students, local masons, carpenters and fabricators.

The design intent was to create a layered and adaptable set of spaces for the children, within the constraints of a tight budget, logistics and available resources. It was also to introduce a language, a template that sets out fundamental, sustainable and gentle guidelines to start building on this large wildland.

Program is distributed amongst a cluster of three blocks, arranged around an open court and corridor. This distributes the 'weight' of the building both visually and literally. The composition of the blocks and their orientation was an exercise in creating a hierarchy of the masses using simple volumes.

Views and perceptions of the spaces are different from each of the blocks. The in-between spaces become versatile 'life-spaces' adaptable to different events, gatherings and outdoor classes. In addition, a long verandah/corridor along the length of the south façade of the complex provides shaded open space, covered by a bamboo slat roof.

A specially designed light double roof with a modular steel structural system helped in facilitating efficient fabrication as well as transferability of technology for future construction. Using readily available steel sections, the highly performative roof structure could be assembled by local fabricators based on clear and detailed drawings.

The double roof, one vaulted and the other inclined have eyelet shaped slits that help create a passive ventilation cycle, while the structure holding up the roof emerges out of these cuts to support the inclined top. Brick jali patterns travel along the walls, keeping the rooms continuously aerated and adding interesting shadows and textures to the spaces.

Materials used are locally sourced brick and Cuddappah stone. A layer of 'Mud paint' gives the buildings their ochre colour, similar to all the other huts around. A blue-green cement oxide dado complements the ochre while protecting the bases of the blocks.

What is the impact?

More than 200 children and close to 100 staff and volunteers use the learning complex as a hub of daily activity. While the indoor spaces are used as art studios, library and staff spaces, the semi-enclosed spaces are regularly used as outdoor classrooms for music and theatre, community meetings and impromptu performance spaces.

In the years since this project has been completed, the KSV community has adapted learnings from the architecture and sensibilities of the project to self-build other buildings within the campus. Among other projects are a washing pavilion and a large performance hall, which was retrofitted with a modular steel structure roof system, replacing ageing wooden rafters.

Project Funded by

The PRÉCI team from l'École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS) Montreal.

Stakeholders Involved

University students from ETS Montreal, local masons, carpenters and fabricators.

About Kumar La Noce:

Kumar La Noce is an Indo-Italian Architectural practice founded in Bangalore, India in 2012 by Bhavana Kumar and Nicola La Noce.

The studio has worked on projects of various scales including residential, educational, art installations, interior and urban design since its inception.

Their work is based on typological reasoning and a need to create evocative spaces informed by pragmatism, culture and collective memory.

Links to read more:

[A link to the project.](#)