THE LIGHT BOX

Written and Contributed by

RC Architects
Mumbai, Maharashtra

Contact

rohan.rca@gmail.com

This is a public toilet unique in terms of both form and function. Beyond the obvious toilet blocks, the Restroom aims to provide women with an exclusive social space, something that is a unique feature of the urban landscape in India.

What is the project about?

The design of the restroom has been conceptualized around a tree for two reasons. One to express the idea of integrating nature and context in the built form and using its characteristics to protect from the climate. Secondly, the shade of the tree protects the garden below from the sun allowing filtered light, and then it only needs a transparent cover to protect from rain.

This intervention helped to maintain the light quality, as exactly it was when the site was empty. This was a crucial factor from a designer's point of view. As a result of this intervention during the day the natural light lits up the box filtering through the trees and at night the box lights the surroundings.

The Restroom for women measure 10' x 30' is built around an existing tree. It has four blocks at two ends. At one end there are two toilets with a common washbasin and at the other end, there is a nursing room and a toilet for handicapped and senior citizens. The center of the restroom is a garden measuring 15' x 10' that is used for various activities like a place to rest, a free gallery to display art for amateur artists, a place for lectures and awareness campaigns, celebrating festivals, seasonal activities and events. The central garden is a metaphor to spaces where people can sit and relax under a tree in shade and socialize.

The Restroom with toilet blocks is fitted with a biodigester to reduce the use of freshwater and improved waste management. It also includes a nursing room and has amenities like sanitary pads vending machine and incinerator, CCTV cameras, mobile charging points and a panic alarm system in place.

For us, providing a safe environment for women was as important as providing hygienic toilets. We have created space for an ATM machine and are looking to collaborate with banks that can provide this facility along with a security guard to make the restrooms more secured.

What is the impact?

The Restrooms for women try to express a cohesive plan that interacts with the city and vice versa. 70% of the total area of the restroom is open to the citizens for various activities and events.

A great advantage of this is the participation of people with public properties and vice versa, this encourages a cohesive dialogue between people and buildings and sets a great example for planners and urban designers to look into issues of planning cities as one cohesive plan than in bits and parts.

Project Funded by
The Light box was funded by the <u>Thane Municipal Corporation</u> and initiated by Agasti – a sustainable toilet project.
The NGO is not operative currently.
With TMC, RC Architects have built 14 other prototypes in the city.

Stakeholders Involved
Government – Thane Municipal Corportation
NGO – Agasti
Structural consultant: Prashant Haval
Contractor: Shailendra Vishvakarma

About RC Architects:
Rohan Chavan is an architect, planner, designer and educator who studied at the College of Architecture in Kolhapur. He is the founder and owner of RC Architects a multi-disciplinary design practice started in 2015, after working with Charles Correa, Christopher Benninger, and Rahul Mehrotra. He is also a visiting Faculty at Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute of Architecture, Mumbai.

His work engages with projects and issues related to public and community sanitation, urban design, affordable and low-cost housing, single-family houses, space design, and institutions. The unique approach towards living patterns and bold style are the highlights of his design practice. He loves to fuse modern materials in a vernacular pattern creating spaces that are rich in natural light and landscape.

Links to read more:
<u>A link to the project.</u>