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THE OMO
by Roman Gorshkov
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HONORABLE MENTION
Inspired by the Omo River in Ethiopia
INTRODUCTION

This report describes a design proposal of a 2 bedroom bungalow house in Ethiopia. This project report was developed based on the original competition brief and provides well detailed information about structure, interior design, and sustainability regarding cultural and architectural research.

Prior to developing this design proposal, a study of local cultures and beliefs was undertaken, and different parts of Africa were carefully examined to choose a target group and location for the project. The Design prototype of a “future” African house was developed as an efficient and simple way to construct space that is very modern-looking but at the same time appreciates African traditions and ways of living, providing comfort and elegance.

BRIEF SUMMARY

The design brief encourages the development of an affordable “future” home for African people so they could feel a connection with their past within the space they live. This project was informed by three elements of design: culture-lifestyle, aesthetics, and sustainability.

CULTURE

“Omo Residence” is the name chosen for this project. It gets its origin from the Omo Valley and pays respect to the people of this region and their culture. This proposal is based on the idea of protective areas and courtyards, inspired by traditional African architecture. Every circular part of this design provides separate zones that organically divide the house into private spaces. By introducing big open-to-skies in circular fashion, spot lighting and a unique atmosphere are created. Inspiration for this idea comes from clay open homes that are put together to form organic courtyards and open zones providing for different usage, such as a kitchen, patio, living room, and bedroom.
DESIGN PROCESS

Traditional architecture in Africa provides colorful and varied examples, ranging from mosques in Djenne and Great Zimbabwe to simple yet unique clay homes and shelters in Mali and Ethiopia. Landscape, people, and the nature of spaces play a big part in forming this concept. This diversity provides a great inspirational base for different design ideas. Through the design process, involving sketching, creation of physical models, and thorough cultural research, 3 options were developed.

After careful consideration of all elements of these ideas the climate response, cultural connection, and ease of construction of Option One was chosen, as it provides the most efficient design for the home of the future. It is the option that will help to facilitate a deeper connection between the residents and their culture.
OPTION ONE

This option is organized as a series of protective spaces formed by circular shapes. These shapes provide a connection to the traditional round African hut. Inspiration for this idea came from the clay open African homes that are put together to form organic courtyards and open zones that provide the various usage possibilities.
OPTION TWO

Flowing like a snake, this design celebrates the great Omo River. Organic, green and simply designed, this project was formed for a unique identity that also provides an easily recognizable shape. This building is part of the landscape and nature of the Omo Valley.
OPTION THREE

Pitched and impluvium roofs are one of the design elements of African architecture. Inspired by cone shaped patios for collecting water, this option gives a beautiful interpretation of the impluvium room through a modern lens, by creating a very strong, sharp and organic form.
LAYOUT

The plan consists of the main spaces you would expect in a modern home, such as an entrance hall, kitchen, dining area, bedroom, master bedroom, guest room, and patio with an open kitchen. By organizing the kitchen, dining area, and open kitchen on one axis, it provides a good connection between the spaces and gives a nice view outside to the open kitchen and courtyard.

The building itself consists of three independent structures with separate entrances providing public and private separation for guests and owners. By locating bedrooms on the east side and guest room with living spaces on the west, open space in-between these two areas provides a natural separation and creates a courtyard with an open kitchen.
AESTHETICS
The facade tries to be straight and organic at the same time to fit well in a natural landscape. Most parts of elevations are made from rammed earth wall structures with natural ripple pattern that recalls wave ripples on the surface of the Omo River. On widows, mashrabiya screens are used to protect from heating issues. The pattern is based on original plan design of the building itself which recalls traditional patterns used in African rugs and cloth.

LANDSCAPE
Being an urban house makes it hard to provide an experience of the natural African landscapes, that is why non-urban elements were chosen for the site to make it feel as rural as possible. Natural ground cover, wild grasses and buses with big decorative stones all create an illusion of being outside on a free land without constraints of modern culture.

SUSTAINABILITY
Sustainability was the main concern for this project. All design decisions take into consideration the use of locally available materials and the climate of the region. This scheme provides good shading and cross ventilation to prevent overheating internal spaces. Place for water collection is also provided.
STRUCTURE
Considering the cost of the project, it was designed to be easily constructed by unskilled workers with sustainable materials. The diagram above shows the simplicity of the construction process and the elements of the building. This project also provides unique flexibility in its structure and reusable parts. It consists of identical elements that can be building blocks for other design ideas and options for this project.

INTERIOR DESIGN
The main goal for designing internal spaces was to create a warm and comfortable environment where people could feel protected, but at the same time provide a connection to the outside open spaces. The open courtyard that opens up from the kitchen provides an enclosed open space that serves as a place for family gathering and celebrations.
THE OMO