

February 2016

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Recommended Citation

Thatcher, Nakimuli; Okoth, Lawrence; and Murungi, Brian (2016) "K'Jong," *ATL*: Vol. 1 : No. 1 , Article 16.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/atl/vol1/iss1/16>

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K'JONG

by Nakimuli Thatcher, Lawrence Okoth & Brian Murungi
Architects | Uganda

HONORABLE MENTION

Inspired by the Karamojong people of northern Uganda



BACKGROUND

The design dubbed the 'K'Jong House' has been informed by the intimate study of Karamojong culture and lifestyle. The Karamojong people are a group of Nilo-Hamite agro-pastoralist herders that mainly live in the North Eastern part of Uganda and K'Jong is an urban moniker used to refer to the Karamojong people.

The Manyatta: This is the traditional unique village settlement of the Karamojong. It is comprised of families from the same clan, surrounded by one to three walls made of local thorn bushes mixed with mud to protect from raiders, its inhabitants and their cattle-- a prized possession and a divine birthright to them. In the center of the Manyatta is the courtyard or Kraal.

The Karamojong Shelter: The Karamojong shelter is characterized by various architectural features from form to material and construction technique.

TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS INCORPORATED IN THE K'JONG HOUSE

The Manyatta Design and Layout is inspired from the Manyatta beads and accessories which are used for the design of the roof form into a spiral feature to give the house an inverted conical form.

The Courtyard (The 'New Kraal'): By proposing a new scale for the entry to the courtyard, it is made expandable to host events and also for children to play, reflecting a traditional essence and purpose. It is open to the sky and accessible from all rooms in the house.

SOURCE OF AESTHETICS AND ARTISTRY: AN AFRO-CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC FUSION IN THE K'JONG

Building Form as Sculpture – The walls have been molded around the corners to enhance the organic finesse of the layout plan.

CHARACTER AND PERSONALITY

Patterns and Texture: This will include inimitable engraftment of patterns representative of the homeowner onto architectural features in the house such as lintels, ironmongery and burglar proofing, door and window frames in order to make the house unique and personal.

Color: The K'Jong uses bold primary colors against brown and white neutral walls as color accents on openings.

MATERIALS, CONSTRUCTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

The K'Jong borrows from African traditional approaches by using:

- Walls – Custom clay, mud or laterite bricks that can be built on site promoting cost efficiency and sustainability through low construction costs. Finishes are in adobe plaster in shades of brown.
- Roof – The K'Jong will use timber trusses and brown clay tiles with woven patterns of bamboo trusses to create a bold and strong pagolla for the kitchen patio and the courtyard areas
- Floors – Polished cement screed.
- Borrowing from West African traditional impluvium, the courtyard will be used to allow for rain water harvesting within the home, hence offering an alternative water source.

VENTILATION, LIGHTING AND COMFORT

The design of K'Jong addresses issues of heat, ventilation and comfort through the use of:

- The central courtyard design, drawing enormous amounts of light and air into the internal spaces
- Openings are adequately raised to capture daylight and designed wide enough for cross ventilation and lighting
- Extension of the eaves of the tile roof has allowed for a cooler micro-climate around the house by providing shade from the direct sunlight onto the walls
- The use of mud and clay bricks finished in adobe plaster has also ensured that the walls allow for a cool environment on hot days and retain heat in cold weather thus promoting comfort in the house

THE KITCHEN

Special considerations of the K'Jong towards a traditional African kitchen are:

- It provides a modern indoor kitchen connected to an outdoor paved patio that acts as an exterior kitchen
- It's located at the back of the house, allowing for more private cooking activities and serving
- The mud-brick paved court also opens out to a backyard garden that may be used for periscope or horticulture and gardening as well as provisions for sanitary activities or modern day services such as laundry, water tanks, or septic tanks

COST OF THE K'JONG

The K'Jong has been designed to use available, low cost materials developed on site, which also requires limited maintenance. This has substantially lowered its per unit area cost to USD\$200 and about USD\$25,142 for 120sqm, an affordable price for a modern house of its size.

SELLING POINTS OF THE K'JONG

The K'Jong is a comfortable home, reflecting traditional approaches with all necessary amenities to serve the needs of a modern lifestyle. It is artistic, beautiful and allows for the creation of uniqueness and personal identity of any homeowner as seen of African cultures and lifestyles in traditional architecture. The house has been designed with beautiful materials, making it an affordable, and a modern concept with low construction and maintenance costs as well as sustainable approaches.

STUDIO MANYATTA
CPDI AFRICA 2015 SUBMISSION

THE K'JONG HOUSE
A House inspired by the
Karamojong tribe in Uganda

