METI School | The 'Handmade' School by Anna Heringer & Eike Roswag in critical lens

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Architect Anna Heringer came to Discourse last year after an invitation from Architect Nurur Rahman Khan, it was held in the Open Studio of the University of Asia Pacific. She gave a lecture on her then recently finished METI School (Handmade School) project in Rudrapur, Dinajpur, Bangladesh. She also presented some other projects built with mud and wood. Architect Prof. Shamsul Wares gave a conclusive speech after her presentation, praising her courage and approach to this design and criticizing few phenomenal and contextual issues. It was really a great Discourse session that day.

German Architect Anna Heringer and Austrian Architect Eike Roswag in association with a lot of villagers and local craftsmen built this project together with the Bangladeshi NGO for sustainable rural development Dipshikha (¦ ¿ ª ¶ ¿ – ¾).
This project is one of the 9 winners of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture 2007.

The project includes the building of a school as a representative public building, the building of two-storey houses as a model for rural living as well as the design of the outside areas.
The ultimate goal was to gain and disseminate knowledge and information for optimizing the use of locally available resources. The improvement of the building techniques is as important as the economic aspects and the creation of a regional identity.
In order to create jobs and to build up a capacity for producing sustainable architecture it is essential to include local workers in the building process. Training through learning by doing helped the local craftsmen improve the standards and condition of the rural housing in general.

Drawings:

Photos of Construction

Photographs

While many aspects of the school have already been discussed and analyzed to bits and applauded in most cases, there may still be a few questions one might ask the designer about her work. For instance, the buildings in the complex have all used two different methods of heat control and ventilation, passive cooling through thermal mass at ground level and heat transfer by means of airflow in upper level. These two systems have never been used in combination in North Bengal before this project. Thermal mass by itself is common in that area and earth walls like the ones used in the school have been known to perform well; but the bamboo made air flow dependent upper floors may come under questions. If anyone of these is perfect then is the other method wrong? Or both are perfect? Now only the real scenario can say the answer. This may be an experimental approach of heat control by the architects. If it is successful in real life then this project may become a real example for future.

In climatic considerations the orientation of the building goes very wrong. The building is elongated in north-south direction. That means it gets more outer surface in west and east side. It is always discouraged in tropical monsoon climate of this region. It gains extreme heat from west during long summer and monsoon.

However, the enthusiastic way of construction, involvement of local craftsman and the enhancement of local construction techniques give this project a big thumbs-up, and set a great example of environmental and cultural sustainability.
(Photo courtesy: Kurt Hoerbst, Anna Heringer)
(Information courtesy: meti-school.de, Aga Khan Award for Architecture, Anna Heringer and Discourse)
[Edited by: Ishraq Zahra Khan & Mohammad Tauheed]