

Issue 23, October 1, 2016

AD

AFRICAN DESIGN MAGAZINE

PROUDLY AFRICAN
DIGITAL, INTERACTIVE
ARCHITECTURE
AND DESIGN MAGAZINE

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**PLUS COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEWS OF
THE COBRA PRODUCT DESIGN AWARDS;
THE STEEL AND COROBRIK SAIA AWARDS**

AFRICA LANDING



The new Kintele Congress Centre and Resort Hotel (KCC) by Avci Architects is in a newly developing area of Brazzaville, to the north of the new Olympic Centre. The site has panoramic views of the Congo River to the south and a forested unbuilt landscape to the north. The topography of the site is a valley carved out by the great Congo River which creates an island M'Bamaou in the foreground, and the buildings sit parallel to the contours of this valley, falling towards the river.

The positioning of the buildings on the site is largely dictated by this topography where Avci Architects focused on minimising excessive excavation and shifting of earth away from the site. The larger objects of the programme: the 1 500 seat Congress Hall, the 300 person Presidential Hall, the 1000 seat Banquet Hall and the 1 000 person Public Piazza, were placed in a line sequence interrupted by courtyards, and all reached by a public sheltered colonnade that links these elements. The Hotel, on the other hand, is positioned 5m above this general public promenade, largely to provide better views to the river, while making a public/private segregation of functions on the site. All but two courtyards linking the enclosed volumes are accessible to the public, which allowed the architects to form landscaped intermissions amongst the large masses of these functions. Thus the form of the KCC settles in to the

AD African project Kintele Congress Centre

landscape, avoiding the appearance of an out of scale overbearing large mass of buildings while providing views of the Congo River from all hotel rooms.

The 350m long colonnade also acts as a linear public space, in itself sheltering people from the ever-present rain that prevails most of the year in this part of the world. The two ends of the Colonnade also act as public gates to the whole complex. Attached to this public colonnade are the Press Hall to the Western gate and Museum to the Eastern gate. At this end the Museum forms the southern edge of the Piazza, while the shops and the Public Restaurant form the Northern and Eastern edges of the Piazza. This open space is also sheltered from the rain with a square oculus that allows the rain to fall in to a shallow pool at its centre.

For at least 6 months of the year, rain is an ever-present climate phenomenon in the Congo and it defines the way people interact in public and with public space. Therefore, great effort was made in this sense to shelter people while out in the open but to not distance them from nature and the presence of rain, because while it is raining it is still very warm, and of course, humid. While it is necessary to provide shelter from the rain, it is also important to allow air to flow and cool such sheltered spaces. The presence of water is celebrated by making its fall from roofs visible and audible as it reaches the earth and fills open pools which take overflow from large roof areas using gargoyles and waterfalls.

Another aspect of the local tropical climate is the constant presence of a high level of humidity which makes use of natural ventilation as a way of minimising energy consumption difficult, and the use of air-conditioning of public spaces essential for comfortable conditions to be achieved to acceptable comfort standards. Avcı Architects' main objective in this case was to minimise the cooling loads by reducing the incidence of sunlight on exposed glass façades. Thus glazing is always deeply set in to the façade on the north (in this case it is actually the true north façade which receives the midday sun due to the location of the site below the equator) and low sunlight from the east and west is minimised by vertical shading elements and perforated metal screens.

The use of materials in the KCC were to a large extent dictated by the requirement of speed of construction, and availability of modern construction and cladding materials, of which none exist in The Congo



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