White Rabbit
Home for marginalized children, Thane, India

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury
A home for 30 children, this building replaces their existing facility which tends to flood and lacks ventilation. The proposal reacts to the constrained site by leaving a void for ventilation at the back of the site, drawing air upward and providing indirect light. Terracotta louvers are envisioned as scaffolding for greening that can help cool the interior and potentially provide a small business opportunity harvesting greens. The raised ground floor accommodates services for women and the elderly and the upper floors are reserved for the children and their caretakers. That this is mainly a space for children is reflected in the playful design sensitive to their scale and perception.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author
The jury was taken with the project’s “Alice in Wonderland”-like approach which re-imagines a small urban building through the eyes of children. In doing so, it also provides them with a dignified and comforting environment. The compact, quirky building form nevertheles achieves a feeling of spatial generosity through the inclusion of a central vertical void for circulation, light, and ventilation. The proposal goes beyond social sustainability to include passive building technology, innovating design measures, and a viable economic model. The next step towards implementation will need to be a further development of the project from compelling schematic design to a convincing translation into construction detailing.

Main authors
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Project data
Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Community Outreach Programme (CORP)
Project background: Public commission
Planned start: December 2017

Stacking/planning
The ground floor of the center is kept open to accommodate community activities for senior citizens, a creche, women’s development training etc. The space is planned like a veranda opening up to a private courtyard on the north side and partly opening up to adjoining lanes on the other 3 sides, shaded by first floor overhang. The middle floor dedicated to children’s living space underneath from direct sun. The north side opening up to the private courtyard be acts as an extension of the community space.

Construction efficiency
The north facade is a dead wall shared with an adjoin- ing lanes on the other 3 sides, shaded by first floor overhang. The middle floor dedicated to children’s sleeping areas and caretaker’s sleeping place. It shelters the children’s living space underneath from direct sun.

Inserted nursery
The north side opening up to the private courtyard be acts as an extension of the community space. In doing so, it also provides them with a dignified and comforting environment.

Skylight
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Sustainability strategy addressing “target issues”
That this is mainly a space for children is reflected in the playful design sensitive to their scale and perception.

Image 1: Top: Isometric view of the informal settlement and our proposed insert – seen from a neighboring hill. Bottom: Existing scenario: the structure – its tin roof and lack of ventilation makes the summers unbearable and the monsoons flooding the ground floor. The design also does not provide for green space and simplifies basic requirements such as adequate light, storage, toilets and sleeping areas. Centre – community center and children’s home.

Image 2: Left: Front elevation. Design proposes a new playful elevation that follows differing proportions to respond to the varying anthropometric needs of its users. Right: Section elevation diagram and site plan.

Image 10: Exploded isometric view.

Image 3: Sustainability strategy addressing “target issues”.

Image 4: Ground floor plan and first floor plan.

Image 5: Ground floor community center.

Image 6: Top floor plan and cross-section.

Image 9: Stepped pavilion, top floor internal space, south elevation.

Image 8: Longitudinal section.

Image 7: The children’s living space wraps a vertical nursery on one side and views of the courtyard.

Image 6: Top floor plan and cross-section.

Image 11: Sustainability strategy addressing “target issues”.

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