Children’s House
Pedagogically-aligned school, San Andrés Payuca, Mexico

Main authors
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Summary by the jury
Children's House is a project that is founded on an alternative educational model, offering activities that find solutions to the real problems of the population in the San Andrés Payuca rural community, north-east of Puebla, Mexico. Correspondingly, the school’s curriculum includes instruction in agriculture, farming and building construction, in addition to normal course work. The design for the school – arranged by Fundación la Concepción and self-built by the community – proposes the use of cement-reinforced compacted blocks using readily accessible local earth. The design of the block with tapered corners permits assembly in a variation of curves based on organic principles. The school will double as a cultural center for the community, offering access to a library, the Internet and the school’s sports fields.

Appraisal by the jury
Whereas the beauty and precision of the submitted drawings initially captured the attention of the jury, a closer look at the project revealed a deep sensibility for social, technical and environmental concerns – all combined and transformed into a stunning building for children, a building embedded in the landscape and appropriately playful in its formal expression. The jury was furthermore impressed by the scheme’s minimal deployment of architectural elements, such as the use of one continuous wall encasing the entire school, to achieve maximum effects – an “economy of means” contributing of an elegant and discrete structure dedicated to the next generation, while changing the paradigm of education in rural Mexico.

Project data
Context: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Fundación la Concepción
Background: Private commission
Planned start: January 2015

Further authors
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The school will be self-built by the community and financed through donations and government support.

The goal is for rural communities in Mexico to receive quality education according to their profile.

The round geometry of the school favors dynamism and promotes equality between students and teachers.

Students will learn to make the block that was especially designed for the school construction.

The model is of a public-private school where students have scholarships up to 90% and pay only 10%.

Agriculture, livestock, aquaculture, hydroponics and construction will be part of the activities.

The produce of the harvest will be used to feed the students and the surplus will be sold to finance the school.

Water will be returned to its natural cycle, used as irrigation for vegetables or fish farming.

More at www.holcimawards.org/projects/childrens-house