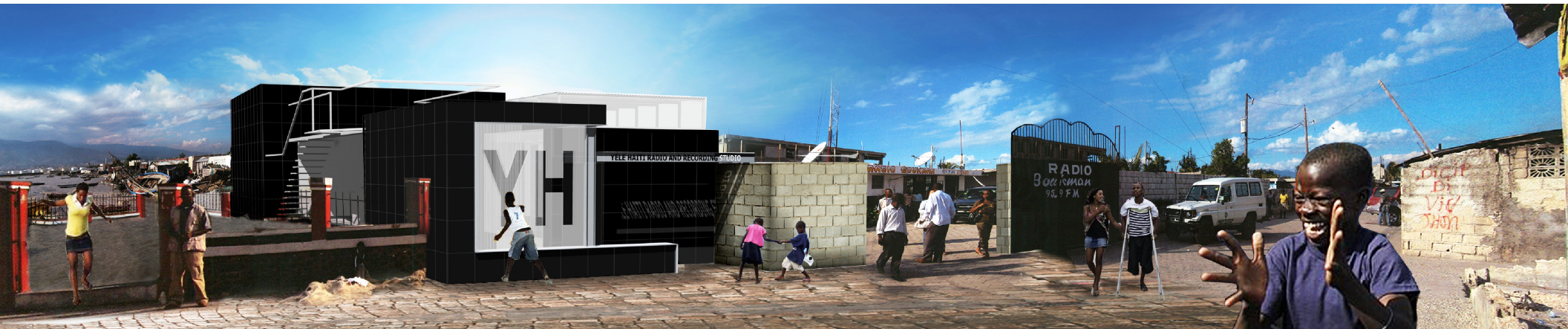


yele haiti music and radio recording studio
arch 384 research paper



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preamble | introduction

The intention of the Yelé Haiti Design Ideas Competition was to discover a well-conceived and plausible design for a new music studio and radio broadcasting base for the densely populated, impoverished area named Cité Soleil in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The winning student design was meant to be realized alongside a local architect, and built on a site adjacent to a grassroots organization called Radio Boukman.

However, following the devastating earthquake of January 12th 2010, the focus of the charity group Yelé Haiti shifted towards providing the necessities of life for survivors, and the massive reconstruction effort to follow.

Nevertheless, the competition proceeded, albeit having to be considered in a much different context.

cité soleil | yelé haiti

This densely populated slum to the north of Port-au-Prince proper may seem to be a violent and menacing neighbourhood on the surface. However, there are several grassroots charities and organizations devoted to the arts and music, encouraging youth to look beyond the inevitabilities of their immediate surroundings. While the skin of Cité Soleil appears to be not much more than dirt, rubbish, and corrugated iron, within its being is a highly creative and ambitious core. Yelé Haiti wishes to encourage curious and determined youth of the area, by creating a haven for the study and development of music, and the means to share this talent with the nation. Drawing from these objectives, the Yelé Haiti Music Studio aspires to be a highly communal, safe, and expressive artifact. Nevertheless, the climate of insecurity and poverty, and the lack of funds, technology, and construction skill makes its architectural realization a challenge.



1 | Port-au-Prince, Haiti



2 | Cité Soleil slum, Port-au-Prince



3 | Cité Soleil slum, Port-au-Prince

"The works of the past always influence us, whether or not we care to admit it, or to structure an understanding of how that influence occurs. The past is not just that which we know, it is that which we use, in a variety of ways, in the making of new work.... The typology argument today asserts that despite the diversity of our culture there are still roots of this kind which allow us to speak of the idea of a library, a museum, a city hall or a house. The continuity of these ideas of type, such as they are, and the esteemed examples which have established their identity and assured their continued cultural resonance, constitute an established line of inquiry in which new work may be effectively grounded."

- John E. Hancock

typology ? | programme ? programmatic precedents

John Hancock states 'the works of the past always influence us... The typology argument today asserts that despite the diversity of our culture there are still roots of this kind which allow us to speak of the idea of a library, a museum, a city hall or a house.' However, in a hybrid project such as the Yelé Haiti Music Studio which desires to be – simultaneously – a recording studio, a radio broadcast centre, a school, a community building and performance space, immediate programmatic typologies are sparse. Additionally, tight financial and site constraints, and cultural identity further individualize its nature. Which begs the question: can such a project be 'grounded' by typological precedent? Or is the brief too specific and context too constrained, requiring a reformulation and hybridization of type and programme? Do such overpowering and stringent requirements stifle architectural potential, or force a uniquely creative response?

Architecture dedicated to the production, performance, and sale of music varies immensely, from small amphitheatres and bandshells to massive concert venues and entertainment empire headquarters. However, apart from those gargantuan structures which awe due to immensity or frivolity (Frank Gehry's EMP Seattle, as an example | 6 |), few retain any architectural prominence. Nevertheless, the Capitol Records building in Los Angeles | 4 | and Abbey Road Studios in London, United Kingdom | 5 | stand as mnemonic artifacts. Imbued with a nostalgic being, they are referential to a specific era of music, and attest to music's significance to popular culture. In a similar vein, the Yele Haiti Radio and Recording Studio will be an mnemonic entity, celebrating musical creation which is intrinsically connected to the Haitian culture, whilst simultaneously recalling the devastation of the earthquake, and ultimately the optimism and hope that will dominate Haiti's reconstruction.



4 | Capitol Records, Los Angeles



5 | Abbey Road Studios, London, UK



6 | Experience Music Project, Seattle

reinterpreting design

In her publication dedicated to design in Latin America, Ariadna Cantis states:

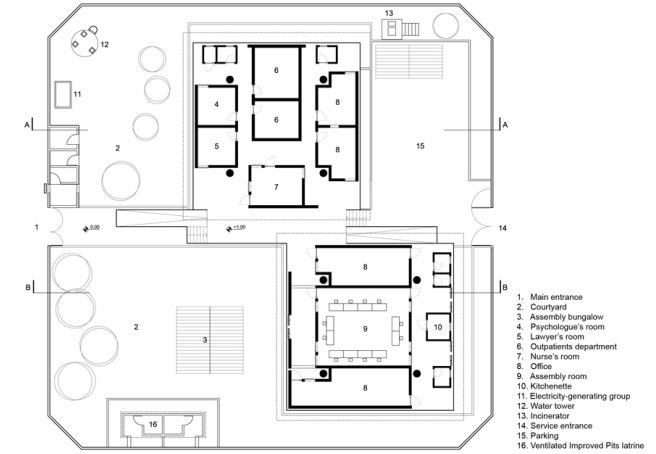
' [the] cultural scene is undisciplined, dramatic but at the same time attractive: everything is unstable and changeable, contradictory and extreme. Architecture has unsuspected kinds of expression... Architects are survivors in the face of unusual realities in an extreme setting; people work with improvisation and illegality, impunity and anonymity, informality and lack of precision, irregularity and unco-ordination, lack of common sense or of foresight.'

Indeed, these sentiments can be visually witnessed and easily understood amongst the urban fabric of Ibero-America. Nevertheless, 'architecture' – as a formal, complex, and organized specimen – is not the antithesis to this entity. Rather, those structures billed as 'architecture' can be an investigation (urban, social, material, etc.), re-interpretation, and organized presentation of what already exists, or provide a structure for what should.

As an example, the Quinta Monroy Housing Development, by ELEMENTAL architects | 8

| 9 |, took precedent from the existing urban density of Latin 'slums.' A study of the perpetual growth and subsequent recalibration of individual dwellings within the slums demonstrated a desire for space to be malleable – as families grow and shrink, so too would dwellings. As wealth ebbed and flowed, the ability to maintain and renovate existing space would change. By providing an architecture as a structured framework and constructed of vernacular materials, the physical changes – and subsequently the social desires those spaces would accommodate – were easily manipulated. This allowed tenants to appropriate and utilize space specific to their needs.

Similarly, the Women's Health Centre by FARE Architects | 7 | analysed the necessities of the clinic, specific to the region. Effective organization of these spaces and efficient, generous circulation are combined with small formal constructions to provide cohesiveness. While the budget was minimal and the vast majority of materials were local to the area, the massive programmatic needs were accommodated in relatively small area through a thorough understanding of the needs, and a devised structured solution that allowed maximum flexibility.



7 8 | Women's Health Centre, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
FARE Architects



9 10 | Quinta Monroy Housing Development, Iquique, Chile
ELEMENTAL Architects

'Architecture has been put on the top shelf, out of the reach of most.'

- Samuel Mockbee

A further example of a reinterpretation of vernacular design and construction techniques can be understood in 'Handmade School,' by Anna Heringer and Eike Roswag | 11 | 12 |. Traditional materials have been adapted in a contemporary fashion, allowing a non-pretentious architecture to sit seamlessly within its context.

Many projects related to the reconstruction of Haiti have been published recently. However, the insensitivity to tradition, vernacular design, and affordability negate any cultural value the project may add. Oftentimes, these are simply a fanciful import of 'new-age' design. This is evident in the SEED Humanitarian Project | 13 | 14 |, which suggests a architecture more akin to a carnival will be beneficial to the nation's reconstruction. While valuable in its attempt at ease of build and operation, it's insensitivity to site and culture – at a time when Haiti is endeavoring to rebuild both - is disappointing.



11 12 | Handmade School, Rudrapur, Bangladesh
Anna Heringer & Eike Roswag



13 14 | SEED Humanitarian Project for Haiti
Clemson University

simplicity is sufficient

In view of the tight site constraints, and restricted budget, the Yele Haiti Radio and Recording Studio predominately uses traditional construction materials and techniques, ensuring very little skilled labour is required.

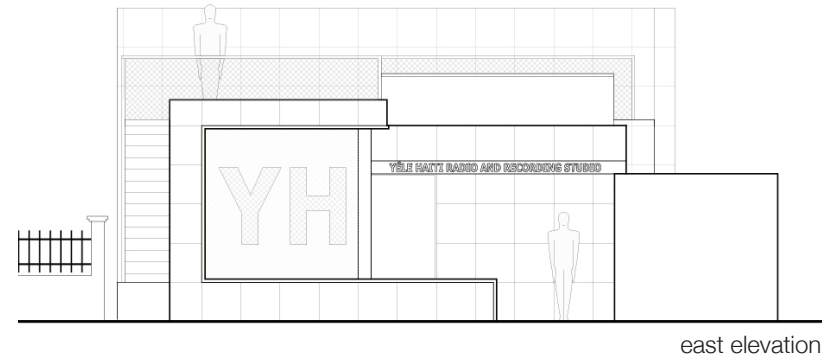
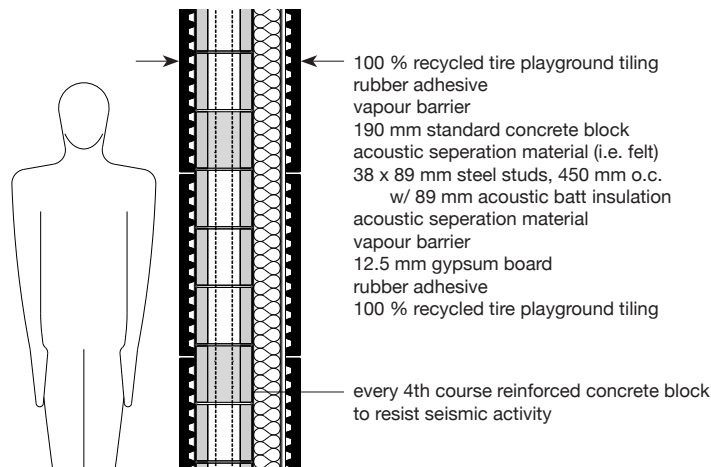
The main structure is composed of standard size concrete block, the norm for construction in Haiti. Every 4th course is reinforced with rebar and poured concrete, to resist seismic activity. This is a tried and tested prevention technique in low-rise concrete block dwellings.

The concrete block is faced with rubber tiling. This material, predominately sold as - and used as - playground tiling, is an acoustic and thermal insulation. The material is virtually maintenance

free, and is made from 100% recycled automobile tires. While an unconventional material, the rubber tiling provides a sense of character to the studio, atop it's insulating benefits.

Other construction materials include standard steel sections (requiring simple welded connections), Lexan glass (a cheap and secure alternative to glass), as well as corrugated iron sheeting – a staple of the building industry in third world countries.

Whilst employing a simple and predominately traditional material palette, the innovative collaging of rubber with steel and glass will create a unique visage for the studio. A play of transparency and shadows further add character.



15 | Mudgee Tiny House, New South Wales, Australia
 Casey Brown Architects

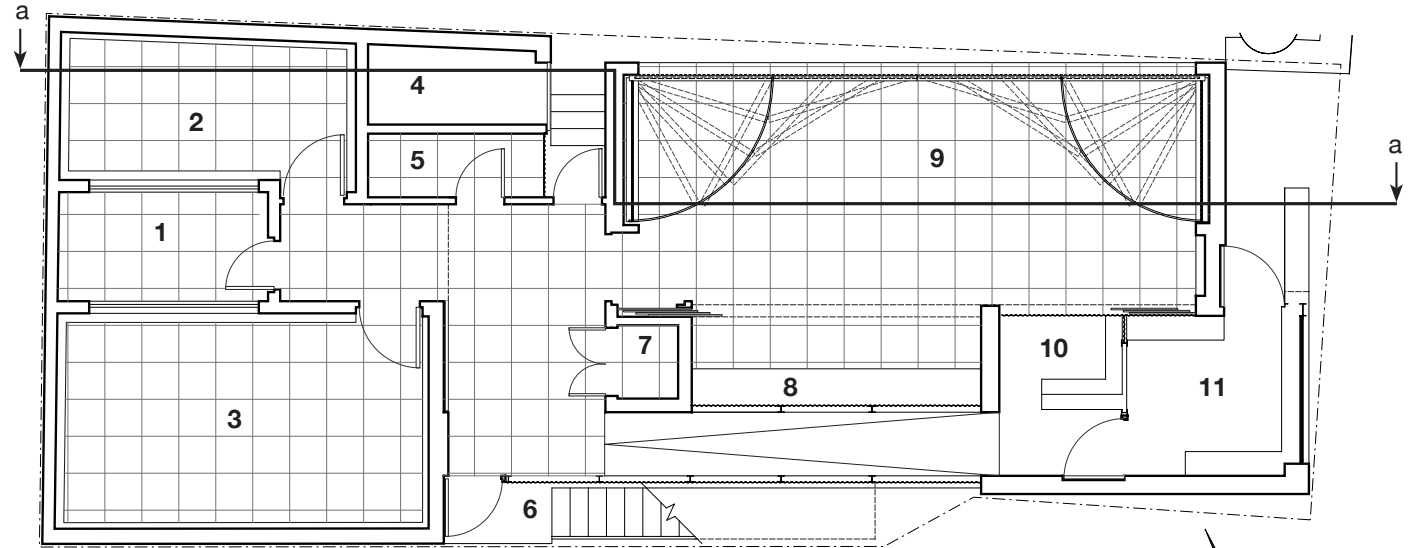


16 | Teton Valley Community School, Idaho
 Section Eight [design]

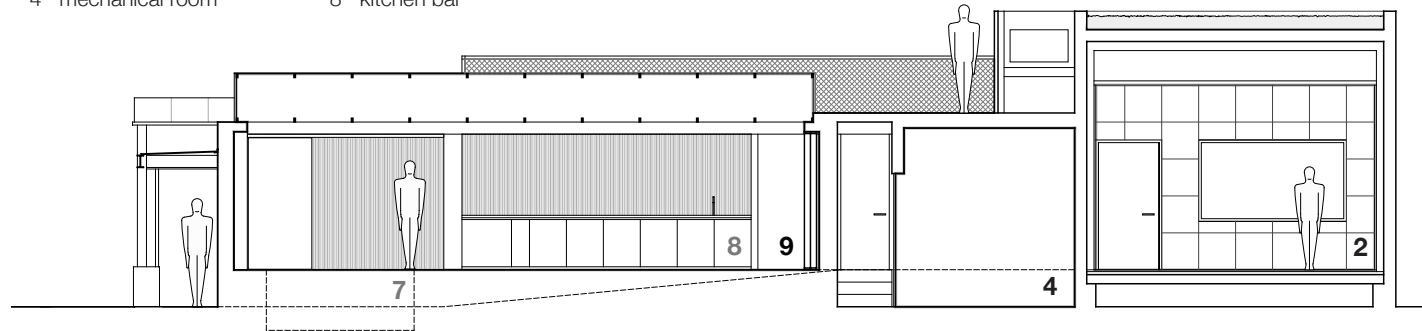
For ease of construction, all walls (excluding one) are orthogonal constructions. Space is organized into the secure zone to the front (reception / waiting) , a 'public' zone (lounge / stage) and a 'private' zone (the recording studio).

The organization of space allows flexibility. Upon entry, one passes through the waiting area, which is securely separated from the main building. Through the reception area, one ascends a short ramp to the main level. The vestibule at the top of the ramp separates the private recording area from the more public lounge / event space, as well as having access to the north to the Radio Boukman facilities, and to a stair to the roof terrace out the south. The main lounge area is directly adjacent to the Radio Boukman fore-court. The entire north wall of the lounge is a door, able to open up onto the yard. The raised floor allows the lounge to act as a covered stage; a band shell. Furthermore, it is able to activate the fore-court as a semi-private public space for youth. Storage for music equipment and furniture is within the raised floor. The kitchen bar faces to the south, overlooking the ocean. It is able to be closed off from the main space if necessary.

The building has been organized such that expansion to the north-west may occur, should Radio Boukman and Yele Haiti wish to amalgamate.



- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 control room | 5 bathroom | 9 lounge / stage |
| 2 sound booth a | 6 stair to roof terrace | 10 secure reception |
| 3 sound booth b | 7 storage | 11 reception waiting |
| 4 mechanical room | 8 kitchen bar | |



architecture as memory

Haiti is a country recovering from extraordinary tragedy. The zeitgeist of the nation - morose, but hopeful - will be reflected in its music and art. While the architectural expectations of a nationwide reconstruction in a third-world country will never be prodigious, there remains the opportunities for exceptional architectural artifacts to convey a sense of optimism. An artifact may be nostalgic, but might also portray a sense of better things to come, may inspire, may - through its presence alone - provide a betterment to one's life. As a community building celebrating music and culture, the Yelé Haiti music studio definitely holds this potential.



PHOTO SOURCES

- 1 / 2 | Google Earth
- 3 | United Nation's Women's Network Report - http://www.wunrn.com/news/2008/12_08/12_22_08/122208_haiti_files/image001.jpg
- 4 | INeTours - http://www.inetours.com/Los_Angeles/Images/Hlywd/Capitol_Rclds_7645.jpg
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- 6 | The Spectable Blog - <http://thespectableblog.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/emp1.jpg>
- 7 / 8 | ArchDaily - http://www.archdaily.com/8319/womens-health-centre-fare/487875645_fare-cbf-north-elevation-528x351.jpg
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- 15 | DailyIcon - <http://www.dailyicon.net/magazine/wp-content/uploads/2008/09/mudgee01dailyicon.jpg>
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