

Open Museum for Peace, Kitgum, Uganda

by Rafi Segal, David Salazar

When we talk about peace, we understand it as a state that is achieved through reconciliation. Reconciliation requires justice, by way of accountability for the atrocities of a conflict; healing, as an individual and social process; and rebuilding, the recovery of the local traditions that acts of war have threatened to erase. In keeping with this understanding, the Kitgum Museum for Peace and War Archive was conceived as both a memorial to the victims of the civil conflicts in Uganda—a living archive to collect testimonies and stories of the war—as well as a museum space for cultural heritage and public events.

While the archive contains accounts of the crimes of war, the museum path and courtyard—

through the display and practice of art, crafts, dress, customs and rituals—serves as an educational and public meeting space for cultural heritage and identity.

A new exhibition space in the form of a circular path is the primary organizational element of the project, which engages outdoor spaces and connects to the existing surrounding buildings, disparate structures that before seemed randomly scattered are now united through participation in the project. A space for collective activities has thus emerged among them.

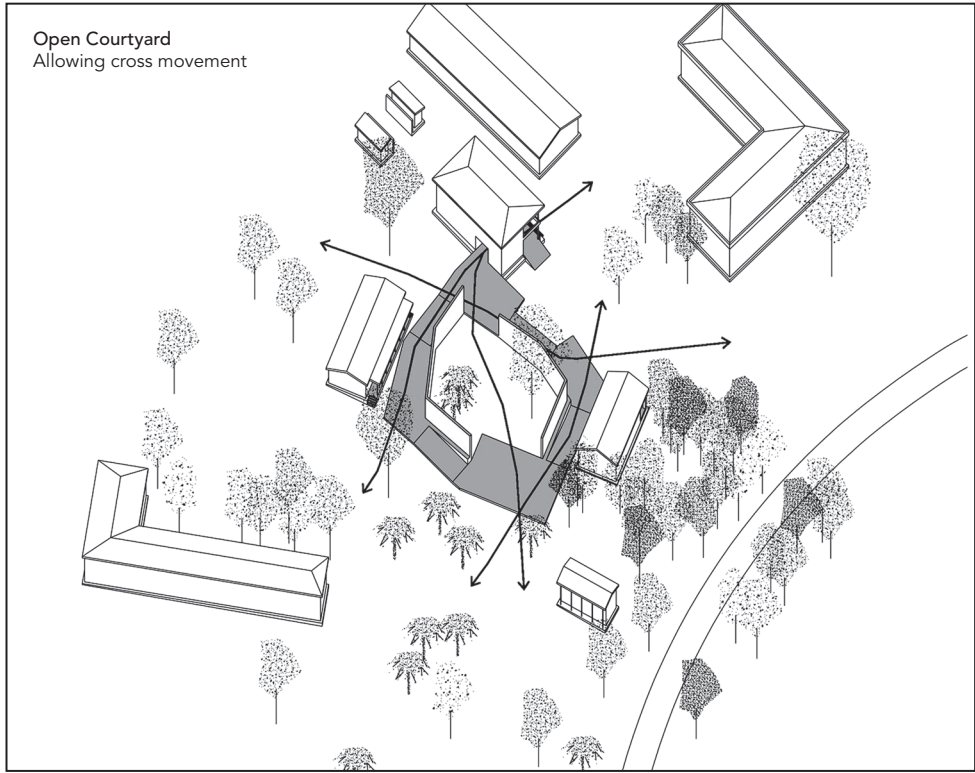
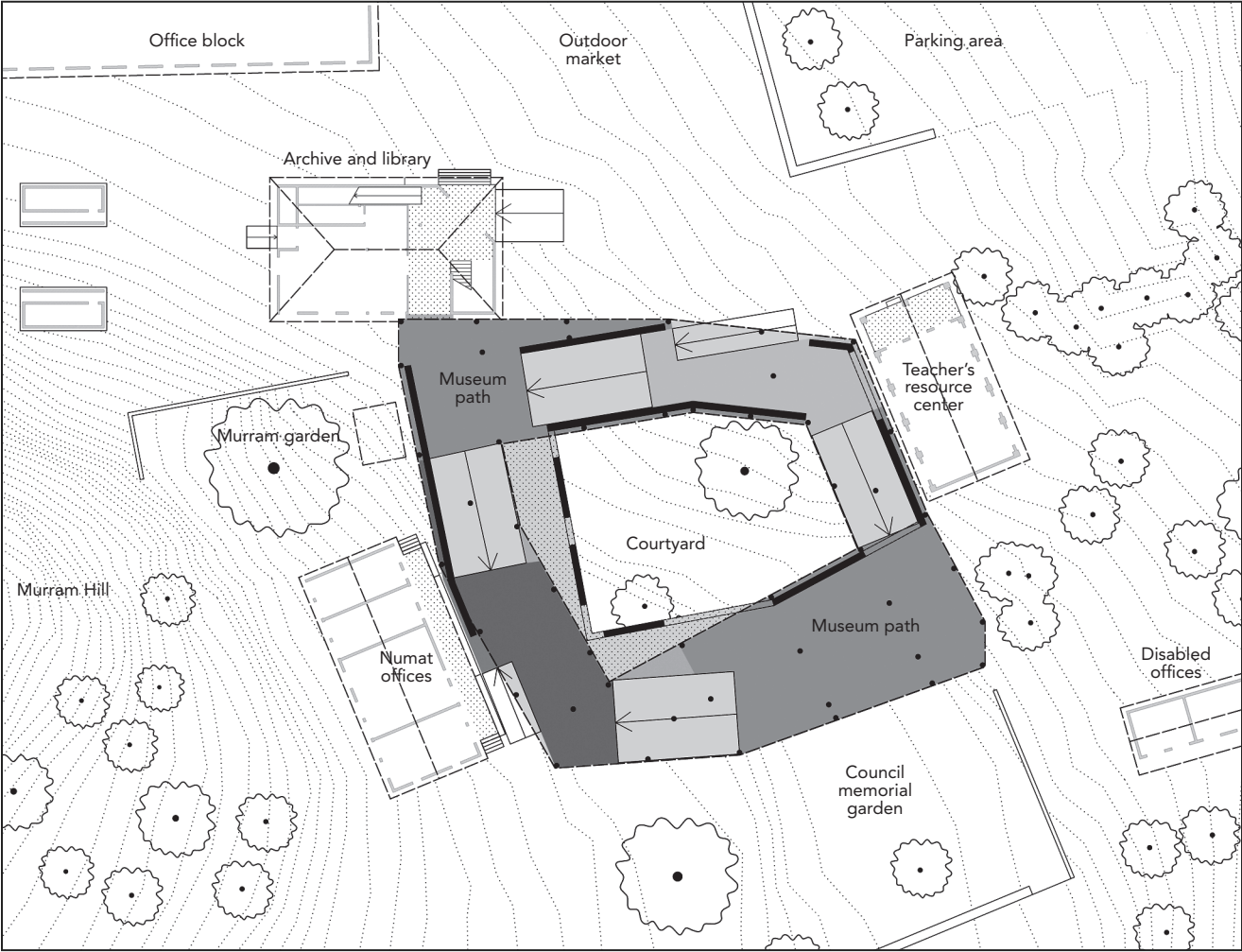
Architecturally, this circular path was conceived of as a covered open space. Its outer perimeter remains open, thus allowing one to enter the

museum through several points, and preserving the ability to move openly across the site. In relation to the exhibition, the path serves as a curatorial device that connects fragments of stories and events, without imposing a single narrative. It allows for individual freedom of movement, interaction, and ultimately, the framing and interpretation of events. Visitors will create different narratives as they are given the freedom to encounter the material as they wish.

Contrary to the common conception of the museum exhibition as a closed, separate, and independent experience, this partially open structure creates an exhibition space that is dependent on and integrated with its surroundings. The project

fully participates in the realities on site—both the elements of nature, and the human activities and movements between the buildings—to the point that the exhibition pathway and the existing public paths on site become one. Thus the site becomes the museum and the museum becomes the site.

Within the context of Kitgum and the conflicts of Northern Uganda, the project is far more than a record and display of a past conflict. The building of the Kitgum Museum for Peace reengages and reimagines a public space as an act of establishing and dedicating a physical site for collective purposes. The result is a literal and symbolic foundation for the peace-building process. X



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