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W I N N I N G P R O J E C T S

**Palestinian Museum**

Birzeit, Palestine

*Architect:* heneghan peng architects, Dublin, Ireland

*Client:* Taawon-Welfare Association, Ramallah, Palestine

**Project description**

Built to celebrate Palestinian heritage and with a stated aim to ‘foster a culture of dialogue and tolerance’, the museum is a flagship project of Palestine’s largest NGO, with support from nearby Birzeit University.

The site is defined by agricultural terraces formed of dry-stone walls (*sanasil*) erected by local villagers to adapt the terrain for cultivation. Selected through an international competition, the design takes its cues from this setting and is firmly embedded within it. An access road leads to the top of the hill where approaching visitors glimpse views out of the other side of the building, across this characteristic landscape and to the Mediterranean 40km to the west. The building’s plan is double-wedge-shaped. The main visitor spaces – lobby, exhibition area, glass gallery, shop, café and cloakroom – are at entrance level, limiting the need for vertical circulation. The café, in the north wing, opens onto a paved open-air terrace with further views. A pre-existing hollow in the topography is exploited to provide additional accommodation underneath the south wing, including stores and an education/research centre, leading to a sheltered outdoor amphitheatre.

The zigzagging forms of the Museum’s architecture and hillside gardens are inspired by the surrounding agricultural terraces, stressing the link with the land and symbolising resistance to the West Bank’s military occupation. Palestinian limestone, quarried locally near Bethlehem, is used for both façade cladding and exterior paving, unifying the scheme. The west façade’s masonry is cranked upwards in two places, exposing triangular curtain walls with metal fins whose sizes and locations are carefully calculated to protect the interior from solar glare and heat gain while maximising natural light – one of a number of measures that have earned the building its LEED Gold certification. Internally the Museum’s concrete structure is rough-rendered and white-painted.

The garden is themed to range from agricultural crops at the outer confines to more refined plantings nearer the buildings, and is intended to supply the café with typical Palestinian produce. Rainwater from the terrace and amphitheatre is harvested for use in the irrigation and flush systems, and wastewater is treated also for use in irrigation.



### **Jury Citation**

The Palestinian Museum stands as the powerful embodiment of a cultural identity under duress at the intersection of land and architecture, nature and people. By placing the traditional agricultural terracing of the region at the centre of its conception, the project locates land at the core of its curatorial mission.

This concept is carried throughout the design of the building, which stands on top of a hill overlooking a rich botanical garden of indigenous species, and faces the inaccessible distant sea and cities of historic Palestine.

In its integration into the natural topography, the building adopts the age-old architectural language of the region, but does so using a modern geometric language. It balances a reliance on local materials with the introduction of innovative detailing techniques.

Programmatically, the building displays regular exhibitions that document the history, cultures and ambitions of the peoples of Palestine. Its activities are intertwined with the vibrant educational environment of the nearby Birzeit University.

The building's very existence, its level of detailing and the perfection of its design and specifications – built despite a condition of occupation and siege – can be understood as nothing less than an act of hope for current and future generations.

### **Project data**

#### **Client**

Taawon Welfare Association, Ramallah, Palestine:

Zina Jardaneh, *chairperson*

Adila Laïdi-Hanieh, *director general*

#### **Architect**

heneghan peng architects, Dublin, Ireland:

Róisín Heneghan, Shih-Fu Peng, *directors*

Conor Sreenan, *project architect*



Elizabeth Gaynor, Catherine Opdebeeck, Dominic Lavelle, *architects*

Landscape Architect

Lara Zureikat, Amman, Jordan

Local Partner (Structures, Civil, MEP, Cost)

Arabtech Jardaneh, Ramallah, Palestine:

Hassan Abu Shalbak, *AJP Palestine lead*

Suzan Abdel Ghani, *administrator*

Main Contractor

Consolidated Contractors Company, Athens, Greece:

Haitham Jaber, *EPC manager*

Building Contractor

Tubaila Target United, Nablus, Palestine

Feras Tubaila, *co-founder*

Integrated Engineering and Fire

ARUP, London, United Kingdom:

Francis Archer, *associate director*

Lighting

Bartenbach GmbH, Aldrans, Austria:

Robert Mueller, *creative art director*

Façade Design

T/E/S/S atelier d'ingénierie, Paris, France:

Tom Gray, *director*

Project Manager

Projacs International, Dubai, United Arab Emirates:

Nasser Kanaan, *deputy CEO, country manager and business development director*

Emad Shaar, *senior project manager*



### Strategic Development

Cultural Innovations, London, United Kingdom

### Quantity Surveyor

Davis Langdon/AECOM, London

### Project Data

Site area: 40,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Built area: 3,085 m<sup>2</sup>

Garden area: 26,000 m<sup>2</sup>

Cost: 24,300,000 USD

Commission: December 2011

Design: March 2012 – April 2013

Construction: April 2013 – April 2016

Occupancy: May 2016

### heneghan peng architects

heneghan peng architects is a design partnership practicing architecture, landscape and urban design, founded by Shih-Fu Peng and Róisín Heneghan in New York in 1999. In 2001 it was relocated to Dublin, Ireland, and in 2011 opened an office in Berlin, Germany.

Shih-Fu Peng studied architecture at Cornell University and received his master's degree in architecture from Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1992. Peng is a frequent lecturer and visiting critic at prominent schools of architecture in the United States and Europe.

Róisín Heneghan received a Bachelor of Arts from University College Dublin and holds a Master of Architecture from Harvard University. Heneghan has retained an academic discourse as a lecturer, tutor, visiting critic and reviewer at several universities including Yale University, Harvard University, MIT, University College Dublin and Cornell University.

A multi-disciplinary approach drives the office to collaborate with many leading designers and engineers on a range of projects which include larger-scale urban masterplans, bridges, landscapes and buildings.

Projects include the Canadian Canoe Museum, the National Gallery of Ireland, the Grand Egyptian Museum at the Pyramids, the Giant's Causeway Visitor Centre, Airbnb EMEA headquarters in Dublin and the Diamond Bridges at the 2012 London Olympic Park.

### Website

[www.hparc.com/](http://www.hparc.com/)