2009 UNESCO Heritage Awards
Jury Commendation for Innovation

Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School, Qingyang, Gansu, China

Description
Designed by Professor Edward NG and Mr MU Jun, Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School is located in a village in Gansu Province, northwest China. The new school is an ecologically friendly complex of five buildings constructed using traditional mud-brick building techniques. The forms of the buildings recall the traditional dwellings of the area, while providing a modern, well-lit and pleasant classroom atmosphere. The new school is intended to replace the cave that was in use previously as the village school, which was heated with harmful and ecologically-unsound coal.

Jury report
The design of the Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School offers an attractive modern and locally-suitable alternative to the existing cave schools. It maintains continuity with long-standing local building traditions, in particular, by adapting the environmentally-sustainable aspects of vernacular earthen architecture. The careful selection of materials and techniques, combining mud brick with modern technology such as double glazing, has allowed the school to minimize its energy consumption. The school complex blends smoothly and fits comfortably into the surrounding landscape. The configuration of the buildings creates a livable space at a human scale that is sensitive to this particular context of the loess plateau. Built in cooperation with the local villagers themselves, the project sends a strong message about the relevance of applying traditional wisdom to build in an ecological and socially sustainable manner.

Apart from the UNESCO Award, the eco-school has also been honoured in:
- 2009 RIBA International Awards
- Design for Asia 2008 Awards
- 2008 World Architecture Festival Awards
- 2008 CAMA Awards
- AR Emerging Architecture 2009 Awards
- Zumtobel 2008 Awards
Heritage Conservation in Asia
An informal discussion forum with Dr Tim Curtis, Head of Culture Unit, UNESCO Bangkok

Zone A & B, School of Architecture, CUHK
20 November 2009, 6.00pm to 7.00pm (after the award ceremony)

Dr. Tim Curtis is the head of the Culture Unit in UNESCO Bangkok office, and is responsible for the coordination and implementation of UNESCO's Culture Programme in South East Asia. He has been working on culture issues in international contexts for the last fifteen years firstly as a cultural anthropologist and then for UNESCO. He received his PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, where he wrote a thesis entitled ‘Talking about Place’ on the relationship between oral history and place amongst the Na’hai speakers of Malakula in the Republic of Vanuatu. From March 2000 until December 2002 he worked as a consultant for UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Section at UNESCO Headquarters, primarily on the design and implementation of intangible heritage projects as well as on the launching of the UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001. In January 2003 he joined the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Project in the UNESCO Science Sector, before moving to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in December 2004, where as programme specialist for Culture he oversaw UNESCO culture sector programme in Tanzania, Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius and Seychelles. In June 2009 he moved to UNESCO Bangkok office. He has worked on numerous international programmes related to culture in the fields of heritage, cultural industries, cultural policies and culture and development.

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Award Ceremony
2009 UNESCO Heritage Awards - Jury Commendation for Innovation
Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School, Qingyang, Gansu, China

Zone A & B, School of Architecture, CUHK
20 November 2009, 4.30pm to 5.30pm (drinks after the ceremony)

Jury report: The design of the Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School offers an attractive modern and locally-suitable alternative to the existing cave schools. It maintains continuity with long-standing local building traditions, in particular, by adapting the environmentally-sustainable aspects of vernacular earthen architecture. The careful selection of materials and techniques, combining mud brick with modern technology such as double glazing, has allowed the school to minimize its energy consumption. The school complex blends smoothly and fits comfortably into the surrounding landscape. The configuration of the buildings creates a livable space at a human scale that is sensitive to this particular context of the loess plateau. Built in cooperation with the local villagers themselves, the project sends a strong message about the relevance of applying traditional wisdom to build in an ecological and socially sustainable manner.