Report on the activities and the product of the group’s 10 days presence in Shutb, Asyut during the period 6-15th of April 2018.
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1 INTRODUCTION

CUS is an initiative that organizes sketching walks, tour walks and sketching workshops. We believe that through sketching, architects, designers and common people can express their opinions and communicate their ideas with themselves and others. While sketching is widely understood as drawing on paper, our art activities include murals, comics, and public engagement.

This report of the workshop organized by the Cairo Urban Sketchers team, hereafter referred to as CUS, in Asyut for the British museum as part of the expedition’s scope of local community development. The presence of CUS in the village spanned over 10 days between 6th and 15th of April, 2018. The first three days were dedicated to communication with the authorities to get their approval of holding the workshop in Shutb Preparatory School and performing the Art work on the Walls of Shutb train Station.

The workshop took a course of five consecutive days in which a group of preparatory education students, aged between 12-15 years old, participated. The workshop aimed to capture the extent to which the students appreciate the traditional Shutb houses and are in favour of preserving and developing this architectural heritage. Four levels of exercises were designed to help the students express their ideas.

1. Basic drawing techniques
2. Drawing the dream house
3. Identification of elements of architectural heritage character
4. What would a Shutbi house look like

Exercises varied from open discussions, drawings and hands-on experience. The objective was to raise heritage awareness and challenge some perceptions related to the traditional heritage versus the new construction practice in the village.

This workshop took place in parallel to the mural activity that was executed on the Shutb railway station walls. Students engaged with the artist to understand the message and significance of what the artwork being done.

1.1 Participating team

1. Ameer Abdurrahman - Architect
2. Ahmed Saafan - Architect
3. Radwa ElHassany - Architect
4. Nada ElMergawi - Artist
5. Omar Abotaleb - Architect
6. Mariam Mohamed - Architect
2 Day 1

2.1 The Shutbi House

Location: Shutb Elementary School
Participants: 18 Students

The first day focused on developing basic drawing skill with the students through a “follow me” exercise; an exercise where students follow step by step what the instructor draws. This was performed by exercising different linear patterns. They enhanced their command over straight lines and spacing between them. The exercise was filling up different squares with parallel lines in different directions. The exercise got more complex as they progressed and ended with drawing spirals in different directions.

In a following exercise, the students were asked to create a composition from the different linear configurations they learned. An open discussion took place and collected their opinions about the aesthetical principals found in these compositions. The concepts they concluded were:

- Contrast (between curves and lines)
- Diversity (of used elements)
- Order
- Integrated composition
- Proper drawing

A final discussion analysed the elements that form a traditional building façade. Students were encouraged to look at the surrounding buildings visible from the classroom windows. They identified the different components of the façade as an introductory exercise to Day 2 activities. The components identified were:

- Number of floors
- Doors
- Windows
- Finishes
- Terraces
- Roofs
- Ornaments
- Installations (lights, A/C, curtains, etc.)
As homework, students were asked to redo the composition exercise using the hatches and shapes they learned to draw. The homework was another chance to exercise the aesthetic principals deduced in the classroom.

**Figure 1** White board showing the basic drawing skills exercise and aesthetic concepts identified through discussion

**Figure 2** Ring discussion about the aesthetic qualities of abstract compositions
2.2 Shutb Heritage Mural

Location: Shutb Train Station

![Figure 3 laying out the Mural outline over the station walls on the first day]

3 Day 2

3.1 The Shutbi House

Location: Shutb Elementary School
Participants: 25 Students

“Follow me” exercise was again used to explain the concepts of order. Students were asked to practice drawing patterns which were based on language of architectural heritage (i.e. patterns of brick, windows, and doors) in addition to other generic patterns.

The second day ended with a discussion about the order they can find in the neighbouring buildings. The students were able to identify common patterns across buildings.

The students’ homework was to think of how the house of their dreams would look like. They were reminded of the façade components they deduced in the first day and were encouraged to think of the house they would like to live in.
FIGURE 4 A. Saafan from CUS team engaging the students in an open discussion about patterns and order

FIGURE 5 Students exercised basic skills in drawing patterns to understand its underlying order
3.2 Shutb Heritage Mural
Location: Shutb Train Station

Figure 6 A. Rahman from CUS team guiding the students to observe their surrounding and figure the components of building facades and the order that binds them.

Figure 7 Students discussing the elements of the mural with Nada, the collaborating artist.
4 Day 3

4.1 The Shutbi House

Location: Shutb Elementary School
26 Students

The third day started with an interview on the motivation behind the chosen façade for each student. This involved a discussion of their perception of the buildings they see around them, their evaluation of them and reasons behind their impressions. An extended drawing workshop was performed during the day to enhance their capacity of drawing proper building facades. It was noticed that several items of the architectural heritage were included in the dream house they designed.

The second half of the workshop consisted of a dialogue about the architectural character of buildings. Samples from Nubian houses, oasis houses, and English houses were introduced to the students. That was followed by an open debate in which the students identified the elements that characterize a house façade from Shutb.

Their homework for this day was to walk around the village and capture aspects of the building facades that remind them of Shutb. They were encouraged to take pictures of these items with a mobile phone and bring it to the class on the next day.

Figure 8 Radwa ElHassany from CUS team discusses with a student her drawing of the dream house
Figure 9 Omar Abutaleb from CUS team discusses with a student her drawing of the dream house.

Figure 10 Example of the dream houses drawn by the students which incorporates elements of the vernacular architectural traditions; the Mogawthara-arched metal work and the unique patterns on the doors on the ground level.
5 Day 4

5.1 The Shutbi House

Location: Shutb Elementary School

The last day of the workshop started with a display of the items captured by the students. Every student explained which items they have chosen and the reasons they think it represents Shutb. An open conversation took place to filter these items and reflect on the views of their relevance to Shutb. The students explained that several aspects of the architectural Shutbi character can be associated and compared with other villages in the Asyut region. The architectural features highlighted were:

- Brick patterns
- Megawthara (arched metalwork) over entrances and windows
- Upper floors built with animal droppings
- Arousa (dancing female figure profiles with bricks on building facade)
- Lion (ornament found over entrances)
- The man and the bird (ornament engraved on the doors)

The students were then provided with a matrix of several elements of Shutb’s architectural heritage. They used tracing paper to incorporate the elements they choose from the matrix into the façade of the dream house they designed. As they traced the elements they got more aware of the underlying patterns of the different elements and they exercised the principals of aesthetics they learned during the first day.

The home work of this day was to properly redraw the façade they designed and color it. The following day they were asked for the reasons behind the configurations they used. We also tried to help them reflect on the preference between recent building practices and their Shutbi House. Clearly, in spite of the appreciation of the architectural heritage, there was no overruling consensus on either of the architectural images.
Figure 11 Discussion round with students about what makes the Shutbi House

Figure 12 Students are invited to explain what they drew and why they think it represents the Shutbi House
**Figure 13** Example of the facade design by the students for the Shutbi House

**Figure 14** Students were handed a matrix of elements which make up the character of the vernacular architecture. They chose different elements and used them to create the facade design of the house.
5.2 Shutb Heritage Mural
Location: Shutb Train Station

![Image of Shutb Heritage Mural](image)

**Figure 15 Nada ElMerawai drawing out another element of the vernacular character; the lion found over the entrances of houses**

6 Day 5

6.1 The Shutbi House
Location: Shutb Elementary School

The students exhibited their design and we discussed the ideas behind their choice of architectural heritage elements. The students used several concepts of aesthetics and order gathered in the beginning of the workshop.

The discussion included a comparison between the new construction practices with the traditional houses in terms of aesthetics. It is possible to say that there was a consensus in appreciating the character of their architectural heritage. However, the new construction culture seemed to allure some of them. This is possible associated with the relative quality of finish and structural integrity of the new construction. This perception can be further challenged if they are exposed to architecture which exhibits the character of heritage in addition to the integrity of its structure. The art work performed on the walls of Shutb station provided such example to the local population. The interaction on social media of the local population of Shutb as reaction to the work done in the station indicates that such architectural intervention can benefit the survival of the heritage character.
6.2 Shutb Heritage Mural

Location: Shutb Train Station

Work on the Mural continued for Day 6.

Figure 16 Local teenagers following up the late stages of the mural

Figure 17 Senior students participating in stamping the vernacular patterns over the station wall
Figure 18 Daytime photo of the finished work by Ahmed Mostafa

Figure 19 Night photo of the finished work by Ahmed Mostafa
7 Reception of Shutb Station artwork

7.1 On site

As soon as the main elements of the mural became recognizable, local people engaged with the team in different ways. Some of them gave Nada a hand in moving the ladder and sticking the masking tape. Other people challenged each other to identify the mural’s elements. Some others advised a better way to handle the materials and the ladder. People came to visit us several times during the same day. Students went to their afternoon classes and came back afterwards to help us until the very last day. Before we finish the mural they started taking pictures with it and with us.

Figure 20 Locals take pictures in front of the mural before it is completed

Figure 21 Locals were keen on taking pictures with the Nada ElMergawi
7.2 Social Media

Locals interacted with the album of the station on Al Asayta page, a local news Facebook page, and CURC page (our workshops focused page). We translated below the impressions of some local people regarding the artworks at the station. On both pages it is clear that the impressions are very positive and provoked feelings of pride and belonging in several cases. Other responses were critical of the artwork because of the marginality of the station and the ‘bigger problems’ which the village faces.

![Figure 22 Responses from the Locals on the Alasayta Facebook Page](image)

*Figure 22 Responses from the Locals on the Alasayta Facebook Page*
Figure 23 Continued responses on Alasayta Facebook page
Figure 24 Responses of the local community on CURC Facebook page

They should do this in Assiut Station

I can't believe this is shub station

You worked on the station while the whole village is in a sorry state
8 Conclusion:

There are several associated feelings with the Kom, which differ according to each student’s preferences and everyday life. One of the reasons behind the negative impressions of the Kom is the accumulated garbage around public spaces. Others mentioned occasional fights that occur around it. Positive impressions of the Kom arrive from its sloped streets, which make it a suitable playground for kids. For others being an elevated platform makes it an observation spot for the surrounding areas. These diverse impressions of the about the Kom can be seen as indications of its potential development. An expanded investigation of these impressions can guide us to develop strategies that enhance the Kom’s authentic experience. It is a necessary step to help the locals appreciate their architectural heritage and find ways of adopting it.

Alternatively, when it comes to the architecture of the village, the students clearly appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the vernacular architecture. They dislike the declining conditions of its structures; a state that made them become the houses of the poor or reused as animal farms. These transformations explain cultural and social reasons behind the schism in character between the old and new constructions in the village. In contrast, according to the students, the new construction offers bright colors, solid structure and “modern” facilities. All of them can be seen as indications of the financial welfare of their owners. However, looking at the diverse images of the new construction, it is possible to say that there is no agreement about a “modern” aesthetical code or practice. Having said that, it becomes clear that experimental activities, which promote the adoption of aesthetics derived from heritage may be successful in reinforcing the people-heritage mindset.

The artwork performed on the station was positively received by the locals. The common appreciation of the artwork was mainly for its aesthetic addition. Although some locals questioned the benefits of such artistic project, they were interested in identifying the architectural subjects of the mural. In addition to the architectural and landscape elements, there were also the mythical items, which the locals relate to, such as the golden roaster and the lion over the door. In addition, traditional patterns of the vernacular architecture were also used to echo the mural on the main elevation of the station. The use of stamps to create these patterns offered an opportunity for the students to participate in the painting activities. The interest expressed by the locals in the subjects and the implementation of the artwork indicates their desire to understand the value of their village and their willingness to appreciate and develop it.

The social media captures the feelings of pride and belonging among the locals, which were evoked by the new image of the station. As we see these responses, we ought to stress again that the elements used in the artworks were all adaptations from their architectural heritage. The artwork introduces a
plausible image that connects a “modern building” to heritage character. It overcomes the typical associations of poverty and decline with the character of their vernacular architecture. This suggests that reintroducing the qualities of the vernacular architecture in “modern” language to the public can guide the local paradigm towards connecting the old and the new. Therefore in order to encourage the locals to adopt and develop the qualities of their architectural heritage, they may only need a realistic example. Different projects and activities addressing aspects of heritage are needed to expose their qualities. Through pilot projects these qualities can be reintroduced to overcome their stigma and complement today’s construction culture.