



Bringing Concrete into the Playground

The first summer school organized by Turkish Cement Manufacturers' Association was realized in Ankara, Middle East Technical University campus. The theme was "Concrete Modules in Children's Playgrounds".

Students Experience "the Bauhaus", Thanks to the TCMA Architecture Summer School

Architecture students experienced "the Bauhaus" in Ankara during the summer school organized in collaboration with TCMA (Turkish Cement Manufacturers' Association) and METU (Middle East Technical University).

21 students coming from different architecture schools learned, designed, and applied during the week-long event. Students completed the Summer School, which started off with an approach that presented the theory and practice as a whole, while gaining a lot of valuable experience. Living the theory and practice together as a whole for the first time they left behind a design they have implemented with their own hands. Three students from the Communication Faculty filmed all of the activities during the workshop. After editing of the film is finished, it will be available broadcast in national television channels as a youth documentary.

Here's what fit into a week during this activity: The preschool and elementary school divisions of the METU High School gained a playground; 21 students got a chance to experience cement and concrete first hand, created a design that utilized them, cast iron, assembled the molds and implemented their own creation; a youth documentary which will be broadcasted national television channels and a photo exhibition consisting of photographs taken during the week long activities slated for display in various architecture faculties.

The TCMA Architecture Summer School took place at the METU campus on July 22-29, 2002 with the METU Architecture Faculty's cooperation in an attempt to investigate the alternative uses and limits of cement and its byproduct concrete, and to improve the environmental sensitivity and the quality of the physical environment.

Theme:

The theme of this year's TCMA Architecture Summer School was selected as "Concrete Modules in



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Children's Playgrounds". Following this theme, the participating students developed and implemented various concrete based arrangement alternatives around the METU Preschool .

Participants:

21 students, selected from candidates on track to start their senior year in the departments of Architecture, Industrial Design, Urban and Landscape Design in Turkey and Northern Cyprus, participated in the program.

TCMA Architecture Summer School Coordinator:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selahattin Önür (Chair of METU Architecture Department)

TCMA Summer School Moderators:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdi Güzer, faculty member in METU Architecture Faculty
Özcan Uygur, Architect, MSc.
Semra Uygur, Architect, MSc.

Impressions of the Moderators:

ASSOC. PROF. DR. SELAHATTİN ÖNÜR
In a preliminary meeting held on February 7, 2002, in Istanbul, between the Turkish Cement Manufacturers' Association and the heads of architecture departments from 7 universities, different proposals aiming to foster university-industry collaboration with respect to better promotion and implementation of cement and concrete were taken discussed. Due to the possibility that the "Blitz Concrete" workshop, a week long activity that had been organized in collaboration with the Dutch Cement Industry (ENCI), Universities of Delft and Eindhoven, and the Netherlands Architecture Institute every summer since 1998, may be held outside of the Netherlands, one of the proposals discussed was to try and make arrangements to hold it in Turkey during summer 2003, and have the TCMA participate in this organization. (TCMA



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- 1 The alternative playground, the end product of the workshop, faces the conventional playground of the elementary school
- 2 The first day of the workshop, students meet with the moderators
- 3 The students first built a model to visualize their designs
- 4 On the construction site, students' performance was as high as the workers'
- 5-7 Students experienced the whole process of the execution of their design
- 8-9 Concrete walls awaiting children...
- 10 Finally, it is children's turn to experience the concrete walls

PHOTOS
Engin Galibolu



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had already funded the participation of two students from Turkey in the last two summers, in 2000 and 2001).

TCMA embraced this proposal with a slight change and agreed to initiate and organize a similar summer workshop which would bring together participants from the architecture and design schools in Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Depending on the experience gained from the initial pilot program, TCMA suggested they may be able to turn this into an annual and international event.

During the first meeting held in April 2002, the theme "Concrete and Children" was selected (mainly because they are two concepts difficult to associate together in people's imagination) and an arid site adjacent to the wooded area next to the METU Development Foundation's Preschool was identified for the project which was agreed to be completed within the METU Campus. The design activities in the studio and the construction activities on the site, started on July 22, 2002 with the participation of 21 students coming from 13 different schools, and lasted until July 28, 2002 under the supervision, direction and assistance of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdi Güzer (METU), architect Semra Uygur (MSc.), architect Özcan Uygur (MSc.) and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selahattin Önür.

During the studio activity held on the first day, it was agreed that we would guide

the students towards a "wall" design that defined vertical spaces and enabled contact with the children through the characteristics of its surface and form. For the creative design activities, small groups (3-4 students) could work on as a team. Abdi Güzer proposed a project that would base on the creation of six 10m-long parallel walls interacting with the topography that would be designed separately by each group.

The space between these walls, the passages among them, coordination between adjacent groups in addition to the height limitations for the walls, and topography gave us the opportunity to discuss the whole structure attained within a 10x10 m area.

The 1/10 scale model built in the studio in the first three days, was constructed in full scale at the site with the assistance of professional craftsmen, workers, and technical equipment by the participating students. All activities lasted seven days and were completed by the planned date and time.

Initiated and implemented in a relatively short period of time, this summer workshop helped us gain valuable experiences with respect to both the organization of the event as a whole and also in terms of determining what can be done in a week long event. Such a specific work environment accommodating student participants from within and outside the country, is very

important because of the opportunities it provides for team work, and social and cultural interaction, and also because it gives students a chance to familiarize themselves -earlier, better, and closer- with a widely used building material.

SEMRA UYGUR (MSC.)

ÖZCAN UYGUR (MSC.)

"Concrete and Children". This may be a combination hard to imagine at first glance. In order to understand why such an unlikely combination was chosen instead of children and the green (nature), or children and wood, we can stop by the yard of the METU Elementary School when the schools start and satisfy our curiosity.

We believe the TÇMA Architecture Summer School we participated in as moderators together with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selahattin Önür and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Abdi Güzer was very successful in terms of how it was realized and its results. 21 architecture students coming from different universities and getting to know each other during this process materialized a design and implementation within one week based on the main concepts we provided them about concrete and children.

In addition to the design and construction of the playground, students gained tangible experiences in this work environment about: how architecture is a total design process; how there could be certain limitations; how decision making is the main ingredient of the design process; how the designed structure is a result of team work; how much effort and sacrifice is required for materializing the designed structure; and how ideas in one's mind first transform into lines on a piece of paper, and then those lines transform into reality and the end product.

The significance of this whole process for us, which was documented by three students from the Communication Faculty of Ankara University, was sharing the happiness these young, candidate-architect colleagues felt when they witnessed the materialization of their own designs while they were still in school. We believe that the end result succeeded in showing our young friends what an amazing material concrete is, and how it



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can present countless possibilities as long as its used as a design element. It wouldn't be surprising to see the children playing among the constructed modules, use them like craft paper. The fact that the completed structure will be re-interpreted by its creative users will be another exciting dimension of the whole process.

We thank everyone who contributed to the realization of this project, and participated in it. We hope that the Turkish Cement Manufacturers' Association will continue their support to education. ■

Translated by Sinem Şenol