



HELENA SANDMAN PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO

Photo Alessio Chiaradia



Women's Centre, Rufisque, Senegal, 2001

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

This project has offered facilities for various women's organizations for a quarter of a century. It started as a student project and included fund raising for the construction. The design is inspired by Senegal's cultural heritage and harmoniously blends modern and traditional architectural elements. Locally-sourced and recycled materials were used in its construction, further reinforcing its ties to the local culture and ecosystem. This project was a starting point for my interest in designing for people not necessarily being able to use architectural services. The project has been published world-wide and has inspired numbers young architects to follow a socially responsible path in architecture.

(Role: Shared architectural design lead)

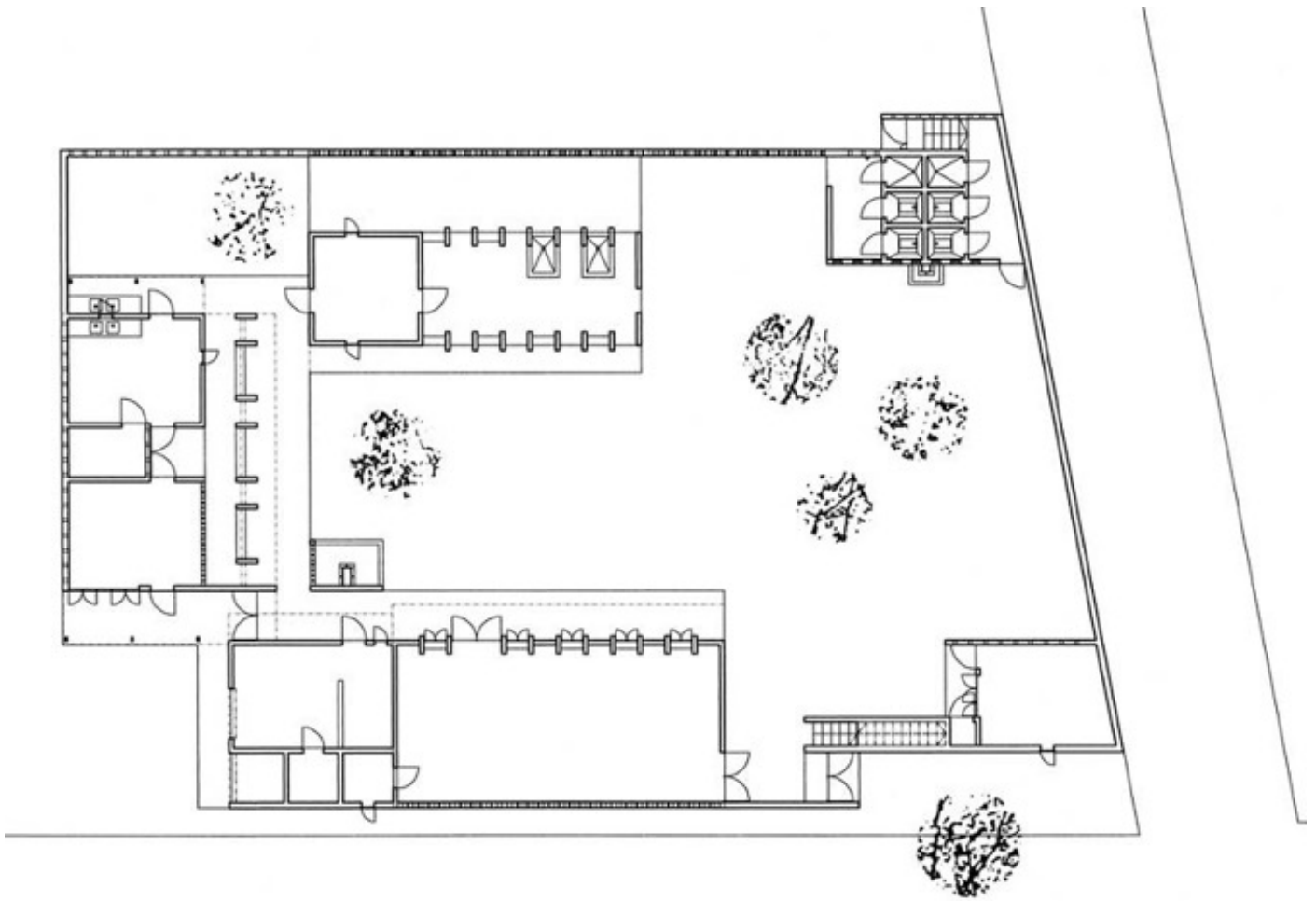


Photo Helena Sandman



Photos Juha Ilonen





Sebkhat Sejoumi inclusive urban planning and lake restoration, Tunis, Tunisia, 2019

Leapfrog Projects

In collaboration with The Environmental Institute of Finland, we planned the surroundings of the 25 km² saltflat lake, Sebkha Sejoumi, in central Tunis, Tunisia, with an inclusive design approach using nature-based solutions. The area around the lake is inhabited by the city's lowest income class and holds historical significance as the starting point of the Jasmine Revolution in 2011. Balancing social, political, and economic needs while preserving the lake's protected ecosystem and its role as a haven for migratory birds posed a challenge. We aimed to mediate between various parties with different political agendas through an empathetic and inclusive planning process. The pandemic and later the political situation in Tunis has put the project run by Business Finland on hold.

(Role: Planning, architectural, and co-design lead)

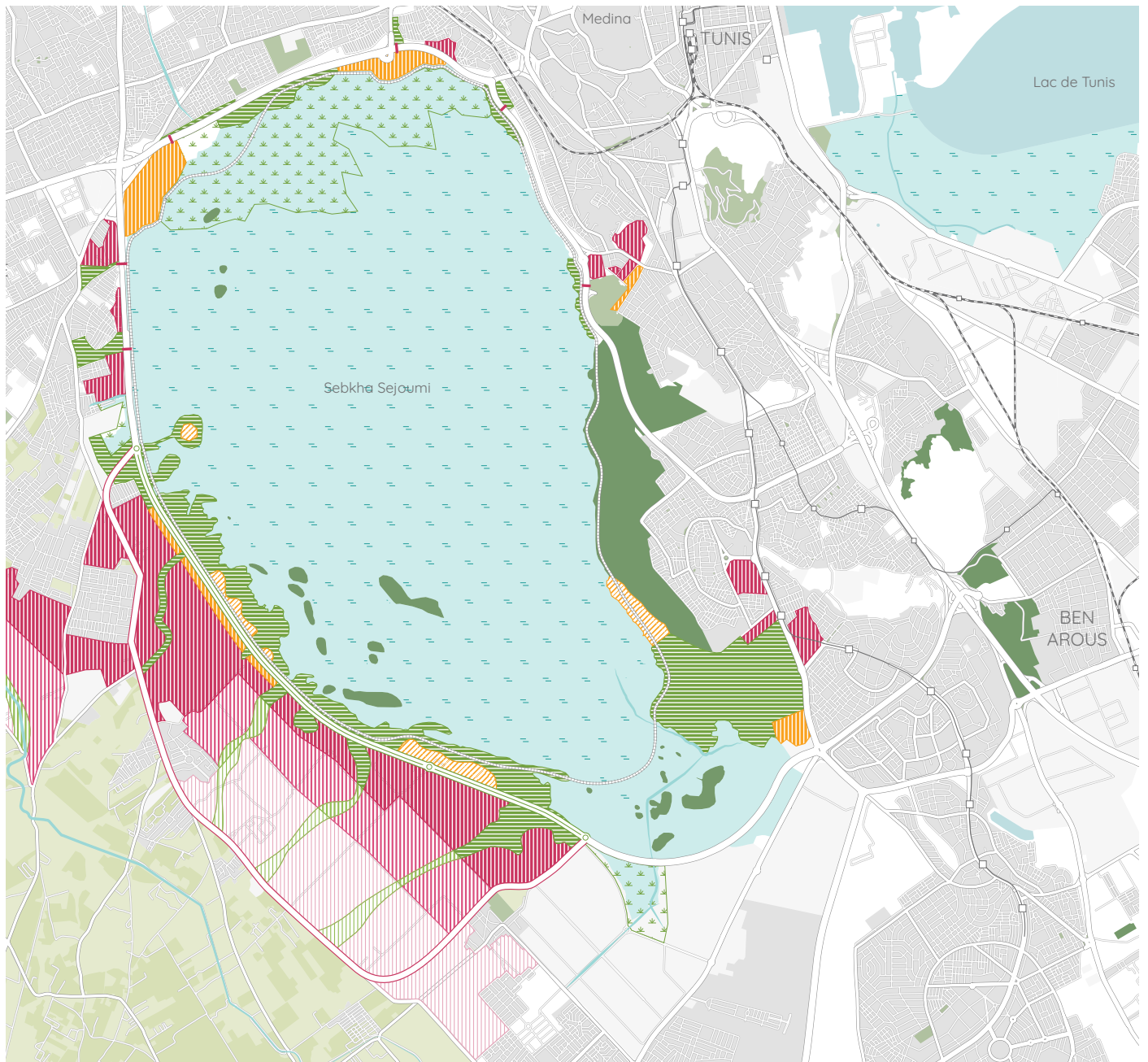






Photo Juha Ilonen

KWIECO Shelter House, Moshi, Tanzania, 2015

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

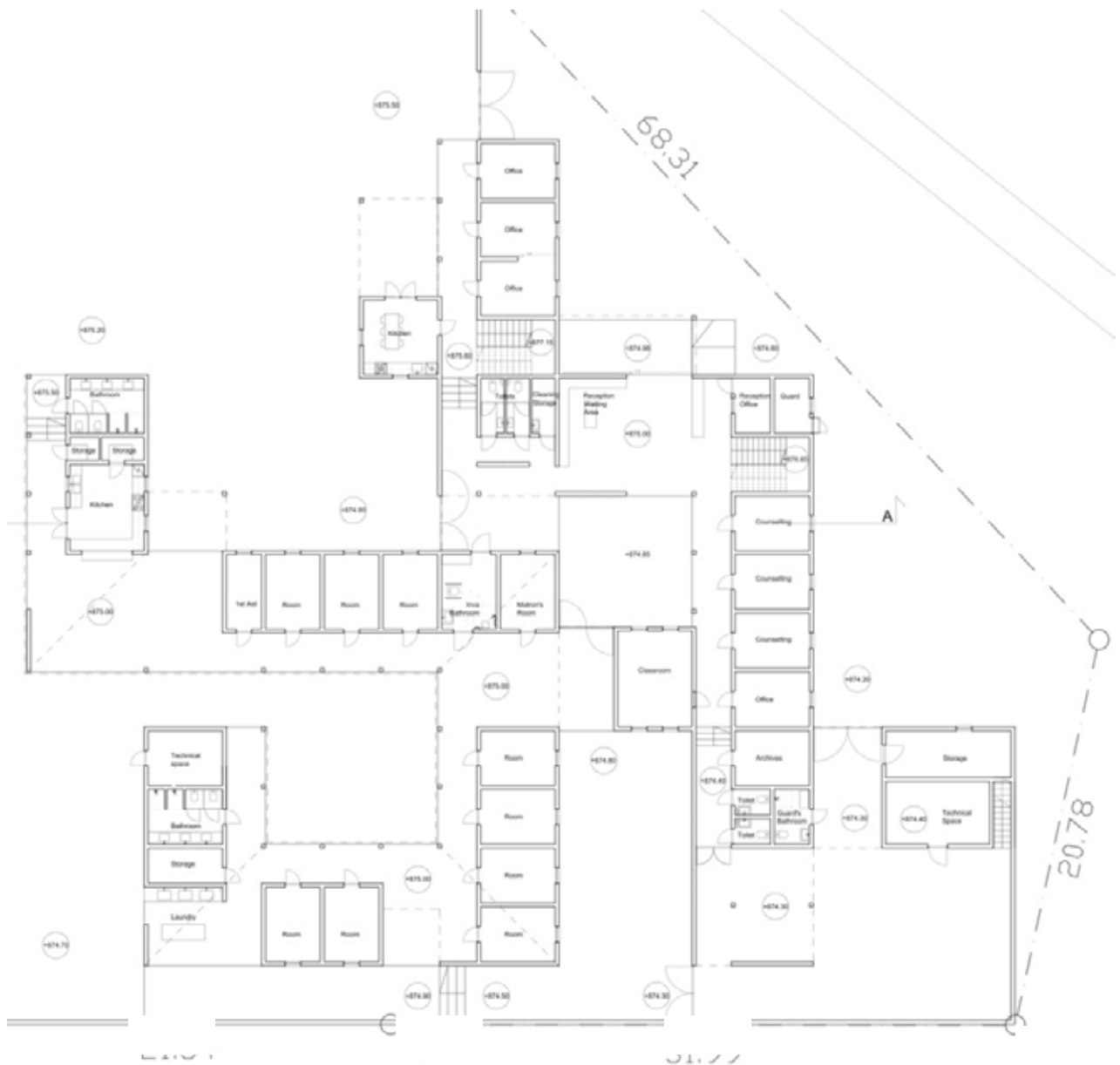
The design for the shelter home aims to provide safety, sustainability, and cultural sensitivity. Constructed with locally-sourced materials, the building minimizes environmental impact and incorporates passive design principles for natural ventilation and year-round comfort. Beyond providing a safe space, the organization KWIECO empowers its residents through counselling, education, and vocational training, supporting them in rebuilding their lives and regaining independence. The first phase of the shelter was constructed in 2015, but the office wing still awaits construction.

(Role: Shared architectural design lead)



Photos Juha Ilonen







Affordable Housing in Ng'ambo, Zanzibar, Tanzania, 2018

This affordable and incremental housing project with a strong focus on sustainability and participatory design was one of the projects that layed as a foundation for my doctoral thesis. The area faced urban sprawl, posing a threat to agricultural land and the community's cultural heritage. Collaborating with the Department of Urban and Rural Planning (DoURP) and the local inhabitants, we developed a higher-density housing plan to involve the community in shaping their future. The objective was to explore possibilities for dense housing and implement collaborative design methods that strengthened the relationship between the DoURP and the community. Despite facing challenges related to historical displacement, we built trust through close collaboration over two years, resulting in an inclusive and sustainable housing solution. The project plans were donated to the DoURP, awaiting construction.

(Role: Architectural design and co-design lead)



Incremental apartment co-creation project in Zanzibar – Helena Sandman Architects
www.newglobal.aalto.fi

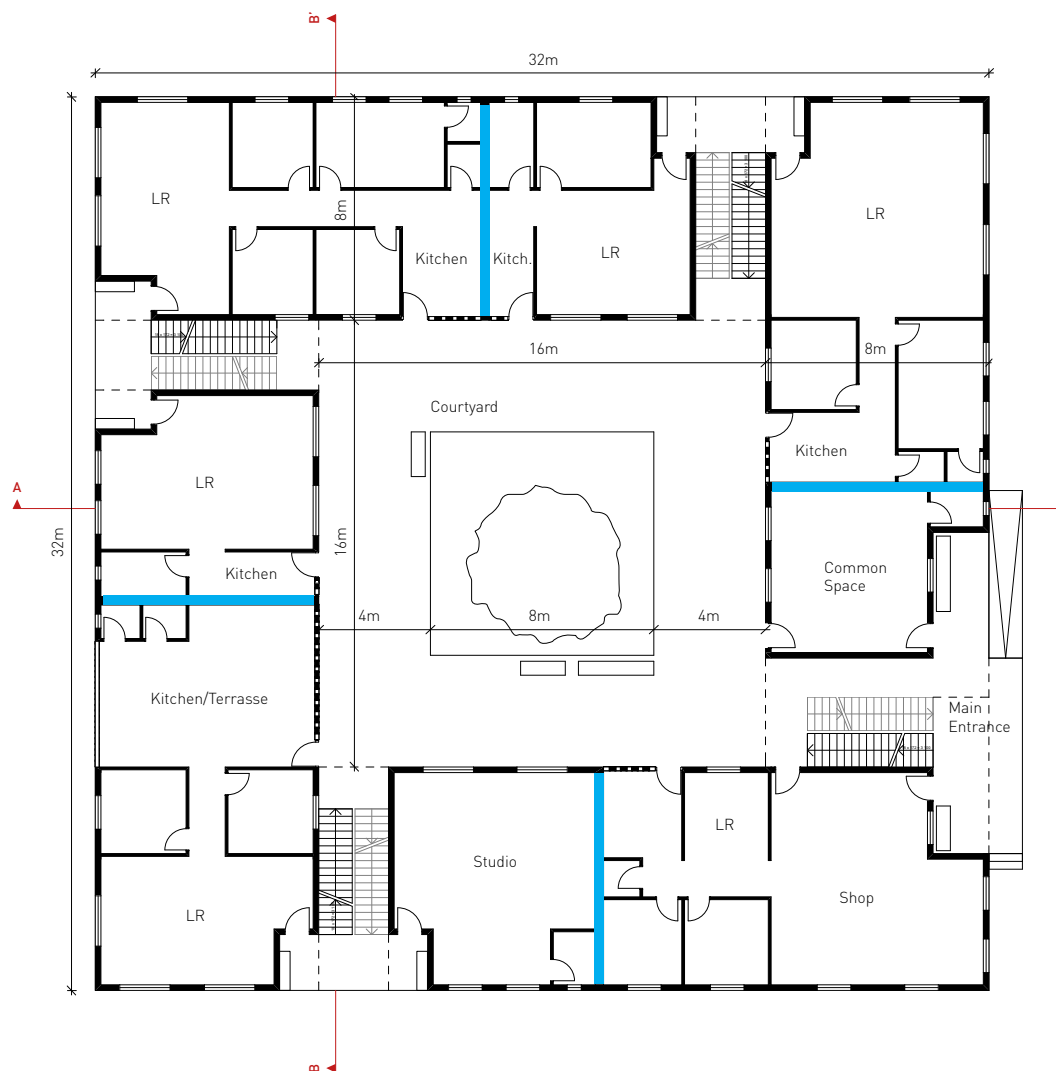




Photo Helena Sandman





Afri Furniture, value chain enhancement, Tanzania, 2022

Leapfrog Projects

Addressing the prevailing issue of unsuitable hardwood furniture in Tanzanian homes, especially for small spaces, we enhanced the furniture value chain and promoted collaborative design. We collaborated with multiple stakeholders to better understand the local furniture market and culture using ethnography, interviews, and prototyping. This approach identified intervention points within the socio-economic system. The proposed interventions included establishing a local startup for sustainable design furniture, enhancing local carpentry skills through collaboration with Scandinavian designers, strengthening carpenter associations and smallholder farmers, and introducing a cooperative governance model. This comprehensive approach aimed to create a resilient and sustainable market that meets urban needs, generates rural employment, and protects the environment.

(Role: Project lead, furniture design by Henri Judin)



Photo James Kasela



Photo Helena Sandman



Photo Helena Sandman



Maternity Ward, Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Basta, India, 2016 and 2018

I was leading the architectural design team for the Lab. Our Ward project executed by the Helsinki-based social impact company Marketing for International Development (M4ID, renamed Scope) and financed by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We took on a design project with a critical objective: preventing maternal and child deaths by improving the quality of care in maternity wards. Through comprehensive design, we aimed to create smoother and safer maternal and newborn birth experiences. Our team conducted background research in Zanzibar and proposed an extension for the Kivunge hospital's maternity ward. Subsequently, we prototyped the design concept in Basta, Odisha, India, refurbishing an existing healthcare facility. The project prioritized the needs of mothers and newborns, emphasizing the importance of quality care in maternal health.

(Role: Architectural design lead)

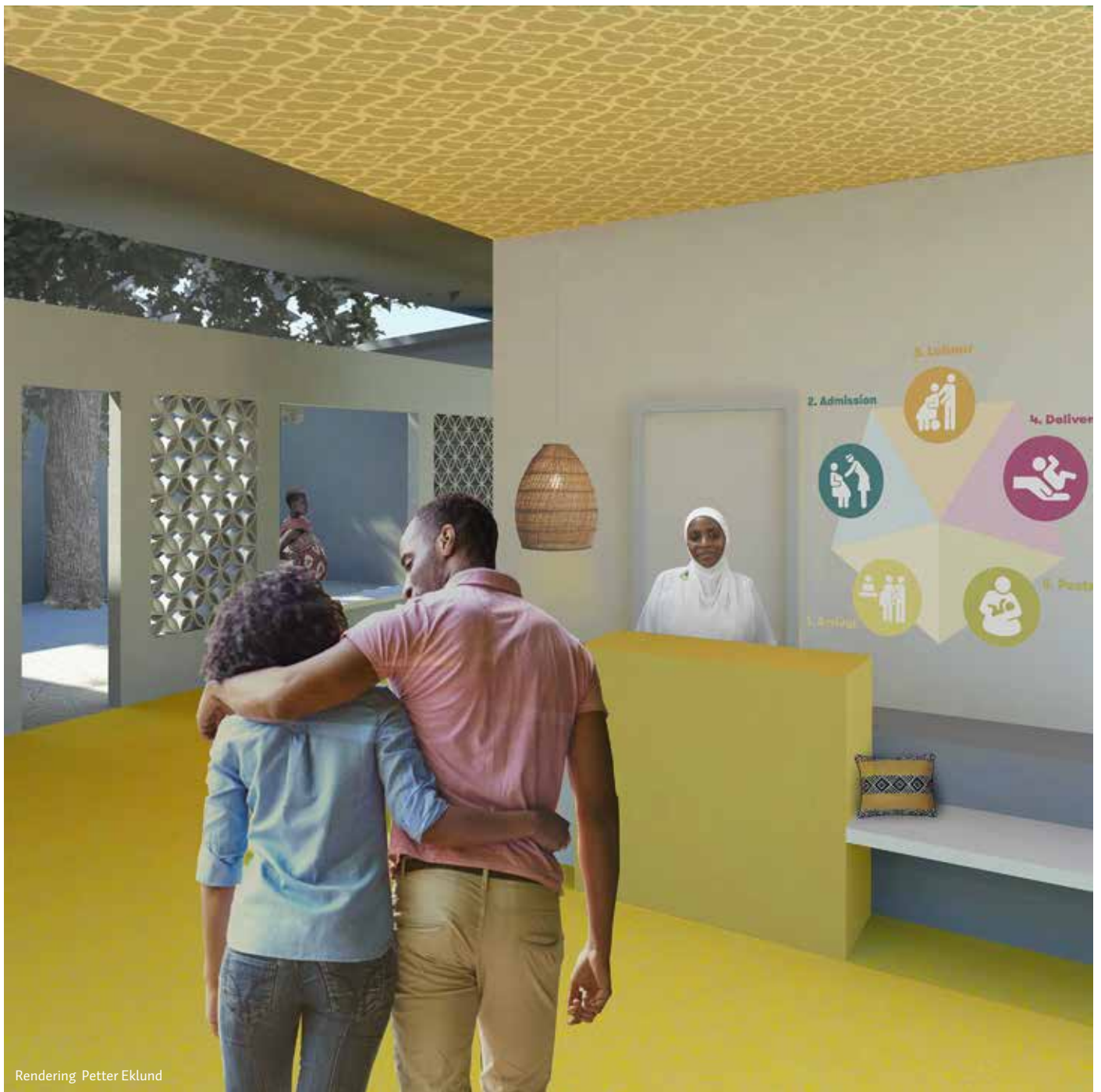


Photo Helena Sandman



Photos Abhay Mohanty





Rendering Petter Eklund



Photo Helena Sandman





Photo Juha Ilonen

The Snow Show, Rovaniemi, 2004

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

Invited to collaborate with artist Robert Barry for The Snow Show international art and architecture event in Rovaniemi, Finland, we created a snow and ice installation. The installation featured lanterns that allowed visitors to immerse themselves in the microcosm of ice, showcasing ephemeral beauty and thoughtful craftsmanship. The lanterns followed the tradition of small-scale lantern making, with water frozen in a bucket, in this case of a bigger scale, to create a human-sized space. The installation provided visitors with a serene and immersive experience, celebrating the beauty of ice.

(Role: Shared design lead)



Photos Juha Ilonen





Lyra Hostels, Iringa region, Tanzania, 2016–2025

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

Our collaboration with the organisation Lyra in Africa, supporting young women in the Southern highlands of Tanzania, led to the construction of dormitories for girls in Tanzanian secondary schools. The first executed dormitory opened in October 2018 in Nyang'oro, the second in Ilambilole 2020, the third in Ifwagi 2021, and the fourth opened in 2022 in Maduma, the fifth in Mseke 2023 and the sixth in Msanga 2025 and the seventh in Idunda 2025. Currently the seventh is being constructed in Idunda. Working in collaboration with local governments, school personnel, and communities, we developed a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable model for hostel buildings. Built of interlocking stabilized soil blocks (ISSB) with active community involvement, these hostels provide safe and culturally appropriate homes for girls. The design process included input from the girls and schoolteachers, resulting in an atrium building with personal rooms for 8 girls and spaces for studying and socializing.

(Role: Shared architectural design lead)



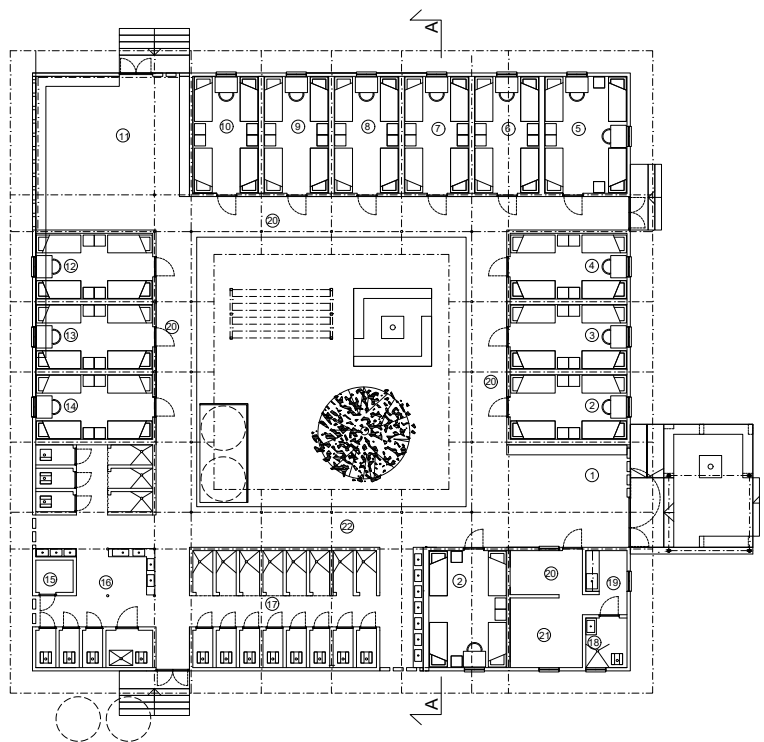
Photo Lyra in Africa



Photo Saija Hollmén



Photo Jenni Reuter





Glorieta Bird Houses, Concentrico architecture festival, Logroño, Spain, 2023

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

In the park Glorieta del Doctor Zubía in Logroño, Spain, we aimed to enhance nature's presence in the city centre and promote biodiversity. Working with a local ornithologist association, we identified bird species and bats that would thrive in the park's environment. Five different bird species and bats were considered: The Eurasian Scops Owl (*Otus scops*), the Great Tit (*Parus major*), the Black Red Start (*Phoenicurus ochrurus*), the White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), the Eurasian Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), and bats (*Vespertilio*). Our design of birdhouses catered to the specific needs of each species. The birdhouses were built using recycled plywood and were ornamented to complement the pattern of the ground. The information boards featured bird drawings made by architect Emma Komi and were printed on recycled tables from last year's festival.

(Role: Shared design lead)



Photos Helena Sandman



Drawing Emma Komi

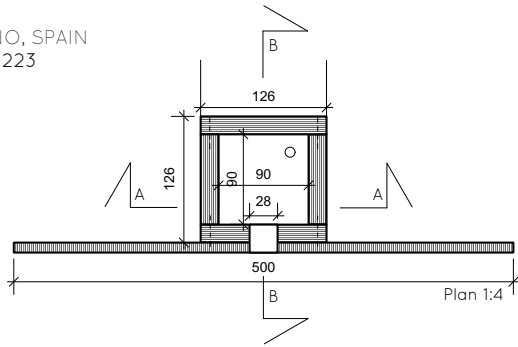


Photo Jenni Reuter

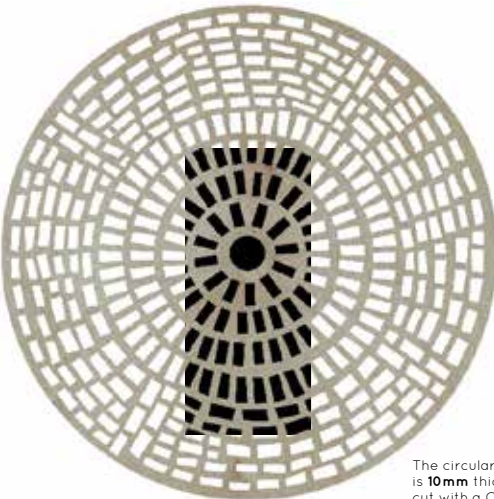


BIRD HOUSES IN THE PARK
GLORIETA DEL DOCTOR ZUBÍA, LOGROÑO, SPAIN
Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects 180223

CYANISTES CAERULEUS
4 pieces in trees (board 50cm)

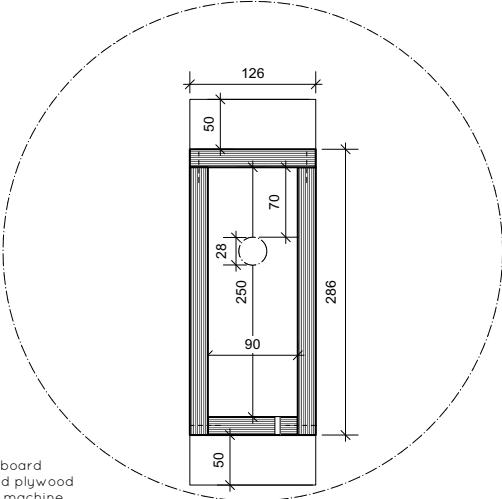


The house is constructed of **18 mm** plywood and stained black.
5mm drainage hole in the floor.

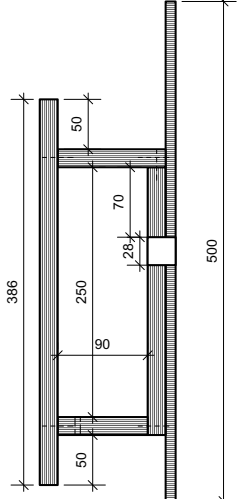


Front elevation 1:4

The circular ornament board is **10mm** thick unpainted plywood cut with a CNC cutting machine. It is attached to the house with screws (possible to dismantle if needed).



Section A-A 1:4



Section B-B 1:4



APE Learning Centre, Cairo, Egypt, 2011

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

The Association for the Protection of the Environment (A.P.E.) is a private voluntary organization registered in Egypt in 1984. The association's goals are both to improve living standards within Zabbaleen communities, the garbage collectors of Cairo, and to protect the environment through a better understanding of household garbage collection dynamics in urban areas. We collaborated with A.P.E. to design and construct a new Learning Centre for the Zabbaleen community in Mokattam, Cairo. The architecture of the new Learning Centre aimed to create a model of what can be achieved by efficient and innovative recycling, while raising the level of self-esteem among the Zabbaleen. Unfortunately, the project was interrupted by the Jasmine revolution and has not yet been constructed.

(Role: Shared design lead)



Rendering Kai Salmi



Photos Helena Sandman





Photos Helena Sandman

Lighthouse, Nordic Pavillion, Venice Biennale, 2012

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

60x60x60cm installation made of *Rosa rugosa* roots (the invasive species) from the beaches of Hanko in Southern Finland. The roots are marked by weather, sea and time. The roots form a cubic spatial volume within the given dimensions.

(Role: Shared artistic work)





Photos Helena Sandman





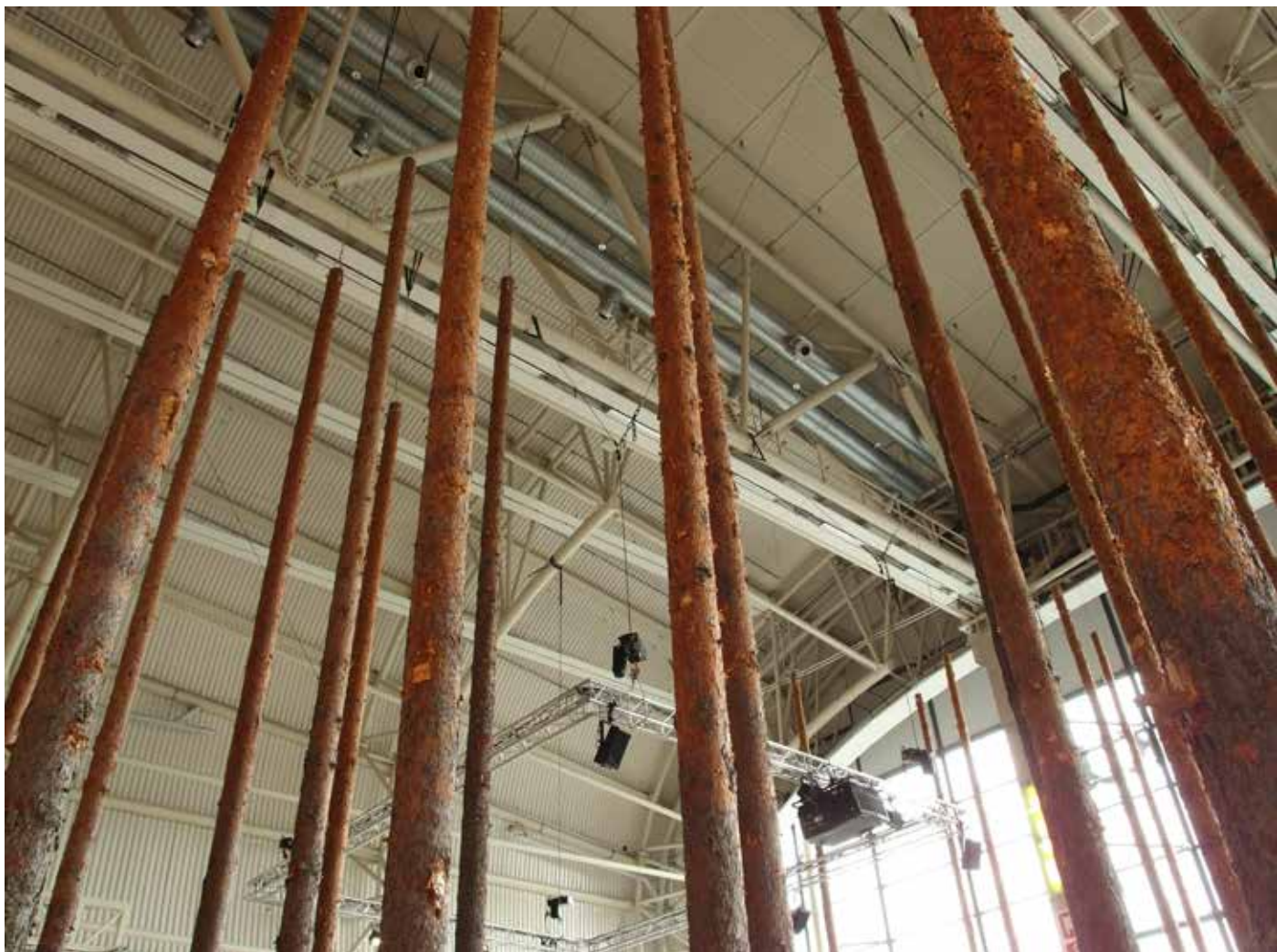
Photo Juha Ilonen

Habitare Ahead! 2012

Hollmén Reuter Sandman Architects

Interior architecture for the Ahead! design area of 7000m² in the Habitare furniture fair with the theme Responsibility. 100 logs of 12–15m in height are creating an abstraction of a forest in the space. The logs are reused after the fair.

(Role: Shared architecture lead)



Photos Juha Ilonen



Photos Helena Sandman

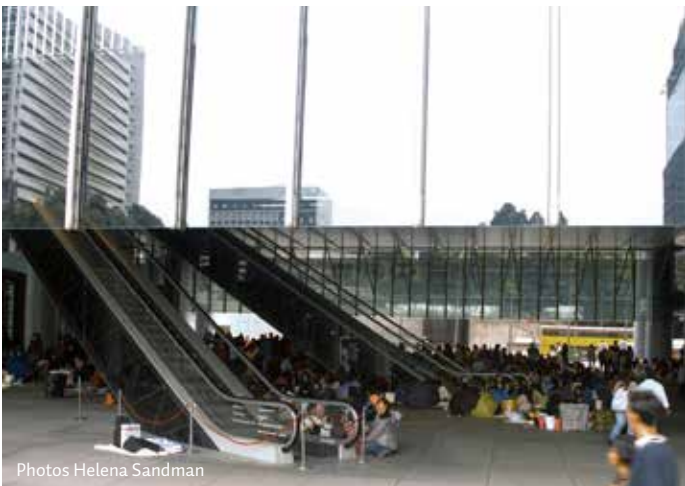
Migrant Birds, Hong Kong / Helsinki, 2006

Helena Sandman

Photographic and sound installation of the Sunday gathering of migrant workers from the Philippines in Central Hong Kong at the exhibition on Places of Arrival and Departure organised by the Arts Council of Uusimaa. Narinkka tori, Helsinki.

(Role: Individual artistic work)





Photos Helena Sandman



Photos Helena Sandman

From the viewpoint of the gnome, 2014

Photographical art work in the forest of Paloheinä as part of the Tapahtumisen Tunne project. I was invited to create an art work at a site that the curator had chosen randomly on the map in the surroundings of Helsinki. My site was situated in the forest of Paloheinä by the Korpipolku nature walk. I decided to add a stop at the nature walk. This stop invited the visitor to experience the forest from an alternative perspective — the perspective of a forest gnome. I exhibited photos on the spot where the photo was taken.

The word “tomte” in Swedish or “tonttu” in Finnish refers to a mythical creature in Scandinavian folklore, often described as a house spirit or farm guardian, similar to a gnome or an elf. The tomte has a long history. It is no coincidence that the word tomte shares the same roots as the word “tomt” or “tontti” (plot of land or site). Tomt means a place for a house, separated from the surrounding land. It is the meeting point between humans and nature. It is a physical place as part of nature. When the land was divided into plots, the protectors of the place the gnomes began to appear. The gnomes make the place unique, they give it a soul. They convey and maintain the relationship and order between humans and nature. The gnomes’ task is to safeguard moderation. (Ojanen, 2004). Humans create the place, but the place also shapes humans. Establishing oneself and creating culture always also involves listening to the place.¹

¹ Ojanen, Eero (2004). *Kohtuudesta ja kohtuuttomuudesta*. Helsinki: Kirjapaja Oy

(Role: Individual art work)



Photos Helena Sandman

