

CONTEMPORIZING E'COCHARD'S MODERNIST MASTERPIECE

The Architects Polak

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Category	2. Educational
Project title	2.1 Visual Arts Department, Karachi University
Client	Karachi University
Location	Karachi (Pakistan)
Year	2008-2011
Scope of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual architectural design • Architecture • Urban Design (Study) • Planning • Land Use Plan and Design Guidelines • Programming • Facility Study • Building and Site Assessment • Visioning
Project Size	5 Ha
Project Cost	NA
Project Description	Karachi University Campus (Designed by French Planner Michel Ecochard, 1960), Design of a a new Visual Arts Department at the Karachi University Campus including; Departments of architecture, Communication Design, Graphic Design, Fine Arts , Industrial Design, Photography and Textile Design.
Awards	NA

INTRODUCTION

Karachi University Campus: An Introduction

In the context of Pakistan's architectural history, Karachi University (KU) has immense significance as the critical work of an international master architect, Michel Ecochard. It predates important exemplars of modernist urban planning and architecture such as Chandigarh and Brasília.

Michel Ecochard (1905-1985) was a French architect and urban planner who graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1943 he worked on the first master plan of Beirut, and in 1955 he designed with another French architect Claude Lecoq the College Protestant on Marie Curie Street. This educational facility shows a clear rational spirit in line with the early European avant-garde. Among the other projects by Ecochard, figure the Grand Lycee Franco-Libanais [1960] and the Sacre-coeur hospital in Hazmieh [1961], east of the capital.

In 1951 Ecochard designed the Karachi University (KU) wherein he continued his use of rationalist principles, devising a concept of "desert architecture" responsive to the climate in Karachi. It is interesting to note how provision has been made for shaded pedestrian movement and for cross-ventilation, and how trees and other kinds of vegetation have been deployed in synergy with the buildings. Ecochard had also envisioned an elaborate landscape design incorporating water features for respite from the dry climatic conditions. Careful attention was given to all scales of architecture from the planning of the campus and orientation of buildings to the design of windows that keep rooms well ventilated in the absence of electric fans or air conditioning. Not only is the architecture at KU a

worthy specimen of the modernist art of sculpting forms in reinforced concrete, it reflects an adaptation of this art with a felicitous economy of means to a non-industrialized region of the world. Although the buildings are very simple in geometry and structure, their facades are cast in high-relief when the stark Karachi sunlight falls on deep sunshades or *brises-soleil* (French for "sun breakers"), creating dramatic shadows. Local yellow sandstone used sparingly as a contrast to the white concrete furthers the theme of regional sensitivity.

Apart from purely academic facilities, Ecochard also designed a building intended as a recreational meeting place for students and teachers at KU. This Student Teacher Club (STC) building, along with the Mahmood Hussain Library, is unique among the university's buildings in its design as a freestanding object. It emanates circulation elements in all directions, drawing visitors along a ship-like *promenade architecturale* that uses the surrounding landscape as visual reference. The STC building is today home to Karachi University's Department of Visual Studies.

Irrespective of the fact that KU was not built exactly as Ecochard had designed it, architects from around the world in general and from Pakistan in particular can learn much from both the realized and unrealized aspects of the original scheme. However, these buildings and drawings have yet to be accorded the respect and attention they deserve. Restoration and usage sensitive to the designs originally envisaged are of immediate importance.

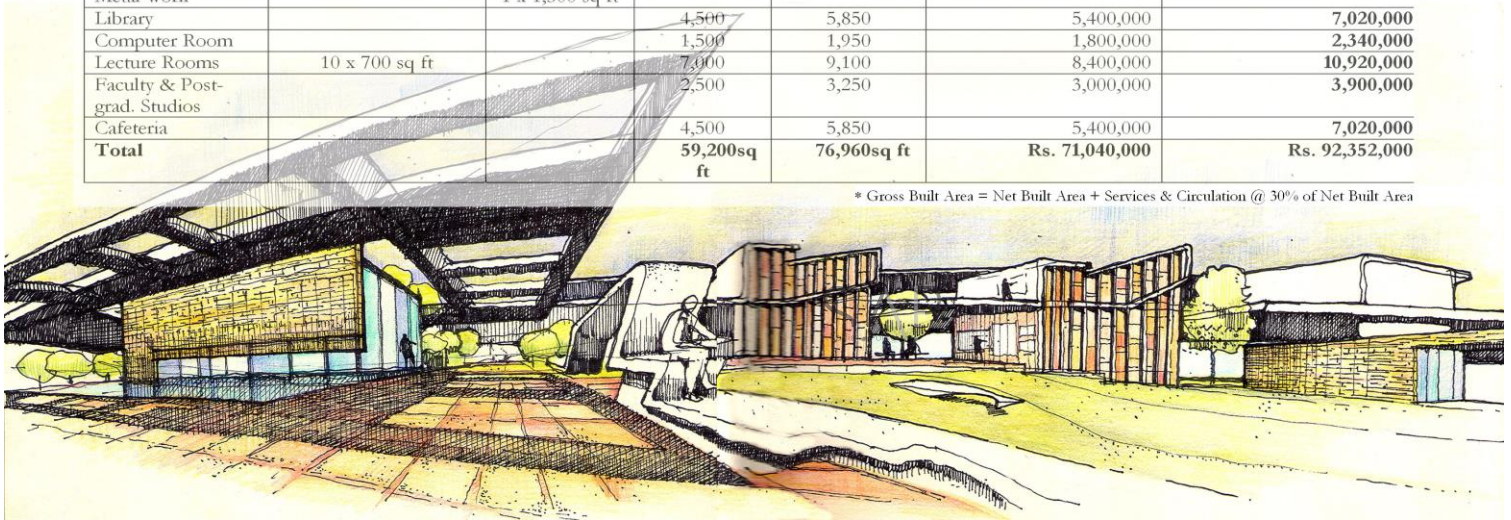


DONORS BROCHURE

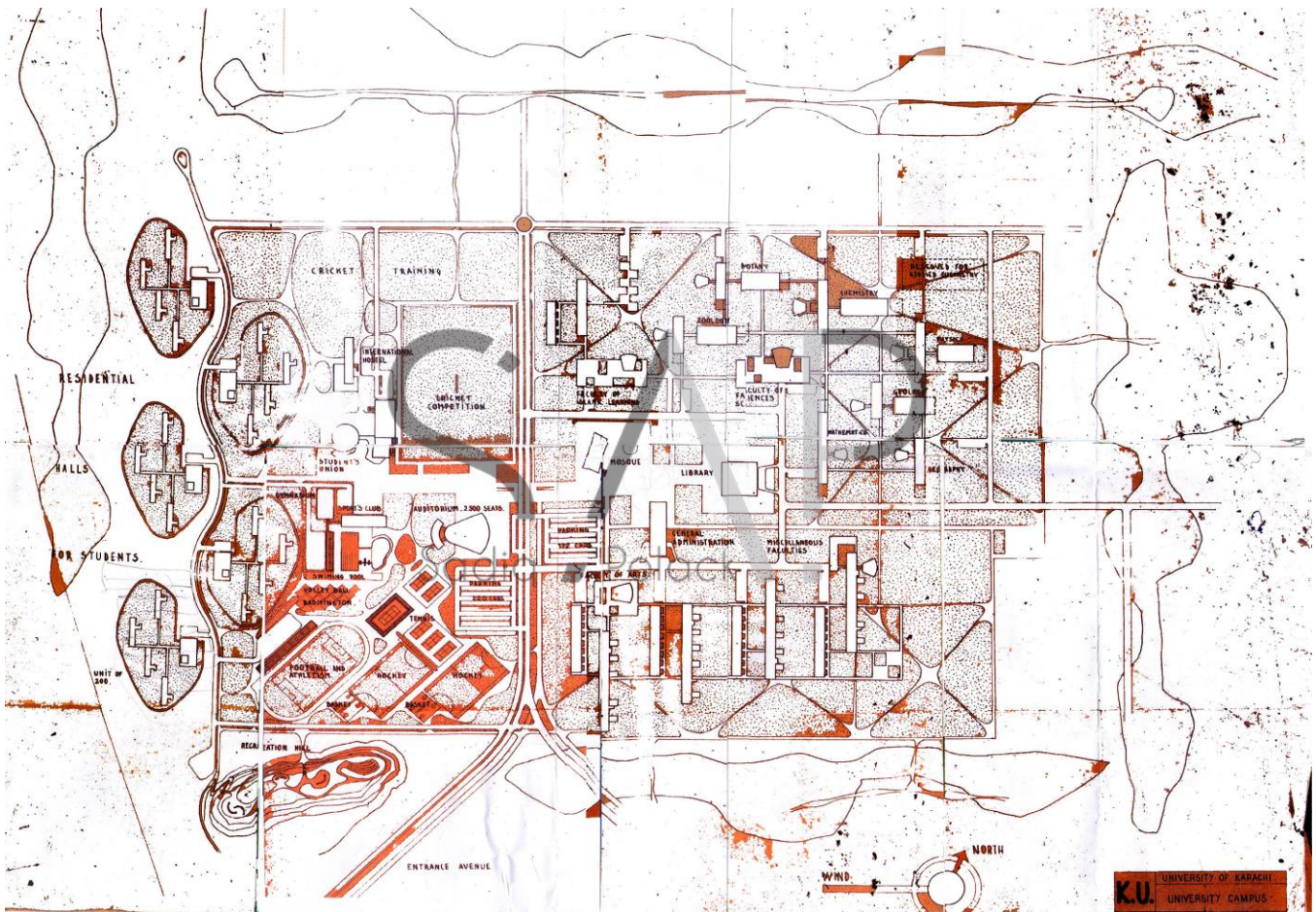
Faculty-wise Estimates of Built Areas and Costs of Construction

Faculty/ Facility	Studios/Classrooms	Workshops	Net Built Areas (square feet)	Gross Built Areas (sq ft)*	Net Construction Costs @ Rs.1,200/sq ft	Gross Construction Costs @ Rs.1,200 sq ft
Architecture	4 x 1,000 sq ft		4,000	5,200	4,800,000	6,240,000
Graphic Design	3 x 1,000 sq ft		3,000	3,900	3,600,000	4,680,000
Fine Arts: Print-making Sculpture Ceramics & Glazing Painting & Drawing Miniature	3 x 1,000 sq ft 1 x 1,000 sq ft	1 x 1,200 sq ft 1 x 1,800 sq ft 1 x 1,200 sq ft	8,200	10,660	9,840,000	12,792,000
Industrial Design	3 x 1000 sq ft	1 x 1,200 sq ft	4,200	5,460	5,040,000	6,552,000
Photography & Film-making		1 x 2,000 sq ft 1 x 200 sq ft	2,200	2,860	2,640,000	3,432,000
Textile Design	3 x 1,000 sq ft	3 x 1,200 sq ft	6,600	8,580	7,920,000	10,296,000
Foundation Year	4 x 1,250 sq ft		5,000	6,500	6,000,000	7,800,000
Shared Workshops: Plaster & Clay Model-making Wood-work Metal-work		1 x 1,500 sq ft 1 x 1,500 sq ft 1 x 1,500 sq ft 1 x 1,500 sq ft	6,000	7,800	7,200,000	9,360,000
Library			4,500	5,850	5,400,000	7,020,000
Computer Room			1,500	1,950	1,800,000	2,340,000
Lecture Rooms	10 x 700 sq ft		7,000	9,100	8,400,000	10,920,000
Faculty & Post-grad. Studios			2,500	3,250	3,000,000	3,900,000
Cafeteria			4,500	5,850	5,400,000	7,020,000
Total			59,200sq ft	76,960sq ft	Rs. 71,040,000	Rs. 92,352,000

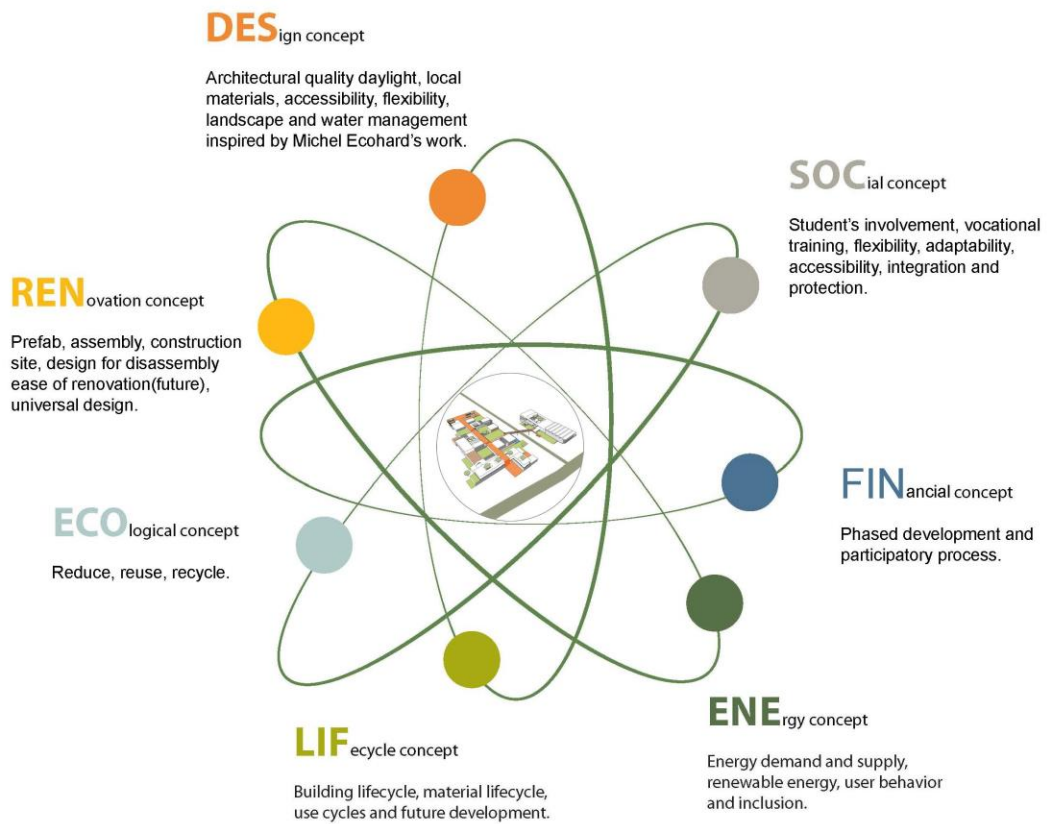
* Gross Built Area = Net Built Area + Services & Circulation @ 30% of Net Built Area



EXISTING SITE

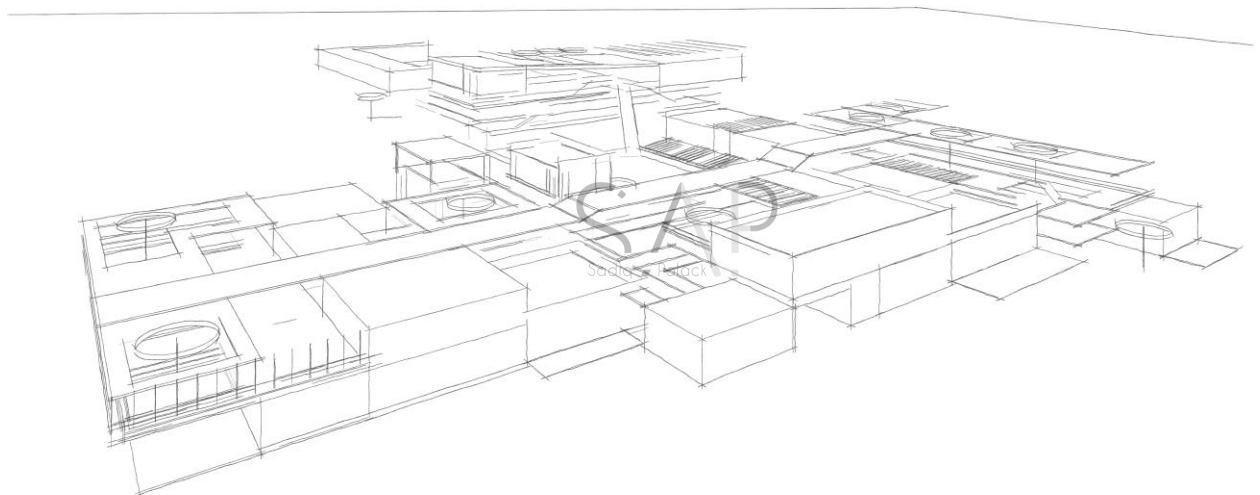
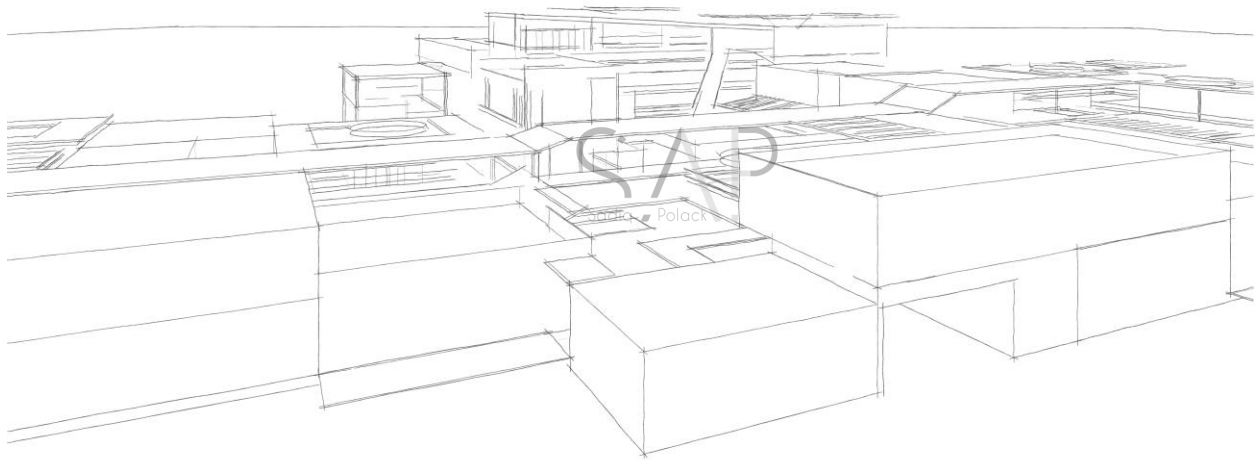
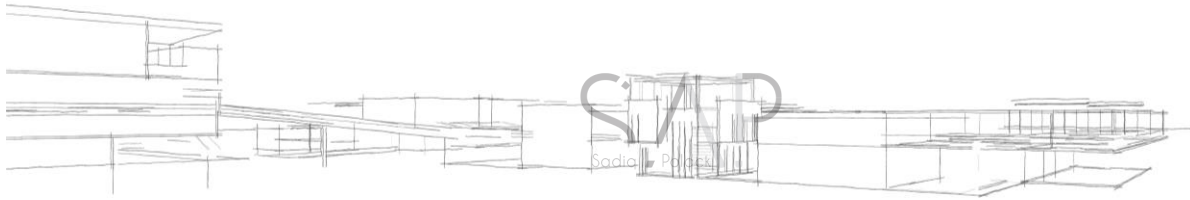


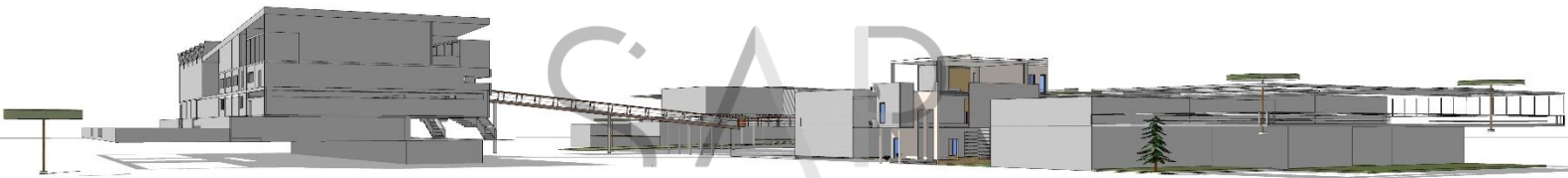
VISION



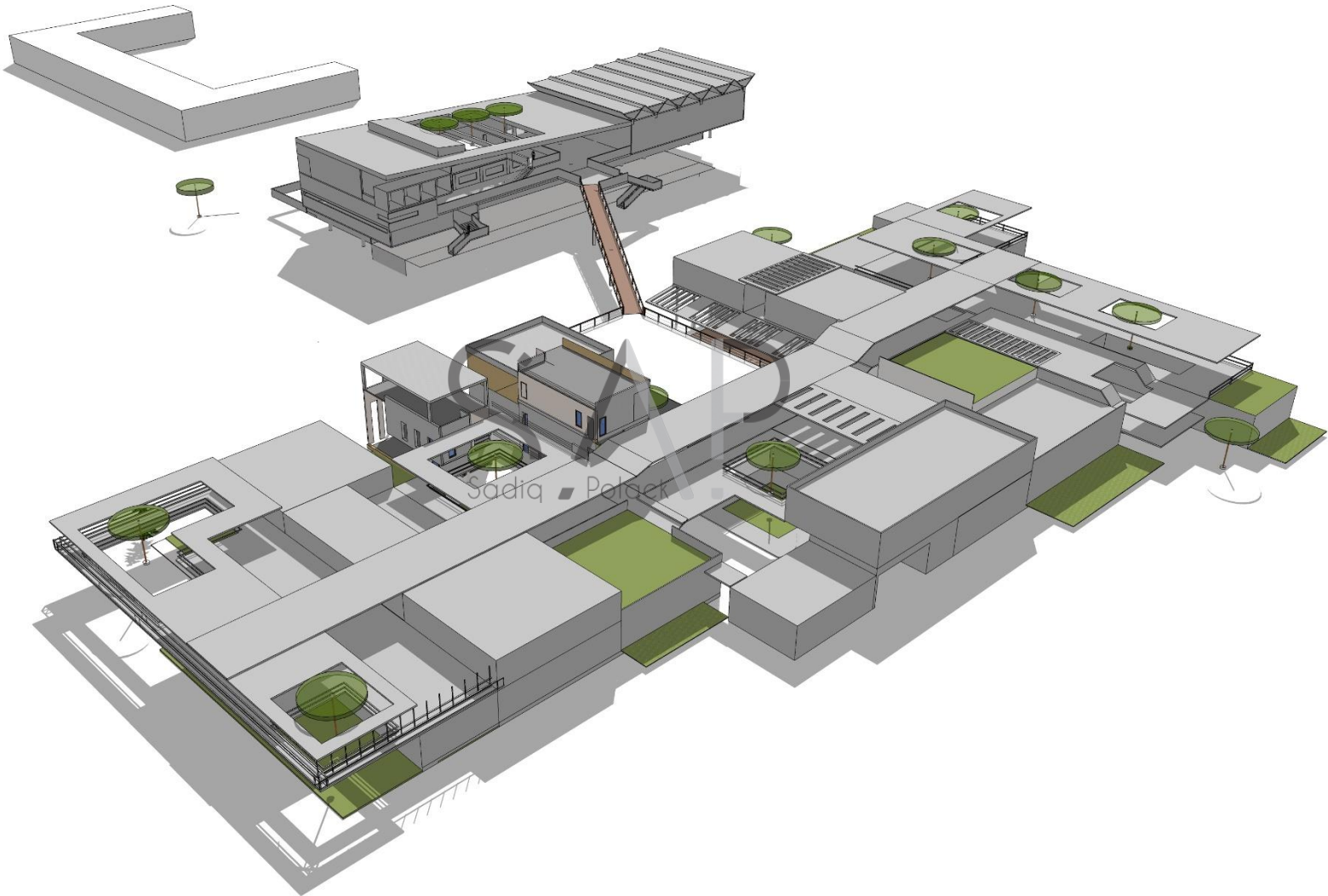
VISION

PROPOSED DRAWINGS

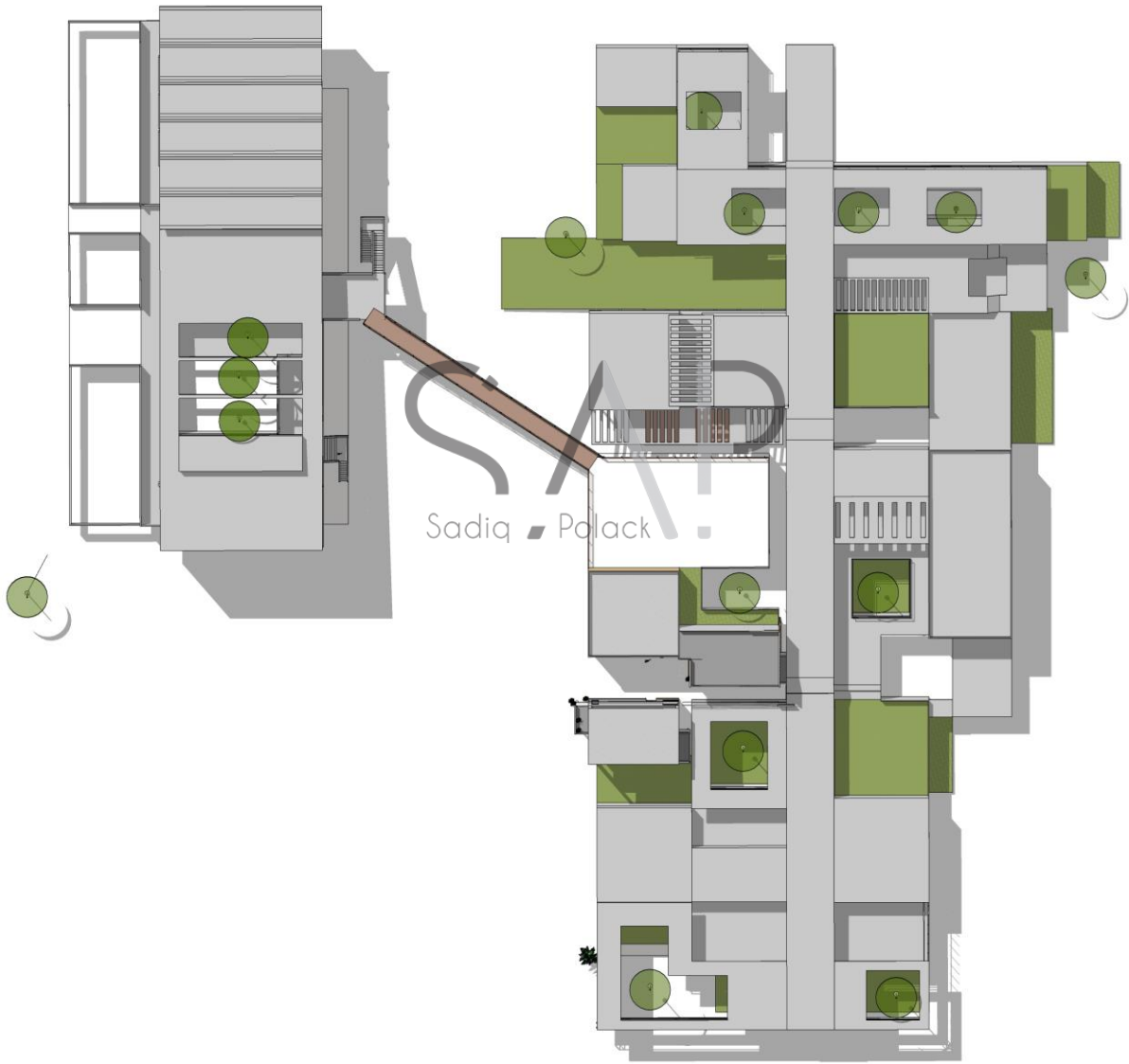




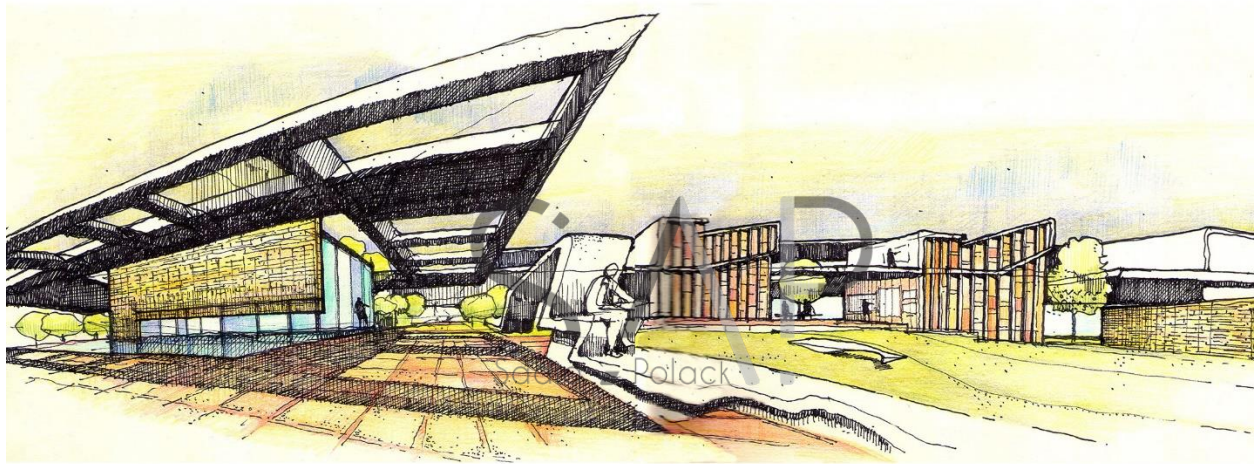
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Bird's-eye View of Projected Visual Studies Department

