

Reflecting on the past while looking forward to the future.

Building Trust international, Wildlife Conservation Society and the Royal Government of Cambodia announce details of an interpretation centre which will act as a hub for eco-tourism activities in the northern plains of Cambodia and stand as a memorial to the past.



Centre designed by Atelier COLE in partnership with Building Trust & WCS

Building Trust international have unveiled their latest collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) with a proposed interpretation centre at Ang Trapeang Thmor in Cambodia. Due to be constructed next year the building will serve to remember the great price Cambodia paid during the Khmer Rouge period, while looking forward to the diverse and spectacular wildlife the country has to offer both local and foreign tourists alike. The centre will be a new type of museum created to educate and raise awareness of both natural and cultural heritage.

Ang Trapeang Thmor is a 12,650-hectare wildlife reserve located between Angkor Wat and the border of Thailand in north eastern Cambodia. The

site was once a natural lake located within a forest which was adapted during the 12th century to feed the rice plains of the Angkorian empire and more recently it became one of the large scale, failed civil engineering projects forced upon the population of Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period. Of the estimated 50,000 people who were tasked with enlarging the massive reservoir around 30,000 people are thought to have died, testament to the truly horrific chapter in Cambodia's past.

The creation of the reservoir however has led to an explosion of wildlife with some of the worlds most endangered birds nesting in the area. This amazing revelation led to the area becoming a protected reserve which is managed by Forestry Administration (FA), with technical support provided by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS.)

In early 2014, Building Trust international and Atelier COLE were approached to help design a building which could act as a memorial to the past while also connecting people with the incredible opportunities for wildlife observation. Inspired by the forest which once dominated the site. The concept of the building is defined by the untreated rough timber columns that pierce the floor plates and drive up through the floor slabs. Visitors are engaged with the building in the surrounding landscape, with columns breaking free of the building starting in the car park and wetland area. A standing tall metaphor for both nature and man's ability to overcome adversity.



The new facility will offer visitors the opportunity to view endangered species while gaining an eye opening insight into the atrocities which occurred during 1975-1979. Visitors rise up to enter the building and are welcomed by a short history of the sites Angkorian past. Following this guests descend into an interpretation area to experience the darker period of the Khmer Rouge with a short film and personal stories of survivors. Next visitors rise up a level through the roof slab which houses a reflection pool that gives an

opportunity to reflect upon the past while being surrounded by the present splendour of the lake and wildlife reserve.

On the upper deck level an outside viewing tower allows guests to take in far reaching views of the wetlands and wildlife. Once back inside the building visitors receive information on the wild birds and other species that can be seen in the area and throughout Cambodia. Also provided are details on protection schemes and education on how to help the conservation efforts. Finally, a cafe and shop which provide support to the local community, has a seating area with wonderful views of Ang Trapeang Thmor. Within the cafe, the feeling of being under a forest canopy is reinforced by the glazed roof which allows light to filter through from the reflection pool on the roof, throwing dappled shadows across the internal spaces.



"It is impossible not to be moved by the tragic consequences of the past in Cambodia but at Ang Trapeang Thmor we see a lasting reminder which has gone on to provide the home to endangered species becoming a symbol of life over coming adversity." David Cole, Principal, Atelier COLE



"WCS are excited to be working with BTI and Atelier COLE because we share similar values. Quality and inclusiveness are hallmarks of our conservation and are reflected in the design of this building." Ross Sinclair, Director, WCS Cambodia



North facade



Cafe with views across Ang Trapeang Thmor



Wildlife information area

Editors Notes

About Building Trust International

Building Trust International is a non-profit organisation offering design assistance to communities and individuals in need. Building Trust International assesses areas in need, finds sustainable, economical aid solutions and ultimately provides buildings and infrastructure. These core actions have blossomed into advocating and educating on the principles of socially aware design, providing an accessible resource on humanitarian design projects and providing a structure for the crossover of information between design professionals. Building Trust International is a charity registered in England and Wales (1142338).
www.buildingtrustinternational.org

About Atelier COLE

Atelier COLE is an architecture and design practice. Established in 2010 their work includes low cost residential, public art, public projects and masterplanning. They are led by the idea that sustainable design is about doing more with less and that designers should be catalysts, working alongside clients for better solutions rather than solely providers of design solutions. This ultimately creates more holistic results that have the opportunity to go beyond the conventional boundaries of a building or single project.
www.ateliercole.com

About Wildlife Conservation Society

The Wildlife Conservation Society, founded in 1895, has the clear mission to save wildlife and wild places across the globe. Our story began in the early 1900's when we successfully helped the American bison recover on the Western Plains. Today, we protect many of the world's iconic creatures here and abroad, including gorillas in the Congo, tigers in India, wolverines in the Yellowstone Rockies, and ocean giants in our world's amazing seascapes.
www.wcs.org

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

The Design stage has been funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.
www.cepf.net

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