

PROJECTS



For well over a century, St. Sebastian's College of Moratuwa has stood as a forerunner of Catholic education in the region, as well as an institution that could boast of architecture harking back to the colonial period. The college authorities recently required a re-development plan for an expansion of the facilities in order to cater to the growing needs of the school. The new Chapel and Resource Centre development was undertaken as the final phase of this project.

The school, governed by the Catholic Church, was initiated to provide secondary education through a spiritual basis, anointing the chapel with an iconic significance in the educational system. In this undertaking, the design concept emphasises a revival of conservative catholic architectural traditions as part of the present. It re-captures the essence of the iconic architectural characters associated with old colonial institutional buildings – such as double height spaces, timber flooring, and decorative surface form – and re-interprets these elements to suit contemporary relevance and practical issues. Careful consideration has been given to maintain the ordering principles of traditional church architecture, such as an axis, symmetry, hierarchy, rhythm, and repetition.

The magnificent height, volume and the elevation of the Chapel from ground level created by locating the resource centre a floor below not only generates a visual impact from the road; as the compound remains the tallest structure within the premises, it also gives way to an iconic presence, reflecting the importance in hierarchy that church buildings were traditionally given in comparison to other buildings.

The main entrance to the chapel is through a wide flight of steps, another typical feature in buildings of the particular period that served to heighten the psychological experience of the building as one enters the chapel. The series of repetitive high round arches leading to the altar within the chapel consists of a basic column grid that enhances its large vertical volume and visual balance. The staircase at the side of the main entrance of the chapel provides access to the mezzanine level above, creating additional space within the chapel and enhancing its capacity to accommodate a large number of students.

Chapel and Resource Centre for St. Sebastian's College, Moratuwa

Text Shonuka Dias

Architect Sagara Jayasinghe
Sri Lanka

A new building housing the administration centre of a college-cum-chapel, Sri Lankan architect Sagara Jayasinghe's recently completed project derives its strength from a well-synchronised blend of authority and spirituality.

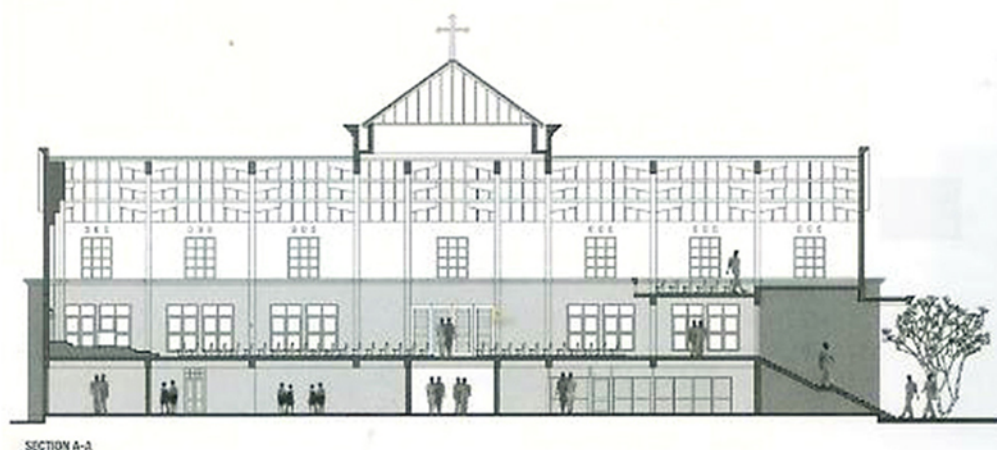
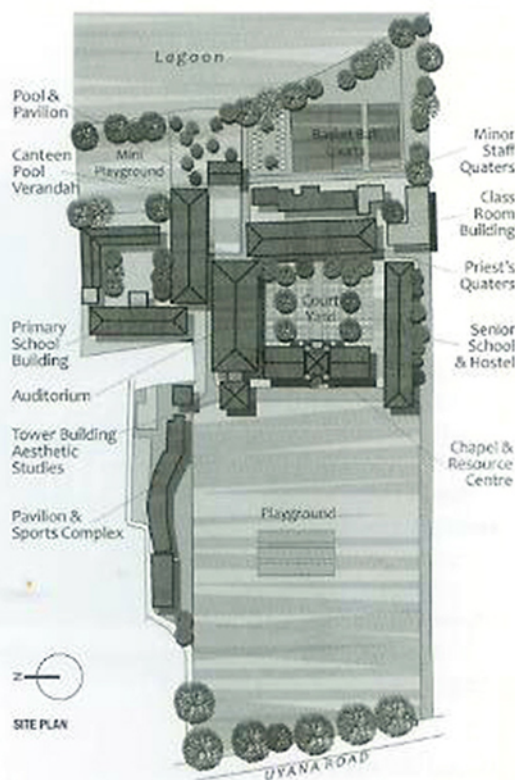
spiritual transcendence



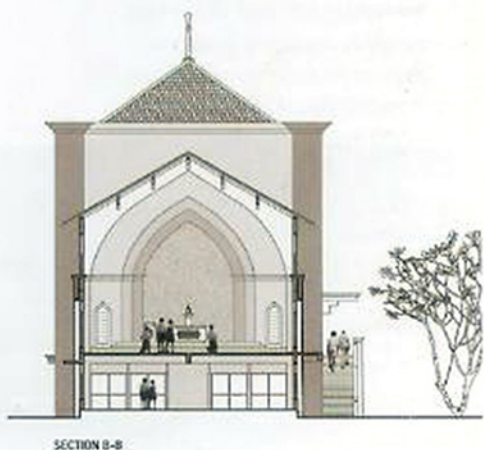
The clearly visible series of repetitive arches, columns, and storey windows, which continue through the façade of the chapel, alludes to a sense of grandeur, while maintaining a rhythmic pattern. The selected colours of brown and beige play figuratively on the 'oldness' of the entire setting with its sense of history. The wide columns, high arches, pitched roof, and colour selection, together with its towering effect, give the building a dominating and iconic presence within the school grounds. The basic structure of the building, like everything else here follows a simple four-metre grid pattern in reinforced concrete with a brick wall filling. The large expansion of floor area with respect to the building is reinforced by the addition of ceramic floor tiles. The roof meanwhile is formed with Calicut Tiles.

The symbolic form of the crucifix has been simplified into a belfry, which stands in close proximity to the chapel. This form has been developed to make the cross visible from all directions. The design of the sanctuary furniture, consisting of Presidential Chair, Altar and Lectern, is abound with traditional symbols of liturgy. The chapel altar where holy mass is celebrated, features a cross at the centre as well as the 12 vertical copper inlays on either side of it which signifying the Last Supper. The design of the lectern used by the priest for gospel readings incorporates the symbols of Alpha and Omega, with a cross between them signifying the beginning, the crucifixion, and the end of creation.

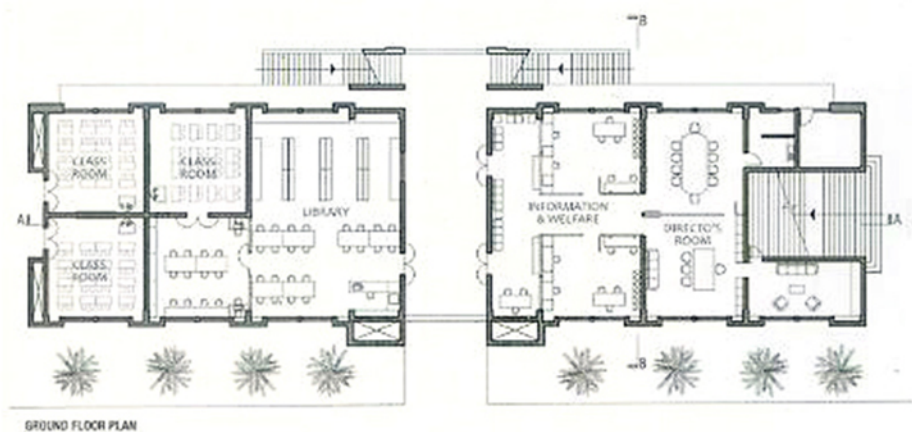
A great deal of sensitivity has been exhibited by the architect with respect to the context and heritage of the institution as well as the religion the building celebrates. The project is exemplary of how contemporary architecture can be seamlessly integrated into a context steeped in the heritage and tradition of yesteryear.



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Client
Rector
St. Sebastian's College Moratuwa
Date of Completion
December 2009

Principal Architect
Sagara Jayasinghe
Design Team
Tharinda Sooriyaarachchi
Sumudu Abeygunawardane

Structural Engineer
Lalindra Perera
Contractor
MI Jayaweera Contractors

Photographer
Malaka Weligadapola