



# MIN TU WON SCHOOL

ESTUDIO CAVERNAS

LOCATION: Mae Ku, Thailand  
ARCHITECT: Estudio Cavernas  
PHOTO CREDIT: © Juan Cuevas  
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The Mae Ku Learning Center is a new educational building located near the Thai–Burma border. The building is designed as a mountainous, monolithic object nestled in amidst the adjacent fields.

The center is a multi-functional educational space for the Min Tu Won School, a community-led organization that provides education for a local community of Burmese refugees and migrants.

Faced with minimal resources, the Min Tu Won School's existing classrooms needed relief for their overcrowded teaching areas. They sought additional room for 70 students to improve the learning conditions of the school as well as to continue to cultivate and promote local education.

The new center responds to these needs with a massing of adaptable, multi-functional spaces. Two large interior volumes form an open floor area for teaching, studying and interactive learning. As the school grows and develops, these spaces will be able to accommodate the Min Tu Won School's evolving conditions.

The building is designed with playful, massive shapes assembled together for children to engage and explore. Natural, locally sourced materials are used throughout the building to integrate the object within its surroundings. The center is visible from afar, an enticing destination for the long distance that many students travel to come to school.

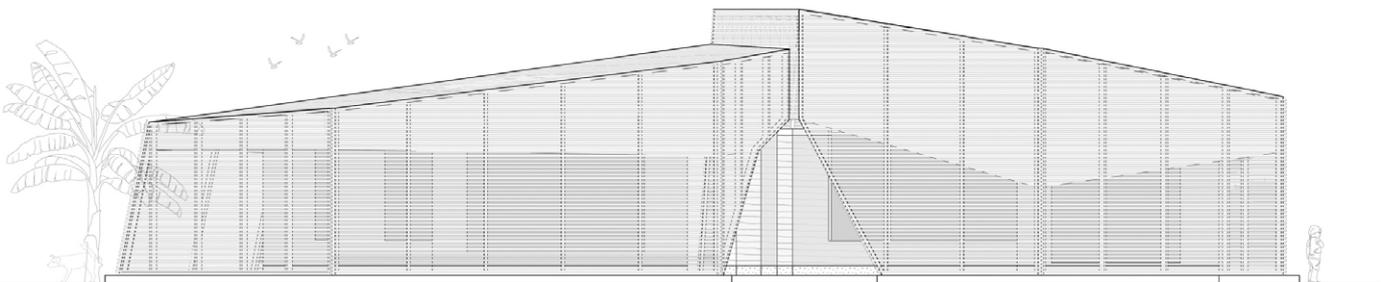
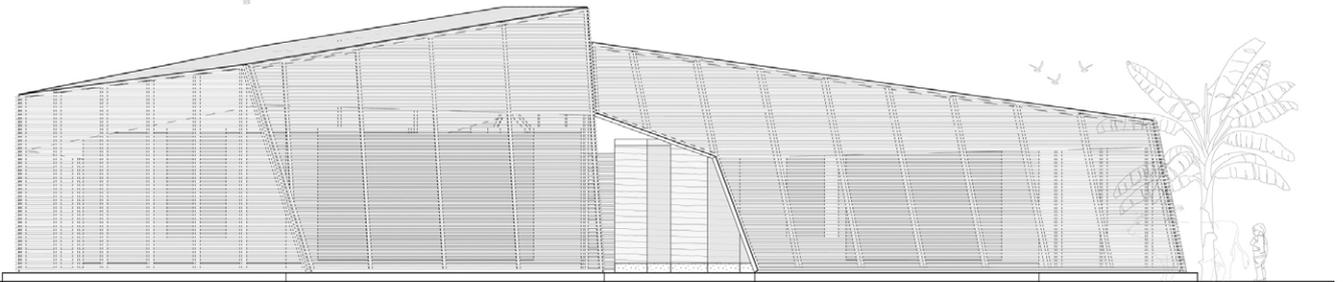
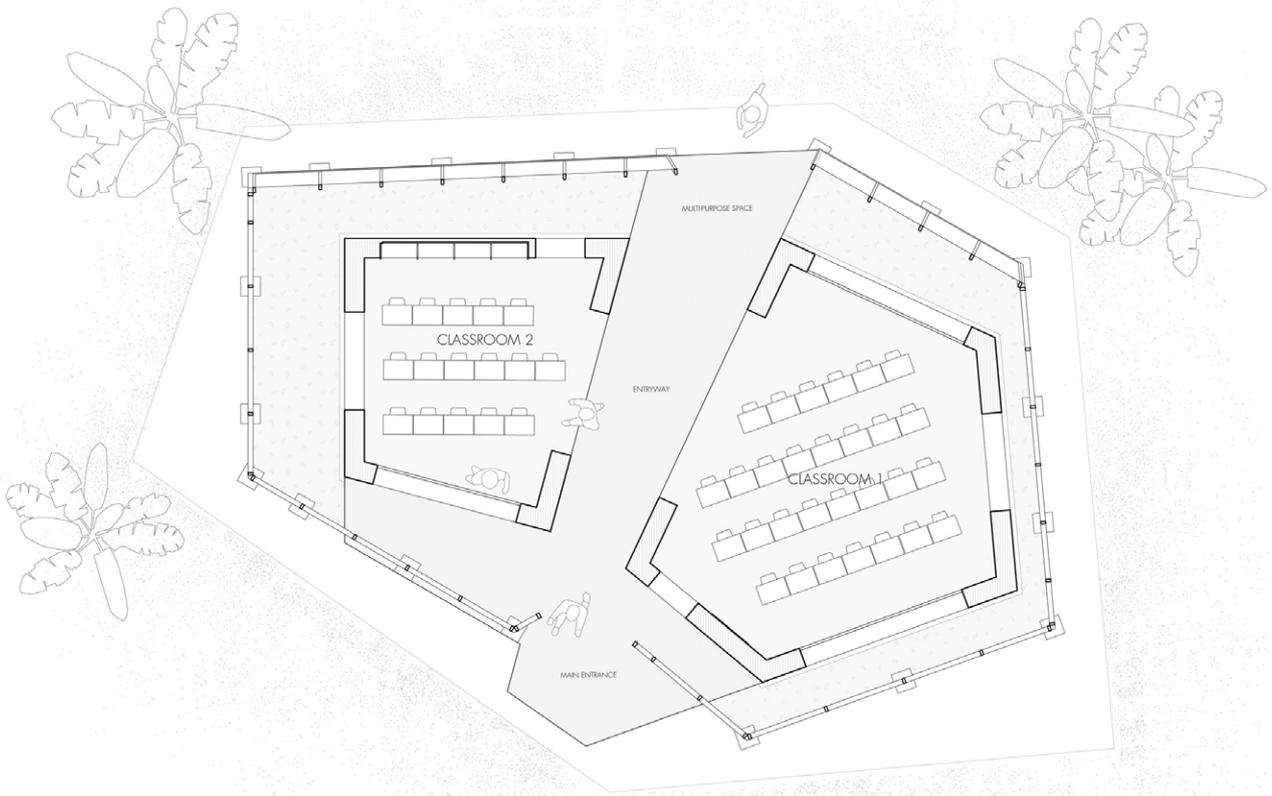
The large classroom volumes feature blackboards, built-in wall benches and storage space. An open floor plan allows for flexibility in the arrangement of the learning areas. The interior is illuminated with soft, natural light using skylights.

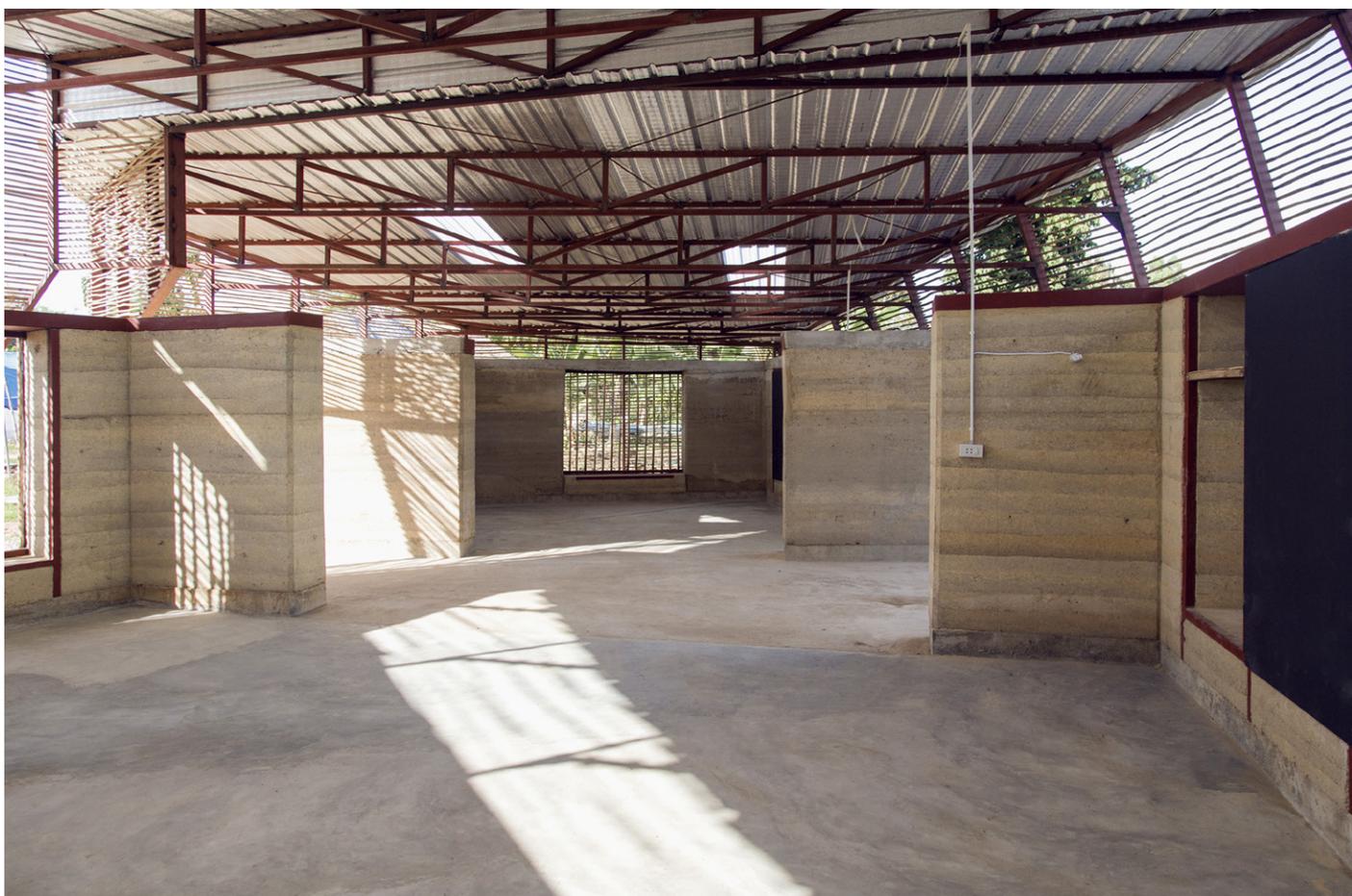
A delicate, veiled bamboo skin wraps the interior spaces, creating a world of passageways and spaces for students to discover. Sunlight is filtered through, adding depth and volume to the building. The bamboo skin acts as an environmental mediator, screening the interior rammed earth walls from direct sunlight and rain while welcoming fresh air and breeze to pass through.

As part of the philosophy of Estudio Cavernas, the design of the building uses low-tech constructive systems that can be built by all workers, ensuring that most of the systems are adapted to the available materials and skills. The beneficiaries of the project are involved throughout the design and construction process, allowing them to take pride and ownership in the building and to encourage the continued success and maintenance of the learning center.

The Mae Ku Learning Center was developed through the Design and Build for Community course at the International Design and Architecture (INDA) program at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Started by Dr. Preechaya Sitipunt, this course connects communities from throughout Thailand to the university resources to create a meaningful project.

The design build course gathered twenty students in Bangkok to study mass, material and program. Through site visits and a collaborative design process, students worked to refine and document the project and then participated in the building construction on site.









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