Rehabilitation of Asilah
Asilah, Morocco

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Local Population &amp; Municipality of Asilah</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>Mohamed Benaissa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asilah, Morocco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Mohamed Melehi</td>
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<td>Asilah, Morocco</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Farid Belkahia</td>
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<td>Asilah, Morocco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>1978 ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site area</td>
<td>9 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>not available</td>
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The origins of the town of Asilah go back to Phoenician times - the city was then called Zili. In later medieval times, it became a Portuguese trading post and the defensive walls built in that period are still extant. Nowadays, the town of Asilah is at once a harbour, a market, a centre for cultural events and a summer resort. Its architectural heritage has been revived on the initiative of a group of intellectuals including the Vice-Mayor and Minister for cultural affairs, M. Benaissa, and the painters M. Melehi and F. Belkahia. The rehabilitation process has been going on for the past 15 years and consists of restoration works on various buildings as well as a general improvement of the infrastructure.

1. Asilah seen from al-Kamera Tower
2. The Portuguese al-Kamera Tower
Site
The coastal town of Asilah, on the Atlantic Ocean, is situated on the north-western tip of Morocco, some 45 km south-east of Tangiers. The total population reaches 20,000 inhabitants, however, the area under consideration - the medina - has an estimated population of 3,500.

Functional Requirements
The works carried out include:
- the restoration and rehabilitation of historical buildings such as the Portuguese fortifications, the al-Kamra Tower and the Raissouni Palace (an early 20th century structure);
- the construction of new houses within the medina, built to replace dilapidated structures;
- the re-arrangement of public spaces for commercial activities such as the market place at the foot of the fortifications and the introduction of decorative pavings and murals designed by local artists (eg. the Place Senghor);
- the continuous maintenance of individual houses, public buildings and mosques;
- the improvement and extension of the infrastructure, including running water, sewerage and pavements.

Description
The organization of the first cultural mussem (festival) in July/August 1978 provided the opportunity for the Ministry of Culture to restore a section of the city ramparts and to refurbish the large and luxurious Raissouni Palace. This building was transformed into a "palace of culture" and includes art studios and a hall reserved for cultural gatherings. An open-air theatre was set up in the old part of the city, within the Portuguese walls, and an area for film shows and permanent exhibitions of plastic arts was also provided. Within the constraints of a limited budget, the mussem succeeded in attracting artists from various countries.

The newly built private houses within the medina occupy irregular plots left as a result of the partial or total demolition of older structures. The new houses usually integrate elements salvaged from the ruins, such as doorways and arcades (cf. the houses designed by Moroccan architect Y. Melehi - see 0811.MOR: Five Houses Asilah). The construction works have been conducted by local master masons mu'allém and workers using traditional construction techniques and materials.
Rehabilitation of Asilah

10. Mausolea of Laila Mennana
11. Mausolea of Sidi Ahmed Mansour
12. Mural painting by M. Melehi
13. General view of Jamaa El Kabir
Construction
The houses are built of reinforced concrete columns and beams, load bearing brick walls and partitions and reinforced hollow-tile floors. The façades are rendered with cement covered with lime. Finishes include red deal and cedar woodwork, and traditional ceramic tiles (zellij). Most materials were locally produced and the labour was entirely local.

6. & 7. Views of the Raissoumi Palace
8. The medina of Asilah
9. Housing types study

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