

Díaz Paunetto Arquitectos upcycles dilapidated Puerto Rican school building into a modernist landmark

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2
2

When Díaz Paunetto Arquitectos firm was first approached, back in 2012, by the Puerto Rican Family Institute with the [restoration](#) project of Guardería Ecológica La Mina, much of the original structure of the school building was already in ruins. Fast forward to 2014, and in the middle of the GELM campus in Corozal, Puerto Rico, stands a magnificently modern and multi-functional school annex that has none of the marks of the previous ramshackle structure.



The building originally served as a center for providing vocational training facilities to students. Its first floor housed a sports and recreation hall, while a cosmetology salon was present on the second floor. Since its abandonment some 20 years ago, the wooden roof as well as the walls of the second floor had collapsed, leaving behind a tumbledown structure that proved to be immensely challenging for the architects to rehabilitate. It was actually the need for extra classroom space that prompted the clients to contact the local architectural practice.



Being an ecologically-conscious establishment, the school was against a complete overhaul and demolition, and instead insisted on leaving the building's original footprints alone. Consequently, the team of architects took a different route of restructuring the building, while keeping its foundation same. The result is a stunning architectural marvel that primarily serves as the [school](#) annex. This expansive, multipurpose structure is constructed such that it can be used for conducting seminars, PTA meetings, teachers' training and so on. Additionally, it includes a massive storage area, on the first floor.



While the basic structure of the building has remained unchanged, the architects have revamped the design to make it more modern. A huge cubed-glass bay window protrudes out of one corner of the building, offering an uninterrupted view of the surrounding children's playground and the trees. The window also adds a sense of spaciousness to the room, while at the same time, optimising the availability of natural lighting. The solid concrete roof shelters the external staircase from sun and rain.



One of the major challenges faced by the architects was to artfully disguise the beaten down walls of the original building in order to make them appear new. The solution they came up with is indeed quite innovative. Enwrapping the entire building is a naturally-colored steel cladding, with perforations, that completely transforms the appearance of the annex. Made of weather-resistant and durable material, this corten steel skin is adorned with long, narrow slits all over its body, which in turn resemble the bamboo trees of the neighbouring forest. Colored glass panels cover several of these perforations, thereby adding another dimension to the primary structure.













To learn more about the project, check Díaz Paunetto Arquitectos's official [website](#).

Via: [Archdaily](#)

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Currently doing her masters in English, Sukanya can be best described as an avid bookworm. Lover of classics of all kinds, she can also be seen spending her days reading and rereading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. She is passionate about both music and baking, and hopes to own a bakery someday.

