



Earth One. Vaulted Home at Cal-Earth Institute. California. built by students and members of the public.

AT HOME IN THE WORLD

A Cup Half-Empty or Half Full?

A big change has been happening in Europe these last few years, as the war in Syria and Iraq continues to drive people from their homes in search of sanctuary. Europe has been faced, for the first time in 70 years, with a massive refugee and migrant issue. And this, in some southern European countries, is piled on top of the Eurozone debt crisis. In the case of Euro debt, a large part of its origin was inflated property prices, which were illusory and crashed. The resulting unemployment and poverty has caused large scale migration. In the case of both immigrant refugees and European internal migration, the issue of HOME is at the forefront.

Where is Home? For a refugee home is what you have left behind because of imminent danger to your life. Today, the Middle East and Europe have millions of refugees running desperately to save themselves and their families from imminent danger: the disasters of war, civil war, ethnic violence, and the “natural disaster” of climate change. From Syria alone there are over 5 million displaced from their homes.

Close behind the issues of Home is the issue of Sustainable Development, for if the urban landscape is to absorb many more people, it would be foolish to repeat the unsustainable models of post-war Europe. Simply put, we too will go under if our future city development is not sustainable. Because there just isn't enough clean water and unpolluted forest left in Europe. A make or break issue for Europe will be cultural and behavioral because many aspects of daily life and expectations are different between the refugees and the Europeans; misunderstandings and worse could develop. Thus a strong vision with a definite plan on bringing together diverse peoples as a Sustainable Community is needed.

written by Architect Iliona Khalili

"The Refugee issue" is a reality we must face today. My grandmother and her family became refugees in a tented camp when I was in my early teens and our family life filled up with emotions of stress and grief. The fear for loved ones, and loss of a family home filled with precious memories, left me resolved to do something for refugees and homeless. Because when one person becomes a refugee it affects others, like a ripple in a pond. In our family, losing home abroad made us unable to pay for our home in London; we were no longer secure in it and we became "sitting tenants" (illegally inhabiting our own home). All the family members came to live in our home, with not enough money or space. Stressed by knowing that I could never afford to live in the beloved family home, and unable to imagine how I would ever afford to buy one, but filled with ideals of making cities and building poetic homes from earth, I travelled afar seeking how to build a home in the world. I was looking for a sense of belonging and trying to shake the feeling of insecurity about Home. I was also striving to overcome the prejudices dividing peoples and looking for real community, where the purity of Being was built into the relationships.



Refugees at UNHCR camp, Jordan.



El Galinero shanty town near Madrid, Spain.

How can refugees build their homes in the world, when so much is opposing in their life? Grief for the lost family members and homes, depression and confusion for changed reference points, a lost city and way of life, combines with the passion of blaming others. How can the host country welcome the refugees and find the positive side of the situation? It is not enough to give a refugee a tent and then a prefabricated home. This will not instantly make the inhabitants feel at home in the world. Every person, and most especially the refugee needs to experience a grounding, and healing journey whose destination is being at home in their own body.

To Build and Be Built

Sustainable living encompasses every aspect of daily life, and by affirming LIFE in our everyday habits, by natural evolution a sustainable community is built. Our workshop's humble offering is a small step in this new discussion on Europe's sustainable urbanism and follows the old saying, "To Build and Be Built". This summer, the Spanish Institute for Bioconstruction, Domoterra, will teach workshops in Earth and Ceramic Architecture with New Earth UK. Participants will not only gain practical hands-on training in building a vaulted home with earth and ceramics, but by designing and building together as a meditation, we believe solutions for the refugee crisis facing European cities will arise. Focussing on the glass being half full rather than half empty, we will take it as an opportunity for practicing a healing architecture for communities and cities.

Thus the first step is putting our hands in the earth. This connects a person with his or her intuition. It is literally "grounding". Imaginary and emotional scenarios are hard to maintain in the human mind when the hands are in the earth. The next step is to learn to build with others who are experiencing the same thing. It should never be underestimated how building with a group relieves the fear of other people, and with the right training, can turn the mind to to harmonize with heart and body, thus being in tune with universal concepts. This is an art in which masonry building excels. It may not be the only method but it is fundamental because at every moment we need buildings and infrastructure, and we live in such buildings and infrastructure. Consciously or unconsciously, they mold our daily aesthetic and our moment to moment bodily experience.

written by Architect Iliona Khalili



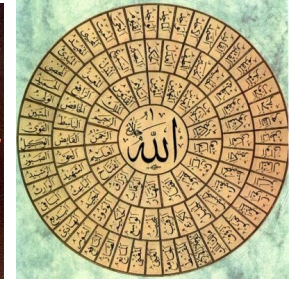
Putting your hand in the earth



.....Mason's Symbols



Universal Elements



99 Divine qualities

Earth Turns to Gold in the Hands of the Wise

Ultimately, What is this “Putting our Hands in the Earth?” It is coming to a sense of physical reality, truth and the healthy connection of body, heart, and mind. In this sense “earth” is all of the universal elements, and all of the universal “elements” within the design of the human being. Earth is also love, it is healing, and in the end there is only one element. Thus earth turns to gold in the hands of the wise. The hands-on workshop at Domoterra offers to institutions, NGOs, students and professionals innovative new interpretations of ancient traditions. Building your own home, as I found out over the years of practice, is a healing journey from feeling homeless to feeling at home in the world. Though this is an inner journey, along the way there must be a useful product, a tangible home. Building with a group also becomes a shared journey to create a community, a city, one in which the inhabitants feel ownership and create meaning. Thus the architects’ job includes not only AutoCAD, geometry and materials, it includes inspiration, love, skill, and also money, people, co-operation, contracts. Architects’ work should embrace the role of Master Mason, in Project Management contracts. It is a holistic design work. This workshop will take the next steps in new formulas to include the inhabitants in the process of building their city, and to turn the Earth into Gold.



Above: Community dance: vibration, breath, word



Therapeutic building with others after Nepal earthquake, May 2015

Below: The alchemical process of building and firing a ceramic dome together.

