



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Hassan Fathy (Egypt)†

(1980)



Hassan Fathy

for developing an Architecture for the Poor .

Dr. Hassan Fathy, born in Alexandria in 1900, became one of the outstanding architects of his generation in Africa, demonstrating that it is possible to build for the poor and teaching people to build for themselves.

Fathy taught at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Cairo University and served as head of its Department of Architecture. In 1981 he established the International Institute for Appropriate Technology in Cairo to develop and apply his approach.

With the publication of *Architecture for the Poor*, University of Chicago Press 1973, Fathy's work came to international attention. This book, which has since become a classic, describes in detail Fathy's experience in planning and building the village of New Gourma, using mud bricks and employing traditional Egyptian architectural features, such as enclosed courtyards and domed and vaulted roofing. Fathy worked closely with the people to tailor his designs to their needs. He taught them how to work with the mud bricks, supervised the erection of buildings and encouraged the revival of ancient decorative techniques.

Although New Gourma remained uncompleted, due to bureaucratic red tape and other problems, it has been said of Fathy that he produced 'not only answers but inspiration; his thought, experience and spirit constitute a major international resource.' In 1980 he received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and in 1984 the Gold Medal of the Union of International Architects.

Dr Fathy died in Cairo in 1989.

Quotation

"How do we go from the architect/constructor system to the architect-owner/builder system? One man cannot build a house, but ten men can build ten houses very easily, even a hundred houses. We need a system that allows the traditional way of cooperation to work in our society. We must subject technology and science to the economy of the poor and penniless. We must add the aesthetic factor because the cheaper we build the more beauty we should add to respect man."

Hassan Fathy

