



The new Walworth Barbour American International School in Even Yehuda.

Photos: Yuval Tebor

## A lesson in school design

*Tennis courts and swimming pool aside, the posh new American school in Even Yehuda can teach a thing or two about designing educational facilities*

By Noam Dvir

"The roof is what is great about this place," says architect Ulrich Plesner. "It provides shade, shelter from the rain and creates meeting places for students."

We are standing at the entrance to the library of the new Walworth Barbour American International School in Even Yehuda, a circular, creamy-beige structure covered by a delicately domed roof, reminiscent of a sand dune's form.

Inside, there is the biggest collection of English-language books in Israel, and an atrium that is open to the sky with a fish pond, an element that is hardly typical of Israeli schools, to put it mildly.

The roofs are also the dominant elements in other structures on the campus, some with sloping triangles, others with curved or trapezoid shapes, over a total of about 11 developed dunams

**The campus extends over 75 dunams, containing sports fields, a basketball court, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a gym, a cafeteria and a 400-seat auditorium.**

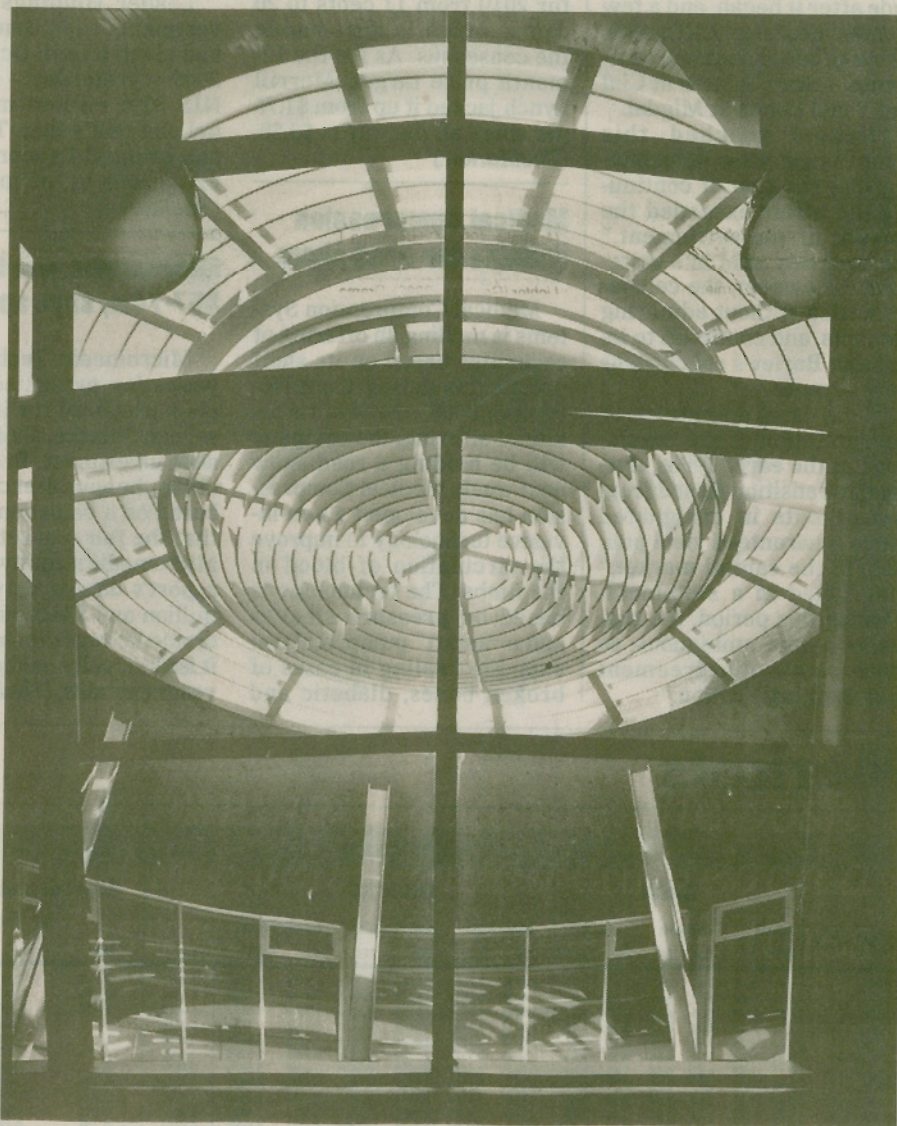
(3.75 acres). The roofs cover the public areas, passageways leading to classrooms, and gathering points.

Another roof cuts across the length of the campus, connecting all the buildings. The architects call it the *cardo*, Latin for main thoroughfare.

"The client asked us to design a school without a corridor, to save on air conditioning and lighting," says Nadav Salamon, the Plesner Architects partner responsible for the project.

"We saw it as an opportunity to exploit the excellent climatic conditions prevailing in Israel most of the year and to do without corridors altogether. There are building with classrooms connected by covered and airy passageways that also allow fresh air into the internal spaces. I went to an Israeli school with a normal corridor, 2.4 meters wide, with a small window at the end," he said.

The Barbour school belongs to a chain of 500 similar institutions across the globe,



The roof of the school, which mimics the outline of a sand dune while letting in light.

supervised by the U.S. State Department. Their aim is to provide quality English-language education for Americans and other foreign citizens. Some 500 students of 50 nationalities are enrolled at the pre-K-12 school, mostly diplomats' children but also some 15 percent Israelis. Tuition is \$16,000-\$20,000 a year.

### Upgrade from the old school

For 30 years the school was located in Kfar Shmaryahu, housed in a clump of temporary buildings, and the move to Even Yehuda was meant to upgrade

its facilities and increase the number of students.

The new school was planned by the Plesner and Haim Dotan architecture firms, with the American company H2L2 providing professional educational input.

Money can buy good education evidently, or at least the basic infrastructure for it.

The campus extends over 75 dunams (18.75 acres), containing sports fields, a basketball court, tennis courts, a swimming pool, a gym, a cafeteria and a 400-seat auditorium.

"It would have been impossible to do with an Education Ministry budget," Plesner remarks.

Despite the international character, the atmosphere at the school is purely American; it seems to have been copied from some TV series.

There are lockers in the classrooms, sports teams and a school shop selling items like jackets with the school emblem.

The experience acquired by Plesner Architects in Even Yehuda has been translated into other school projects, both in Israel and abroad.

The firm is currently designing the American school in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the roofs are also a key element, providing shade from the African sun and connecting the buildings.

Although the Even Yehuda school was constructed with an unusually large budget, there's no doubt that it shows what can be done to design green and enriching school environments, even if they don't necessarily have swimming pools and tennis courts.

## How the Defense Ministry funds its overseas sprees

*If the huge cost of the ministry's delegation to the Paris Air Show made you think it has plenty of cash for all, you were wrong. For those who really need it, the cupboard is bare*

By Orly Vilnai

The Paris Air Show at Le Bourget is the showcase where we display our best technology, and where the best of our pilots and leaders like to hang out. And since it's a showcase, we don't put our flawed goods on display there — the stuff on which shekels were saved to cover the cost of Ehud Barak's luxury suite at the Paris Intercontinental Le Grande. Demagoguery, I hear you cry. But anyone familiar with all the people who fruitlessly bang their heads against the walls of the Defense Ministry's budget department cannot help being infuriated.

Take the case of Maria Aman, the Palestinian girl who, when she was three years and nine months old, lost most of her family to an Israel Defense Forces missile that also left her paralyzed and dependent on a respirator.

For three years, Hamdi Aman has been caring for his daughter in an Israeli hospital, and for three years, the Defense Ministry has been promising to provide him with money to rent an apartment nearby. But no money ever arrived.

Or take Miriam Adler, whose son has been suffering from a psychological illness since his army service, leaving him dependent on her care. But the Defense Ministry refuses to recognize his disability and has not provided any assistance at all.

Many disabled IDF veterans have to wage similar battles. They are begging for help. But when it comes to them, the ministry keeps its purse strings tightly closed.

This week, Meni Glass came in second in a wheelchair ballroom dancing contest. What began as a rehabilitation exercise has become one of the few joys in his life. In 1973, he sustained a back injury while serving in the paratroops, but he continued serving as a reservist, in both the Yom Kippur War later that year and the 1982 Lebanon War.

In 1984, he was wounded again during a combat medics course, and he decided to claim compensation from the Defense Ministry, which granted him a 20 percent disability rating. But over



Nir Kafri

Meni Glass: "I haven't smiled for ages."

the years, he contracted cancer and his back injury worsened. So today he is confined to a wheelchair, and has been recognized by the National Insurance Institute as unable to work.

As such, he knew he was entitled to a special payment for needy disabled IDF veterans, of NIS 1,500 a month. He filed a claim at the Tiberias office of the ministry's rehab department, which sent him to a medical panel. He had all the necessary paperwork attesting to his permanent loss of ability to work, plus an additional medical opinion and a document from a hospice confirming that he used morphine and marijuana for medical purposes.

But the panel, which he says consisted of only one doctor, decided that he was capable of working. Accordingly, some of his privileges were withdrawn, and with them over NIS 5,000 a month

that he had been receiving from the Defense Ministry.

"It's hard for me to look at Ehud's Barak's smile," he says today. "I haven't smiled for ages."

True, not everyone turned down by a medical panel is necessarily a victim of injustice. But it certainly isn't necessary for Defense Ministry bigwigs to sleep in luxury suites in Paris while the Air Show is on. They could easily pop over to Paris, say hello, and come back to look after all the people here who really need "a strong defense minister," in the words of Barak's campaign slogan.

The Defense Ministry's response: "The above invalid is recognized by the Defense Ministry as having a 50 percent disability as a result of his military service. In addition, he receives supplementary payments from the National Insurance Institute for disabilities that are not connected to his military service."

### Good-bye asbestos

Last week, Haaretz carried a report about residents of the Shabal neighborhood in Pardes Hannah who have been living for years under roofs made of crumbling asbestos sheets, fully aware that they are endangering their health. Thirteen residents of the tiny neighborhood have contracted cancer, and many others have lung diseases. Repeated appeals to the government's Amidar housing company, which owns the buildings, had no effect.

Last week, after the report appeared in Haaretz and on a television program, a solution was apparently found, and a roofing contractor is slated to come to Pardes Hannah.

One call to Housing Minister Ariel Attias and it's good-bye asbestos. One hour after the call, Attias knew all the details; within a day, the ministry had found the almost NIS 1 million necessary to fix the roofs.

Next week, Attias promised, work will begin. It's easy to believe he really means it. He isn't doing it for us, it's for the good of the residents. A rare thing in these parts.

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The school's covered walkways, which function as corridors between classes.