

Urban Fabrics

Manama, Bahrain

Across the Arab world, the notion of the public is changing—provoking a reassessment of urban public space and city life. The Arab Spring challenged the idea of a monolithic Arab public, instead revealing many fine-grain “publics,” trying out newly audible voices. The public of the Arab Spring is a multiplicity. To propose a public space among Manama’s complex and patchwork urban fabrics is to come to terms with this multiplicity of “publics” within the city, adapting to their diversity and perspectives—those both quiet and vocal, old and young, conservative and progressive.

Traditionally, the typical Arab city developed without large-scale public spaces—and resisted symbolic notions of the public typical in western cities. In this light we imagine a new Bahraini public square that prioritizes the interactive, improvisational, playful, and adaptable. Instead of a single, static central space, it accommodates diversity and contradiction. The proposal for Bab Al Bahrain square weaves together many types of public life for the city’s many publics. Constructed of gently blowing translucent fabrics, shimmering with changing colors, through layers of varying density, the dynamic field adapts the scale and density of the city to a public event, creating opportunities for any number of activities to take place concurrently.

Bahrain’s new square is both intimate and grand, individual and compound. Gentle ramps thread between public spaces across the site, allowing new perspectives back to the old city, and out across the sea beyond.

Client	City of Manama
Program	Public square
Area	540,000 sf / 50.000 m²
Status	Competition 2012
Team	Florian Idenburg, Jing Liu, Ilias Papageorgiou, Ted Baab, Nile Greenberg



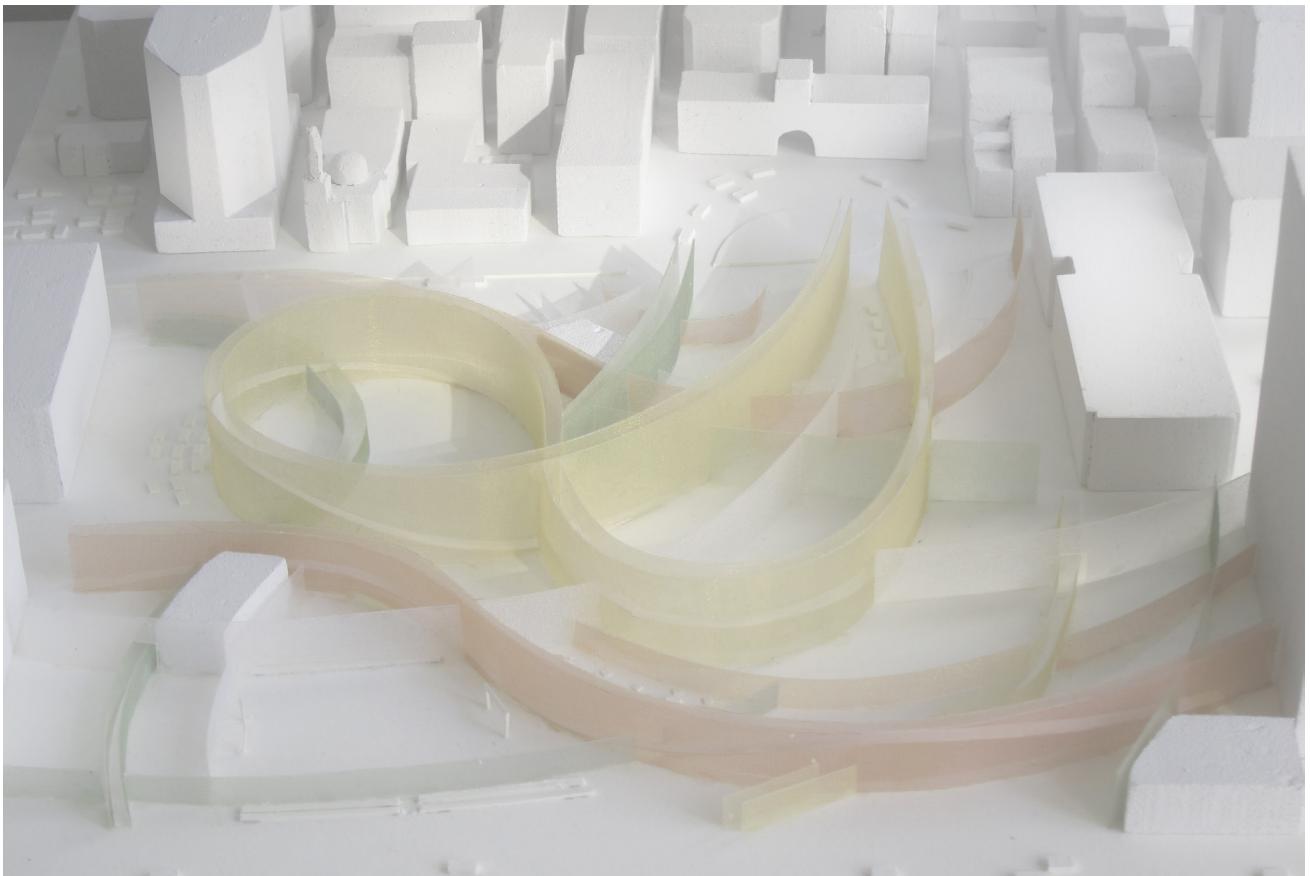
Site plan



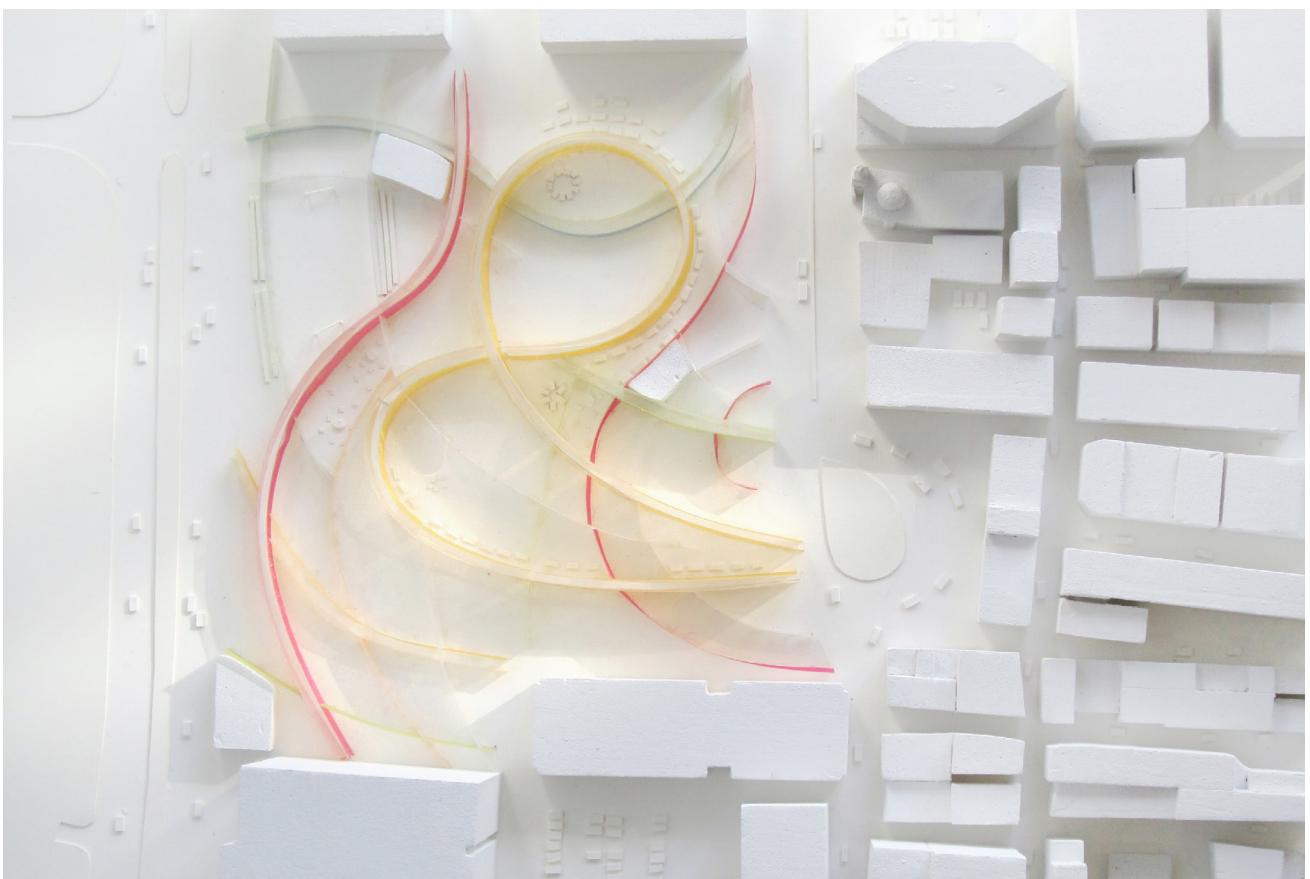
View of square



View of square



Model



Model