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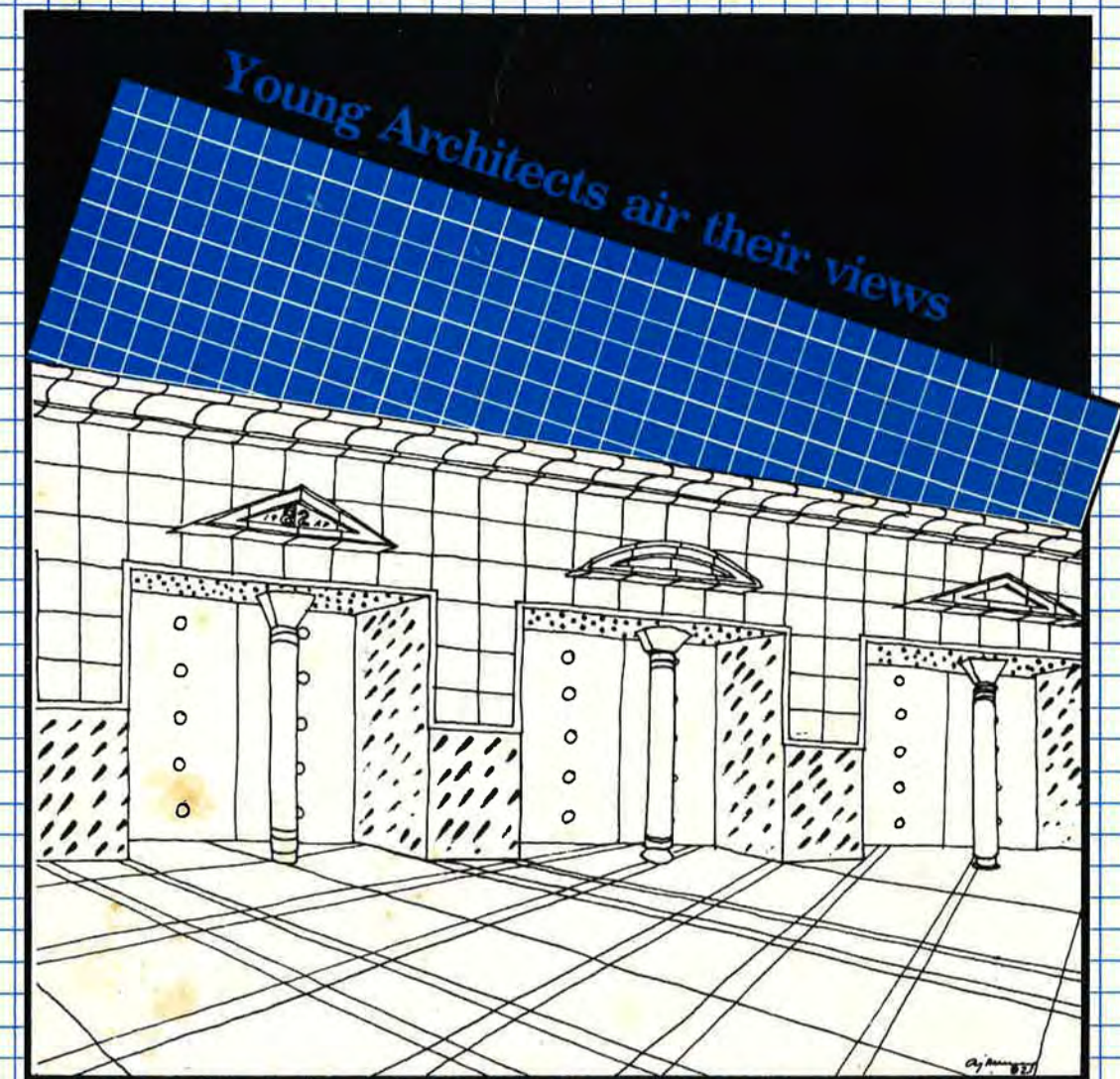
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NOC

4-1982

Newsletter of the Natal
Provincial Institute of Architects

Editorial

Let them speak.

In this issue NPIA presents the thoughts of a group of young architects about the art of architecture. Some contributions are of actual projects, in others the graphic illustration is intended as an end product.

The Provincial Committee has decided to give over this issue to the group because it feels that all parties have a right to be heard. These architects meet fortnightly at one or other practice, discuss each others' designs, exchange experiences and disseminate technical (and computer) information. Despite the group's not professing a common approach or theory, they are, besides contributing to this issue, mounting an exhibition entitled "The Architects' Drawing" (see news).

One can only wish the group well and surmise that their circle will widen to include fellow members in the building team. Should engineers, quantity surveyors and building contractors be involved at this informal discussion level about architecture, a long-term advantage could well be the beginning of that comprehension which architecture needs if it is to be valued and understood by society in general.

At the request of the group, their old mentor Professor Barrie Biermann, has been asked to

Comment:

Here are a dozen young architects who feel the need to articulate their commitment to their work and to the world. Twelve is a goodly number for this kind of enterprise; there are precedents which have served the cause of architecture well. Some have restated the old truths in credos appropriate to their times. Others have proceeded more cautiously, searching rather than proclaiming, and the seemingly random scatter of views expressed by our group identifies them with the latter.

However, underlying their individual formulations are clearly recognisable three concerns of our time which informed their training. What Lewis Mumford terms *"the primacy of the person"* resounds from Duncan, Tom, Colin, and Mike; Lethaby's dictum that *"architecture is more than one man deep"* finds echoes in Lance, Sally, Alex, and Rob; while Bruce, Andy, Kevin, and Ken rephrase the main thesis of SPACE, TIME, AND ARCHITECTURE. In the concluding lines of the third edition (1954) Sigfried Giedion returns to his theme:

"The influence of feeling on practical decisions is often regarded as unimportant, but it inevitably permeates and underlies the decisions of men ... At the moment ... the inner kernel of the personality is split by a difference of level between the methods of thinking and those of feeling ... It is possible that it may not be long before this situation will be recognised ... and the schism may then disappear ... our cultural consciousness ... may awake suddenly, but never if we do not begin to be absorbed by these things, never without the strong will to an inner change, and never without forward-looking preparation".

Sally
Adams

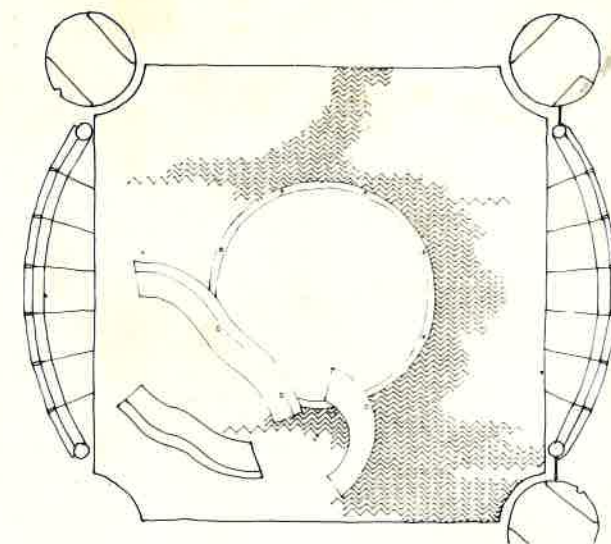
To achieve a classic simplicity (both timeless and unfashionable) has been my design concern. Developing materials, colour combinations, patterning principles is at present one of my real pleasures. Using Florentine precedent for walls, combining face brick with marble or tile and the Paris Opera House precedent for floors using herringboned woodblock and travertine with brass divides, large format tiles and tufted carpets.

My fascination is still with Durban discoveries, the solid old verandahs and columns, fret work and framed views, layered views through trellis and glazing.

The long term sustaining of one's interest in the client once the design and build thrill has worn off disturbs me, as does the grey area that develops with the differing frames of reference that each uses the further one gets away from the architectural concept into reality. This segment of the gap in architectural terms Chris Fawcett describes as the architecture of the absurd in 'The New Japanese House' and I quote:

"Learning is a matter of acknowledging ones own absurdity. The first design one does one believes in until it is completed when its absurdity suddenly raises its head. An 'absurd architecture' is predicated on the fact there are limits to our human endeavours ... An absurd architecture thus comes about when intentions are not matched by built form - need points in one direction but the building has gone in another."

I hope that by a more active education and exhibition series at various levels, architects can renew their efforts to bridge this gap.



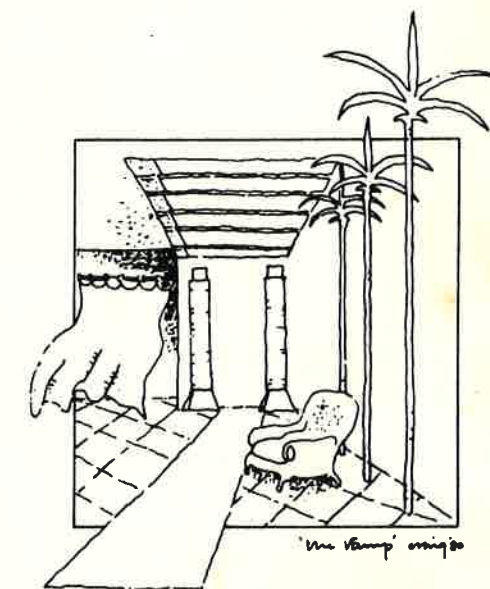
Layout sketch for the library at Brenthurst
Hallen Theron and Partners Inc.

Tom
Craig

"It is wonderful to consider, you know, that you must see so well that you hear too. And sometimes it is well to hear so well that you see too. The senses really can be considered one thing. It all comes together. It is the reason why I constantly refer to music in referring to architecture".

Louis I. Kahn

On leaving university to practise as an Architect one is aware of an immense 'responsibility'. It is because of these responsibilities, not only to people and their environment but also to one's own personal development, that I believe one needs to nurture a sense of 'humility' as well as an understanding of 'moderation'. One hopes this humility and moderation will subdue the 'ego' and allow one's senses to develop a clear rationale in a very responsible career.



Changes in partnerships

Messrs. T.H. Smuts-Erasmus and Wynand Claassen as from the 1st March 1982 have entered into partnership under the style of Wynand Claassen Smuts-Erasmus and Partners at 1007c Sanlam Centre, 311 West Street, Durban.

W.H. Peters has changed the style of his practice to "Dr.-Ing W.H. Peters Architect", The School of Architecture, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban.

Mr. J.L.H. (Lance) Smith resigned as a partner in Ferreira Da Silva, Smith and Stafford with effect from 1st March 1982. Messrs. Ferreira da Silva and Stafford will continue to practice under the style of Ferreira da Silva and Stafford at the same address.

Mr. Lance Smith has joined Hallen Theron and Partners Inc. as a partner with effect from 1st March 1982.

K. Lalloo with effect from 1st May 1982 has formed his own private practice under the style of "Kiran Lalloo Architect" at 523 Pietermaritzburg Street, Pietermaritzburg.

Changes in Membership

R.D.Y. Pugh - NPI to TPI.

A. Banfield - NPI to TPI.

P.M. Perold - NPI to TPI.

C.D. Kruger - OFS to NPI address P.O. Box 10465, Richards Bay.

J.D. Theron - NPI to CPI new address c/o Hallen, Theron and Partners Inc., 32 Bird Street, Port Elizabeth.

Mr. A. Banfield - NPI to CPI.

Mr. J.C. Bouwer - from NPI to OFS.

Changes in Addresses

Mr. P.H. Coetzee to P.O. Box 2974, Durban.

Mr. G.J. Davis to 192 Roberts Street, Joondanna, Perth 6060, Australia.

Mr. B.I. Peter, Mr. P.C.H. Batho, Mr. C.A.H. Kadwa to c/o McLaren.

Alcock, Bedford, 76 Valley View Road, Morningside, Durban.

Mr. C.N. Richards to 35 Ridgeside Road, Umgeni Park.

Mr. J. Duvenage to P.O. Box 10586, Meerensee.

Mr. C.D. Kruger to P.O. Box 10465, Meerensee.

Mr. R.W. Muller to P.O. Box 5794, Durban.

Mr. M.S. Phillips to c/o 601 Sanlam Centre, 331 West Street, Durban.

Mr. J. Pitout to P.O. Box 10572, Richards Bay.

Mr. L. Stretton to 105 Fassifern, 35 Ridge Road, Durban.

Mr. G.R. Robinson to P.O. Box 680, Durban.

Mr. D. Thomas to c/o 211 Fassifern, 35 Ridge Road, Durban.

Mr. R.P.R. Porter to Garryhinch, 26 Rockhaven Road, Cowies Hill.

Mr. R.W. Muller to P.O. Box 5794, Durban.

Mr. A.R. Lees-Rolfe to 32 Oriel Road, Pietermaritzburg.

Mr. A.M. Ogilvie change of residential address to 5 Levant Road, Umgeni Park, Durban. 4051.

Mr. R.C. Geraghty to 601 Prudential Equity Building, 331 Smith Street Durban. 4001 (P.O. Box 4069).

Mr. G.M. Khan to 201A Sayani Centre, 165 Grey Street, Durban.

New Members

G.M. Khan; Ordinary, 7 Tamdale Avenue, Asherville, Durban.

R.S. Granville - 14 Keate Street, Ladysmith.

N.R. Bennewith (ordinary) c/o P/B X9041, Pietermaritzburg.

M.P. Malefane - P.O. Box 94, Maseru.

G.T. Downes (ordinary) 162 Ridge Road, Durban.

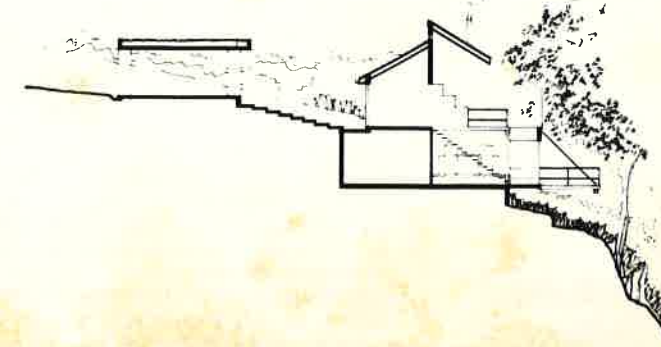
Rob
Johnson

This house, for young friends with a special feeling for their piece of land beyond the suburban limits, is about their idea of retreat to their very own orchard where they can enjoy the fruits and rub shoulders with real nature.

The physical product is about the section, which copes with the slope and meets the most dramatic point on the site. Here, without fear of loss of privacy, it opens its face to the leaves, the night sky and the view down and along a thickly vegetated gorge of a valley.

After 5½ years 'in the world' it doesn't appear that we can afford philosophies, but we definitely need ideas.

If an idea can survive the limitations, variations, referrals, reductions, reappraisals, contractual obligations and more, and if it really does turn out to be as worthwhile an idea as it appeared in the first place, then I think the idea can approach architecture.



We are teetering on the edge of a decision whether the profession should go public or not – perhaps radio jingles like the very professional bankers of not long ago – Rich Pullon phone 316661 – no weddings. Great stuff.

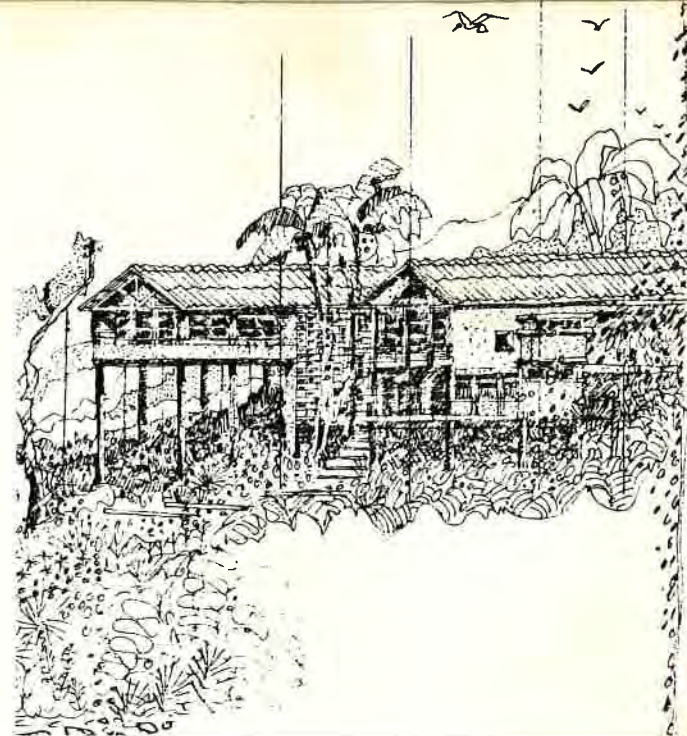
If it helps bring things closer to us and by careful looking, it helps us agree on ways of making the ugly more difficult, then that is even greater stuff.

The stuff that makes things beautiful – not society, as that is beyond my reach – but clearing tables for discussion at grass roots level on ways of making things beautiful. And then getting them made.

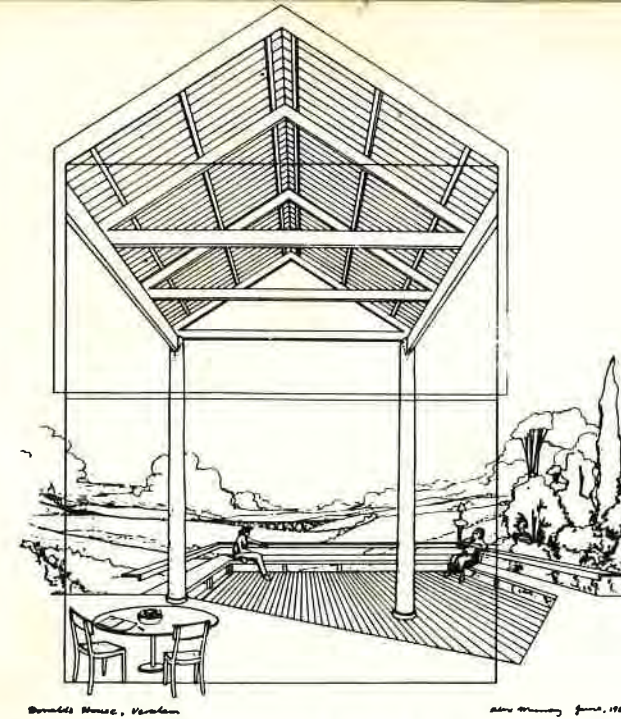
There is another hot debate presently running through the glossies compelling me to pinch, borrow or pretend things belonging to our early compass bearers and give them meaning now. On the one hand.

Also sometimes among the pages, ideas that have also pinched, borrowed, but without pretence, things that belong to us and are within our grasp right now.

These are the things that make beautiful things great stuff. And who knows, someone else may also like them, and that's great.



**Kevin
MacGarry**



At the drawing board we sit and construct imaginary geometries; evolve private theories; delineate thin, abstract worlds for our inventions to inhabit, where we may best study them lit by the flattering light of the ideal. In such a world has this house stood for the past one and a half years, unassailable and immaculate like all unbuilt dreams.

Now it is going up, high over the green hills near Verulam. How will it stand up to its first encounter with vivid reality: Will its imagined beauty wilt?

Will all those late night ideas be blown away like chaff at the first gust of the sea breeze? Or will it retain just some of the dreams that made it, and quietly take its place in the real world?

**Alex
Murray**

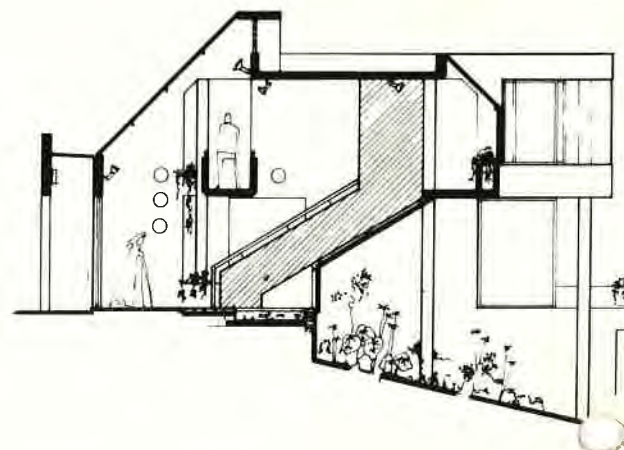
Inside/outside we all try it, the S.A. domestic problem/solution. But how to do it on a naked hillside exposed to the worst aspect of Glenashley with a view like Acapulco? – Solar shield??

All very well if one enjoys the sight of oneself at dinner, drinks, bed etc. etc.

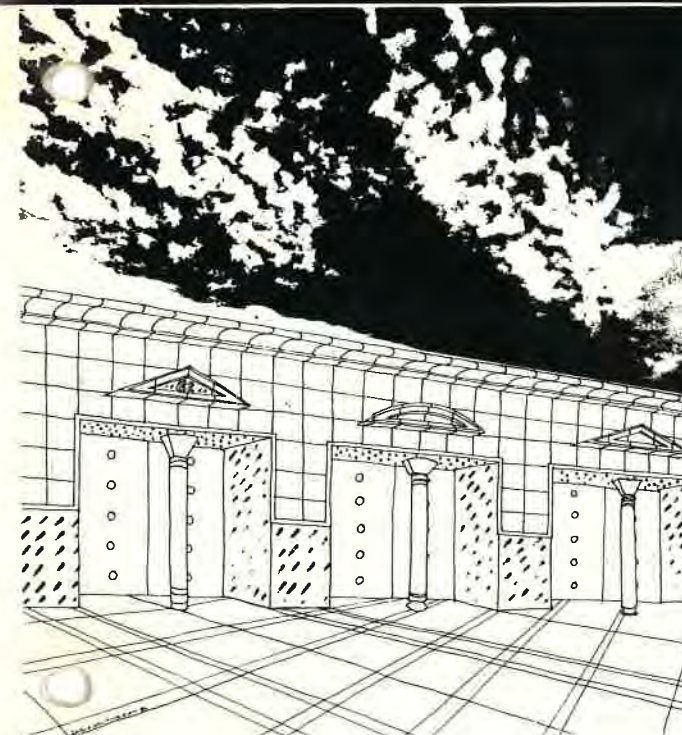
Our practice has for some time during the booming months been able to fully involve itself with gusto in a series of "villas", a sometimes enjoyable phenomenon in architectural practice. The effort and anxiety seems only well spent on about one in five, but for that one, the satisfaction is grand.

The illustration is, I am beginning to hope, one of these (despite most of the usual contractual hiccups!). It is in fact the fortress/garden/view/sun/private attempt described above.

The satisfaction is rarely unfettered, but worth every minute when available.



**Ken
Moull**



A return to magic

In the space of the last 10 years we have seen a revolution in architectural thought. This coup d'etat led by a small band of international collaborators has established a new set of architectural attitudes and an accompanying polemic. The return to classicism has emerged, yet again, as the means of shedding ossifying design philosophies. Pediments, symmetry, the golden mean and anthropomorphic proportions have been all returned, according to the word of Michael, Robert et al.

Where this ongoing revolution will take us is a question that leads to speculation as to the basic ideals of the prophets and the power of the media, which seems to have found in them, personalities with public appeal and image. We have seen the eclectic approach produce buildings as architectural medleys of styles and images, what I would call "Hits on 45 architecture" all in the name of architectural language and semiotics.

The technology of the 20th century has seen its high point stylistically, in "High tech" and has since eased into a role suited for use in industrial applications. Has the baby been thrown out with the bath water? Are we leaving our 'modern' aesthetics for a new mistress. Let's not forget the excitement of High modern, slick architectonic gymnastics.

I suppose we're all trying to be inventive pioneers of design as were our modern predecessors and perhaps in this lies our salvation, that in seeking to attain new levels of design we instil a little architectural magic into a brew that someday people might enjoy.

**Andy
Murray**

To practice architecture is to be midwife at the birth of a child whose parents are our mere acquaintances.

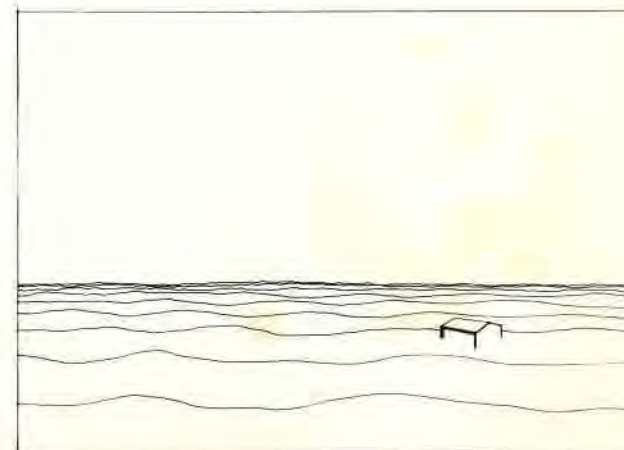
Form and ornament are the traits by which we distinguish a building's personality; by which we tell its age; and which determine our subjective attitudes toward its essential function.

Function has followed form; form has followed function. Both form and function have followed environmental and social-economical parameters. Yet there is a dimension greater than what meets our immediate perception.

Buildings are bigger than we are. We create structures that outlive and stand higher than we. We might bear relation to them as does a pedestrian to a speeding car – a momentary blur.

Their life-spans are generally measured in decades, centuries are held in the consciousness of a civilization for an age through legends. A building in essence is never complete, merely a co-ordinate, a point, in time and space; its very material, steel, glass, timber, clay, sand and water returning in many forms.

Fashion and style are the impertinent gestures of self-indulgence, the facade on infinity, through which simple solutions shine, as light through glass.



**Michael
Mullins**



I like to think of architecture being an ostentatious human in scale ... plain but colourful. It should be appropriate to its task and surroundings.

I like ornament.

I think our buildings should reflect the fact that we are living in Africa. I find my enjoyment of my work undermined by the knowledge that virtually all our work is by and for the privileged few. I worked in a museum for some time and enjoyed feeling I was working for the community as a whole.

I have done some restoration work and think allowance should be made for this kind of work in any architectural education.

There are rules to follow which are often ignored.

**Duncan
Ross-Watt**

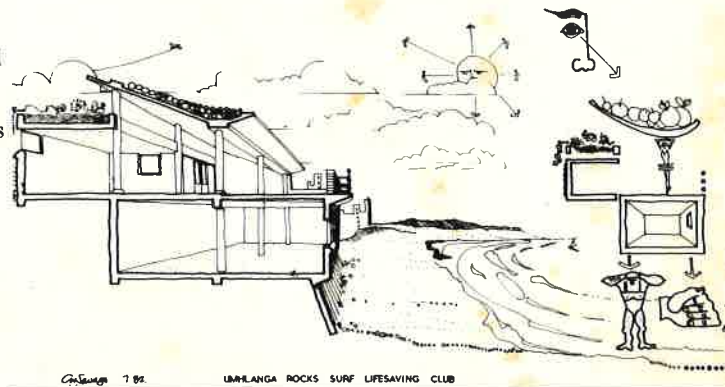
Colin
Savage

The work of my life long vocation, architecture, is essentially involved, at the micro scale, in assembling materials in ways that are inventive in a three dimensional context.

The problem at the macro scale remains in essence the same – assembling special elements created with materials that juxtapose with the landscape and so become architecture.

Where roof kisses sky and wind tickles eaves, the sun peeps in and is shut off at will; walls generously enclose against the cold night air and doors that swing, beckon brightly – “Hello”, and as surfaces wrap and hug, spring and shout – force meets force and gather together for the final thrust only to be effortlessly caressed by Mother Earth.

These are my props assembled for the performance of people in the theatre of life.



‘Spirit of the times’ was a phrase often used during the period of architectural endeavour that was termed ‘modernism’. It was marked by a great deal of rhetoric about social concerns, a proliferation of specialists and a theory/dogma that held function as the determinant of form.

Sadly, despite the specialists, the majority of buildings erected in the name of modernism are empty of ‘meaning’ and nearly devoid of any understanding of human life. There is no clearer demonstration of the poor interpretation of the modernist’s ideals than in our city planning/building of the period. In our eagerness to specialise in every conceivable aspect of the city mechanism we overlooked the qualitative and integrationist aspect of cities. Consequently our cities have good traffic systems but bad ‘streets’. Good individual buildings but no civic space. Plenty of housing but none of the quality that goes to make up a successful neighbourhood.

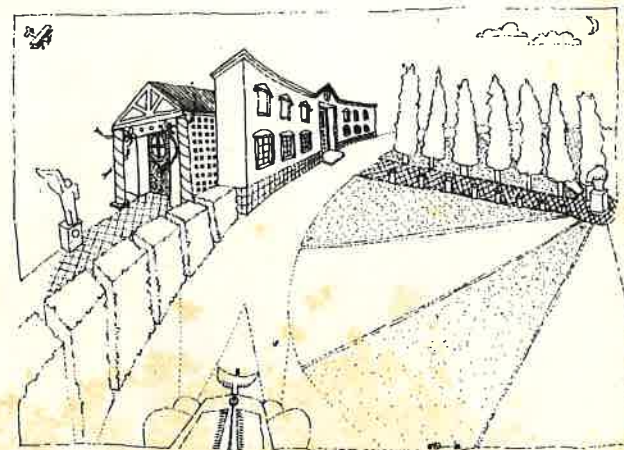
However there are signs that things are changing if commentators on the built environment have read the signs correctly, we are entering a period free of dogma, a period without stringent and narrow guidelines, no certainties. A derivative of the Mies box or a S.O.M. tower will not be the certain winner that it was in the past. Rather the criteria for success are likely to be far broader and inclusive. Evaluation can be on the basis of what gives us pleasure, and how a particular project responds to the ‘spirit of the place’.



Lance
Smith

Architecture is the delicate balance of opposing forces. A dichotomy of rational and emotional sensibilities. Architecture is born of architecture, a language whose syntax is not eroded by time but undergoes subtle changes. An evolution of tradition based on the developments of archetypes, a collective history. Architects are not born architects but learn through the work of preceding generations, an imposed heritage. Opposed to this tradition is emotional sensibility. The subjective, idiosyncratic direction of the individual. The particular interest or influence pertinent to each architectural problem.

It is the constant struggle between what the Architect ‘knows’ and what the Architect ‘feels’ that creates the tension, and this sensibility is one of my concerns at this point in time.



Bruce
Stafford

News

The Architects Drawing

An exhibition illustrating historic and contemporary examples of architectural drawings of Durban buildings was held at the Little Abbey Theatre, Commercial Road, Durban, from 23 August until 4 September 1982. The exhibition was opened by Prof. Pancho Guedes, Head of the Witwatersrand School of Architecture, who spoke on the architect's drawing as a medium for expression.

Durban Architecture: Roots, Growth, Change

The above exhibition of the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects was opened on 7 July 1982 with an illustrated lecture by Prof. Barrie Biermann on “The Seven Cities of Durban”: the colonial, the imperial, the maritime, the recreational, the commercial, the industrial and the exotic. This was the first time the Institute has participated in Durban's Annual Celebration of the Arts, and its success can be gauged by the 3075 record number of visitors to the Art Gallery.

The exhibition of architectural posters and models ran from 8 to 24 August and comprised six sections: the development of domestic architecture, attempts at capturing the essences of older apartment buildings, a taxonomy of architectural styles, the visual impact of recent changes in architecture, architectural models, and experiments with sun, shelter and space – the roots of Architecture.

Catalogues of this exhibition are still available from The Secretary, NPIA, P.O. Box 777, 4000 Durban, at R1,20 including postage.

Annual General Meeting

As 1982 is not an Institute election year, Prof. Danie Theron, Head of the School of Architecture at the University of Port Elizabeth, has accepted the invitation to be guest speaker at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Thursday, 21 October. The subject of the talk will be “Durban in a rear-view mirror”, and cover Prof. Theron's two decades of professional and architectural experiences in Durban, 1960-1981.

University/Institute Liaison Committee

The following events have been planned for the fourth quarter of 1982:-

Tuesday, 21 September, 5.15 p.m. in SH.2, University of Natal: *Mangosutho Technikon* by its Architects, Engineers, and Quantity Surveyors.

Tuesday, 5 October, 5.15p.m. in the Old Mutual Sports Hall, University of Natal: *Volleyball*, Students vs the Profession. Members wishing to make the two Institute teams should contact Keith Alcock, tel. 330023.

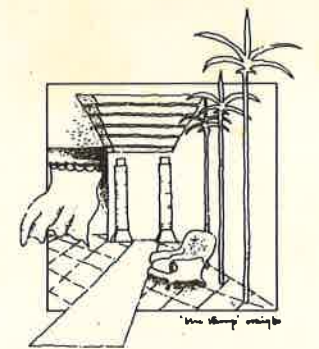
Tuesday, 19 October, 5.15p.m. in SH.2, University of Natal: *The Making and Preservation of Historic S.A. Townscapes* by Robert Haswell of the Dept. of Geography, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

In the 1983 NPIA issues ...

It is hoped to continue quarterly issues in 1983. Themes are not final, but some of general interest and concern may be: on the technology side, brick veneer timber-framed construction; on architectural movements, post-modernism; on urban and rural developments, Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands.

Members are however reminded that the nature of the content and quality of issue is contingent upon their full co-operation and they are by re-iteration hereby invited to offer suggestions and submit contributions.

Editor



THE ARCHITECTS DRAWING

AN EXHIBITION WHICH CELEBRATES THE ART OF ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING

