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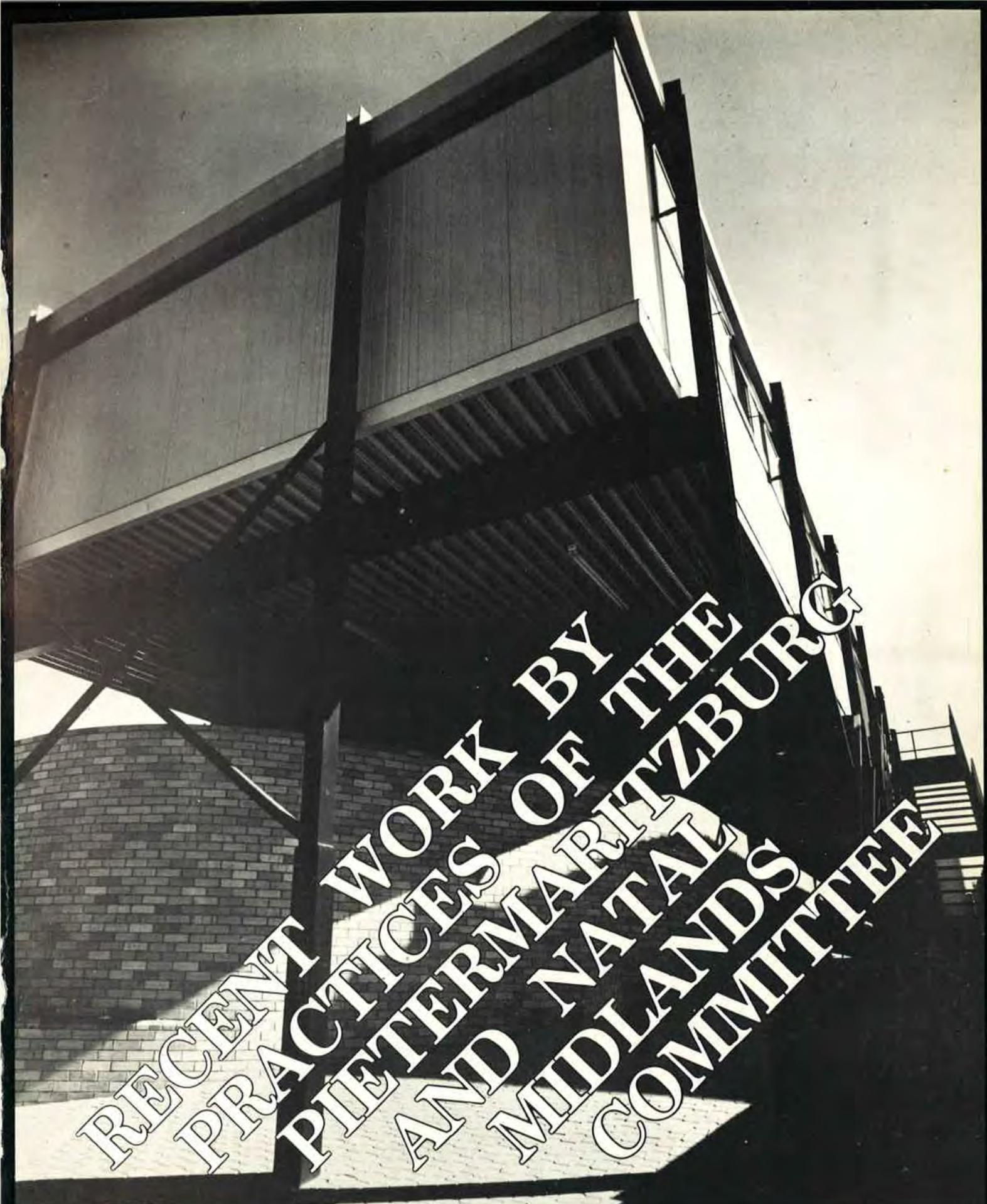
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RECENT WORK BY  
PRACTICES OF THE  
PIETERMARITZBURG  
AND NATAL  
MIDLANDS  
COMMITTEE

Journal  
of the Natal  
Provincial  
Institute of  
Architects

4-1983





Compiled and edited by Dr. Walter Peters  
for the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects.  
P.O. Box 777, Durban 4000, Telephone 67345  
Design and production: Monica Göbel

## Editorial

Recently the Pietermaritzburg and Natal Midlands Sub-Committee of the Natal Provincial Institute of Architects became elevated to full Committee status of the Institute of South African Architects. To celebrate the occasion, it seemed appropriate to present to our readership an overview of conditions of practice and of recent work by members of this new Committee.

## The Private Enterprise/Architect problem in Pietermaritzburg by Geoff Carter-Brown

Pietermaritzburg, despite being one of the larger cities outside the country's major metropolitan areas, has always tended to operate within a low level economic structure. By this is meant that the financial structure commencing with salaries paid, business profits earned and consequential commercial and residential rentals, remains amongst the lowest in any comparable city in the Republic. Construction costs, however, remain high resulting in a "strangulation" effect on any development within the private sector. It is therefore not surprising that the architect is "cut out" of local private enterprise development whenever possible due, of course, to the popular belief that architects indulge in extravaganza or offer no more than a draughtsman's service at an exorbitant fee – a circumstance which probably prevails in most centres and which it is hoped that the *Professional Promotions Directorate* will endeavour to rectify. Pietermaritzburg has, furthermore, an extraordinarily high number of draughtsmen who are exempted from the provisions of the *Reservation of Work Act* with the result that the exclusion of professional services extends to the major projects as much as the minor ones. Mies van der Rohe's famous statement "less is more" certainly applies to Pietermaritzburg but not in quite the same context. Extreme effort has to be applied if projects for local businesses are going to be built and completed within the economic levels referred to and yet achieve the slightest architectural merit.

## Comment by Gordon Small

Besides houses and housing, the traditional and established concerns of architects, I am delighted to see that architects in Pietermaritzburg and Natal Midlands are getting a good share of industrial buildings. But let me hasten to add: volume is not our concern – quality is. We need to make better and therefore more economic factories than the engineers and package dealers would. That is the challenge to our profession and I am pleased to see some fine solutions herein.

Louis Grové appears to have clients who insist on quality and prepare their budgets accordingly. He has used the variegated roofscape to provide natural lighting and ventilation to the service cores of the flats and thereby afforded all living and sleeping spaces the maximum exposure to the environment. However, I am unsure of the small consequences of the double volumed kitchen in the two bedrooomed flats, and the living spaces in the bed-sitters have been compromised. The use of industrial, shed-like roofing material is fine, but the flashing and barge-board details remain foreign to the scale of the house. Despite my negative comments, Louis Grové's Enelka Flats at Dundee are ingeniously designed.

Tony Clarkson has had to reconcile large accommodation schedules to sites which invariably have the magnificent distant views to the Drakensberg contradict with the desirable orientation. House Marshall particularly brings home this point and to solve the problems of giving the occupants both view and comfort, he has resorted to the use of large north-facing clerestory windows along the lengths of the passage. I am pleased to note that Tony Clarkson has not simply placed toilet and bathroom groupings south and bedrooms north, but has allowed the bathrooms some sun too! He has therefore more than adequately, theoretically at least, conformed with the clients' stated request "to see that the house was not cold". At the same time, I was a little surprised to find that the family room, during the daytime undoubtedly the most comfortable room to be in, has no fireplace for the family's comfort on winter evenings. In an area where for most of the year one is looking for the setting sun and its last warming rays, this omission surprises me. In all his buildings the tradition of the face brick is continued and I enjoy his plastic use of this traditional building material in courtyard walls and general detailing. His planning is however not always as compact as that displayed in the Pietermaritzburg house by the Brian Servant Partnership.

The Biology Building of the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg sits well alongside the existing Agricultural

Faculty Building, the scales of the buildings, the re-interpreted fenestration, the bricks and the pitched roofs all emphasise this group quality. But, whilst aesthetic integration has been achieved, the axial planning basis of the existing building appears to have been ignored and one may certainly ask the determinant of the width that separates each of the new blocks. What a pity the editor has not been supplied with revised drawings.

The problem faced by Messrs. Hughes and Todd is not dissimilar and I appreciate the difficulty of adding a new wing to an existing building and then, for the sake of architectural unity, having to incorporate the original planning modules, window sizes etc. I would however like to bet that the north-west facing laboratory windows will in the near future be screened against the sun with aluminium louvres bearing the "Hulets" trademark!

Patrick Holdcroft of ZAI has produced a clean and straightforward plan which indicates a considerable study of the production process. He has concerned himself with the necessity for landscaping, and though it is unfortunate that the site dictated the angled administration block, he has successfully solved the planning thereof with industrial materials at an industrial scale.

The problem of integrating an industrial complex of buildings into an architectural unity is also what Messrs. Moolman, van der Wall, Volk, van der Westhuizen and Bold had to face in their brief of some five buildings with divergent uses at Mpumalanga. Common to all are face brick walls and sheet metal roofs, and though this is successful, the vexed problem lies in the challenge for consistency of detail where clearly certain buildings are "people" buildings and others are "thing" buildings.

A different solution can be seen in the Gilbeys Distribution Depot by the Brian Servant Partnership, which in resorting to pitched roofs, unfortunately ends up by denying their existence along the administration section and loading canopy by providing a horizontal fascia surround.

Carter-Brown and Baillon have submitted three worthy buildings and a summary of the "Private Enterprise/Architect Problem in Pietermaritzburg" which I wholly endorse. I watched the C.B. Engineering building mushroom. It sits well in Victoria Road; I approve of the concern for detail in the placing of the window frames hard up against the outer surface of the wall but expect soon to see sun control louvres added to that elevation which happens to be north-west orientated. The ideosyncracies like the carefully moulded downstand beam hiding services along the road elevation; and even the framing to the windows on the ground floor are interesting, but why could not the graphics be larger and better integrated in the street facade?

How did they manage to have such fun with Hendersons Heavy Duty Service Centre within the usual budget? The use of colour, the trivia of the piped return of the gable profile and the wide architectural vocabulary may disturb some readers of this *Journal*, but in its context it has the remarkable combination of being both a straight forward and yet "jolly" building.

But my favourite is the C & J Clark Personnel Facility which within an economy of sparsity and extraordinarily thoroughness provides a personnel facility within what was only a narrow alleyway – an engineering building like no engineer could build. It is a great pity that the submitted plans are unwieldy and do not lend themselves easily to publication. I do hope there will be another chance to expose this most skilful "box" more fully.

My brief for writing this comment was also to take issue on the appropriateness of the examples given to the demands of Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands. Well, whereas Robert Stern has given as definitions for post-modern architecture that it be "contextually suited and allude to historicism", let me hasten to add that the latter seems not to have been a great consideration in the work presented. This is not fashion bound, but attempts to meet the needs of people at work and at leisure in an architectural way, and the quality I perceive in some of the work gives me confidence that contemporary architecture will one day be viewed as favourably as the Victorian heritage for which Pietermaritzburg and the Midlands are famous. In this respect perhaps there is a concern for the lessons of the past-be they unconsciously present.

Gordon Small is a Past President-in-Chief of the ISAA and a 1977 NPAA Award of Merit recipient (for the Faculty of Arts Building at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg).

# Meanwell, Andersson and Jackson

## Biology Building, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

## Function of Complex

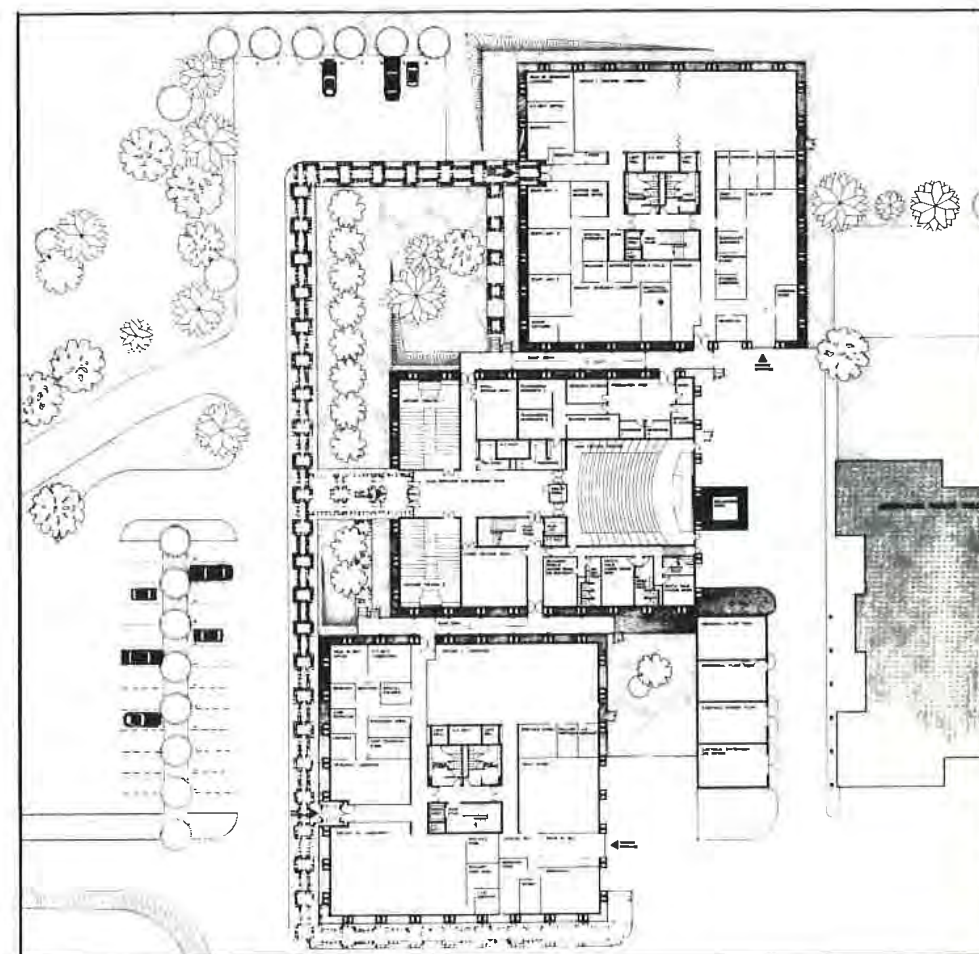
The complex houses the Departments of Botany and Zoology for the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The accommodation required was primarily laboratory accommodation with related service areas. It was anticipated that as improved teaching and research methods were developed the laboratory layouts and use of service areas would change frequently. The main design criterion, therefore, was the provision of fully serviced shells within which the variable functional units could be accommodated and where unit changes could be allowed to occur without major alterations.

## Planning

The square shape chosen for each departmental building represented the most economic shape in terms of usable area particularly in relation to the centrally placed square service core within each building. The core provided the space for toilets and the main vertical and horizontal circulation routes within each shell, thus completing the economy of area utilization initially envisaged. Analyses of the spatial requirements of this complex indicated that the functional requirements would be fulfilled best by maintaining a basically low-level development with the corresponding degree of horizontal expansion. The separation of the departmental blocks was achieved by positioning the common user block in between them and linking all three with horizontal circulation corridors.

## Structural System and Modular Concept.

In order to achieve the flexibility required in terms of the above it was considered essential for the departmental buildings to have no internal columns and for the supporting structure to be on the periphery of the building, with the service core as the internal supporting structure. It was considered necessary also that piped supply and disposal services should be able to be routed as simply and directly as possible within the depth of the supporting floor structure and that the structure therefore should maintain a degree of flexibility compatible with that achieved in the internal planning of the buildings. Peripheral ducts/structural elements provide maximum flexibility for services.



A Ground Floor Plan

V Aerial view from north-west





# Glasspool, Coote and Clarkson

## House Scoccia, Ladysmith

### Brief

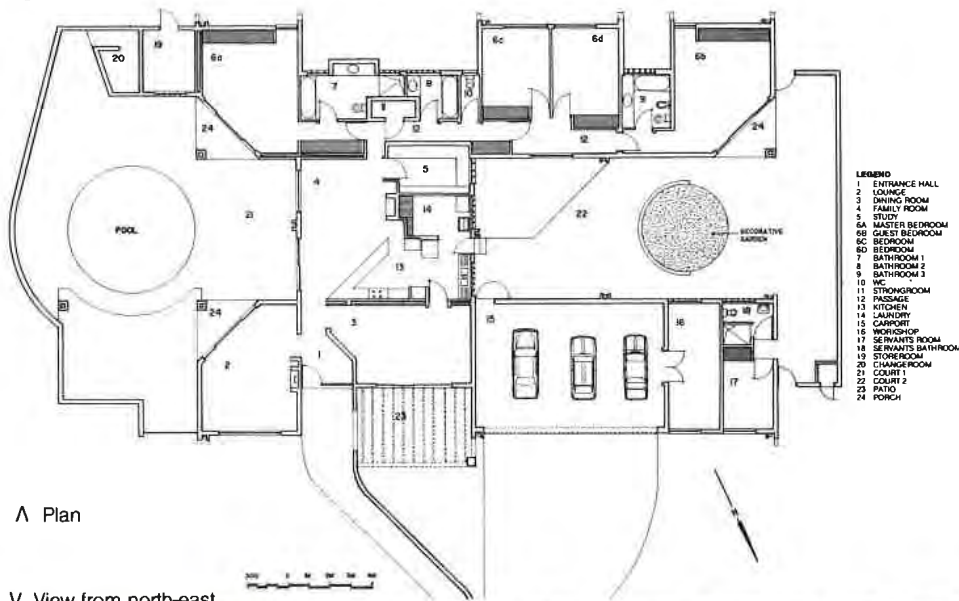
A comprehensive brief was received from the clients with special emphasis on their life style. The house was to afford maximum privacy to a family unit comprising husband and wife only and was to suit their needs in a compact unit. It was also required to accommodate their parents on extended visits from Italy. At all times the kitchen was to remain in contact with all living areas.

### Design solution

The design utilizes the pool as an external focus to both the private and entertainment areas which are in visual contact with the kitchen. The guest wing allows for freedom of movement without necessary contact with family life.

### Structure and finishes

The house is built externally of *calsi* gold face brickwork laid with square recessed joints. Internally the house is bagged and painted to offset a large collection of paintings. The floors throughout the house are *mazista rosa* stone.



A Plan

V View from north-east



# House Marshall, Ladysmith

### Brief

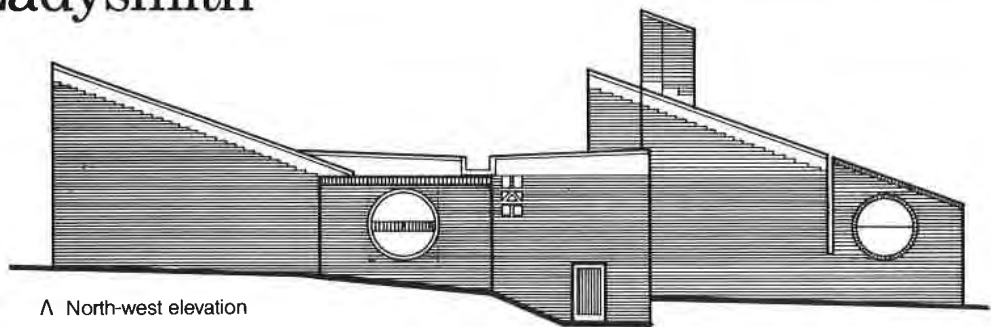
The owners bought their suburban stand to enjoy the magnificent view of the Drakensberg. The owners are gregarious and spontaneous entertainers. Their brief to their architect was to provide the accommodation within their budget and "to see that it was not cold!"

### Design solution

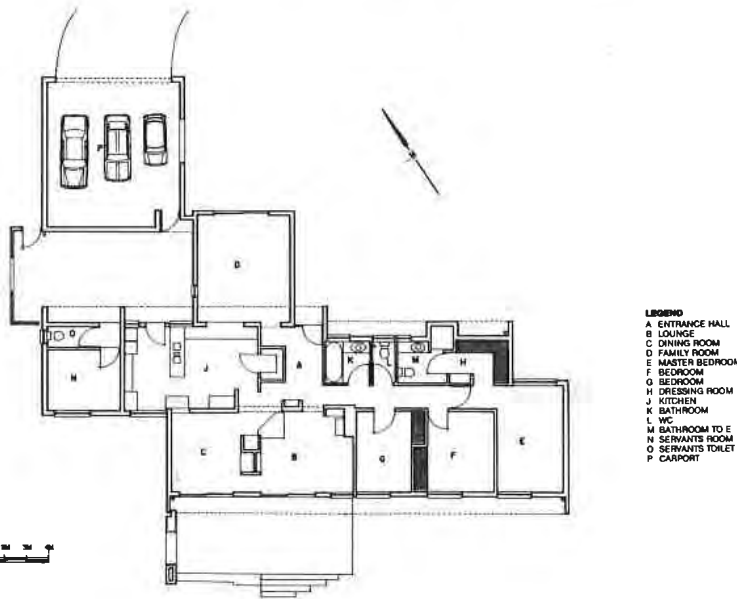
The house falls into a simple zoning pattern, and is carefully detailed and compact. The rooms were all lined up to take advantage of the Drakensberg view to the south-west and they raise their heads to soak in the winter sun. The family room is separated from the lounge to avoid conflict between kids and adult life.

### Structure and finishes

The house has face brickwork externally and internally with quarry tile floors. The ceilings are white rhino board.



A North-west elevation



A Plan

# Glasspool, Coote and Clarkson

## House Heyns, Dundee

### Brief

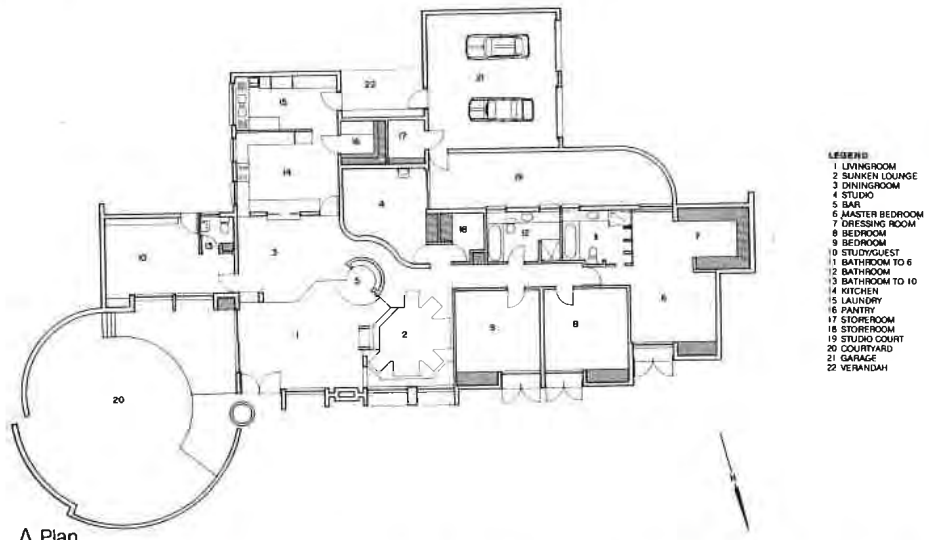
This house is designed for a dairy/crop farmer and is situated some 6 kilometres from Dundee. The owner is an agronomist and his farm attracts many visitors as a result of his innovative farming methods.

Thus, despite being on a farm, the house was to enjoy privacy from the many visitors and farm labourers. The family is a close unit and the living areas were all to be in one volume. The house is to serve as an office for the farm and accommodate the wife's artistic talents. It enjoys the privilege of being unhampered by municipal bye-laws.

### Design solution

The house was designed to suit an established site and was staggered to accommodate the existing trees. A rockface brick was used to integrate the house with the adjacent rocky outcrop.

The living areas form an open plan and are spaciouly defined by placing the family room, the dining room and the sunken lounge, at three different levels, while sharing the central service bar as a visual focus. The bedroom wing and the wife's studio form the second zone. The studio opens into its own private court and forms an extension to the office and kitchen forming the service zone.



A Plan

V View from north-east



# House Pandor, Dundee

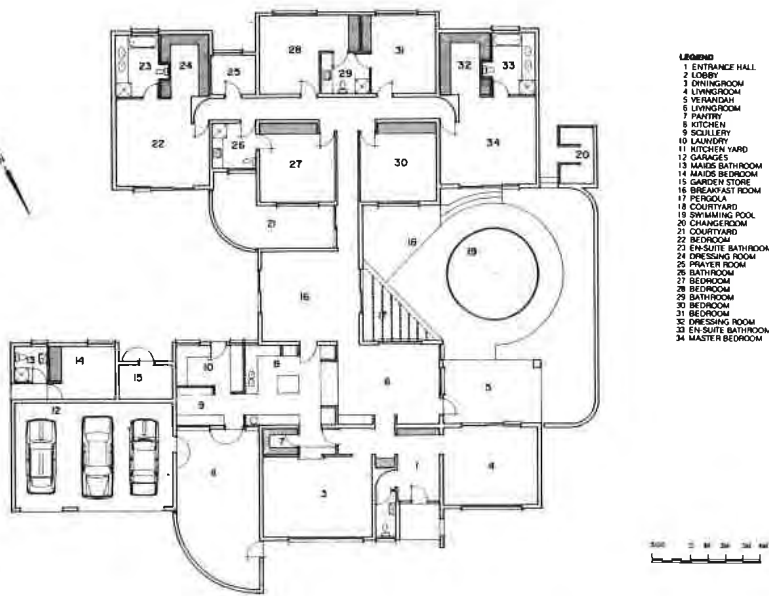
### Brief

This house is designed for a business man with a large family spanning three generations. The brief called for each generation to be able to feel free to entertain at the same time.

### Design solution

For privacy the house faced inwards and focussed around two courtyards. The site determined that to obtain north light many rooms had to reach out above their neighbours to gather in sunlight. The living and bedroom areas were separated by the outdoor living areas. Each of the two older generations were to have their own bedroom wing and were to relate through their own courtyards to the kitchen. The youngest generation's lifestyle revolved around the family room and pool area. The house is designed to be servantless and the kitchen is central to the living areas.

A North-west elevation

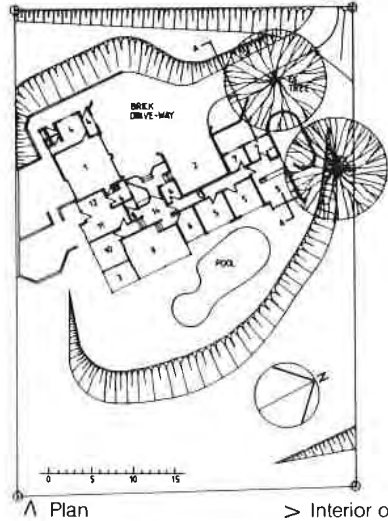


A Plan



# Brian Servant Partnership

## House Hatfield, Pietermaritzburg



Plan > Interior of lounge



### Design report

Since the Owner is extremely involved in motor cars, particularly the restoration of vintage cars and sports cars, parking and garages were a prime design factor.

The other design factor was the relationship of the interior to the exterior on this very steeply sloping east facing site.

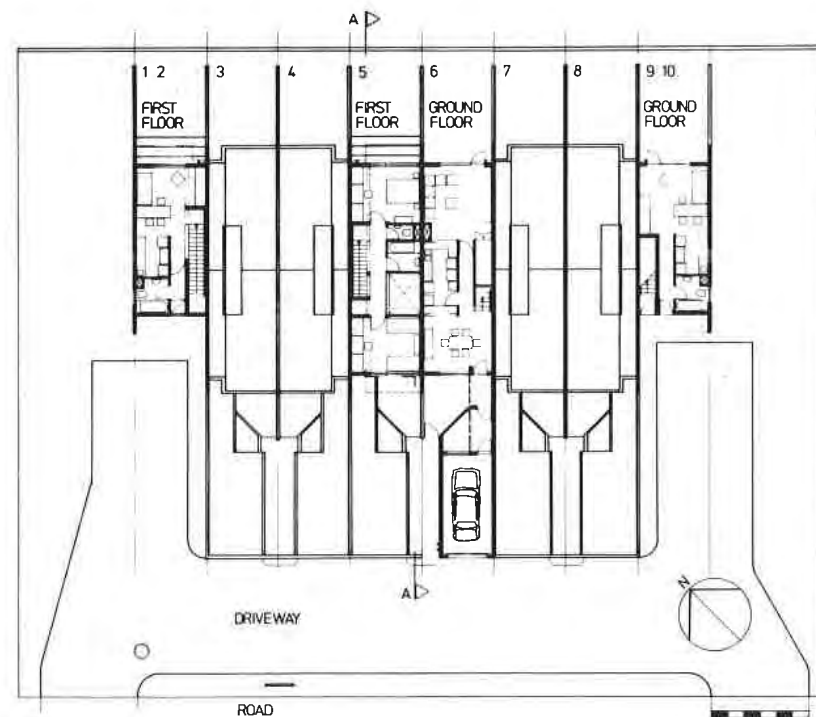
By using a series of split levels and terracing, each room opens onto ground level.

# L. Grové Architect

## Enelka Flats, Dundee



Section



Plan

View from north-west



### Brief

The clients called for a low maintenance block of four bachelor flats and the maximum number of two-bedroomed flats on a level site which offers no view, in the Northern Natal town of Dundee.

### Design solution

The distributor road on the South-West dictated the position of the parking areas.

Aspects important to the design of the duplex flats included: undercover access from the garages; protected front entrances; integrated living, dining and cooking areas; north-east orientation of the major spaces and privacy of the outdoor living areas. Flanking the group of duplex flats are the bachelor flats on two levels.

For the superb execution I thank the builders, Messrs. Wohlberg and Brunkhorst.

# Brian Servant Partnership

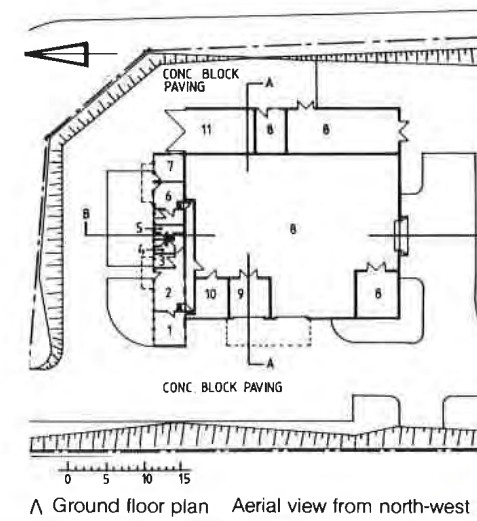
## Gilbeys Distribution Depot, Pietermaritzburg

### Project

To design and build a new Warehouse/Distribution Centre in Pietermaritzburg including the necessary office accommodation and ablutions, thus relocating Gilbeys to Pentrich Industrial Area.

### Design/Construction

A simple steel portal frame construction was used for the warehouse with *Colomet* cladding and *Calsi-Facebricks* externally. The Offices are North facing and are constructed of *Calsi-Bricks* and aluminium windows with a simple *Colomet* fascia on the three sides of the single storey Offices/Ablution Area.



Ground floor plan Aerial view from north-west



# Hughes Todd Inc.

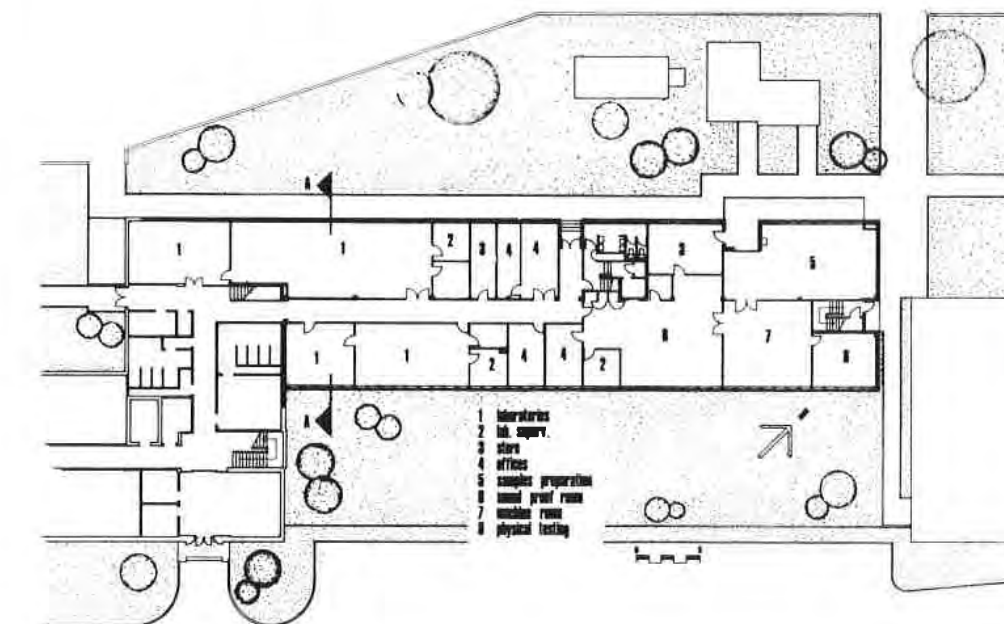
## Hulett Aluminium Technical Block, Pietermaritzburg

### Brief

The brief called for the existing laboratories and technical sections within the vast Hulett Aluminium Head Office complex in Pietermaritzburg, to be centralised into one building thus facilitating quality control and technical administration.

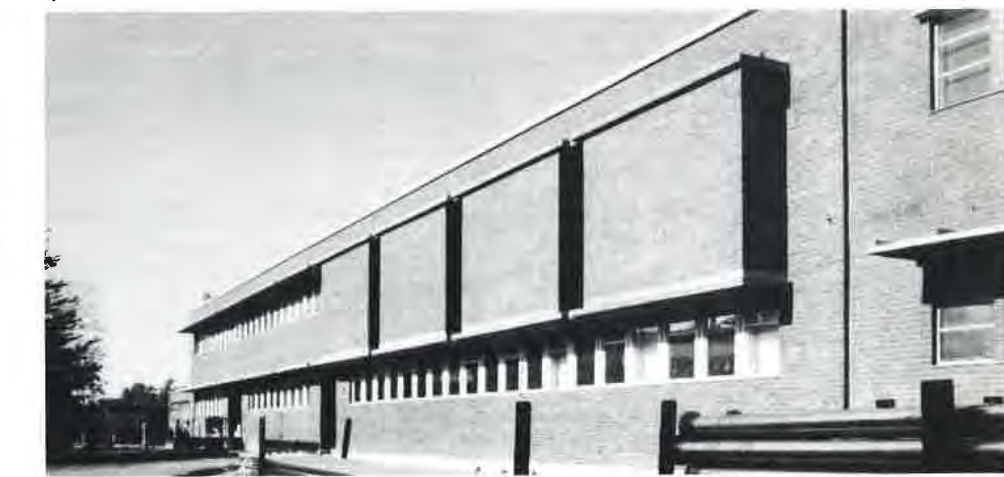
### Design solution

By developing the technical block as a new wing of the existing administration block, close inter-relationship between these departments was ensured and great care was taken to achieve an architectural unity between the new and the existing buildings by incorporating the original planning modules, window sizes and facebrick finishes in the new facade. The laboratories and sample preparation and physical testing rooms are located at ground floor level to provide ease of access for samples from the nearby production buildings, and to accommodate the heavy testing equipment required. The metallography section, library and administration offices are planned at the upper level to insulate them from the relatively noisy ground floor activities. In addition the central corridor at first floor level acts as a covered access way between the existing administration and cafeteria blocks.



Ground floor plan

View from north-west





# Carter-Brown & Baillon

## C & J Clark Personnel Facility, Pmb.

V View of new outdoor dining/recreational area

### Client's brief

The Client approached the Practice with the view of increasing the present factory floor area and also providing additional Staff Change/Dining and Toilet facilities as required for a staff complement of 800 persons.

### Architect's proposal

The proposal was to erect, at first floor level over the existing toilets, a steel structure to contain new Change/Dining Rooms. Under this new structure at ground floor level, additional toilets, a new kitchen and landscaped outdoor recreation areas would be provided.

On completion of the new complex, existing staff facilities within the factory would become available for machinery, thus avoiding the need to extend the factory blocks.



## Hendersons Heavy Duty Vehicle Service Centre, Pmb.

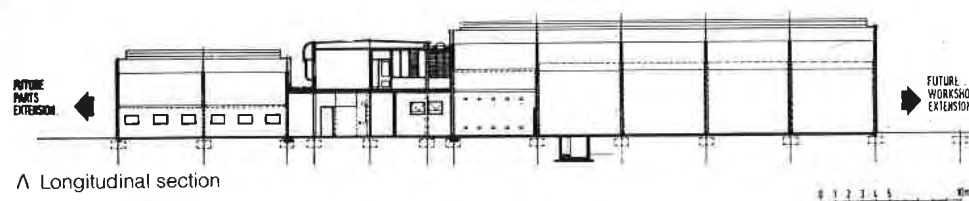
### Brief

The initial brief was simple and business-like: "plan the complex and include all the needs reflected in previous schemes by others but through the ingenuity of the architect do so in a manner which would reduce the capital expenditure and therefore save the additional architect's fee". Needless to say, the brief could not be accepted on those terms and following a detailed description of the architect's true role in assessing client's needs, interpreting them and hopefully arriving at a solution within financial limits, the client agreed to granting the commission – a decision over which, on their own reflection, they remain most relieved.

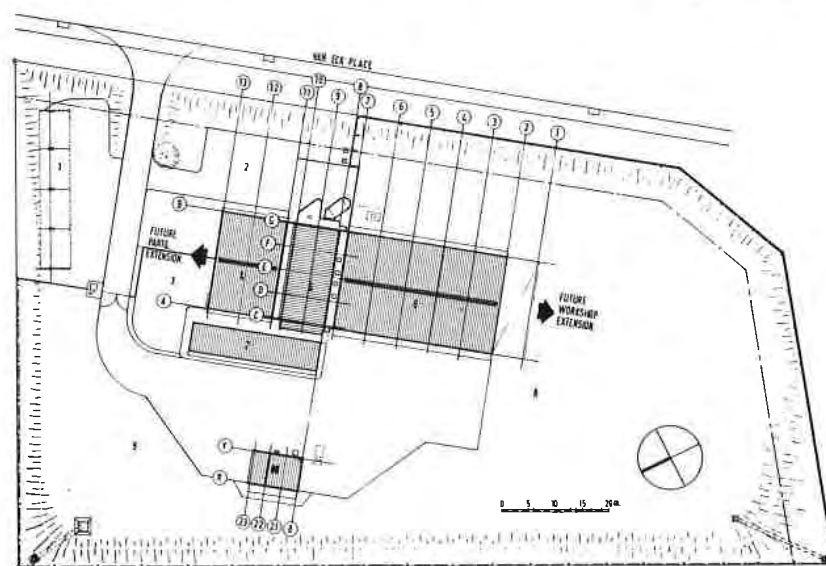
### Siting and Design Solution

The design concept is based on a double storey reinforced concrete central section comprising the offices at first floor level, and parts and other utility areas below. This central section formed the "fix" from which the structural steel and metal clad modules forming the Parts Section on the one side and the Workshop Section on the other, attached themselves and provided for growth by extending the ends.

Detail design decisions comprised a response to an adjoining project which incorporated curved eaves, a desire to soften the complex and attempt to reduce the scale of the high Workshop Section in particular by expressing and drawing downward the structural supports for the eaves. The public and entry spaces responded to the main observation and access point by turning the staircase and parts of the upper accommodation through 45°.



A Longitudinal section



> Site plan

V View from access road



# Carter-Brown & Baillon

## C.B. Engineering Works, Pietermaritzburg

V View from west

Here is that typical non-building that draughtsmen have reproduced so many times and which, to many architects, is not worth a challenge.

### Brief

The client's brief was brief – provide 500 m<sup>2</sup> of workshop area, plus office and reception on the street frontage, usual change rooms and ablutions, and make maximum potential use of the site at an impossibly low cost.

### Postscript

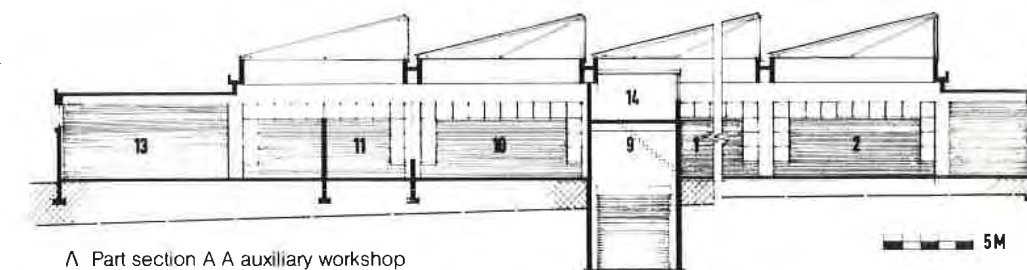
For some reason this little building has evoked more favourable comment than expected or deserved – perhaps because it mushroomed up in just over two months (less time when the GPO required to install the telephones) or more likely, because it did not replace a Victorian cottage.



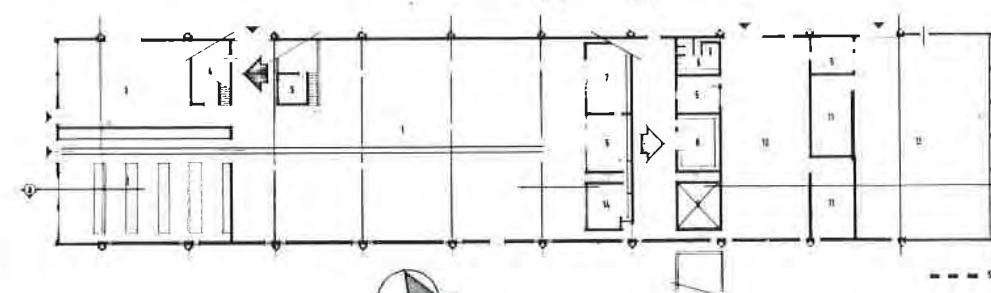
## Moolman, van der Walt, Vlok, van der Westhuizen & Bold

### Workshop and Admin. Complex, Hammarsdale

- LEGEND
- 1 JOINERY WORKSHOP
  - 2 TIMBER STORE
  - 3 LETTERING & HEAT TREATMENT
  - 4 SPRAY PAINTING
  - 5 FOREMAN'S OFFICE
  - 6 MALE ABLUTIONS
  - 7 OFFICE
  - 8 TOOL ROOM
  - 9 SAWDUST ROOM
  - 10 REFRIGERATION SHOP
  - 11 STORE ROOM
  - 12 STORE ROOM
  - 13 FITTING SHOP
  - 14 ADMINISTRATION OFFICE



A Part section A A auxiliary workshop



A Auxiliary workshop plan

V Plant workshop with gatehouse from south-west



### The Design brief

The project was to be built in two phases. The first phase would cater for the more pressing technical and maintenance needs and was to be followed by new administration and training facilities.

### Plant Workshop

The Plant Workshop provides the necessary space and equipment for the maintenance of the heaviest plant and machinery and has the facility for in-house training of apprentices and operators. The installation of a gantry for moving between the plant and the specialised workshops was an essential requirement for the heavy plant parts.

### Auxiliary Workshop

The Auxiliary Workshop includes a joinery workshop with adjacent timber store and road sign department. A trolley conveys timber to the woodworking machines located on either side of the track. A refrigeration and fitting shop with stores and offices complete the ground level, a sawdust extraction plant is located below.



# Zakrzewski Associates Inc.

## Howson-Algraphy Factory, Pietermaritzburg

### Brief and Siting

The company manufactures lithographic printing plates employing a highly sophisticated process which is light sensitive and involves critical tolerance in the deposition of chemical coatings on high grade aluminium plates. Manufacture is highly automated and the process is unique in the southern hemisphere.

The brief, originating in 1977, included the selection and assessment of alternative sites, and called for some 2 500m<sup>2</sup> of production area with separately articulated administrative offices, staff facilities and bulk raw material storage.

### Design solution

To meet the Client's requirement of a one level development, the complex is arranged on a single large terrace cut and filled on the hillside site. Arising from the site configuration, its optimum point of road access and the necessity to allow for future expansion, the major building elements fall naturally into place - Administration at the open view end of the terrace, Change Rooms interposed between the massive bulk of the Factory set into the hillside, and immediate road access to the Chemical Block and parking areas.

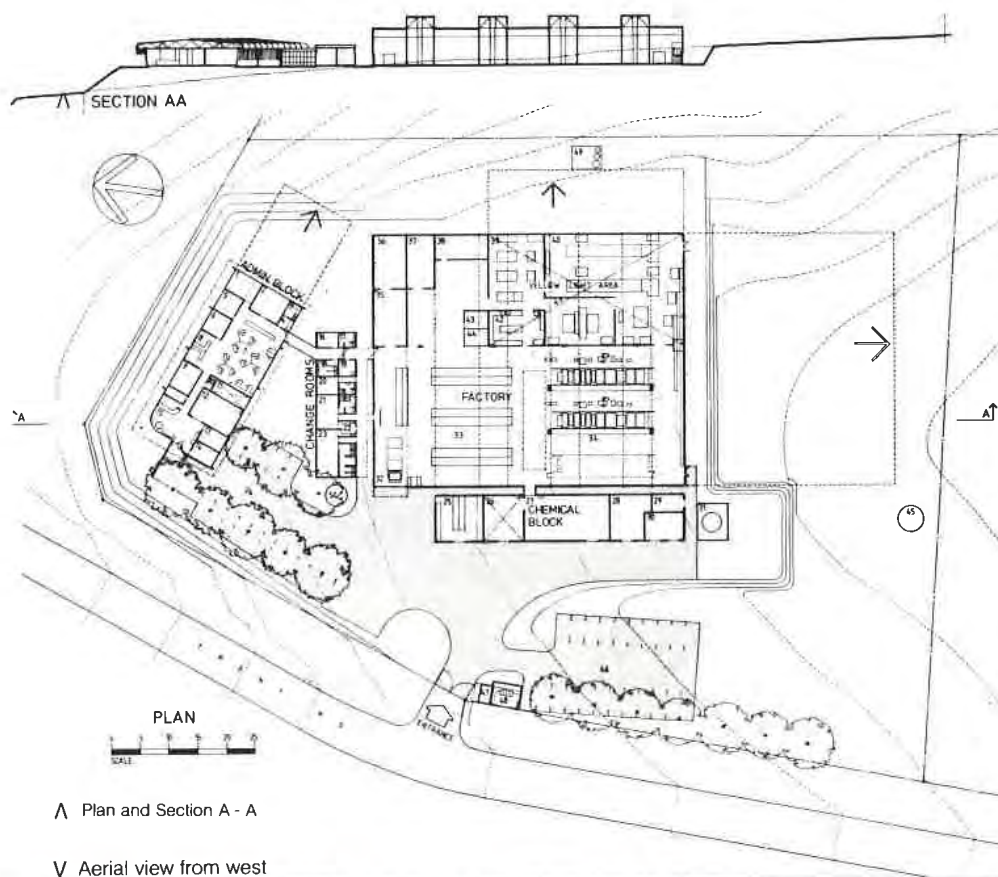
Landscaping was an integral design element incorporating lawned areas, planted banks - still to overcome successive dry seasons - and the transplantation of mature plane trees in parking areas. Rounded eaves echo the natural form of the rolling hillside.

### Structure, services, finishes

The Administration Offices and Factory are framed in large span structural steelwork for flexibility of planning, the remaining buildings being of load bearing brickwork and concrete roof slabs. Walling is generally in blue brown facings with aluminium patent glazing fenestration throughout except for translucent fibreglass sheeting to the monitor roof of the Factory. Aluminium roof sheeting and cladding were used as a logical extension of the factory product.

Light sensitive production areas and Administration are fully airconditioned, plate production and chemical manufacturing areas being mechanically extracted. Within the factory, services are exposed and colour coded.

Internal finishes include carpeting throughout the Administration, power floated concrete floors to the Factory with epoxy type coatings in areas subject to chemical attack, and pre-finish suspended metal tray ceilings in yellow light areas.



A Plan and Section A - A

V Aerial view from west



V Detail of western corner of administration block

South-western approach to administration block V



## Changes

### Changes in practices

Mr. Ivor J. Daniel has advised that Messrs K. Breetzke, V. Polfreman and D. Thomas were now associates of the practice Daniel and Associates. Mr. F.J. Beeslaar is practising under the style of Boshoff van den Berg, Beeslaar and Voster at Suite 1421, 320 West Street, Durban.

### New members

A.P. Pretorius (ordinary), c/o The Olaf Pretorius, Smith and Poole Partnership, 601 Sanlam Centre, 331 West Street, Durban.  
J.V. da R. Gomes - (AnT) - 26 Kemden, 275 Moore Road, Durban.  
G.A.M. de Haan - (Ordinary) - 35 Jubilee Court, 83-93 Clarence Road, Durban.  
K.S. Long - (Ordinary) - P.O. Box 2052, Pietermaritzburg.  
C.A.V. Mariner (Ordinary) - c/o P.O. Box 4452, Durban.  
H.A. Thomson - (Ordinary) - 11 Melrose Avenue, Westville.  
A.G. Whitfield (AnT to Ordinary) - 15 Chelmsford Mansions Chelmsford Road, Durban.  
G.J. de Kock - (AnT) - 24 Park Lodge Gardens, 369 Berea Road Durban.

### Change in class

T.N. van der Walt (Snr) - retired to ordinary - P.O. Box 15013, Newcastle.

### Changes in membership

Y. Patel - TPI to NPI - P.O. Box 19002, Domerton 4015.  
A.J. Hofman - TPI to NPI - Hofman, Hilbert & Associates. P.O. Box 190, Southbroom 4277.

### Change in address

A. Lloyd Spencer to 5 Moyeni Park, Moyeni Road, Gillitts.  
J.B. Weston to 28 Main Street, Howick.  
A.R. Keyte to P.O. Box 3478, Durban.  
D.J. Claude to School of Architecture, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban.  
K.H.J. Schrader to Ottersbekallee 9, 2000 Hamburg 19, West Germany.

## University/Institute Liaison Committee

Although Natal members are circulated in advance of individual events, for the record, the following have been planned for the fourth quarter:

**Tuesday, 20 September**, 5.15 p.m. in SH2: Bill O'Beirne of Paton Taylor Associates Inc. on the *Ernst Malherbe Library* planned for the University of Natal's Durban campus.

**Tuesday, 4 October**, 5.15 p.m. Old Mutual Sports Hall, Western Campus, University of Natal in Durban: *Volleyball*, Students vs the Profession. Members wishing to make the two Institute teams should contact Keith Alcock, tel. 330023.

**Tuesday, 18 October**, 5.15 p.m. in SH 2: Derek Garvie of Stauch Vorster & Partners Inc. on *Impressions of an Experience working with Murphy/Jahn in Chicago on 362 West Street*.

August 3, 1983

### Public Relations

Dear Dr. Peters,

I was interested in the letter in your publication relating to the promotion of architecture.

Two thoughts come to my mind; while visiting the 'Archicentre' in Chicago recently I noticed a group of young children who had been brought to the centre for a short lecture prior to being taken on a walking tour of part of the city.

The questions being asked the children must heighten their awareness of buildings. More critical adults will result. Could the Institute not appoint education officers so that similar exposure be offered to schools?

Secondly, the interested layman looks for a guide to local architecture - in New York I found Paul Goldberger's 'The City Observed'; in Chicago Ira J. Back's 'Chicago's Famous Buildings'.

Could a guide be published on South African architecture, concise, well illustrated and small enough to be carried by the local or overseas visitor exploring on foot?

Yours sincerely,

Jean Nuttall (Mrs.)  
Johannesburg

Some ideas for the Professional Promotion Directorate of the ISAA!  
Editor.

## Letters

July 25, 1983

### Recycling for the Performing Arts

Dear Wally,

Congratulations on your "Rehabilitation issue, *NPIA Journal 3 - 1983*, which surely puts Durban ahead of the rest of the country. Why? While Greenacres and the Old Station are important, the Natal Playhouse is a shining example to other demolition-prone provinces and their arts councils.

Just consider our largest city, Johannesburg. Very recently it lost a spirited battle to recycle both the Colosseum and His Majesty's theatres. While its Civic Theatre may be upgraded, a purely political decision gave Pretoria the State Theatre. However, on the positive side, Johannesburg produced a recycled Market Theatre, a private venture.

Now Bloemfontein is building its own provincial palace of culture with a 1 000-seat opera house clad in marble. Through no fault of their own, the innocent Bloemfontein audience will hardly fill such a theatre for more than a week. Instead of retaining some remnant of the historic Old Chapel or St Michael's School, the bureaucrats went for a "totally clear site".

Exactly ten years ago I completed a doctoral study of the performing arts in the metropolitan area of Toronto, Canada, somewhat comparable with the Witwatersrand. This proved conclusively that *recycling and miniaturisation* of performing arts facilities are the future trend. If we add to these two, both audience building and participation, then NEW bricks and mortar are a non-event and even an anachronism!!

South African architects and planners are as capable as Australians or Canadians in the recycling game, but the priorities in our society are often back to front. Grandiose new buildings do not necessarily mean an improvement in our quality of life! Change and NOT growth is the challenge to our cities, and there are many "white elephants" around to prove my point.

Yours sincerely

Professor Wallace van Zyl  
Past-President, SAITRP  
Bloemfontein

July 25, 1983

### Natal Playhouse

Dear Wally,

I was pleased to receive the latest issue of the *NPIA Journal* containing the three rehabilitation projects, and delighted that you had introduced "comment" by an architect of Jack Barnett's standing. Such comment, though common in overseas journals, is something that has been sadly lacking in most of the local Institute magazines and can only be healthy for the profession.

Jack, of course, expects that on completion of the building I will serve him his words cooked and seasoned to eat but I feel I cannot restrain myself for another two years. I must say that while I too found African Theatres kitsch pretty revolting some thirty or forty years ago and was somewhat daunted in the initial stage of being party to the Tudor Opera House, I am now quite reconciled to the fantasy world that African Theatres architects produced in the 30's. While one must still confess that the Playhouse Auditorium is "Disneyland", the Restaurant and Grand Foyer areas and exterior are really first rate Tudor revival with a great deal of unsurpassed workmanship.

If he is worried about African Theatres kitsch, I hate to think what he is going to say about our mirrored and chandeliered, Edwardian, Ritz or Savoy Hotel type "winter garden" which forms one of the "numerous interleading rooms and levels" of the foyer areas. We take his comment that the Theatre Foyer is congested in the London West End tradition as a compliment but cannot agree with him that 38 m is too deep for an Opera House - the depth of the New Met is 50 m.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Small

August 19, 1983

### Rehabilitation of Buildings

Dear Sir,

It is good to have a nice word from Jack Barnett. Apropos his comments in regard to the shops in the underpass - we can only agree. We are trying to introduce these in the planning proposals and we have had some success. Without it underpasses end up as places to be mugged no matter how attractive they are made to look!

In defense of Gordon Small's theatre may I say how good it is to see theatres do business on the main street frontage of a city in the best West End and Broadway traditions. If there is some squeeze in the foyers so what. There is no evidence that congestion has done harm to the busiest theatres.

I cannot avoid a comment that the demolition of a two storey building and the replacement by one of similar size in the case of Greenacres is a little baffling.

Sincerely  
Hans Hallen