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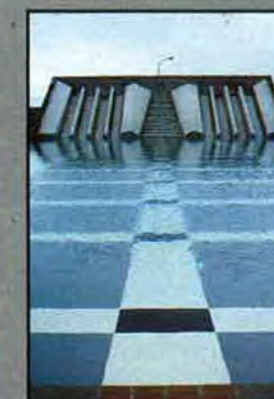
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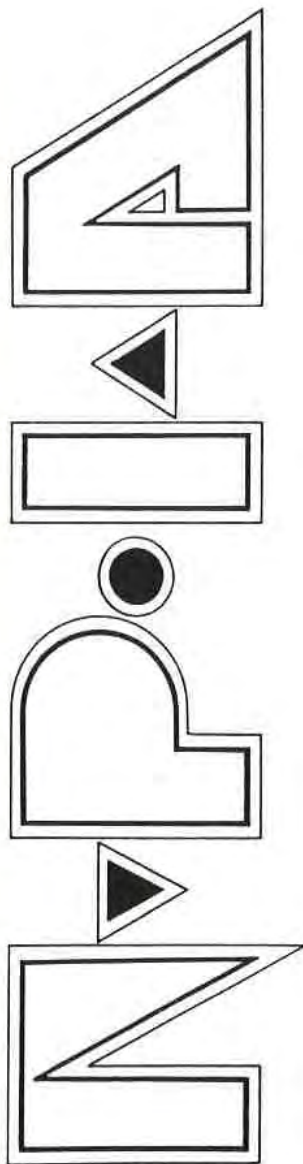


JOURNAL OF THE NATAL PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
TYDSKRIF VAN DIE NATALSE PROVINSIALE INSTITUUT VAN ARGITEKTE
ISSUE 1/1989 • VOLUME 14 • ISSN 0379-9301 • UITGAWE 1/1989 • JAARGANG 14



**TOWARDS REGIONALISM
IN THE LAST OUTPOST**

GUEST EDITOR GEORGE ELPHICK



FROM THE PRESIDENT

SINCE THE NPIA Journal was initiated as the NPIA Newsletter in 1976, editors Danie Theron and Wally Peters, with assistance from Jessie Birss, have ensured the production of high quality and a lively diary of current architectural concerns.

After his seven-year honorary editorship, Wally felt he had served his term and gave due notice of his intention to pass on the baton.

The Public Relations sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of Vice President Brian Johnson rose to the challenge and instigated a system of guest editors. This is the first of such issues, George Elphick compiling contributions under the banner "regionalism".

It was decided to retain Wally's and Jessie's services in the positions of production editor and editorial assistant respectively, in order to ensure continuity and the maintenance of high standards to which readers have become accustomed.

I would like to add the congratulations of the NPIA on learning that Wally's seven-year term has not gone unrewarded. He is to be honoured with the ISAA Architectural Writers' and Critics' Award. (An encouragement to others!)

John Frost

DURBAN CULTURAL CENTRE COMPETITION

The results of the competition for the design of a cultural centre housing the Natural and Local History Museums, an Omnimax Theatre/Planetarium and the Central Library in the Durban Central Park area were recently announced.

The winning scheme was submitted by Uytendogaardt & Rosendal, Cape Town; while joint third prizes went to Silverman & Challenger, Johannesburg; and Johnson Murray, Durban. Five further schemes were commended. These designs were by Mario Farinha, Johannesburg; Meyer Pienaar Smith Moren Inc, Johannesburg; Lee McGarry Mikula and Patel, Durban; Danie Theron and Chris Swales, Port Elizabeth/East London; and Hallen Theron & Partners Inc, Durban.

LECTURER (2 posts) UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, DURBAN

The School of Architecture is seeking lecturers able to contribute their expertise in developing a new qualification structure in architectural education at the University of Natal. This new structure draws a distinction between undergraduate study leading towards a four-year Bachelor's degree, and a range of post graduate options. Applicants should hold a recognised qualification in architecture, possess general skills relating to teaching architectural design, and offer a field of special interest. The successful applicant will be expected to engage in research.

The remuneration package, which may be up to R62 000, includes a negotiable salary plus a 13th cheque, housing subsidy (if eligible), medical aid, remission of fees for dependants, relocation costs and substantial retirement benefits including tax-free gratuity and favourable annuity under the pension scheme. The commencing salary notch will depend on the qualifications and experience of the successful applicants. University policy includes the personal promotion of all grades of academic staff from lecturer upwards. It is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that rejects apartheid.

Application forms, further particulars of the posts and conditions of service, including details of fringe benefits, are obtainable from the Personnel Section, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban 4001 (telephone 816-3378), with whom applications, on the prescribed form, must be lodged not later than 30 June 1989, quoting the reference D47/89.

PRACTICE NOTICES

CHANGES IN PARTNERSHIPS

J.N. Nieuwoudt is the partner-in-charge of the recently established Durban office of Theunis Jankowitz SA Inc at 1206, 12th Floor, Federated Insurance House, 320 Smith Street, Durban. K.R. Breetzke is the architect-in-charge of Osmond Lange Inc in Durban. G.A.M. de Haan has opened his own practice at 669 Currie Road, Durban. M.A. Pellegrini has opened his own practice at 12 Kent Gardens, Durban North. S. Visser is the architect-in-charge of Bartsch Buys van Heerden, Berea Road, 23, Ladysmith. D.E.J. Watkins has closed his Durban office. He has opened a practice under the style of Kass and Watkins at 10 Beach Road, Doonside, and has retained his practice at Amanzimtoti. The practices of Becker Hofman (Margate) and Olaf Pretorius, Smith & Poole Partnership (Durban) have merged and are now known as "Artef 4". The addresses remain unchanged. S. Buys is now practising under the style of Andre Vercueil & Buys at Ladysmith.

The partnership of Myles Pugh Sherlock Jarvis has been dissolved. Mr A.J. Jarvis is now practising on his own account under the style of Anthony Jarvis at 606 J.H. Isaacs House, Pinetown. N.P. Murray has been admitted to the partnership of Myles Pugh Sherlock Murray. O.M. Moodley and Miss R.D. Naiker have entered into partnership under the style of O.M. Moodley and Rani Naiker at PO Box 3055, Durban 4000.

CHANGES IN ADDRESSES

G.J. de Kock to 14 Rockdale Avenue, Westville. F.D. Spencer to c/o Paton Taylor Associates, PO Box 3478, Durban. R.G. Stead to Suite 82, Cressington, 37 Russell Street, Durban. M.J.M. Walker to House of Delegates, Private Bag X54330, Durban 4000. G.E.H. Cornell to PO Box 40872, Redhill. F.R. Heunis to 53 Helston Road, Manor Gardens, Durban. M. Hackner (Price and Hackner) to 14 Pembroke Mansions, cnr West and Prince Alfred Streets, Durban. Pfeiffer Marais & Moult to PO Box 40872, Redhill. J.R. van der Ham to Flat 11c, Club Mykonos, Bellamont Road, Umdloti Beach.

TRANSFERS

G.E.H. Cornell - from TPI to NPI - PO Box 6226, Durban 4000.

CHANGES IN CLASS

W.K. Gessler - ordinary to retired. J.W. Stanbridge - ordinary to retired. J.R. Yelland - retired to ordinary.

NEW MEMBERS

N.M. Proome - ordinary - 6 Windsor Road, Kloof. B.A. Clark - AnT - 42 Trondheim, Avondale Road, Durban. Miss M.A. Cohen - AnT - 2 Knosses, 57 Oakleigh Drive, Berea, Durban. N.M. Fisher - AnT - 11 Struan Grove, Morningside, Durban. S.J. Millier - AnT - 36 Tyrone Road, Padfield Park, Pinetown. Miss C.M. Mocke - AnT - 169 Ridge Road, Umhlanga Rocks. A.R. Orman - AnT - 9 Heather Road, Westville. G.S. Pallatt - AnT - 37 Campbell Drive, Umhlanga Rocks. M.A. Ramaccio-Calvino - AnT - 12 Ridge Road, New Germany. M.L. Taschner - AnT - 14 Hillside Road, Cowies Hill. B.G. Vogas - AnT - 12 Morice Place, La Lucia.

DECEASED

A.F.M. Mason

TOWARDS REGIONALISM IN THE LAST OUTPOST

GEORGE ELPHICK : GUEST EDITOR

George Elphick is a graduate of the University of Natal and was a recipient of the Emma Smith and Geoffrey Le Sueur Scholarships.



His recently established architectural practice is mainly involved in industrial and residential projects. He is also a part-time lecturer in design at the UND School of Architecture.

While the avantgarde architects of Europe and North America are rapidly becoming disenchanted with the theories and practice of Post-Modernism, many local designers maintain a staunch belief in the use of local architectural traditions. Does the state-of-the-art in the last outpost reflect the usual 'fashion time-lag' between northern climes and our sunny shores, or is there a genuine concern for the development of a meaningful regionalism?

Over the past decade there has been a renewed interest in locality and regional identity, paralleled with a reversion to the use of symbolism in architecture.

While reference to traditional forms and details has become the order of the day, it is unfortunate that the emphasis has now moved to mere

decoration, facadism and whimsical pastiche, rather than an educated application of principles. In addition to this, of course, the employment of

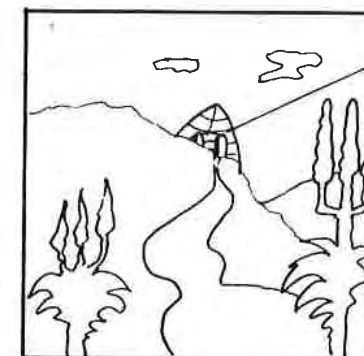
imported traditions rather than the synthesis of local architectural ingredients has assisted in degrading the validity of Post-Modernism almost universally.

This issue of the NPIA Journal examines recent schemes and projects by four Natal Architects in an attempt to illustrate the successful use of traditional principles in local buildings.

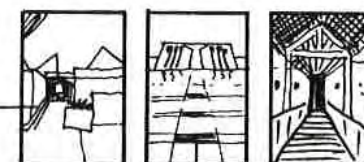
They all exhibit a response to a strong contextual base and in various ways reflect a powerful drive for individualism and creativity in a spirit of continuity. The intention is to critically examine these contributions in the light of the search for a unique Natal regionalism.

Comment on each of the four schemes is also by George Elphick

KEY TO COVER



Assagai Architecture



House on a Grass Verge

Zinkwazi Beach House

Beach Pools on a Colonial Theme

ZINKWAZI BEACH HOUSE

STAFFORD ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS



SOUTH EAST ELEVATION

THE HOUSES of Zinkwazi are fairly typical of most of Natal's seaside resorts. There is a large diversity of styles prevalent, including 'contemporary', 'Post-Modern Westville' and 'imported' Spanish Mediterranean.

Our practice was commissioned to design a house in this setting. The site is a long rectangle with a depression running across its width and is covered with coastal vegetation, including a few fine milkwood trees.

The brief was to design a 'traditional verandah' house and no specific reference was made concerning the period preferred, although examples were cited. The client's accommodation requirements were extensive and these, in conjunction with coverage restrictions, required a compact solution.

The accommodation is grouped into two double-storey buildings — the garages and servants' quarters on the road boundary and the house itself facing on to the Admiralty Reserve. The two buildings are connected by a long narrow bridge spanning the depression running across the site. This concept was developed in order to minimise the impact on the natural vegetation, which has been allowed to grow freely underneath and around the bridge.

The main intention was to achieve a continuous visual link with the sea along the entire axis of the walkway, by careful use of level changes and a view through the house itself to the sea beyond. The major rooms are all sea-facing and span the full width of the house, in order to maximise the cooling effects of sea breezes.

The formal resolution of the building is a direct interpretation of the traditional Natal



The brief was to design a 'traditional verandah' house.

verandah-style house. The hipped gable roof with a cross-gable above the entrance and a verandah skirt at first floor level create a readily identifiable form. Other simple references are made in the details of the verandah, balustrades, sash windows and shutters.

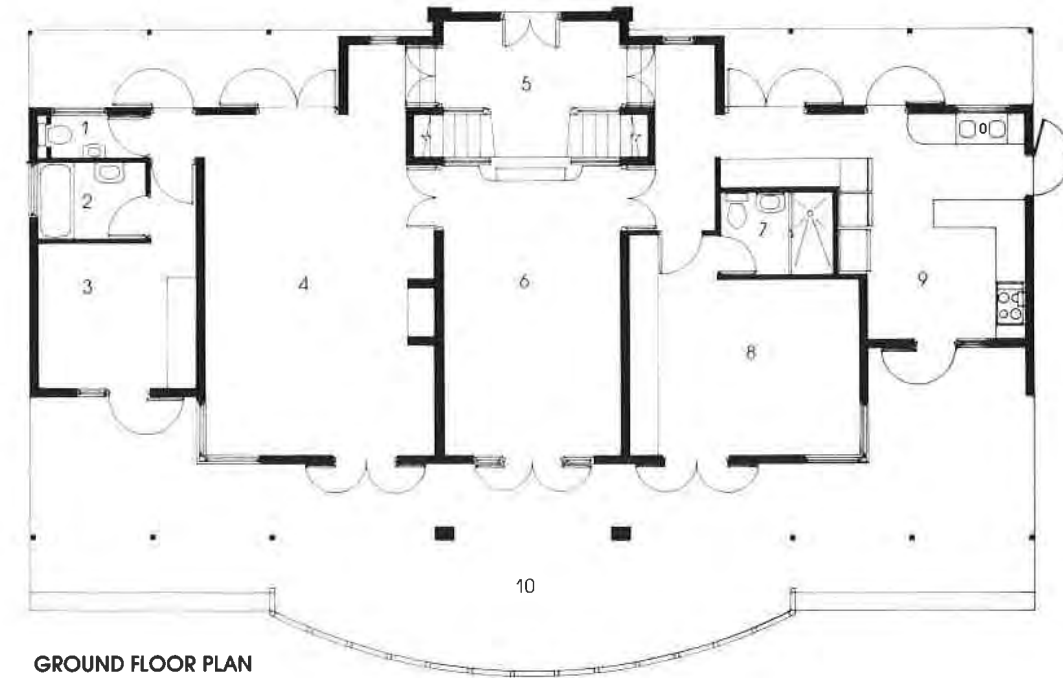
A more pure imitation of a Victorian verandah house was precluded by cost considerations and as a result, the house finds itself somewhere between a faithful reproduction and a modern transformation of the regional style.

The traditional character of the house generates a rapport with its setting and, having a familiar identity, easily overcomes the problems of a somewhat uncompromising context. The disadvantage facing avant-garde designers in this respect is that their work often tends to further confuse an already jumbled environment.

If tradition has anything to offer then, perhaps it is a starting point from which a modern regional style can develop, rather than being cast aside as ancient history.

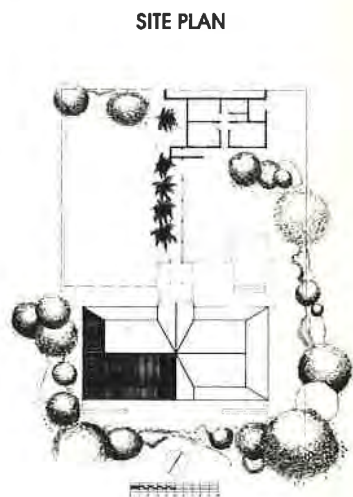
PROJECT ARCHITECT: Dean Jay

ZINKWAZI BEACH HOUSE

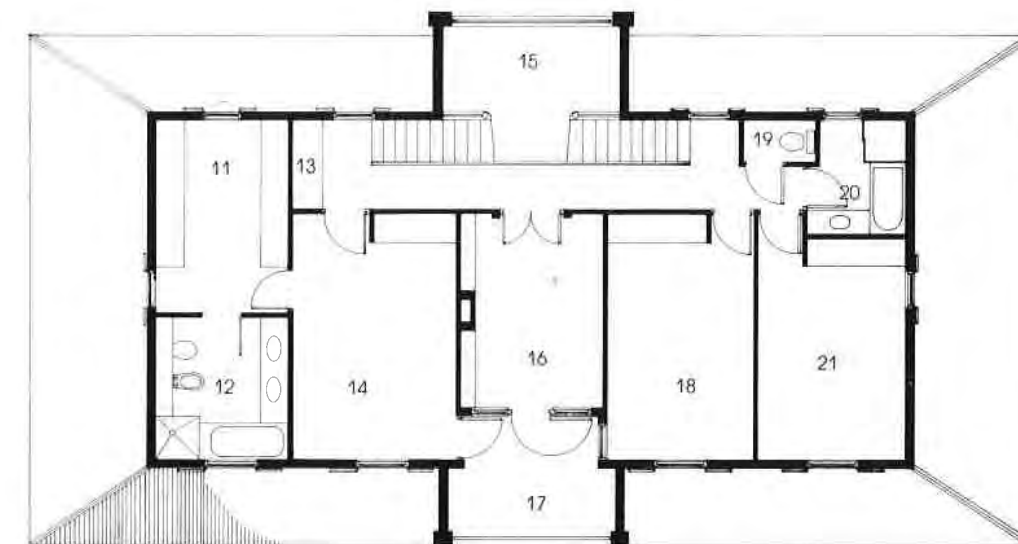


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

- 1 GUEST WC
- 2 GUEST BATHROOM
- 3 GUEST BEDROOM
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 ENTRANCE
- 6 DINING ROOM
- 7 GUEST BATHROOM
- 8 GAMES ROOM
- 9 KITCHEN
- 10 DECK



SITE PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

- 11 DRESSING ROOM
- 12 EN SUITE BATHROOM
- 13 BIC
- 14 MAIN BEDROOM
- 15 VOID
- 16 STUDY
- 17 VERANDAH
- 18 BEDROOM 2
- 19 WC
- 20 BATHROOM
- 21 BEDROOM 3



COMMENT

Stafford's verandah house is an unabashed literal construct well related to its magnificent coastal location. Quite clearly the realisation of the client's dream of a beach cottage, this house has more to offer than the immediacy of its stylistic identity. The design applies the basic principles of the traditional verandah house in a successful fashion and extends this idea in the bridge connecting public and private realms. Spatially the house relies on the traditional concept of individual rooms which ties in with the aesthetic character of the house. Obviously however, the client's strict brief has channelled the architect's approach into literal rather than an interpretive transformation of the authentic vernacular tradition. Within such constraints the architect has responded positively and has avoided the trappings of a facile architecture of applied historical motifs.

BEACH POOLS ON A COLONIAL THEME

LUIS FERREIRA DA SILVA

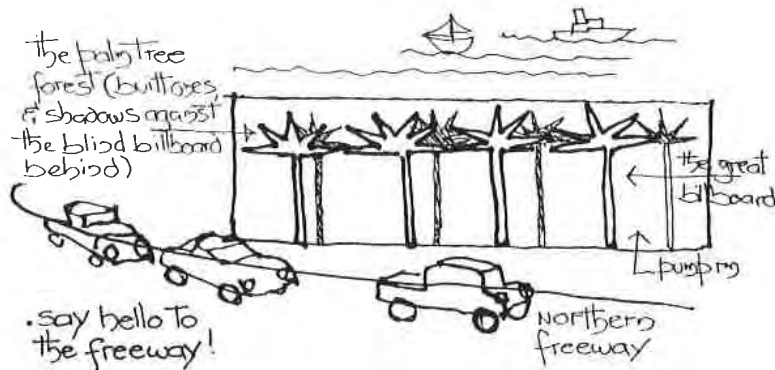
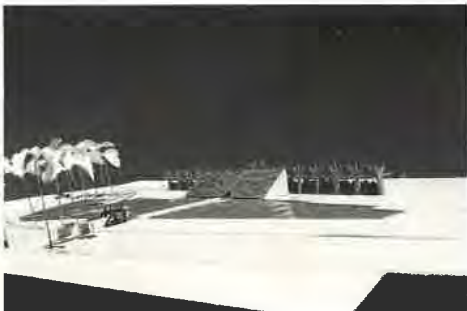
Scheme 1 — Celebrating 'Me'

THE CLIENT'S original brief required two swimming pools of different sizes for different age groups, and support services such as pump rooms, public ablutions, changeroom facilities, lifesavers' tower and fast-food services.

Two important design requirements were the necessity to control crowds and the separation of the two pools without bifurcating the scheme.

This site at Battery Beach, unlike most public pool sites on the Durban beach front, offers a pleasant, strong visual link with the Berea behind, but a less comfortable one with the Northern Freeway.

From the outset, the idea of a landscaped space with carefully positioned structures seemed attractive.



Scheme 2 — Celebrating Sir Edwin Lutyens

COST IMPLICATIONS and a directive from the client to reduce the scale of the development and omit certain facilities such as ablution and changerooms, together with a change of heart concerning crowd control and pool separation, led to a less complex alternative.

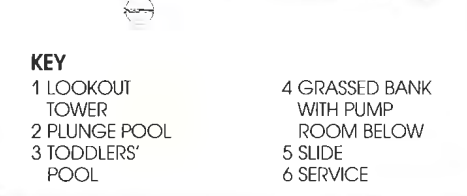
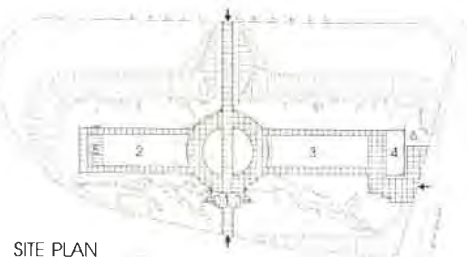
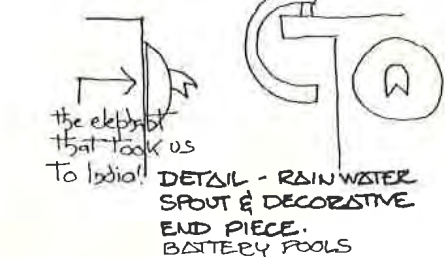
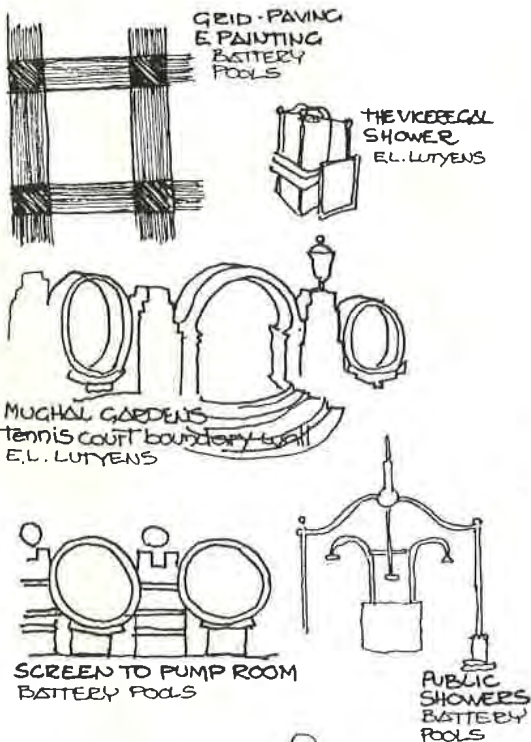
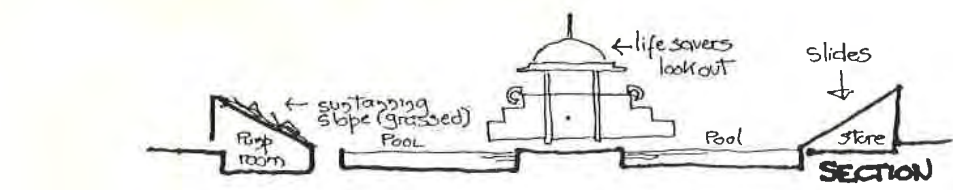
Coupled with this change of direction, we were persuaded to look at the beachfront of the past and to employ Lutyens' influence in the architectural character of the alternative scheme.

We identified the finest Lutyens and Lutyens-inspired work as a starting base. Given the nature of the scheme, the context of our city, and the prevailing mood of the client, the work carried out by the master in Imperial Delhi seemed to be the most appropriate source of reference.

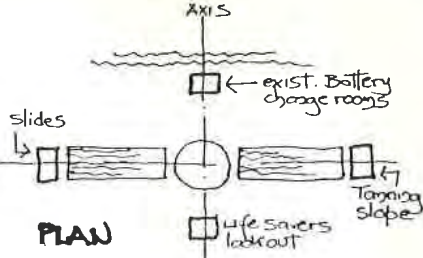
Adjacent to the site, the Natal Command building is reminiscent of the splendours of colonial days, and was 'promoted' to Viceroy's House for the purposes of our 'journey to India' — thus the site became the Mughal Garden overlooked by the Viceroy's House.

This garden of serene, long and narrow expanses of still water, surrounded by formally gridded, floating gardens and pathways, provided inspiration one: the pool's gridded surface treatment.

BEACH POOLS ON A COLONIAL THEME

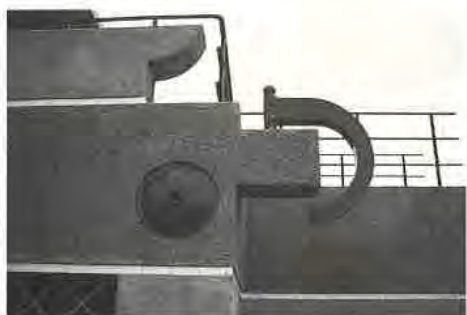


The work carried out by the master in Imperial Delhi seemed to be the most appropriate source of reference.



COMMENT

At a time when the City of Durban is realising its extensive beachfront upgrading programme, it is most interesting to observe the diversity of architectural approaches prevalent. Ferreira da Silva's scheme for Battery Beach is particularly appropriate in an examination of tradition and certainly adopts a somewhat unusual direction in this regard. Under the client's mandate, great care has been taken by the architects to research Lutyens' work and the 'inspirations' gleaned from Imperial Delhi have been put to great effect. In terms of relationship to site and neighbour, its axial planning and meticulous detailing, the pool complex is a most successful celebration of the work of the master. It could be said that the revivalist concept and its concretization is questionable in an African context and is no more regionalist than the international style. The irony is, however, that the amenity is predominantly populated and enjoyed by the local Indian community!



The stone screen marking the boundary of the Mughal Garden and the tennis courts provided inspiration two: the wall screening the pump room, pretending to be a suntanning grassed slope.

The sandstone pergola, between the Mughal Garden and the Round Pool Garden, and the domed Viceroy's House, provided inspiration three: the lifesavers' lookout, being half-elephant and half-Viceroy's House dome adorned with elephant's headgear.

The Viceroy's shower provided inspiration four: the public showers.

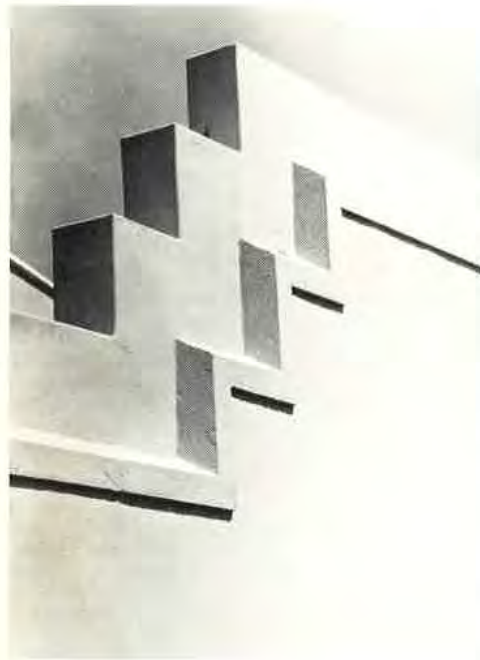
In this scheme, the elements have been used as decorative celebrations, with the use of distorted scaling and simplified language; and thus we have hopefully created an inoffensive reminder of the master's original idiom.

DESIGN TEAM: L. Ferreira da Silva, L. Cohen, C. Marinier.

Readers are referred to the book by Robert Irving, "Indian Summer. Lutyens, Baker and Imperial Delhi."

HOUSE ON A GRASS VERGE

RICHARD DOBSON OF INTERARC



THE SITE, situated on the corner of Sydenham and Riley Roads, Durban, was acquired by public tender from the City Council. This was as a result of the expropriations necessary to extend Riley Road from Overport Drive to Sydenham Road. Virtually a triangle of 700 m² with onerous building line limitations on a busy exposed corner soon gave the site its description as 'a grass verge'.

A building line relaxation to both roads was approved and this concentrated the possible building envelope into a linear arrangement of accommodation entered from the south, creating a circulation problem and an east/west orientation.

The site is located opposite Brackenhurst, a Union period building noted for its rear access gallery, plaster mouldings and corner detail to Vause Road. These attributes, and a strong preconceived idea to solve the exposed site conditions by designing a courtyard house incorporating elements of the 'Natal style', were design imperatives.

A family unit and a granny flat were designed, sharing a common entrance and separate garden access. The circulation to the family unit linear arrangement of bedroom accommodation is along an open gallery off an enclosed roof-lit 'courtyard' — the latter being the family living space between the bedrooms and the kitchen. The site levels permitted a natural split level solution which assisted in reducing the apparent bulk of the building.

The plaster, paint and mouldings of Brackenhurst were repeated in an attempt to make good neighbours of the two structures. (The owner selected the paint colours!)



The open gallery, with its Natal style interpretation of columns, balustrade and timber roof, was the principle aesthetic generator.

Windows were set into the extreme inner face to form deep reveals characteristic of the Natal style and the boundary wall was articulated to soften its public aspect.

The open gallery, with its Natal style interpretation of columns, balustrade and timber roof, was the principle aesthetic generator.

The central space is north/south roof-lit, characteristic of the old Royal Hotel courtyard, and this produced the stepped motif.

All spaces are integrated, yet sufficiently separated to maintain the required privacy.

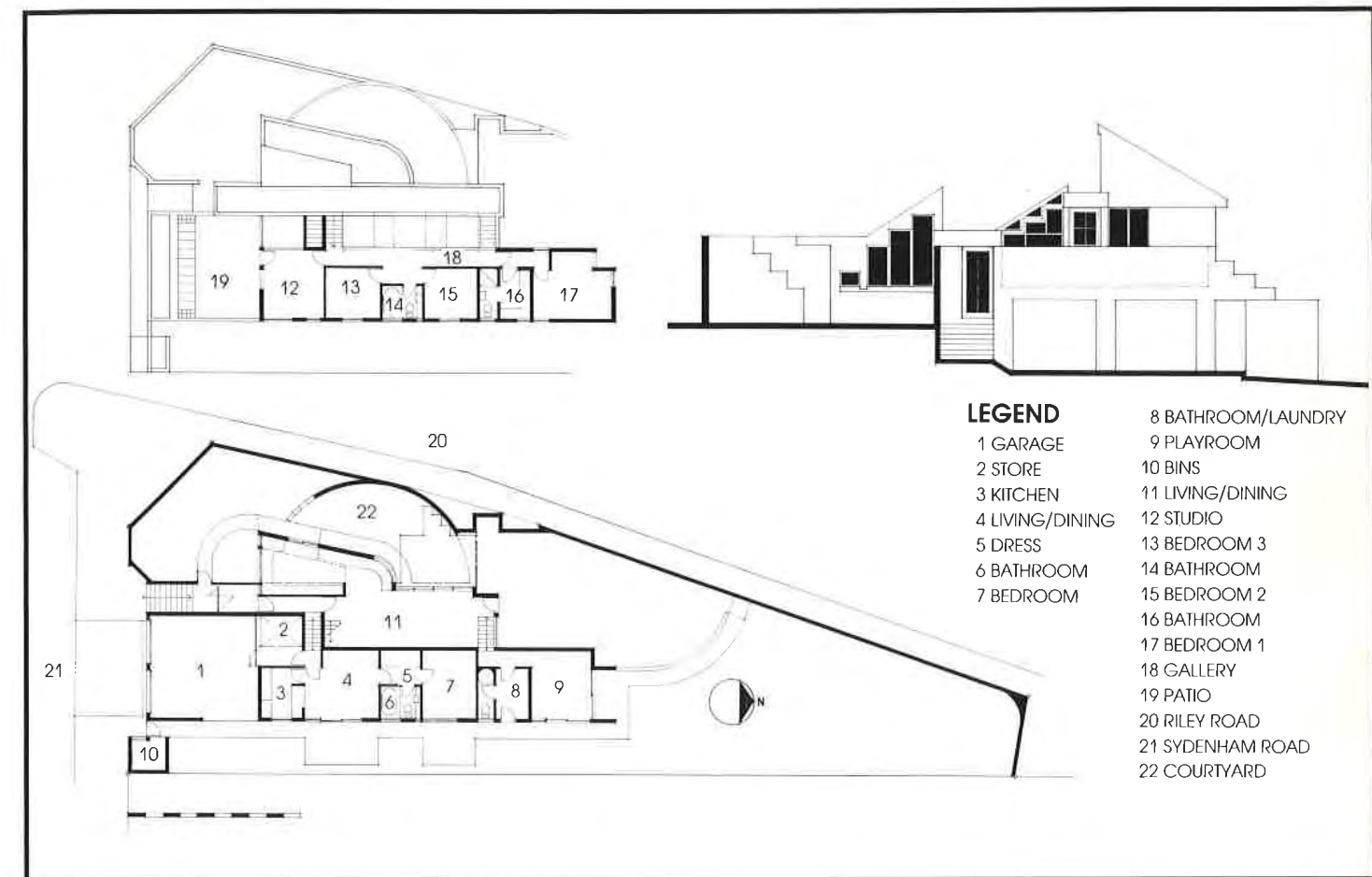
The articulation of the boundary wall creates inner spaces which extend the enveloped spaces into the garden to the site boundary.

The roof form acknowledges the functions of the spaces below and the dictates of the building lines.

The monopitch bedroom roof provides clerestory light and ventilation, the stepped central roof has stepped windows and the monopitch kitchen roof acts as their counterpoint.

The linking concrete slabs are insulated with retractable shade netting for passive solar gain in winter.

HOUSE ON A GRASS VERGE



The central space is north/south roof-lit, characteristic of the old Durban Royal Hotel courtyard, and this produced the stepped motif.

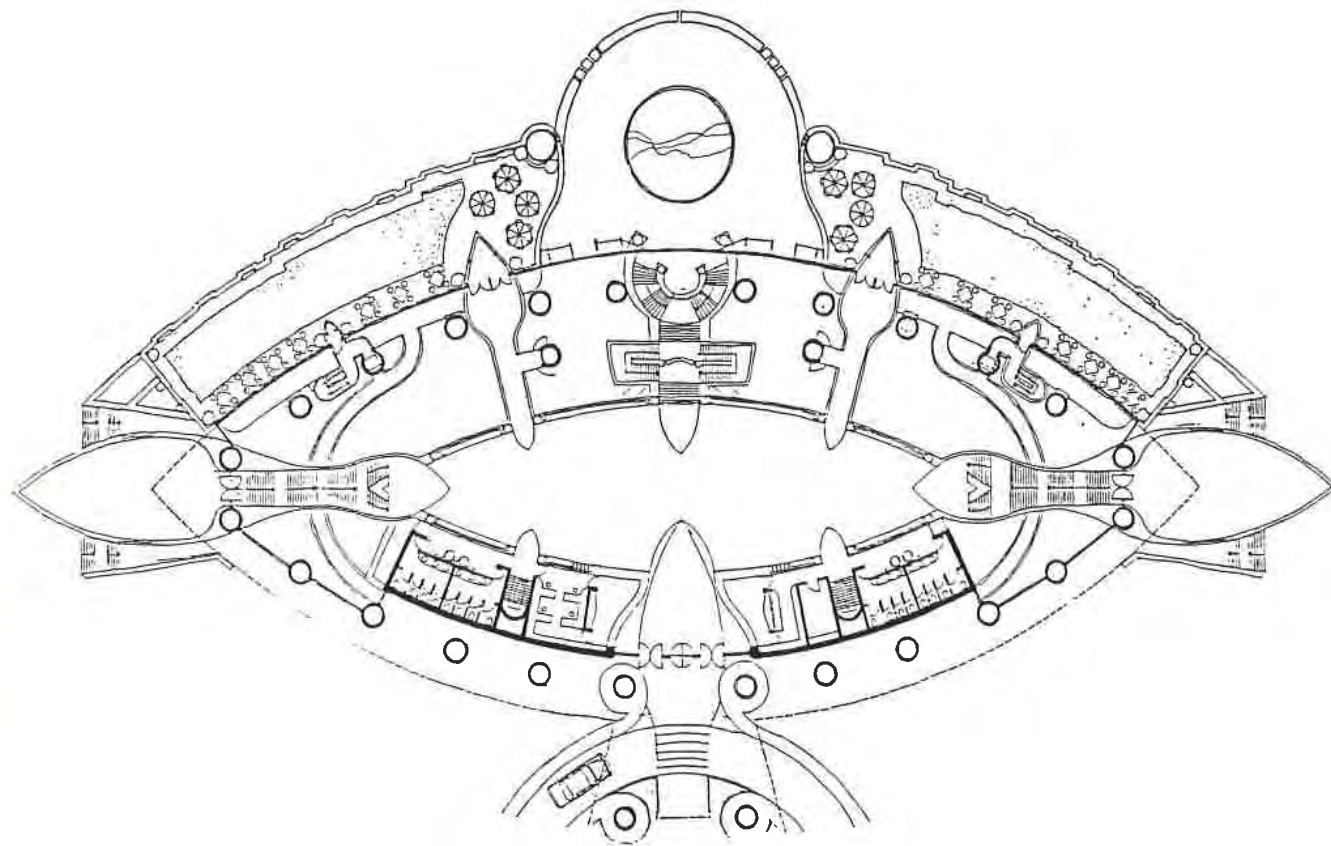


COMMENT

'The house on the grass verge' has become a well known landmark on the Berea, if not for its complex assemblage of roof forms, for its bold, playful palette of colours! The architect has created a vibrant collection of building blocks, certainly modernist rather than traditional in their massing. It is not in the details of the external forms of this house, nor its homage to its Union period neighbour opposite, which makes this building interesting, however, but rather its internal courtyard. Clearly the nature of the site precluded the creation of the external verandah and as a consequence the architect inverts this and produces an interior screen defining the daytime and nighttime spaces. Thus an 'inside out' verandah becomes a successful and unusual transformation of the traditional Natal verandah style.

'ASSAGAI ARCHITECTURE'

ROY FARREN



THE ULUNDI HOTEL COMPETITION ENTRY

INTERNATIONAL Post-Modern efforts in the late '70s to reintroduce history, permanence, mystery and a unique sense of place to architecture and the city, have regretfully often led to environmental disasters on a scale with some of the worst Modern movement calamities.

An American salesman, attempting to dispose of shares in his concept for a full-size replica of Jerusalem in the Arizona desert, said recently: "It will be like Disneyland with Jesus."

Architects need to be aware that serious attempts to find new forms can quickly be assimilated and subverted by the less scrupulous into a parody of their intentions. We need to test new forms in a variety of contextual conditions and scales. The strength of a form needs to be such that it will survive changes in material.

Perhaps Norman Eaton, more than any other South African architect, points the way to a modern regional architecture of integrity. Particularly his meticulous use of appropriate materials, the assimilation of uniquely African objects, forms and patterns into his work, combined with respect for climate, suggest an enduring African Post-Modern movement.

My recent work in Natal/KwaZulu makes use of an object that is a unique invention of the Zulu people: the assagai.

We need to test new forms in a variety of contextual conditions and scales.

Its economical, beautiful shape is rooted in history, but somehow offers a hint of a future regional architecture.

The first project in this direction was appropriately enough The Royal Pavilion on the site of Cetshwayo's Kraal in Ondini near Ulundi, for the National Monuments Commission.

The roof of the small grandstand was designed as a zinc-covered blade form carried on a single shaft-like column of lacquered black concrete, bound with a brass collar. The blade was to hover over shale-faced, tiered seating designed to blend into the surrounding landscape of grassland.

The realisation of the project by Franklin Garland Gibson and Cunningham, coped well with the difficult shape required. Although changes on the stock exchange ruled out the zinc roof (originally designed to match existing museum roofs adjacent), the amended corrugated roof retains some of its force.

The Ulundi Hotel, on a beautiful site 10 km from Ondini, and the subject of a national design competition, offered the next challenge.

At a larger scale, the shape became ship-like and its compact economical geometry allowed minimal intrusion on a delicate cliffside ecology.

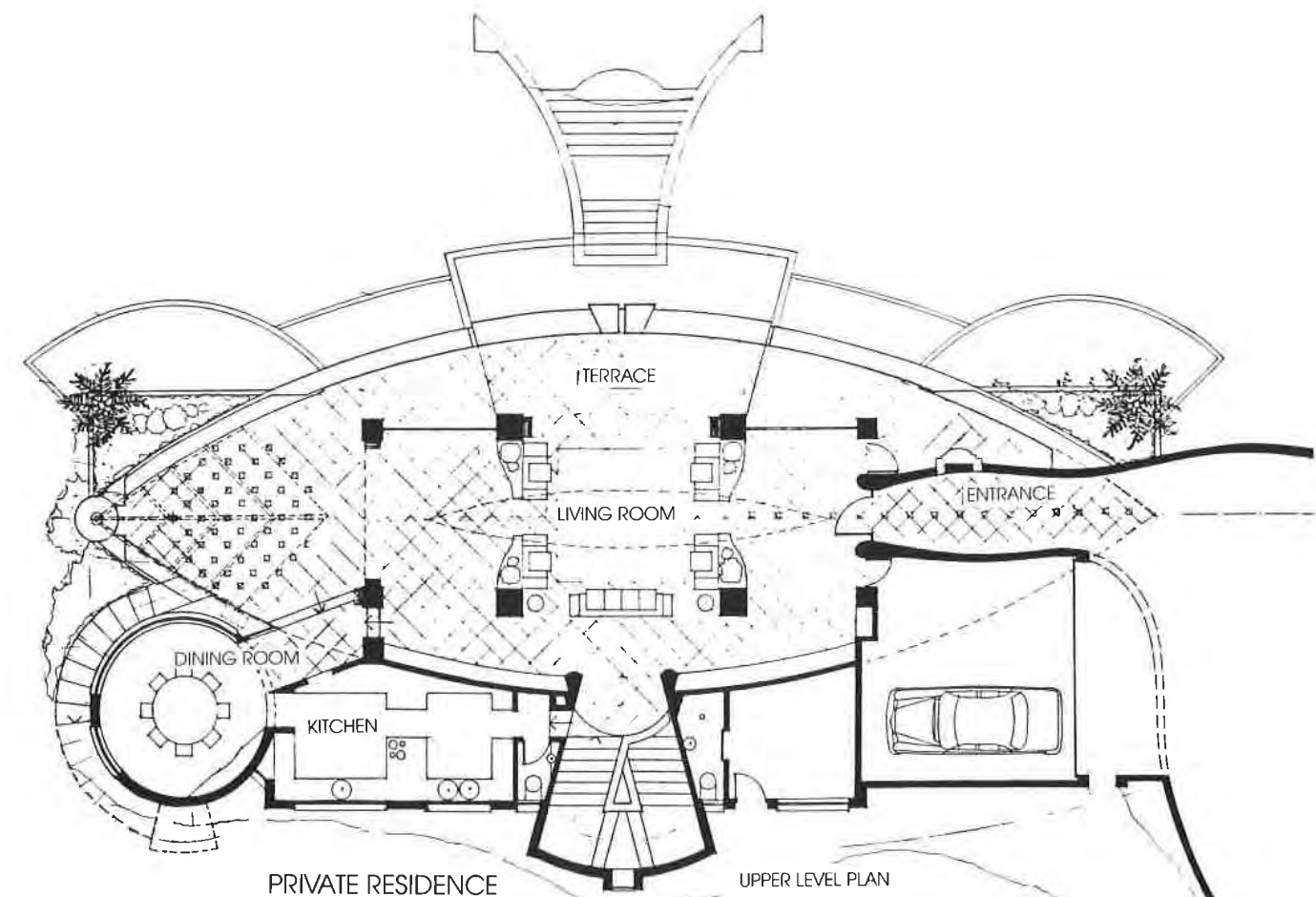
The challenge of a small scale use of the form was presented by a project for a very special house on a steep site, set between a sea of green sugar cane and a rain-forest.

Here, a white aesthetic has been adopted to create a calm, temple-like, formal living area with a spacious deck reminiscent of a cruise liner. This house is nearing completion and the curved roof members have been drawn by computer to allow full-scale drawings to be plotted for easy fabrication.

Finally, an opportunity to explore a huge scale use of the form was presented by the AIA Architects' entry for the Durban Museum/Library competition.

Here we allowed the 150 m long stainless steel roof to undulate gently, like a massive metal hillside high above the glass curtain wall and tubular steel structure of the Science Museum. This structural form is the centrepiece and focal point of the complex, and is a symbol of an exciting future life in the city.

'ASSAGAI ARCHITECTURE'



PRIVATE RESIDENCE

UPPER LEVEL PLAN



My recent work in Natal/KwaZulu makes use of an object that is a unique invention of the Zulu people: the assagai. Its economical, beautiful shape is rooted in history, but somehow offers a hint of a future regional architecture.

COMMENT

Farren's recurring use of the 'indigenous' assagai form presents a fascinating and challenging departure point in the creation of a Natal regionalism. It is unquestionable that a roof architecture rather than a wall architecture characterizes local architectural heritage, and the designer has used this as a basis for the development of a consistent approach to design. Perhaps the most exciting applications are exhibited in the house and hotel where the roof becomes the tour de force of the designs. Here, with no competition from juxtaposed forms, it is able to float in space and enjoy a celebration of roof form. Whilst some may question the validity of applying the same roof form to numerous building types, it is clear that the architect is making headway in the endeavour of producing a meaningful regionalism in the last outpost.



THE ROYAL PAVILION IN ONDINI