

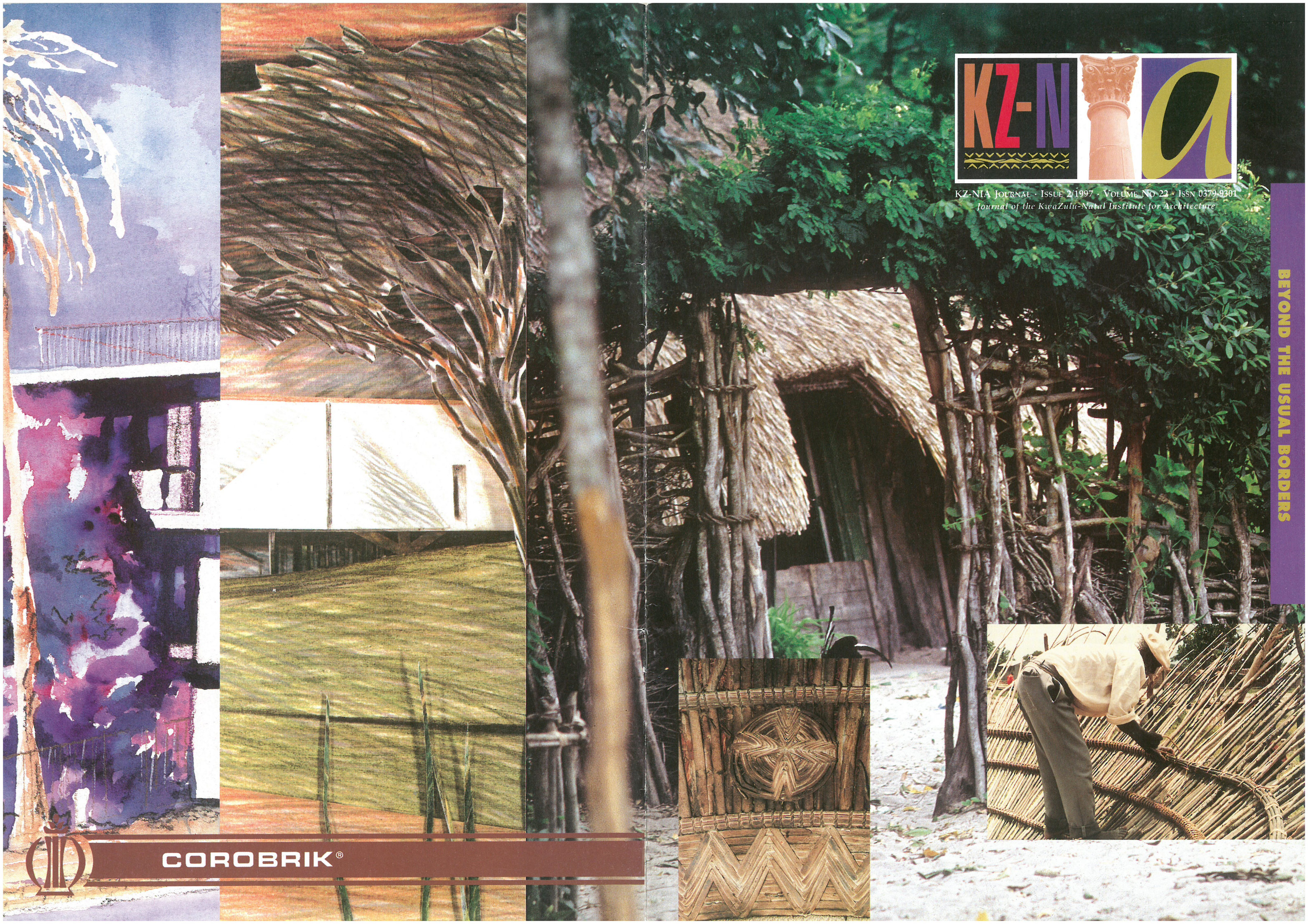


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Journal of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture

BEYOND THE USUAL BORDERS



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Introduction

Beyond the usual borders

This issue has had a considerable gestation period. It has long been the intention to present the regional architecture of Maputaland which, though within the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, is beyond our usual area of coverage; and it was also intended to honour two senior members of our profession who live in voluntary exile beyond our borders, when they turned 70 and 65 respectively.

Time has passed and though the Maputaland objectives have not changed, we now congratulate Issy Benjamin on his 72nd birthday and Hans Hallen on his 67th.

Walter Peters, Editor

FRONT COVER: Entrance to the homestead of Manhlenga Tembe at eGazini; detail of a rosette on a wall interior; and roof building. Photographs by Dennis Claude, 1981.
BACK COVER: Rendering details: Hurlingham by Yr. III Architectural Students—Nicholas Darby and Dan Mootsoosamy, 1997; and Mangosuthu Technikon by Andrew Verster.

ERRATUM:

Issue 1/97, Hindu architecture. The monkey god on page 4 is, of course, Hanuman.



This journal, now in its 22nd year of publication, has since its inception been sponsored by Corobrik.



COROBRIK
THE WAY TO BUILD



Dubai was an independent Arab emirate until 1971 when 7 emirates formed a confederation and it became the largest city of what is now known as the United Arab Emirates of which Abu Dhabi is the capital. What was once a fishing village, is now Dubai, a city of more than half a million inhabitants.

Dubai is located on the southern shore of the Arabian Gulf where the Creek, a natural inlet from the Gulf, bisects the city into Deira and Bur Dubai. From this Creek, traditional wooden dhows set out for the ports of India, the Gulf and East Africa, just as they have for genera-

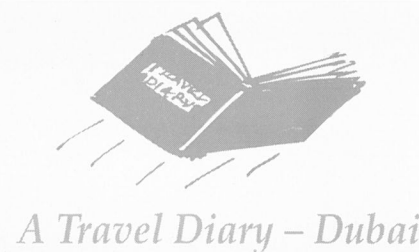
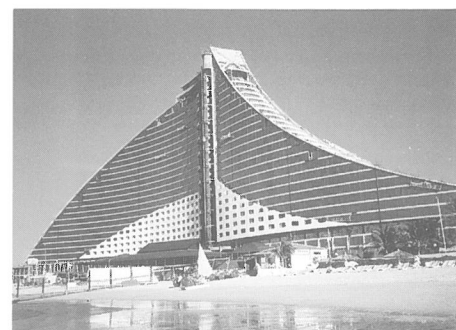
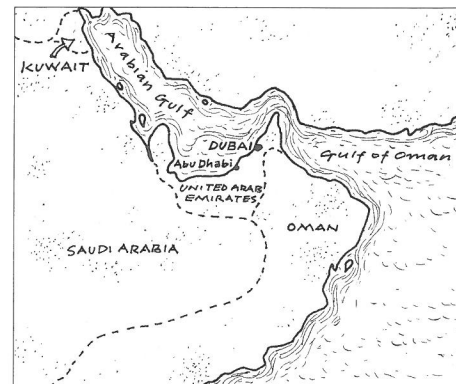
tions, and on its banks the bustle of loading and unloading makes for a fascinating sight.

Though the discovery of oil in the mid '60s shook this emirate into the modern era, trading, manufacturing and tourism now

dominate the economy which, judged by the architectural "supermarket", is booming.

Dubai's culture is firmly rooted in the Islamic traditions of Arabia yet, while locals dress in robes and head dresses, western lifestyles are accepted and catered for. In my view, it is an attractive tourist destination with magnificent weather (in Winter) and first class hotels and excursions. Michael Taylor

Mr Taylor is the senior partner in the practice Fridjhon, Fulford & Partners, Durban.



A Travel Diary - Dubai

Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Mapping out the Future

THE KEY TO unlocking Maputaland's considerable development potential lies in striking a balance between four sets of competing interests. These are:

- the requirements for ecological sustainability;
- the needs of the local communities which are mainly engaged in subsistence farming;
- the commercial agricultural potential of the Makathini Flats; and
- the tourism potential including the coast, wetland and game reserves.

In 1989 a Plan was formulated involving wide consultation with stakeholders in the public, private and community sectors.

Regional context

Maputaland's physical and ecological characteristics are best understood in terms of six parallel zones running in a north-south direction inland from the coast. These are: Ubombo mountains; Pongola floodplain; Sand forest; Mozi/palm belt; Coastal lakes; and Coastal dunes

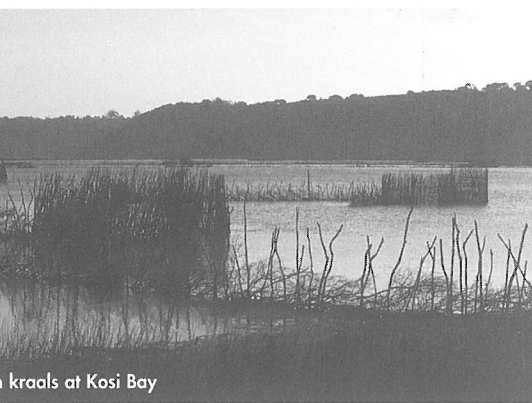
Maputaland comprises 14 tribal authorities within the magisterial districts of Ubombo and Ingwavuma. The main land uses are rural settlement coupled with subsistence farming and nature conservation. Spatially, the region is structured around the small towns of Jozini, Ubombo and Ingwavuma and the emerging urban centres of KwaNgwanase, Mseleni and Mbazwana. However, only 7% of the population live in these centres. The principal infrastructural facilities are the massive dam at Jozini, the Makathini irrigation scheme, two timber plantations and a saw mill, a rural water supply scheme, four hospitals and schools. In addition, there is an active malaria control programme.

The present population is estimated at around 270 000, or some 40 000 households. Of these, 93% live in rural villages which are widely scattered but mainly on the more fertile ground (56% live in two areas: the Pongola floodplain and around KwaNgwanase).

Five features characterise socio-economic conditions in the region:

- relatively low levels of migrant labour;
- high level of subsistence production;
- relative absence of malnutrition;
- low levels of education; and
- few formal sector jobs (1 per 7 households; 70% of those in formal employment work outside the area).

It is therefore not surprising that households engage in complex survival strategies aimed at spreading risk and at securing multiple



Fish kraals at Kosi Bay

sources of income. Incomes are low and the distribution highly skewed (2% of the population earn half the income). Expenditure is mainly on goods produced externally.

The most pervasive problems facing the people of Maputaland relate to lack of access, eg. transport, roads, water, shops, schools, clinics and telephones.

Development Plan

The Plan set out "to fulfil the basic needs of the people of the region within as short a time as possible and to promote sustained development". Its main elements may be summarised in seven points:

- The approach is to be one of integrated rural development.
- The region's natural and human resources are to be used to meet basic needs as a short-term priority, but in such a way as to be sustainable in the longer-term.
- The Plan focuses on households as the main producers in the region, and on transforming households from subsistence to market oriented and more diversified producers.
- Small-scale production (agriculture and consumer goods) is to be encouraged, along with its distribution of products and internal marketing.
- Large-scale schemes (water, agriculture, forestry, tourism) are similarly to be encouraged, but are to be oriented to perform service and support functions for the region in addition to their primary production and income generating roles. Eco-tourism partnerships are also to be encouraged.
- Local community organisation is to be promoted in order to enable people of the region to play a greater part in all facets of the area's development.

- The region's spatial structure is to be organised in support of these activities. In the short- and medium-term, the plan is to locate infrastructure and socio-economic opportunities so as to encourage people to move into towns, rural centres and corridors, thereby relieving pressure on environmentally sensitive areas and improving access to basic facilities and opportunities.

Conclusions

Although the Plan was drawn up some years ago, its approach and main themes fit closely into the current view of regional development as expressed in KwaZulu-Natal's Growth and Development Strategy: Maputaland forms a critical part of the Province's Spatial Development Initiative linking Pietermaritzburg – Durban – Richards Bay/ Empangeni and extended to Maputo. The preconditions for successful development of this attractive region thus appear to be moving into place.

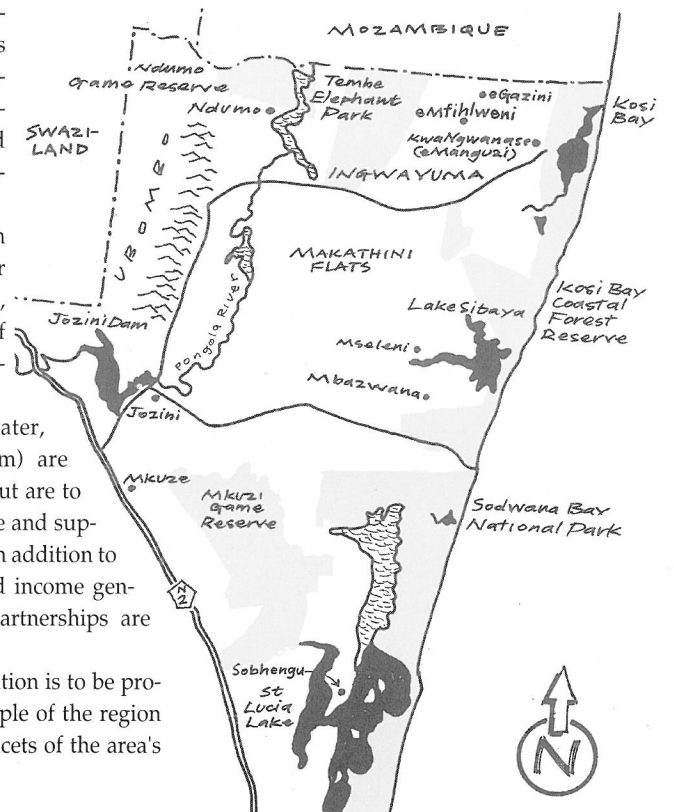
Peter Robinson

Prof Robinson is Head of the Department of Town & Regional Planning at the University of Natal, Durban.

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KwaZulu-Natal (1996) The Provincial Growth & Development Strategy.
VARA (1989) Ubombo/Ingwavuma Structure Plan.

BELOW: MAPUTALAND is remote, poverty-stricken and historically neglected, but is one of nature's last frontiers, largely unspoilt with wonderful beaches, indigenous forests, and unscathed marine resources.



Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Traditional Architecture

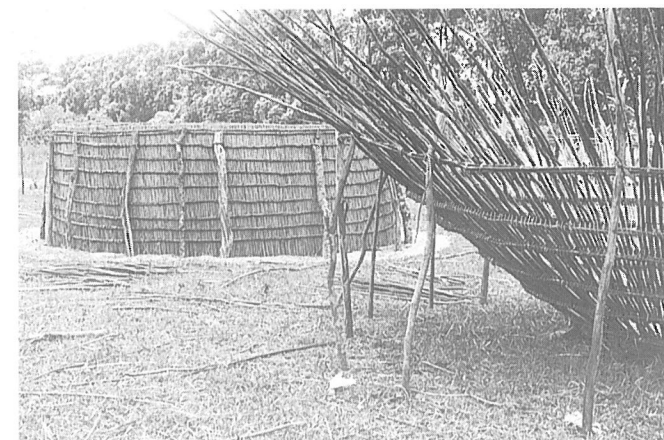
Drawing by Barrie Biermann

unique way of building which survived in this quiet rural backwater until recent times.

Unremarkable when seen from the outside, the Tembe *indlu* (hut) is of the 'cone on cylinder type', but it holds both contradictions and surprises. The structure is a circular screen of sturdy reeds about 1,4m high which is reinforced by horizontal courses of saplings intricately bound with vines and *lala* palm leaves and supported by a series of stout posts set into the ground. The roof framing is separately constructed, upside down, and manhandled into position, being supported contrary to logic, on the reed wall and not on the posts. The ceiling is then completed in situ. Surprise materializes upon entering the *indlu*, for in a display of unique virtuosity, the whole interior is embellished in rich patterns of grass, and chevron woven *lala* palm leaves, and horizontal bands of saplings diagonally bound with cord made from grass and sedge. The effect of the natural materials, glowing in the twilight of the interior, is extraordinarily beautiful. This way of building is known locally as *Ubuhlahle* and is now a lost art since the demise of the last two men who knew or maintained traditions.

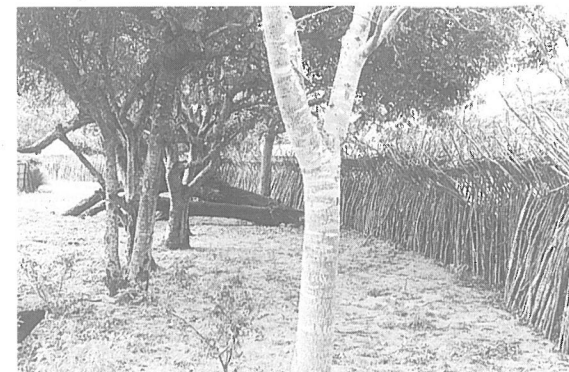
Five *imizi* (homesteads) were documented over a five year period in the early '80s, the most notable being those of the late *Nkosi* Mzimba Tembe at eMfihlweni (*this page*) and of the late *Induna* Manhlenga Tembe at eGazini (*opposite page*). Both were set in landscapes of timeless beauty and in addition to having particularly well made *izindlu* (huts), they have one further and unique feature. They are both surrounded by magnificent timber stockades – probably the last surviving examples in southern Africa. Slender stakes were planted about 0,9m apart at the base, and secured together to form a long triangle about 1,8m high and continuing a further 0,9m beyond. The lower space is filled with brush whilst a horizontal course of saplings nestles in the inverted triangle above. Openings are reinforced with heavier timber or sometimes built onto living trees to give a markedly organic appearance to the enclosure.

The scale is generous, eMfihlweni being a rough circle in plan approximately 130m in diameter and eGazini an ovoid 130m by 60m. Both have clear hierarchies of space usage from the entrance through the family meeting place to individual *izindlu* and to subsidiary en-



surances which contain the special *indlu* of the owner. Both have an atmosphere of extraordinary tranquility which is entirely appropriate for a land where there has never been any serious violence.

The traditional buildings of Maputaland now take their place in history for there are no longer any craftsmen who have the patience or skill necessary to build in the *Ubuhlahle* manner. It is a modest and unassuming architecture very appropriate for a people who set great store by privacy. It certainly has an odd structural logic but in the sure handling of



Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Link Lodge, Lake Sibaya

OUR CLIENT, a local employer in the timber industry, secured a three quarter hectare site in the forests fringing the north-western shores of Lake Sibaya. Access to the site from Jozini is via a 50km district road maintained by the Dept of Forestry and some 15km of temperamental sand tracks.

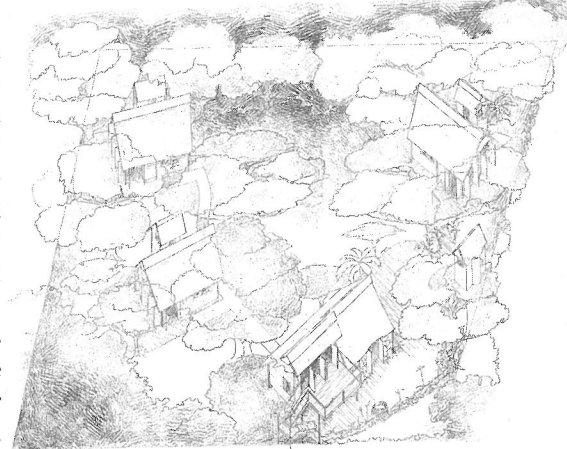
Our brief was to design and deliver a private bush lodge with units for 3 families in relative "bush-comfort"; to provide a centralised kitchen and dining/lounge facility; to cater for expansion, should the need arise; and all was

to be done as quickly and cheaply as possible.

In our design we set out to "touch the earth lightly" and to minimise forest clearing and the importation of materials. The units are sited in an arc surrounding an "eye" in the forest, and face outwards into divergent views. The structures consist of bolted gumpole frames with roughly-sawn timber sidings and reeded roofs, and the units are linked with decks and boardwalks.

Recruiting a labour force was no problem as droves of eager locals arrived on site in the "dust wake" of our overloaded bakkie. Water was sourced from a well dug in the valley and construction commenced with the water/viewing tower which provided a much needed "chill-spot" for the duration of the contract.

All timbers were surface treated with a wax-based preservative. Reeds were obtainable in the riverbeds in the Tembe Elephant Park through an informal co-op. Doors and windows and other fixtures were "concocted" on site. Oil drums were converted to boilers to



provide the most important feature of bush luxury: the reliable hot shower.

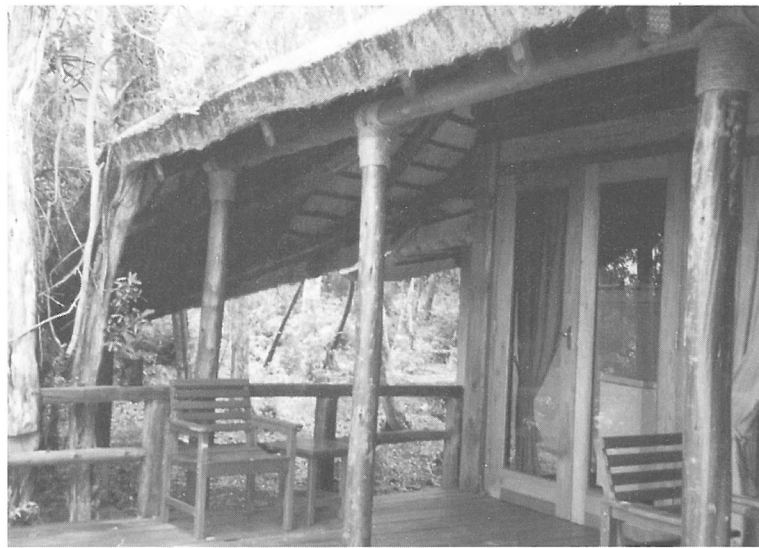
Despite construction having taken twice as long as anticipated, we stayed within budget, have a satisfied client, and most gratifying, having trained the labourers, we were able to depart and leave them empowered with new skills.

Patrick Lergatzis and Richard Stretton



Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Sobhengu



SOBHENGU is the name given by the local people to the southern tip of a remote peninsula in St. Lucia Lake. In Zulu it means "the place of thought" or, alternatively, place of contemplation, an appropriate name for the remoteness, the quiet, the solitude of the site, birthed 140 million years ago. Today the fossils that are found on its shores bear testimony to a rich diverse heritage, which has taken all of time to be realised.

Our brief was to create an architectural language sympathetic with, and subservient to the environment, with a minimum impact on the integrity of the bush. At the same time visitors would be encouraged to participate in the fullness of a bush experience.

Sobhengu is only accessible by "road" via a very poor and ill-defined track down the length of the Nibela Peninsula (four-wheel drive essential). An alternative and much

quicker route is by boat from False Bay Park.

Five luxury lodges were built on a co-ownership basis sufficiently far apart for privacy, whilst being close enough for combined servicing. Although there was no formal local authority, the Natal Parks Board and the KwaZulu Department of Nature Conservation played an invaluable role in

advising on ecological preservation and management, during and after construction. The primary concerns were invisibility of the buildings and the minimising of disruption to the indigenous flora and fauna.

The buildings and all of the access pathways are elevated on boardwalks. Many of the components of the buildings were prefabricated in timber, and simply erected on site to minimise on-site activities. The lodges were largely constructed in natural materials, including timber decks and walls, with coir and hessian, reeds and rattan.

Peter Schwerzel

Professional Team

Owners: *The Gooderson Leisure Corporation*

Architects: *Stafford Associate Architects*

Contractor: *Econ Contractors*

Environment Report: *Environmental Advisory Services*



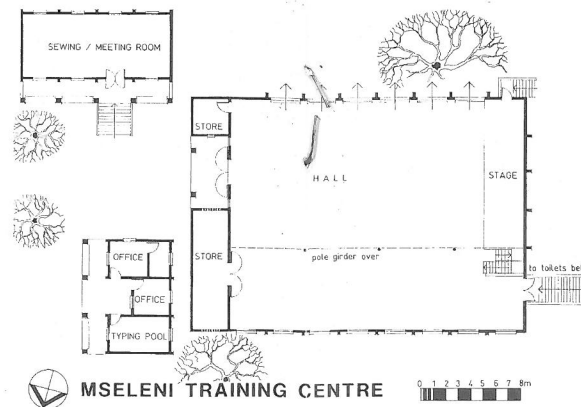
Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Public Buildings, Public Responsibility

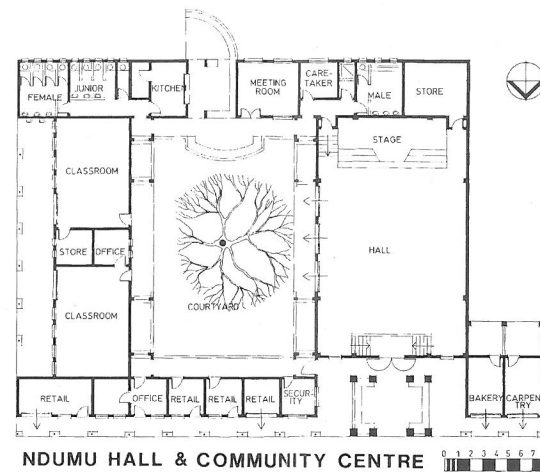
ALTHOUGH Maputaland has more clinics per capita than Durban, the statistics fail to acknowledge that this is because of the thinly dispersed population. A widespread building programme of small isolated clinics has resulted. Sadly many remain unused. Without suitable transport, some are inaccessible, some have no provision for staff and equipment, while others have simply provided a source for building materials.

Modern governments are divided into mono-functional departments each with dedicated building programmes. Multi-purpose buildings or even groups of buildings with different functions on the same site are virtually impossible to fund. This situation is at variance with the way rural society operates and is an abysmal waste of opportunity and funds. Sustainability has to do with networking as much as with architectural detailing.

During July 1996 a Summer School was held at the Natal University for architectural students from Washington University in St. Louis. The focus was on community centres. After visiting some good examples, but more bad, key words were distilled as guides for designing such centres. Brief



MSELEZI TRAINING CENTRE



NDUMU HALL & COMMUNITY CENTRE

prompts follow each keyword.

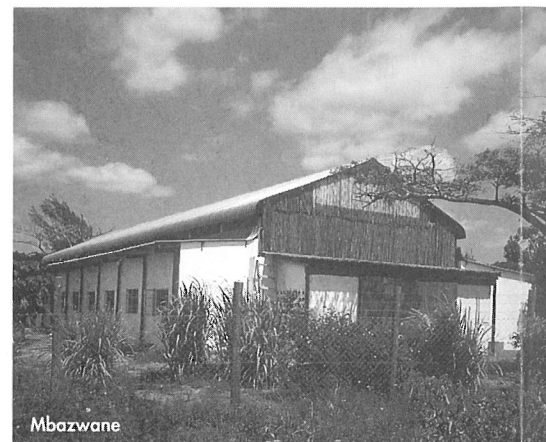
COMMUNITY ongoing participation, models, training; **COMMUNICATION** murals, public telephones, notice boards; **DELIVERY** empowerment and local employment, accessible documentation; **ENVIRONMENT** planting, relationship to terrain, shade and fruit; **FITTINGS** built-in; robust; storage for reasons of security; **INCOME** sustainability, focus on local consumables, eg bread and school uniforms;

INCREMENTAL as funding becomes available or leadership is proven; **LOOSE FIT** final use unpredictable, variety of spaces; **PRECINCT** relationship to other buildings and movement patterns, visibility; **SECURITY** surveillance, caretaker, fence enclosure; **SERVICES** appropriate technology, sewage disposal, water storage; **STORAGE** storage of furniture and equipment enables multi-use of rooms; **SUSTAINABILITY** management, robust detailing, no after-care; **TECHNOLOGY** anticipate virtually no maintenance, limited palette of materials; **WATER** collection, conservation, celebration; **WOMEN** pre-schools to relieve women for employment, cultural gender roles.

The above are further informed by unique circumstances. For example, the vulnerability of guttering makes rainwater collection in channels preferable. Underground tanks also mean that water is pumped with a handpump when needed and a child leaving a tap open will not drain all the resources.

When socially diverse public buildings are erected with community participation they develop public responsibility.

Rodney Harber



Mbazwane

Beyond the Usual Borders: Maputaland

Project Management by Remote Control

A CONTRACT for the construction of a pre-primary school in the sum of R35000 (labour only) was concluded between the local community committee, and a builder resident in the area, who was selected by such committee. The management of the material content of R111 000 fell within the domain of the project manager, and as the builder selected was well known to him, to all intent it appeared that a fairly orderly and conventional (for the area) procurement process lay ahead. As is common practice there, the "build-up" of the labour-only contract price was work-shopped with the selected contractor (contractor A) and his team of workers, which workshop was also attended by the community committee. The project manager's reply to the question as to how many local people were to be employed by the contractor, was that this was to be decided by such contractor.

Visits to site by the project manager were arranged at bi-weekly intervals, and during each visit, the value of work completed was assessed, and payment made per cheque. Experience of the area dictated that the project manager avoided travelling to site with cash, but made an arrangement with the local builder's merchant at Jozini whereby he cashed the contractor's cheque which provided immediate liquidity. Assessment of progress and the corresponding payment was thus based on completion of particular elements in the structure.

Three days after the payment of certificate number two, the project manager received a telephone call from a social worker based at Makatini, who reported that contractor A had absconded and not paid his staff, all of whom had ceased operations. At a site meeting held the following day and attended by the project manager and sixteen workers, it was revealed that each worker had removed either an item of plant or building material as 'collateral' against payment of wages due. The workers had nominated a replacement contractor from their ranks (contractor B) and a second contract was duly completed after a community committee member had been summoned to participate. As it was clear that the contract works could not support a labour force in excess of eight persons, eight workers were retrenched immediately, and all arrear wages were paid by the project manager, with contractor B being entrusted with the funds via the hardware merchant. The workers indicated to the project manager that he need not have any further concern regarding Contractor A, as they intended to dispose of him. Some considerable effort was needed to convince the workers that they had indeed brought about the downfall of contractor A by far too many of the community's unemployed demanding employment in 'what

was after all, a community project.' Progress payment number two had thus produced insufficient funds to cover inflated wages and contractor A had simply disappeared. The workers eventually agreed that they would leave the recovery of damages from Contractor A to the project manager, who returned to Durban in a somewhat more relaxed mood.

This mood was short-lived, and another phone call some five days later indicated more unhappiness on site. The site meeting that followed was attended by the project manager, the workers, contractor B, and of all people, contractor A! Contractor B and the workers then indicated that they had possessed neither the confidence nor the skills to complete the works, and sought the return of A, who had appeared after being summoned, with approximately one third of the diverted funds. contractor B's contract was then cancelled, and contractor A's redrawn, to be signed by the community committee who were then in turn, summoned. The committee appeared, listened while being brought up to date, consulted among themselves, and then announced that the arrangement was totally unacceptable to them and that if the workers had no intention of disposing of contractor A, they certainly would arrange for this. Faced with this, contractor A decided, prudently I believe, to recuse himself, and contractor B was reinstated, and his contract restored.

The final scene was played out two weeks later when at a site meeting, once again attended by the project manager, workers and contractor B, the manager was informed that workers did not wish to be employed by contractor B who in turn pointed out that he did not wish to be the contractor after all. All wished to be employed on a daily basis, contractor B at a rate of R70 per day, three skilled workers at R50 per day and four unskilled operators at R30 per day. The incentive of a shared profit margin could not persuade workers to remain with the status quo, and the proposed changed arrangement was instituted.

Some two months have lapsed under this hopefully final arrangement, and as progress on site is acceptable, it must be concluded that all is well that ends well.

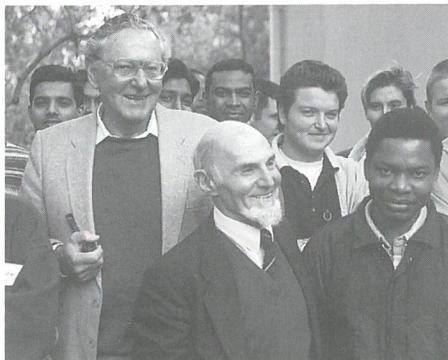
However, spare a thought for the project manager who now through no fault of his own has become the main contractor, no doubt to the astonishment of his professional indemnity insurer, and the perplexity of his professional body which prohibits members from becoming engaged in the building trades.

George Norval

Mr Norval is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Property Development and Construction Economics at the University of Natal, Durban.

Beyond the Usual Borders: London

Issy Benjamin: Durban, my kind of town, my kind of people



Issy Benjamin (centre) with Gerald Mullins (left) at a seminar on Le Corbusian and Brazilian influences on Durban architecture held at KZ-NIA House on 13 June 1997.

AT THE TIME after graduating as an architect, I became a professional stage manager for African Theatres, and found myself touring South Africa with a master illusionist called "The Great Lyle" and his "Cavalcade of Mystery". (Floating lady in mid-air, disappearing lady, sawing the lady in half ... I used my architectural expertise to pickle the wood that made the rasping noise as the volunteers sawed away... strong men fainted at the enormity of what they thought they were doing!).

I became a great friend of the bandleader Roy Martin whose orchestra accompanied the show. During our two weeks playing in Durban we used to drive up and down the coast in his big open tourer with his lead singer, Dulcie van der Merwe and the Melodears. (Does anyone out there still remember them?)

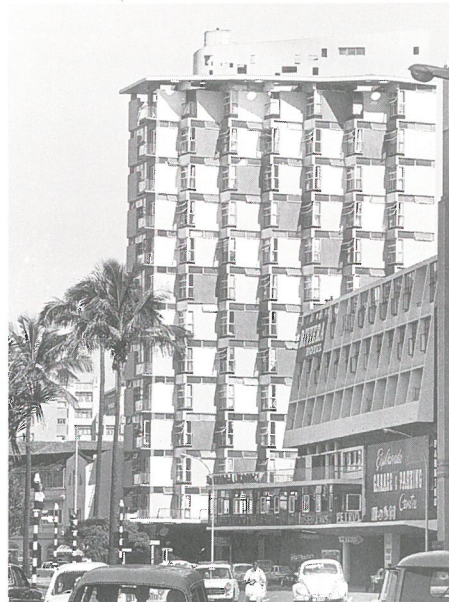
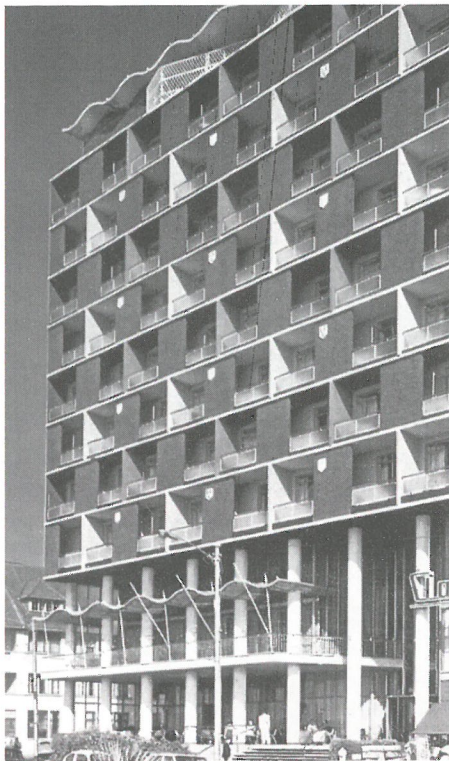
Born and bred in the Transvaal, I was used to the browns and golds and architectural cloudscapes over BIG countryside, and, in consequence, hated the lush greenness of rolling Natal sugar cane land.

The landscape I couldn't tolerate in 1948 I grew to love in 1952, when Derek Crofton and I first came down to Natal for the Claridges (Tropicana) Hotel project. Natal became my kind of Province, Durban my kind of town!

I had no expectations, and life did not let me down! They say "If you like what you've got, you've got what you like", and Durban provided in full measure. It was the right place, Derek was the right person, and for both of us, it was the right time.

With Derek, I had an ideal partnership. We went in on a handshake, split everything down the middle, never a cross word between us, and when I left in December of 1964, we went out on a handshake. It was more than a symbiosis... a synergy was created and we could almost read each other's thoughts.

Westpoint was one such example. We looked at the site, 40' x 80' (ft), late one Friday afternoon



for a Rhodesian client who had to leave Durban the next afternoon – unbeknown to us at the time. On Friday evening, Derek phoned me at my home in Isipingo Beach to break the news of the urgency. We discussed the plan shape on the phone, seven units deep from front to back, staggered to give each a view of the bay, eleven storeys high over ground floor (as 12 steps was the break-even point for an economical lift system in those days).

Derek drew the plans that night based on our discussion while I drew the perspective.

We met the next morning at the printing office... plans and perspective married absolutely. We had our meeting at midday on Saturday, and the rest, as they say, is history. The building stands today, although sadly repainted a monochrome greyish-blue.

Durban gave us the opportunity to become truly "functional" architects, poetically functional "for the foot that danced, the voice that sang". Not the functionalism of poverty that we had been taught, of stripped down austerity, but rather a life-enhancing amplitude, I hoped. Not for us the tyranny of symmetry, of axis and right angle. We did not fear the curve and the splay. Difficult circulation and planning problems were worked out on the beach in wet sand. Design was kept ephemeral at first – we did not come to paper with fountain pens as seems to be the fashion today.

I can't describe how much I miss Derek, how much I missed Durban when I left, one of the white victims of the Group Areas Act when Isipingo Beach was rezoned.

Looking back on my career I see three dis-



CLOCKWISE TOP LEFT: This page: Claridges (Tropicana); Las Vegas; Westpoint and Riviera (Photo: Hans Hallen).

Opposite page: Hyde Park (Photo: Hans Hallen); Farringdon; River Gardens, c1975, London; Hurlingham (Rendering by Issy Benjamin).

inct phases: in Durban we did good work because we LOVED doing good work; in Britain subsequently I did good work because I FEARED doing bad work; and then later in Portugal (which reminded me so much of Durban), once more I could do good work because I LOVED doing good work.

LOVE and FEAR... and it comes through in buildings.

I remember as yesterday the urgency of the Claridges Hotel project, back in 1952. The clients needed to have a planning approval



and to have started work by the end of June of that year in order to qualify for an allocation of mortgage money that would not have been available after that date. We worked day and night for six weeks in Johannesburg in close collaboration with the clients who visited my flat daily with food and drink to keep us in good health. Poor Derek fell ill and there was an awesome stage in my life when the whole hotel existed only in my head.

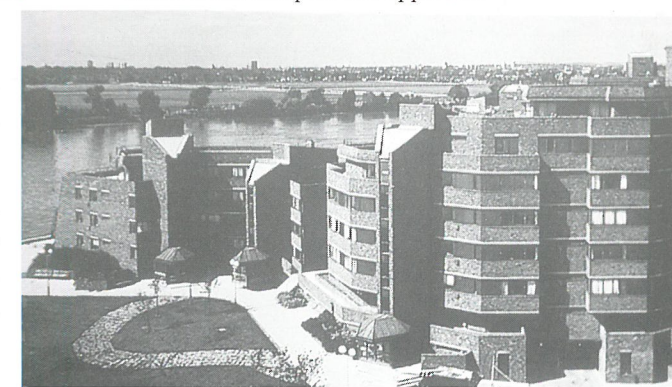
I completed the sketch plans and perspective of the building just in time to fly down to Durban, to meet the Chief Planning Officer, Harold Speight. While waiting for him in the outer office with my roll of plans, I read a journal I had brought with me, banned at the time, as I recall, for its ultra left views. When called into Harold Speight's office, I had no time to conceal it. It caught his eye and he asked to look at it. As he paged through it I could see that he thoroughly approved of it. We discussed the articles for some time and found that politically we were in total accord.

He said "Now that I've got to know who I am dealing with, let's look at the drawings". I ran through the drawings with him, and when we came to the perspective he said "I feel I can trust you. If you assure me that the building will look exactly like the perspective I'll give your scheme an outline planning permission right now!" We shook hands on

architects ("Now is the time to consolidate and build up your practice"), my wife and I went to live on the Spanish island of Ibiza for almost a year. I painted and drew in the company of painters and sculptors, Gem learned to play the guitar, we both spoke Spanish... and laid the foundations for the rest of our lives.

And this drop-out year (1956) served Derek and I in good stead. The block of flats known now as Las Vegas was mooted. The developers maintained that it was too important a site to entrust to local architects, they needed to have someone from overseas. I understand that eventually one of the developers said, "Benjamin's overseas, maybe he's learnt something!" and the next thing that happened was Derek sending me a diagram of the site on the Marine Parade and a sketch proposal.

On my kitchen table, overlooking the ochre cliffs and the blue Mediterranean, Las Vegas was sketched in perspective, and painted in watercolour and despatched back to Durban, where it was accepted and approved.



my assurance, and he stamped the drawings ... and with that, we began work.

When Claridges was completed in 1955, I decided to fulfil an ambition born when as a student, I saw a picture of a Greek church, all white-washed and silhouetted against "a wine-dark sea" – an ambition to experience the Mediterranean firsthand, to get to know cobbled alleys enclosed by whitewashed walls, shuttered and mysterious, hidden courtyards, to "feel" light and shade contrasting with deep blue sea and sky.

And so, on the money earned from Claridges, and against all the well-meant advice from older

That was where our style really developed. Structure expressed in black, walls in white, screens in terracotta. Black and white, and one strong colour, Spain connecting with Durban.

Our later work I think expressed a sort of gaiety, freedom and exuberance, working in harmony with the environment, natural and man-made. We were lucky too in sharing an adventurousness; there was so little precedent in modernism that we felt we had licence to experiment. If we were right, it would serve as a good example – if we were wrong it would illustrate what not to do! Perhaps, in some small measure, we contributed to making Durban our kind of town. I certainly hope so. But Durban of course, contributed the people.

What a rich melange of people I had as friends, a richer mix than anywhere in Europe. My friends the Indian fishermen of Isipingo beach, Zulu friends married into the Royal Household of Cyprian Dinizulu, political friends of all colours, colleagues, intellectuals from the University, beach boys, friends made at George Higginson's karate dojo on the Esplanade where Japanese sailors would drop in for some free fighting, extending our skills, teaching us courtesy to strangers, and regard for those less skilled or weaker than ourselves.

Only in Durban could this happen, with such an intimate connection between city and the harbour. Laurens van der Post wrote an early novel set in Durban and there is a description of the hero walking down to the bay from the wealthy white world of Berea, through the intermediate brown world of Currie Road to the black world of Sontseu Road, which is well worth reading for a picture of what Durban was like in the thirties.

It now is OUR kind of town, OUR kind of people. Long may it flourish.

Issy Benjamin

Born in Germiston, 29 December 1925; matriculated at Germiston High School 1941; graduated in Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in 1949.

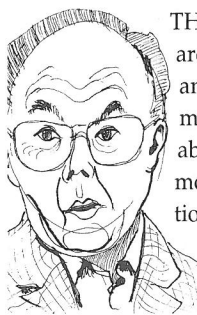
Began private practice in 1950, occasionally assisted by Ted Levy. Employed by practice of Harold le Roith in 1951, becoming personal assistant to Derek Crofton.

Moved to Durban in 1952 as a result of the Claridges (Tropicana) Hotel commission when practice of Crofton & Benjamin established. Major projects: Ansonia Court, Pietermaritzburg; Cutty Sark and Margate Hotel extensions; Salt Rock Hotel extensions; Silversands, Lancaster Gate, and Groote Schuur apartment blocks at Addington; Las Vegas apartment block on the Marine Parade (1957); Riviera Hotel and Parking Garage, Westpoint, and Haven Court apartment blocks, Esplanade (1956-60); Hurlingham (1858), Hyde Park (1959) and Farringdon, Berea; Brazil Coffee Bar; various private residential developments.

Left South Africa in 1964; practice of Ted Levy, Benjamin & Partners, London, established in 1967; own practice from 1987.

Beyond the Usual Borders: Sydney

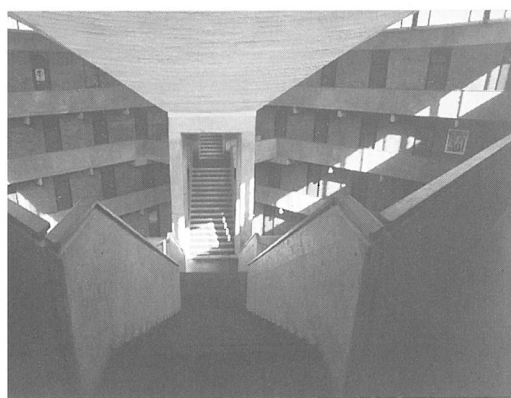
Hans Hallen: Buildings stand still, people move



THE AESTHETIC experience of architecture is related to time, place and movement. Buildings (for the most) stand still and people move about. The idea of the observer moving is an important consideration in the design of buildings and their settings. It is then that a proper concordance of landscape and building is achieved.

Land form, landscape and buildings stay in our memories and with our experience of place and of time, they enter our cultural life through the effect on personal identity, cultural identification and of social values. From these are made the symbols of an age, a period or a group. Thoughts such as these have interested me from my early days in architecture.

There are a set of working principles that I use that are based upon ideas on how a building is seen. First the building is seen at a distance set into the landscape and with this there is a sense of general form only. Moving in a slowly circling approach the entrance forecourt becomes obvious and there is a sense of general detail. For the Greeks this was the temenos, and the entrance way that marked the transition, was the propylaea. Once arrived at, the arrangement of connections, such as avenues, arcades, pathways, ramps and stairs within the space(s) of the building, make for an easy sense of progression and direction. It is important that stairs and ramps are placed within the routes so that they are obvious.



When I designed the John Bews and Mabel Palmer residence at the University of Natal in 1964, I separated the two sides of the double-loaded corridor, of the traditional residence, roofed the resulting space and placed the corridors, stairs and connections in the space formed. Far from the routes being secondary to the experience, they became the main generators of the spaces. The socialising function of paths and routes enhances the experience of the buildings and of the adjacent spaces.

In July 1965 I edited an issue of the *South*

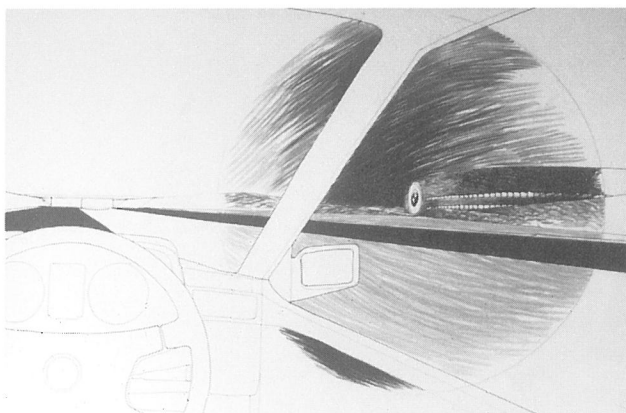
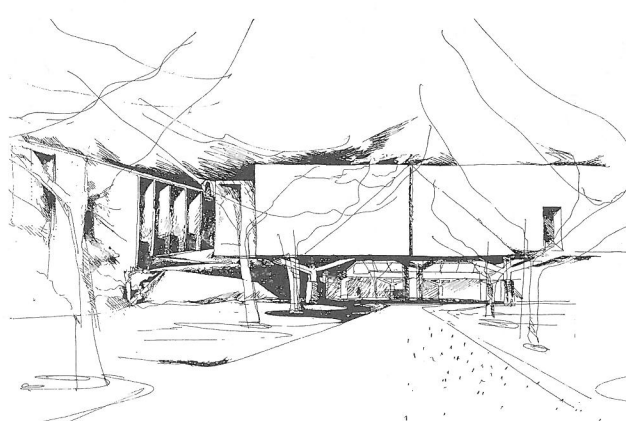
African Architectural Record where I drew attention to the structure of lanes in downtown Durban as well as Pietermaritzburg. Some of the buildings illustrated, such as the old Club Arcade and the Union Arcade, were models of spatial and social organisation. They are sadly now gone: they were just too good to keep!

Almost a decade later, when Danie Theron and I set out to make a "temple" in the canefields for Hulets, we shaped the main accommodation on two levels with all directions, routes and stairs easily grasped upon entry. In the Hulets siting, lessons from early studies and observations were used.

The slow curving road and the formal geometry of Hulets were to be used in the making of a temple-like form standing free in the setting of the cane fields. And this is as it is still experienced. There is a distant view and the sense of moving about the building and then the formal entrance platform (not quite a Greek temenos) inviting contemplation and then entry.

The experience is similar at the Mangosuthu Technikon. The building takes on the appearance of a walled hilltop village when viewed from along the spinal approach road. The shaping of the strong perimeter wall and an inviting point of arrival at a forecourt leading through a portal to a gentler internal court seemed appropriate to site and location.

When designing the BMW building at Midrand on a site that was prominent from the Johannesburg-Pretoria freeway, it was clear



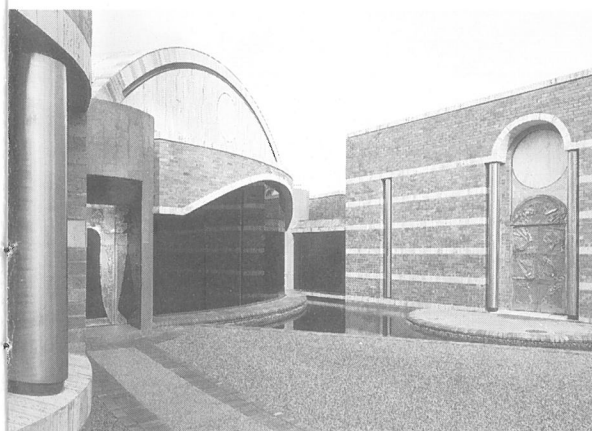
that pedestrians would seldom view the building at a distance and that the only image on the eye would be gained from an experience travelling at 100 km an hour (or much more as I recently experienced) and the resulting short duration of passing by in a car. BMW had a clear understanding of the symbolic role of buildings for companies such as theirs. They wanted the design of a quality where the image of building and company merged, and that the building and its spaces should be symbolic of its location and setting in South Africa. An enlightened brief!

I was at the time fresh from reading the essay by Dr. Mason on early stone structures in the Transvaal. The use of the circular form fulfilled several ideals. The form drew resonances from the ancient history of building in the region, as well as forms that were important for BMW. It was also clear to us that a circular building form would impact on a viewer passing by in a car for a longer duration than any other usable form.

It has been said that the plan is a BMW badge in built form! Whilst this is not where the form came from, the idea that a building can take a strong symbolic form is not unknown! It is true of the Christian church with its cross plan and it is also true of the Hindu temple which based its plan on the human body. In a prosaic age it doesn't do to carry on about such metaphors.

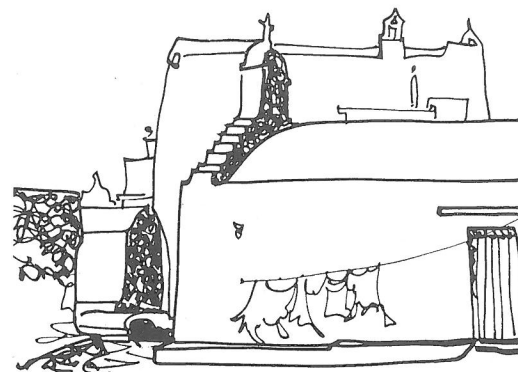
At the Brenthurst library the idea on the concordance of building and landscape, and with the idea of movement, are expressed in a building on a unique site between a freeway and the avenue within a private estate. The idea of using what appear to be loosely grouped building forms of strong individual shape comes from a variety of sources. On the path up to the temple of Apollo at Delphi the sanctuary and repositories of various far-flung communities are seen along the gently curving pathway up the hill. The treasuries are simple temple-like forms with no formal geometric relationships with each other. There were no town-planning-scheme building lines! The rationale for locating each building seems to be derived from the topographic exigencies of each location and the desire to have each building easily seen and identified.

The Brenthurst library is in a real sense a group of sanctuaries which for technical reasons are best separated. The large cross-vaulted hall and reception space relates to separate building forms for the archives, the drawings and maps repository, as well as the book collection and reading spaces. The requirement was for a solid building with a sense of the monumental appropriate to its function without this taking on a grandiose

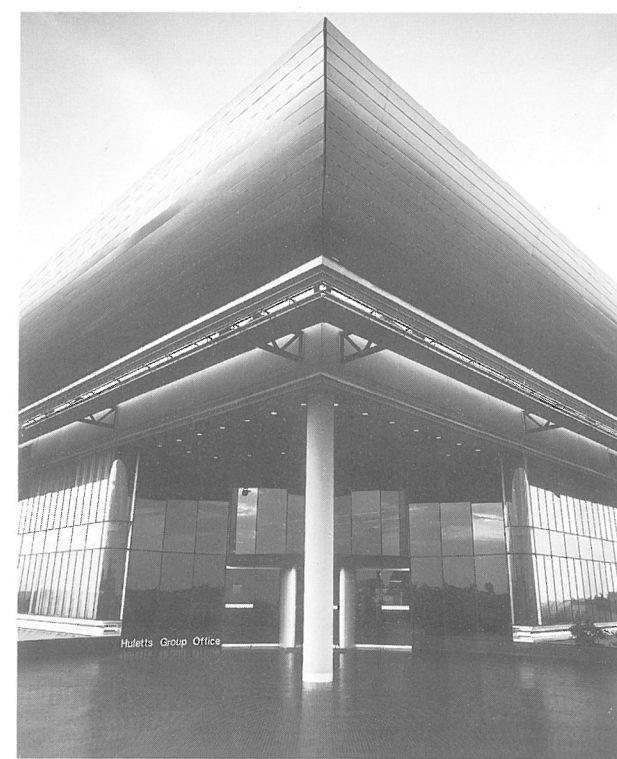


TOP: Hulets Group Office.
ABOVE: Brenthurst Library entrance and plan.

OPPOSITE PAGE –
CLOCKWISE TOP LEFT:
Hans Hallen-sketch by
Rainer Gerhard, 1986;
Mangosuthu Technikon;
BMW (Rendering by
Andrew Verster); Club
Arcade (Photo: Hans
Hallen); Mabel Palmer
Residence, University of
Natal.



built form. This exercise in creating dynamic relationships between the built forms of the various treasuries gives the whole its specific character. The approach to the building reveals first its articulated but related forms and the space created as a forecourt. Here there is a change of direction using a fountain and sculptural elements to direct visitors to the entrance portal and door. Here as elsewhere, the door or the gate-



way element is of vital importance to the composition

and understanding of the building.

For me the best way of achieving a developing architectural philosophy that finds its way into the making of buildings, is the observation of the use and experience of buildings and an understanding of their settings both physical and cultural. This, in a sense, is a classical view. For me the term "Classical" means not just the study of the civilisations of Greece and Rome, but also means the best example, the paradigm. For architects working in a pluralistic world of interacting peoples and cultures that is a more useful meaning. For me, elements of the classical, may be seen in a Greek village, an ancient Sri Lankan city such as Anuradhapura, or in our own city backyard as we study the sites and settings of the Indian Temples in Durban.

It has seemed important to me that buildings and landscapes should be able to be conceived in a manner that touches upon cultural memories that are rooted in time, and the circumstances of building and spirit of the site. I cannot say that this is what I have achieved, but it surely is what architects should seek to. Jack Grossert (died 1997, *Editor*), my art teacher at DHS some fifty years ago, wrote, in the *SA Architectural Record* of July 1965 about the Narainsamy Temple at Newlands but what he wrote has a more general application.

"Architecture is a social manifestation to a greater extent than any other of the arts. It cannot flourish in isolation and an architect, more than any other kind of artist, directs the expression of a community...It should nurture within itself the other arts and provide a spiritual and physical meeting place which is the focal point of community life".

What we understand of the influences that guide our thoughts and actions in life varies from time to time, but what Jack Grossert said in class fifty years ago left some mark on me.

Hans Hallen

Born in Durban, 31 August 1930; matriculated at DHS; graduated in Architecture at the University of Natal, Durban, in 1953. Worked in offices of Kass & Watkins and for the London County Council.

Entered into private practice 1959. Major works: House Hattingh (1962); St Olav's Lutheran church, Berea, and St. Johns Convent, Bluff (1967); Stellenberg (1962); Drostdy, and Musgrave Mews, Berea (1963); Residences for the University of Natal, Durban (1964-66); House Shaw, Glenwood (1968) (Hallen & Dibb).

Hulets Group Office, Umhlanga Rocks (1974-76); Mangosuthu Technikon, Umlazi (1980/81); Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg (1982/83); BMW Headquarters, Midrand (1984/85) (Hallen Theron & Partners).

NPIA President 1974-76; ISAA President-in-Chief 1974-75; awarded ISAA Gold Medal 1980.

Left South Africa for Australia 1987. Established Godfrey Spowers & Hallen, Sydney. Own practice since.

