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UKZN DISCIPLINE OF ARCHITECTURE

International success

The 2018 international student design competition of Saint-Gobain MultiComfort called for the vision of a “vibrant transcultural community development” on the perimeter of Dubai’s Cultural Village, a multi-purpose area located along the Al Jaddaf shoreline of the creek.

In particular, the proposals were to provide “an optimum indoor environment, [which] ensured the right level of fresh air, thermal, visual and acoustic comfort in a sustainable and energy efficient manner” in Dubai’s extremely hot and humid climate. Students were to “reconcile the reduction of energy consumption of cooling and ventilation systems without compromising any of the inhabitants’ comfort, while providing optimum connection with the environment and having a minimum impact on it”.

On winning the South African stage of the competition in April, and when 50 entries from 28 countries were presented to an international jury in Dubai in May, Vahin Parmananda and Mthokozisi Sibisi, M. Arch students of UKZN, were announced winners. Second prize went to a student from the Governmental University of Belarus and third to students of Fachhochschule Darmstadt, Germany, while special prizes went to submissions from Spain and Poland. This is the first time a South African entry has won this prestigious award.



The winning proposal by UKZN students on the creek of Dubai.



Mthokozisi Sibisi and Vahin Parmananda, winners of the 2018 Saint-Gobain international student competition.



Navan Padayachee, winner of the 2018 PG Bison design student competition.

National success

This year’s PG Bison design competition invited proposals for the redevelopment of the historic Johannesburg Gas Works, a major industrial landmark in Cottesloe, established 1892 for the production of gas from coal and closed exactly a century later. The proposals were to re-consider the landmark within its city location and explore ways for community interaction, environmental awareness and healthy living.

First prize of a trip to the 2019 Milan Furniture Fair for both winner and lecturer went to Navan Padayachee, who will be accompanied by Lawrence Ogunsanya, simultaneously Academic Leader of the Discipline of Architecture within the School of the Built Environment and Development Studies.

The judges made three honourable mentions, one of which went to Fathima Bibi Mula of UKZN. The awards ceremony took place in Johannesburg on 4th October.



OBITUARY

Rodney Choromanski 1961-2018

An enthusiastic and indefatigable student, outstanding designer and a well-loved colleague has suddenly left us, aged merely 57. The following piece was written by his close friend of many years, the current SAIA-KZN President:

“It’s been almost four and a half hours since Rodney Choromanski passed on.....

I remain shocked, angry, confused and deeply saddened! How is it possible that a talent so free and energetic - a complete human being in all its forms, be removed from us so prematurely? Rodney and I were part of that unique group who began our careers as architects during the darkest days of repression - the early ‘80s. Ours was a special group of activists - some louder than others. Rodney was firm but never loud. A soul who gave off everything he possessed to the advancement of culture, especially to those less fortunate; music, art, sport, poetry and, of course, the built environment.

We from KZN should feel honoured to have shared our profession with the first recipient of the Grand Prix of the Africa Architecture Awards (2017) but also to be in the midst of one so calm, complete and authentic.

Too soon my brother, just too soon”.

Ruben Reddy

Besides the Grand Prix, Rodney was a fellow winner of the competition for the proposed Pan-African Parliament at Midrand, 2007. At this difficult time, Rodney’s son, Storm, especially, and his brothers Glen and Derek are firmly on our minds. *Editor*

In Memoriam

SAIA-KZN Journal has learned with regret of the deaths of the following members:

Brandon Stewart Stephenson (1979-2018), a Senior Architectural Technologist who graduated from DUT in 2001 and had been working for Studio 88 Architects.

Hasmukhlal Ramjee (1947-2018), known as Hash, graduated at M.L. Sultan College in 1970 and served for many years as a Senior Architectural Technologist with Architects Collaborative.

CHANGING COLOUR

It has been 178 years since George Cato drew up a plan of Durban in 1840. Over this period, the early village of wattle and daub houses has seen road and building infrastructure development, wetland management, and the railway in 1860.

Key buildings were produced in impeccable colonial Victorian and Baroque architecture. Some significant buildings were constructed in Durban between 1850 and 1910 such as the first Town Hall (main Post Office), City Hall, Market house, St Paul’s cathedral and Street-Wilson’s railway station terminal building, which was completed as a two storey building and later extended upwards to four storeys. The attention to detail and craftsmanship is commendable.

Architectural expression goes hand in hand with contextual perception. Today we protect archaic buildings as gifts of workmanship from generations past. Together with these expressions are undertones of how significant Africa was perceived to be, versus the western world.

Today there are attempts to contextualise design beyond classical architecture. The symbolism of the tree as a meeting place, texture, materiality, regionalism and colour echo both the palpable and intangible realities of the continent. A number of buildings in the province such as the Woza, Ushaka Marine world (see KZNIAJ 1/2008), the interpretation centre at eMakhosini-Ophathe (KZNIAJ 1/2006), Didima Hutted camp (KZNIAJ 3/1998) Nomalanga Estate and many others by both black and white architects exemplify this point. Whether we agree with the interpretation or not, there is an attempt to acknowledge that we live in Africa and that colonial concepts are not universally applicable. There has been, over the years, a realisation that Africa has an identity, a culture, an expression, which was looked down upon and attempts were even made to destroy it.

Further to cultural suppression, was economic oppression through apartheid. From the days of the first president of the Natal Provincial Institute in 1902-03, WE Robarts, until today under the current president Ruben Reddy, the Institute has set out to create a common voice and to promote architecture. There have always been disputes with contractors, engagements with authorities, discussions on architecture and mentoring the next generation.

Since 1994, however, challenges go beyond that and have to factor in the changing landscape in the country. SAIA-KZN celebrates the growth achieved by black architects in the province and acknowledges the need to still advocate for transformation.

Primarily, SAIA-KZN concerns itself with support for running the practices of architects. In many cases of previously disadvantaged practitioners, it’s even more difficult being without a business to run. Initiatives from government have not had the furthest reach. But community building is about the humanness of empowerment. There are always countless ways of evading policy, but the question is: Do we really want, as a primary intention, a transformed industry?

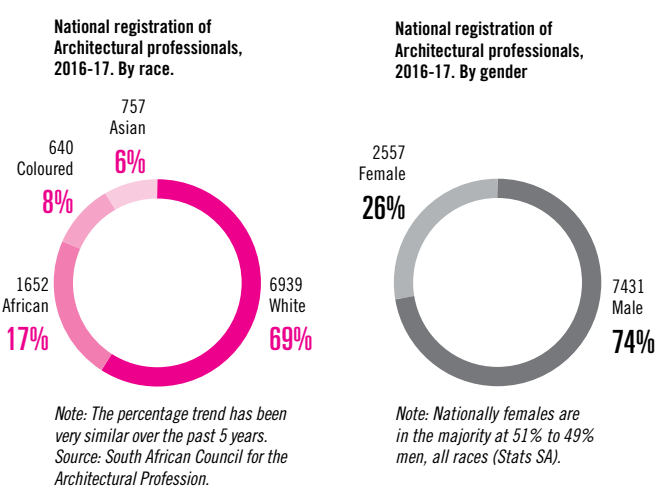
Enjoy the journeys of architects in the province, who not many years ago would not have had such opportunities.



Skura Mtembu, guest editor

Sikhumbuzo (Skura) Mtembu, principal of Striation Architects, Durban, was elected a Vice-President of SAIA-KZN in 2014 and re-elected in 2016.

On graduating from UKZN with the degree M.Arch in 2007, Skura was announced Corobrik Regional Student of the Year. *Editor*



Architecture for all: opening doors during the Apartheid era



In my architectural studies and practice in South Africa, I encountered the usual challenges that face students and professionals, as well as those inherent in a society shaped by institutionalized racism. Blacks faced barriers in the education system and the profession that heightened the risk of failure and diminished self-esteem. Yet there were hard-won successes, made possible by persistence and the support of a few who rose above the prevailing conditions to pry open the doors of exclusion. The following outline of my career highlights the fair and generous spirit of those who helped ameliorate our problems – the removers of obstacles to whom I offer praise and gratitude.

Ministerial approval, Indian Group Area, shades of social Darwinism

I matriculated in Pietermaritzburg where my family lived. Under apartheid, where the racially segregated ‘non-white’ universities did not offer courses in Architecture, ‘non-whites’, were allowed to study at ‘white’ universities conditional on the approval of the Minister. Such approval was subjected to a prohibition of living on campus in one of the many conveniently located and relatively inexpensive student dormitories. So I was compelled to find boarding at higher cost in a designated ‘Indian group area’, and commute to campus daily.

In the mornings, I took a bus from my boarding place in Asherville to Tollgate bridge. From there, I faced a two-kilometer hike up Peter Mokaba (Ridge Road) and Mazisi Kunene Road (King George V Avenue). I walked with my arm outstretched and thumb raised in the hope of hitching a ride with a passing motorist. Not easy when carrying a roll of drawings, an architectural model under construction, and a brief case. Most days, I was lucky and got a ride. On bad days, I trekked all the way.

There were other more intractable problems; the constant ‘othering’ in a predominantly white institution. Shades of social Darwinism revealed through casual insinuations that perhaps blacks were not quite ready to become architects; that we were lagging in the continuum of intellectual development; the persistent onus to prove and re-prove that we were capable; the fear of failure reinforced by the fact that no other student of colour had made it past third year.

Ted Tollman

But, there were fair-minded people who saw the injustice and inequality and did what they could to remove obstacles and open the profession to all races.

Ted Tollman (1930-2007), our design professor in second year, is an exemplar of such fairness and generosity. Those who knew him will vouch that he was a pragmatist; tough in his criticism, but constructive and reasonable and very approachable. For Ted, the design had to work and he demonstrated how to verify whether it did. I liked that and grew to respect him. He also sowed the seeds for my nascent interest in affordable housing. With Ted’s mentorship, I passed second year.

My father died in early 1973 during my third year of study. He had paid my tuition for the first half of the year. I had to figure out how to finance the remainder of my studies. The best option, it seemed,

was to drop out after June, work for a year or two, and return to complete the course. But would I really return to university? Was I just following the path of those who did not make it past third year?

I turned to Ted for guidance. He listened to my story and offered this advice: You just lost your dad and you are grieving, he said. This is not the time to make major decisions. Take time to grieve then return to class.

A week or so later he informed me that he had spoken to the University administration and arranged financial assistance for me. I was to receive a bursary for half the tuition fee and a waiver of the other half. This was sufficient to see me through the end of the year. Ted assured me that if I passed third year, this arrangement would be repeated in fourth year and fifth year provided I did not fail any classes. I did not, and made it to graduation in 1976.

Pancho Guedes

Students across all racial and ethnic categories faced harsh and sometimes pointless criticism. The pedagogy of architectural design is rooted in criticism. This is a sound approach in that criticism leads to discernment and self-evaluation, which in turn results in better, more fully thought-out designs. I can think of no better way to ‘teach’ design. But success depends on meaningful, constructive discourse.

Unfortunately, on many occasions, the quality of discourse suffered and compassion flew out the window. We had difficulty separating the meaningful, helpful comments from the ugly.

Pancho Guedes (1925-2015), then Head of Architecture at the University of Witwatersrand, served on the examiner’s panel when I defended my final year architectural thesis at the University of Natal (now UKZN). The design was not exceptional but the examination went well until one examiner popped a question that caught me completely off-guard. The design showed an electrical equipment room at one corner of the building, a small but necessary component of the scheme. I had provided an exterior door to the space to allow emergency access, but there were no windows.

“How,” asked the examiner, who was seated near the back of the room, “was the electrical room ventilated?” I had not thought about this and froze upon hearing the question. Was the entire design going to be judged by the omission of one minor detail? There was a long, painful silence as I grappled with the question, and despaired at the unfairness of it all. I was stunned and tongue-tied.

Pancho, who was seated in the front row, very close to where I was standing, leaned forward and whispered, “You can provide a louvre in the exterior door.” I was drowning and he had just thrown me a life line. Quietly and hesitantly I repeated Pancho’s words almost in the form of a question “One could add a louvre to the exterior door (?)” To this Pancho added “Yes, that will work” and then said something to the effect that this was a minor issue that did not detract from the overall design, a mild rebuke to my tormentor, delivered in a professional and friendly tone. I thank Pancho for saving my skin that day, and for teaching me an important lesson. He demonstrated that although criticism is important, education should be a collaborative and constructive endeavour, not a confrontational and petty one.

Pietermaritzburg

After graduation, entering a relatively insular all-white profession brought more challenges. But many architects were willing to open their doors to provide work and mentoring. I was fortunate to work for Michael Dyer (1927-2012), Gordon Small (1927-1995) and Geoff Carter-Brown in Pietermaritzburg. With Gordon Small, I worked on the Natal Playhouse, which won an Award of Merit (see NPIA) 3/1983 & 1/1988). Gordon encouraged and supported me when in 1982 I decided to start my own practice in Pietermaritzburg. It was the first black-owned architectural firm in the city.

My firm was constrained by meager opportunities available to blacks. Most private sector development was kept within the white social networks. In the public sector, central and provincial government departments distributed work to white firms only. But we persisted, and survived mainly on small projects that came from the Indian community. Then, some eight years after I started the business, as apartheid was being softened, we received a commission from the public sector. The project was an Educational Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre in Northdale, Pietermaritzburg, which, when completed in 1991, received an Award of Merit from the Institute of Architects (see NIA Journal 2/1991 & 1/1992).

Almost all my work was located in Pietermaritzburg, which has a rich heritage of Victorian architecture. City leaders and many cultural organizations such as the Pietermaritzburg Society encouraged development that was in harmony with this heritage. In recognition of my efforts, the Pietermaritzburg Society awarded me with a commendation for my contribution to the architecture of the city.

USA

Around this time, I faced the choice of continuing with practice or fulfilling my long-held desire to pursue graduate studies. I opted to close my practice and attend graduate school at the University of Southern California. As an architect, I perceived societal issues through the lens of physical determinism, the notion that societal problems can be solved by arranging the physical environment in particular ways. By studying planning, I was able to integrate other fields such as philosophy, economics, political science, history, and geography into my scholarship. With this broader frame of reference, I returned to issues of land and housing, an interest nurtured years earlier by Ted Tollman. My doctoral dissertation was entitled ‘Citizenship, Property and Place: Land and Housing in South Africa’.

After graduation, I taught Architecture and Planning at universities in California, Iowa, and New York. Although I found academia to be intellectually stimulating, I was still drawn to the world of practice. So I returned to architectural practice in 2000. I worked for a consulting firm in Chicago for many years and opened my own practice in 2008. It is based in Los Angeles and Chicago.

My professional practice is guided by the spirit of fairness and generosity of my mentors. I try to follow their example by placing emphasis on mentoring and creating opportunities for newcomers to enter the profession. My professional team is made up of first-generation Americans, children of immigrants from Mexico, Vietnam, El Salvador, and Hong Kong, reflecting the diversity of Los Angeles.

Thanks to the good work of Ted and many others, our profession is a lot more diverse than it was in the 1970s. But the doors to architecture are only partially open. Much remains to be done to make architecture accessible to all.

Kiran Laloo, Ph.D.

Diplomat Apartments, Chicago.

The project is located in Chicago near the Belmont train station, where there are many homeless people and victims of substance abuse. The old Diplomat Hotel was identified as a facility to accommodate transient housing and social services. Laloo Associates reviewed the design on behalf of the investor and monitored the construction for compliance with the codes (including the accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities), project budget, and project schedule.

The scope of work entailed upgrades to the structural timber frame, which had been damaged by water and dry rot, demolition of all interior walls and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing services, and construction of new studio apartments, facilities for social support services and for the community.

The exterior masonry walls were repaired and upgraded to provide improved thermal and sound insulation, windows were replaced with energy-efficient units, the roof was replaced and modified to accommodate a ‘green roof’ and an amenities deck. The entire facility was designed to accommodate people with disabilities.

Architect of record: Landon Bone Baker Architect.

Construction consultants: Laloo Associates LLP



Former Diplomat Hotel before the intervention. The existing windows had single-pane glazing, which was not energy-efficient. Exterior masonry was damaged and spalling caused by the freeze-thaw cycle in cold climates.



A typical remodeled apartment. Each apartment is equipped with a full kitchen, dining area, and bed.



The new Community Lounge on the ground floor.

Seedat & Seedat Architects CC, Overport, Durban



"After matric I hadn't quite made up my mind what to do and took a two-year gap working in the spares department of a motor vehicle sales company in Ladysmith, my hometown. Once I had decided on architecture, and not getting immediate entry into the University of Natal, I did the next best thing and went to ML Sultan Technical College (now DUT) and studied architectural draughtsmanship.

Once qualified, I was employed by Glasspool Coote and Clarkson in Ladysmith and was particularly influenced by Tony Clarkson's work. I made two attempts to get into Natal University (now UKZN) and on the second was interviewed by Rodney Harber who, thankfully, approved my drawings and assured me of a place in the School of Architecture. I obtained ministerial consent in 1974 and at the age of 24 commenced my studies.

My life changed completely. Having grown up in a small town and with very little contact outside of the Indian community, I was thrown into the deep end of a completely new environment within which I got to know the other side of South Africans and Rhodesians (white Zimbabweans) and formed a bond with new colleagues over six years. It was a wonderful experience with many challenges which I managed to overcome. I did in-service training with Glasspool Coote & Clarkson in Ladysmith and subsequently with Ing Jackson De Ravel & Hartley in Durban.

Mahomed Seedat and I were not related although we shared the same surname, and both our families originated from Gujarat province in India. His family settled in Durban. Mahomed went to London and landed a United Nations bursary to study at the Architectural Association (AA). In 1981 I had joined Yusuf Patel Architects in Durban [see boxed entry, p5] and in the same year Mahomed returned to South Africa and underwent his South African in-service training in the office. Once Yusuf returned to his hometown of Barberton in 1982, Mahomed and I teamed up to establish Seedat & Seedat Architects, and our offices were located at 17 Antelope Place, a building designed by the Building Design Group (BDG).

When the practice started we relied entirely on community support. Many years later we got commissions from the House of Delegates* for additions to existing schools, and we designed an entirely new 'Indian School' viz. Mark 3 at Phoenix SS 19 (see KZNIA Journal 4/1995). After 1994 with South Africa's new dispensation we started to get work from the Department of Public Works and from private institutions.

In 2010 after a partnership of twenty eight years and as we reached retirement age, Mahomed left Seedat & Seedat Architects to establish his own practice, MI Seedat Architects, but, sadly in August 2012 he passed away. I have retained Seedat & Seedat Architects and still enjoy practising architecture well past my sell-by date".

Ahmed Sayeed Seedat

*Body within the Tricameral Parliament of South Africa, 1984-94, reserved for Indian South Africans.

New Media Centre, Westville Girls High School

Westville Girls High did not have a media centre; a make-shift library existed by combining three classrooms, arranging bookshelves around the perimeter walls with reading tables located at the centre.

The design approach for the new Media Centre was to plan the library between two existing courtyards, link it with the northern and southern walkways and channel students past the library after morning assembly, during lunch breaks and when they are homeward bound. The workings of the library, marketing displays and reception were designed to be viewed from outside, welcoming pupils to come in; the fenestration at the courtyards and walkways were strategically positioned for such an invitation.

An existing basement on which the Media Centre was built now houses staff rooms, book repair and binding workshops. Fiction and non-fiction libraries were accommodated over two levels and a reading gallery is accessible half-a-level up or down from both book stacks. A computer room for research is provided at one end of the reading gallery with printing facilities at the opposite end. Half-a-landing up from the non-fiction library is the mezzanine floor with group study rooms. From here one can gain access to the existing lecture theatre and northern walkway, which serves specialist classrooms. In detailing the design of the roof, careful consideration was given to window positions and sizing to bring south lighting into the reading gallery, book stacks and group study rooms.



Media Centre



Media Centre entrance

Yusuf Patel writes:

"I studied architecture at the University of Cape Town (UCT), 1968-73, furthest from my hometown of Barberton but where maths and English were not curricular requirements, and was taught by Roelof Uytenbogaardt and Tony and Adele Santos. There were then hardly any people of colour studying architecture but all required ministerial consent. In addition I needed a further permit as Indians were not allowed to be in another province without magisterial sanction and this was granted for 30 days at a time. This was extended on an annual basis by the Department of Indian Affairs in Cape Town. Very procedural.

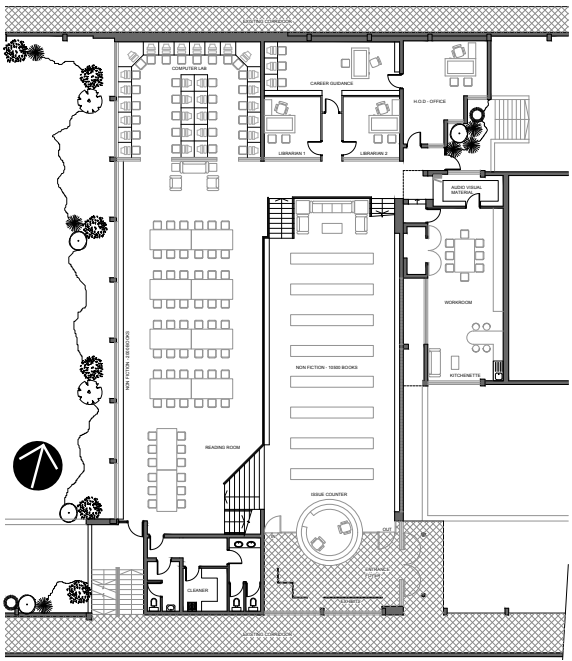
The building industry was largely white controlled and it was difficult to be placed anywhere for practical training. However, Jose Forjaz, a friend of Tony Santos, had returned from the USA only to find himself persona non grata in the country of his birth, Mozambique, so he set up practice in Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). Tony arranged my vacation and practical training with him. Other UCT students there included Lucien le Grange, Derek and Hilary Jacobs and Richard Howis. However, Indians weren't allowed to be in Eswatini for more than 30 days at a time, which saw me returning to Barberton each month.

Jose was the architect for UBLS (University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland). Together with Tony and Adele they were appointed for the extension of the Gaborone campus (dormitories and library), and on graduating I was posted there as site architect. When Frelimo came to power Jose left for Mozambique leaving his practice to Svend and Wai Ling Hvass, Danish architects who were working for him.

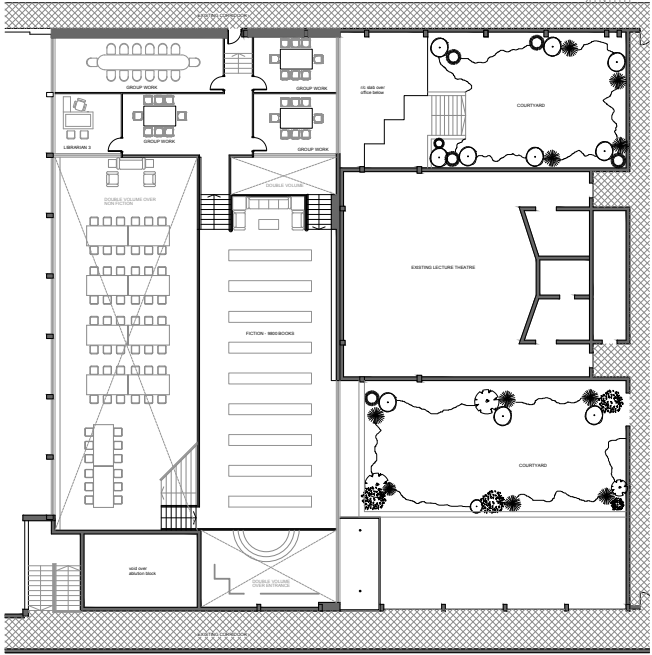
In the meantime Tony and Adele had moved to Rice University in Houston. Because of that connection a number of South African students enrolled there for Masters degrees in Urban Design, including Lucien le Grange, Richard Cooper, the late Mike Smuts, and myself on a Rice Scholarship.

I returned to South Africa after the Soweto Uprising (1976) and set up practice in Barberton but saw little work. I came to Durban to undertake a project for my uncle, Dr Minty, who knew Building Design Group (BDG). That's how I met Kevin MacGarry, Paul Mikula, Bryan Lee, Colin Savage, Bruce Stafford and others. BDG was one of the few practices liberal enough to accommodate students of colour.

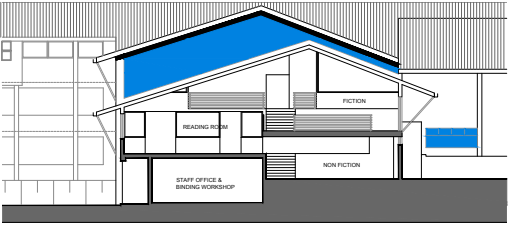
Subsequent to the BDG amalgamation with ZAI Inc. in 1977, various members set up independent practice in Churchill Mansions, Congella. It was here that Architects Collaborative (AC) was founded in 1985, but with Kevin, Paul, Andre Duvenage and myself it became consolidated at its present location, 500 Esther Roberts (Frere) Rd, Glenwood. Paul retired from AC in 2006 but the remaining three of us still run the outfit after 33 years."



Upper ground floor plan



Mezzanine floor plan



Section AA



The Sports & Recreation Centre, also by Seedat & Seedat provides for several sporting codes like indoor hockey, badminton, fencing to name a few; it incorporates the existing squash courts, and more importantly, provides the school with an indoor assembly area, examination centre and hall to stage numerous recreation options.

Artek Architects CC, KZN

Thirty years ago in October 1988, two KwaZulu-Natal practices, Olaf Pretorius Smith & Poole and Bekker Hofman, joined forces to bridge the divide between Durban and Port Shepstone and formed the Artek 4 Partnership. The Durban roots originate from 1953 while the Margate office was founded in the 1980s.

The practice has continued with new member Somakanthen Govender and subsequent associates Paul Phillips and Jack Domisse, and has more recently extended its activities with offices in Gauteng headed by Kumarsen Thamburan. Artek 4 is trading as a Level 1 BBBEE supplier and healthcare has become one specialty of the practice.

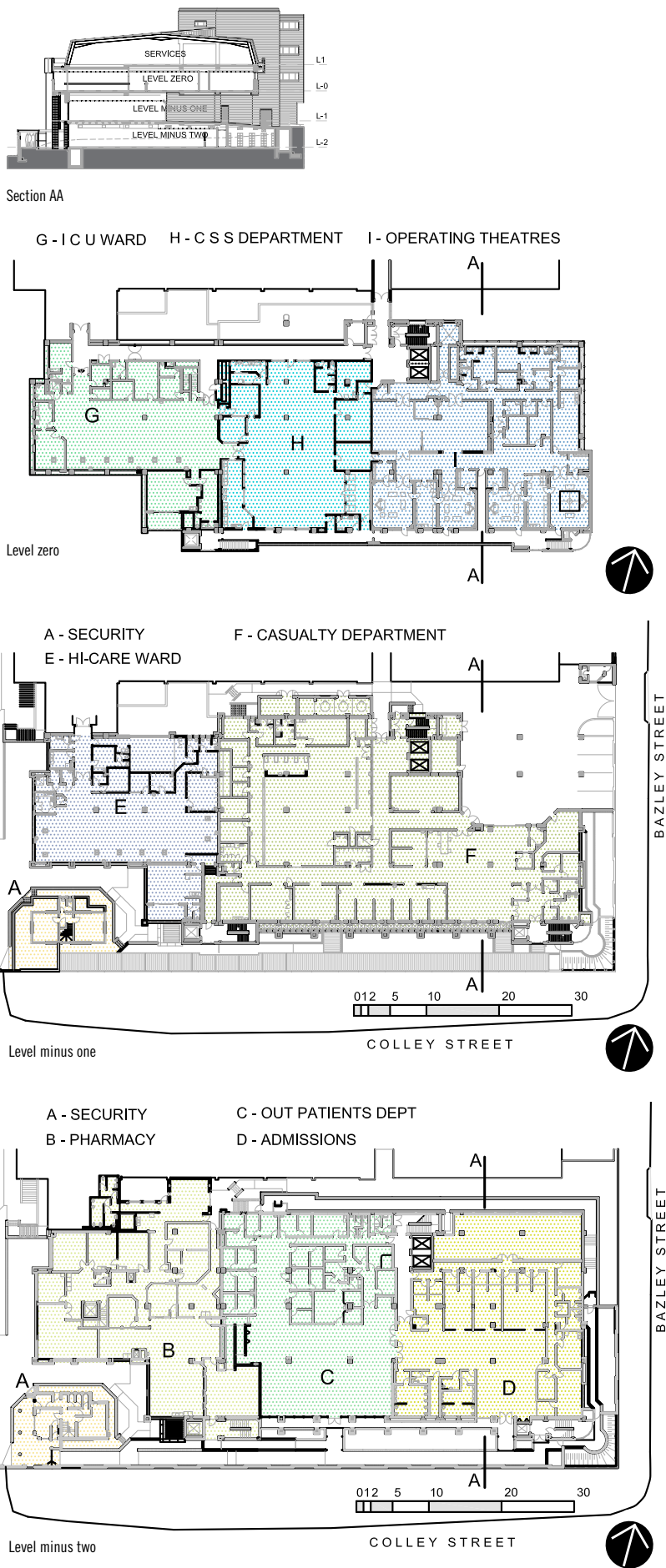
Port Shepstone Hospital: Multi department core block

The project comprises a new Admissions, Outpatient Department (OPD), Theatre Complex and Central Sterile Supply Department (CSSD), Trauma Unit, Hi-Care and Intensive Care Units, Pharmacy and a Ward upgrade in existing building.

The building was sandwiched between the two existing substantial structures and the road boundaries. The structure contains five levels, stepped in some instances to link through to existing levels of said adjoining structures; the lower level incorporating service corridors for wet services and the upper level within the mansard roof accommodating the mechanical services. The clinical functions are located on the three intermediate levels.

An expansive solar shield screen was used along the south-eastern façade (along Colley Street) to shade the internal windows from the morning sun while still affording the benefit of scenic views over the Indian Ocean. The perimeter concrete roof gutter is clad with composite aluminium panels defining the transition between face brick walls and mansard roof. A covered pedestrian ramp at ground level along the eastern boundary wall provides access to Out Patient facilities.

The profile of the building evolved through the placement of the various elements making up the client's brief on the different levels, all linking through to the In Patient Wards and Administration facilities housed within the two existing structures. The resultant form of the building has evolved into its own identity, while being sympathetic with existing structures on site and adjoining environs.



Photograph from east.



Psychiatric Ward

The next phase is the proposed Psychiatric Ward. In keeping with maximizing site usage, the design proposes the concept of courtyard architecture. Vistas have been created to remove the claustrophobia of confined spaces; extensive use of natural light is deployed to extend the constricted spaces and night lighting is conceived from within the structure.

SIZA Architects, Durban

SIZA Architects and Project Managers (Pty) Ltd was founded by fellow UKZN graduates and registered professional architects Siphehile Ngubane and Siphwe Gumede, who both obtained Master of Project Management degrees in 2010 from the University of Pretoria.

SIZA has a formidable and experienced team, which is led by the two directors and senior managers, who also have Masters degrees, have been working together for over 10 years and between them have over 20 years' practical experience. "We pride ourselves on the high level of design and project management solutions we bring to each project".

Adams Mission Station, inland from Amantzimtoti, was founded by Dr Newton Adams, missionary and medical practitioner of the American Board of Commissioners, Boston. It was here that in 1853 an institution for the education of Africans was opened, Adams College (Brookes, E & Webb, C. *A History of Natal*. Pietermaritzburg, University Press, 1967). Editor



Adams College Museum, Adams Mission. The new facility is to be added to the historical house.



Thubalethu Architects, Pietermaritzburg



The practice Thubalethu Architects was established in 2009 by Manqoba B. Khuboni who completed his BArch (Adv) degree at UKZN in 2004. He is the sole principal, working with a dynamic team of budding technologists.

The name 'Thubalethu' is an isiZulu term meaning 'our opportunity', and was chosen to see the doors of opportunity opened with the advent of democratic South Africa in 1994.

Manqoba B. Khuboni

iSiphosemvelo High School, Northern KZN, 2011

Situated on the rural outskirts of Dannhauser, the commission was to renovate and add to the existing school buildings, typical of under facilitated schools in South African townships and rural areas. The challenge lay in the accommodation of learners in classrooms, where overcrowding and multiple grades in a single space was not uncommon.

The existing buildings were worn out, with peeling paint, cracked plaster, broken windows and failing roof drainage. A brief was generated that primarily addressed the need for specialised educational facilities, for maths, science, and self-directed learning, and the number of learners to be catered for.

The renovation of the existing shell, located on the southern boundary of the site, together with the new face-brick buildings with sheet-metal roofs and steel windows is the overriding aesthetic of the built forms. While the envelope is of standard construction, the interior and fittings of the library, computer room, and laboratories were afforded a healthy share of the budget.

As is the case in most rural schools, the point of departure was increasing the number of classrooms so that the school became a sizeable nucleus to serve the dispersed surrounding communities. The addition of a classroom block housing five regular classrooms and a larger multi-purpose classroom on the northern boundary increased the anticipated enrolment of learners. This block introduced a 'fourth edge' and in the process transformed the existing layout from what was essentially a



Site and ground floor plan.



Transverse section A-A.

'U'-shape to a square with an internal court, which was further subdivided into four quadrants by the 'cross-plan' of the specialised educational facilities.

The specialised educational facilities consist of the team teaching room, a computer room and a media centre and are located along the north-south axis; with a physical science and natural science laboratory on the eastern and western flanks respectively. The resultant four quadrants serve as courtyards around which are circulation corridors that link and unify the whole from edge to edge.

This central space is a means to negotiate a more consolidated layout, as a sort of 'completing' factor to the otherwise 'unfinished' and scattered existing forms. While the specialised educational facilities literally add the missing links to the composition from an architectural and planning perspective, the figurative filling of the gap from a curriculum and educational sense also holds true.

Supplementing upgrades to the educational infrastructure is the provision of ablutions for staff and learners and a nutrition kitchen. These services are essential although often neglected in rural schools, resulting in unhygienic and hazardous environments.

The ablutions drain to septic tanks in a more systematic and engineered manner, as opposed to the ad hoc solutions derived by the locals, which underserve the actual population and are of

a less sustainable technology. The kitchen on the east is rather small, but is sufficient to serve learners on a daily basis and is a definite improvement.

The issue of sustainable architecture has been addressed in a 'give and take' manner, with focus being on addressing the slope, drainage and water harvesting, and ease of circulation, at perhaps the expense of absolute north orientation and solar shading. The site slopes from east to west and the buildings are organised in such a way that those laid across and down the slope are stepped with the slope, while those parallel to the contours are on flat platforms. The cross plan with blocks edging the perimeter gives rise to a densified configuration and maximises cross-paths while containing the composition. Storm water is harvested at regular intervals along the roof lengths, while surface water is channeled down the slope from the paved courtyards and discharge is directly onto the site at a lower level. Although east and west facing buildings are not best, their footprint is narrow, which allows for adequate cross ventilation. This is also the case with the north facing buildings.

'Value for money' and 'value for education' are synonymous phrases with the project of 'education for all' in a tumultuous socio-economic climate, as they epitomise the dilemma in determining value where there is a lack of resources. Economic factors are strong determinants for the success of projects such as iSiphosemvelo High School.



Photograph from north-east.

i3Lab, Durban

"I am a self-taught architect. I started out as a so-called apprentice in 1974 and was trained under many professional architects, but in particular Des Watkins, 1978-1998, and Ruben Reddy 1998-2006, whereupon I commenced independent practice as i3LAB, an acronym for laboratory for information, innovation and implementation.

I expanded my knowledge by reading every international architectural piece of literature and every architectural book I could get my hands on. As my knowledge grew, I made it my life's ambition to visit as many buildings as possible around the world, designed and built by master architects. All my holidays were spent on site, physically studying buildings. Nowadays, my holidays are all integrated with an architectural journey. I plan well ahead to get access into the buildings – there is no point in experiencing a building from the outside only, you have got to feel the sun, breeze, space and ambiance from within the shell.

From my early days I was given the opportunity to manage an architectural practice. My professional peers respected me and accepted me as their equal. They had no qualms about having a self-taught architect managing the practice. I was judged for my passion and hands-on knowledge and very soon I was used as an information hub by my colleagues. I was always willing to help, and if I did not know the answer, I quickly researched it and then confirmed it with a trusted senior professional and relayed the answer to my colleagues. Somehow, learning about something that you really desire stays with you, and thus my knowledge grew from strength to strength.

However, my professional journey to my current standing was a long and arduous one, best encapsulated in the monograph I published in 2017, *Architects' Stepping Stones* (see SAIA-KZN Journal 1/2017)".

Suren Indhul

Durban University of Technology, Indumiso Campus Library, Imbali, Pietermaritzburg

The dictionary definition of a library is "A building or room containing a collection of books, and sometimes films and recorded music for use of borrowing by the public or members of an institution".

The client's brief was far from a library as defined by the dictionary. It was based on the 'changing face of modern libraries' which comprises spaces for books, digital spaces, spaces for one-on-one assistance,

media areas, study spaces, meeting rooms, after-hours study areas and social spaces. I would like to call this a 'student innovation hub'.

The brief also included other institutional buildings but stipulated that the library was to be the first approach when entering the precinct, had to be the heart-beat of the precinct and easily accessible. The total area reserved for the library was approximately 3000 sqm and the budget was not to exceed R34million. The completed project was achieved within budget, inclusive of external work, fixed and loose furniture. Rate per sqm, all-inclusive, was approximately R11 000/sqm. Practical completion was achieved in June 2018.

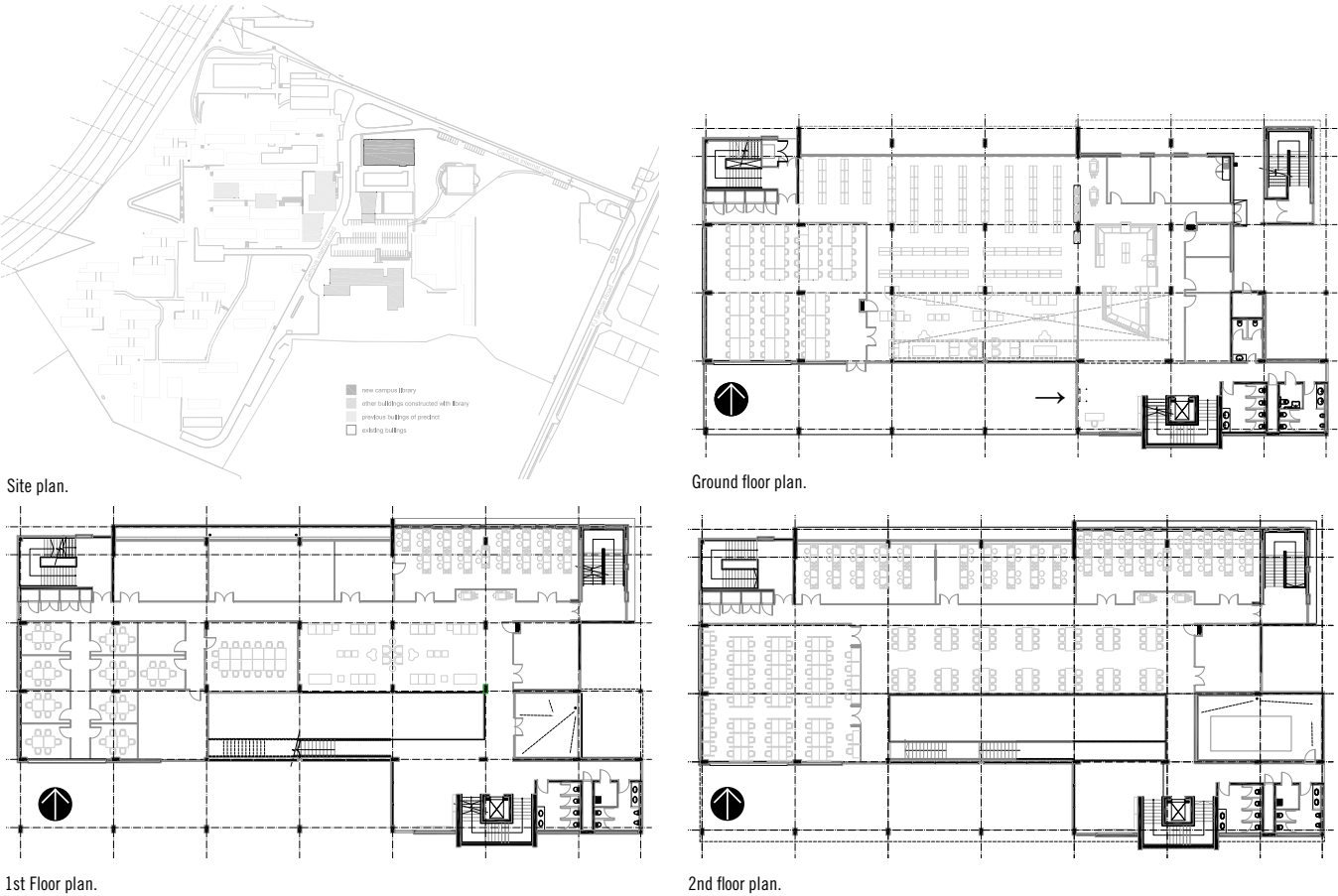
Precedent studies of contemporary international libraries were carried out. The studies were helpful in arranging the spatial planning, but not the façade and interior finishes as the budget would not allow this. Also the spatial planning had to be thoroughly interrogated in the manner our client visualised the operation. Spatial planning also impacts on budget and careful consideration was given at planning stages.

Sustainability always takes me to Le Corbusier's buildings in Chandigarh. All his buildings there encompass key elements namely sustainability, robustness, space, not forgetting timelessness, aesthetics, and, of course, the magic word cost effectiveness. I have visited these buildings on two separate occasions, extensively studying them. If I can hold on to these principles, I can build within the budget without compromising quality, sustainability and aesthetics. All greening principles were applied; however, my biggest gripe is that innovative cost-effective sustainable design is not recognized as a greening principle.

The design is a simple linear grid column floor plate facing north-south with a wide concourse to the cooler south with triple-volume glazed façade. The north face is shaded to filter natural light. The three floors interact as one space; as these open out to the triple-volume void, and the ingress of natural light from the glazed façade on the south enhances the spatial quality. The book shelves are positioned on the ground floor in order to bring down construction costs, as loading on upper floors leads to additional structural input. All concrete work is left off-shutter internally and externally. Cost effective colourful finishes were used internally to supplement the natural finish.



Front of building facing the square on the south.



Triple volume with suspended staircase linking the two upper levels.



View from the north-east.

MAD Design Studios, Durban

iQhayiya Design Workshop

[Pty] Ltd, Kokstad



Society had taught us that success was to be found in the more mainstream professions like medicine, law or engineering. However, my elder sister, Sbo, made me aware of the architectural profession which she herself only discovered while she was doing research for her own career choices.

Choosing a career in architecture was daunting. I had no point of reference as there weren't any notable black architects at that time in South Africa.

However, making the decision was probably the easiest part. As a black student one had limited exposure, except through books and magazines, of the reality and possibilities of design. I mean, I would read about a 4-bedroom house with a pool and other luxuries and then go home to the township to a 2-bedroom house with a standard kitchen and a lounge with zero aesthetic or design features.

In the class, we were often challenged with interpreting briefs not only because of the language barrier, but also because we lacked exposure i.e. the environments we'd grown up in and been exposed to all our lives meant we couldn't easily bridge the gap, and we had to work harder, research longer and fight to get to the same point as the rest of our classmates.

This dynamic also played against us during assessments because the presentation of our work was based solely on trial and error. This meant sleepless nights in the LAN on campus because we didn't own laptops and computers, and we certainly couldn't go home once the taxis stopped operating. But despite all that, we got the same qualification and since then have been fighting to make our mark in the industry.

Now, after qualifying, the biggest challenge was establishing oneself as a worthy professional. Like everyone else, I had to gain experience from various firms, but I felt that the only way we could become empowered was to start our own practice. And this is what I did.

I had a grand vision for my firm, Mholiwezizwe Architects and Design Studios (known as MAD Design Studios) which I established in 2013 together with my wife Nqobile, who had left her corporate job and studied Interior Design so we could combine the two disciplines and attract work in the private sector offering an integrated service all the way to custom furniture and cabinetry design.

Indeed, the future is bright and possibilities are endless, but it will take all of us to be aware of the issues and to work together to attract international clientele looking for our designers!

Mholiwezizwe (Mholi) Mthembu



Mfundo Maphumulo (left) and Kayaletu Qwalela.

iQhayiya Design Workshop (iDW) commenced in Flagstaff in 2006, during the student days of Kayaletu Qwalela, but became established when fellow student at Tshwane University of Technology, Mfundo Maphumulo, joined in 2012, and both are registered as Professional Architects with SACAP. The name iQhayiya translates as 'pride' in isiXhosa, and it "embodies our ethos to create built environment spaces and places that the end-users and the communities can find pride in" and thereby improve the image of our profession as a whole. iDW is now located in Kokstad from where the practice is readily able to service the clientele in both KZN and the Eastern Cape provinces.

"We are driven by the conviction that our upbringing, lived experiences and contemporary outlook shape our architectural interventions and thus contribute immensely to the pursuit of an 'African' architecture that takes its cues from indigenous knowledge systems and space-making patterns. We believe we have the power to redress our past imbalances through our present vocation.

Our practice also affords us the opportunity to participate in altruistic ventures such as the Pondo Chief soccer team and development academy that Kaya chairs and is passionate about, namely the development of youngsters who, through the power of sport, are dissuaded from partaking in negative societal ills".

Kaya Qwalela & Mfundo Maphumulo



iDW sponsored soccer team

SANAMI, Mount Ayliff

Seda Alfred Nzo Agro Manufacturing Incubator, SANAMI, is a business incubator, which is the result of a partnership between SEDA technology programme and the Alfred Nzo Development Agency, a municipal entity wholly owned by Alfred Nzo District Municipality.

The commission was for the design of a sustainable building on a hill overlooking the town of Mount Ayliff, as an incubator for nurturing and protecting new and existing small enterprises in the agricultural sector and imparting business development and technical support skills to such enterprises.

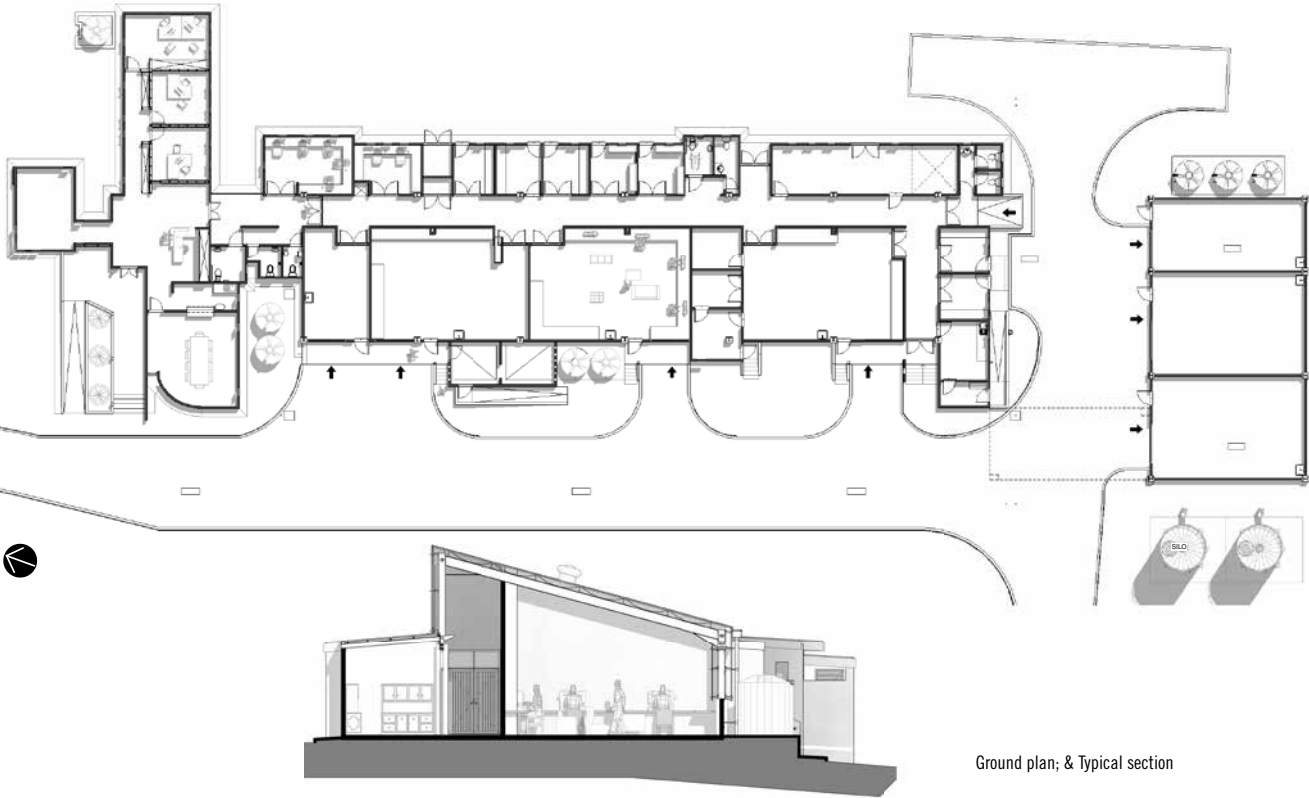
The brief called for three components, an office wing with reception, boardroom, kitchenette and exhibition area; a plant area for water purification, oil production, maize milling, vegetable processing and packaging; and workshops for woodworking, upholstery and crafts. General supporting spaces included a computer and print station, a laboratory and a kitchen. The main entrance is on the north-west which allows all the major spaces of the office wing to face north. The plant area is detached on the south and is accessible for deliveries by vehicle. The workshops are arranged on the west along

a north-south circulation spine, which is a naturally lit space, with the computer room, laboratory and incubation rooms on the east.

The budget constraints called for a fundamental design approach, presenting the architects with an opportunity to express an honesty of materials, which enhanced the tactility, texture and robustness of the building's fabric. Some of the ecological sustainable interventions include the provision for rainwater harvesting, the careful filtering of natural light to strategic locations inside the workshops and circulation areas, and natural cross-ventilation of the spaces.

In hindsight, constant communication with the client and interaction with prospective end-users and their inclusion in the actual construction of the building could have imparted capacity-building skills within the community as well as their participation in the local economy.

Quantity Surveyor: Buyeye Consulting
Civil and Structural Engineers: Scientific Roets
Electrician: Lathitha Sinalo



Photograph from south-west.

Sakhisizwe Architects, Durban North

Following his outstanding results at DUT, Khayaletu (Patrick) Mawesana took a position with FGG Architects, Durban, where the difference between a technologist and an architect struck him so that he proceeded to study and subsequently graduated from UKZN. On registering as a professional architect in 2007 he founded Sakhisizwe, meaning 'building the nation' in isiZulu, which now has a track record of over a decade.

The practice has two active offices in KZN province. The head office is located in Durban North and a branch office is in uMtunzini. There is a staff complement of 4 professional architects, 5 architectural technologists, a finance manager and 2 administrative support staffers.

Readers are referred to the practice profile in *KZNIA Journal* 3/2012. *Editor*

Dube Trade Port, One Stop Shop

The Dube Trade Port 'One Stop Shop' is a high profile investor briefing room of approximately 40sqm. It is situated adjacent to the Dube Trade Port Corporation's main foyer inside the existing 29° South building (see *KZNIAJ* 2/2014), within the Special Economic Zone of King Shaka International Airport, eThekweni

Commissioned as a 'tenant fit-out' for Invest SA, as the first point of contact with potential investors it was critical that the non-structural revamp of this room supported the client's brand identity. Building on the initial brief, Sakhisizwe Architects worked closely with the client to refine and distil their requirements into a set of comprehensive detailed drawings supported by a fully itemised bill of quantities.

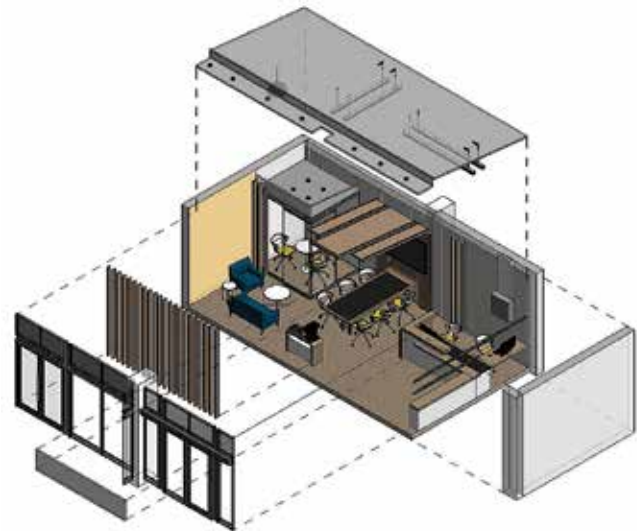
Based on these documents, shop fitters were engaged to execute the work. Timelines were tight, with only 5 months from the client's first briefing to practical completion. This included the confirmation of the scope, design, documentation and a full open-tender process, which left the contractor with only one month to complete the work and procure all loose furniture and fittings. Despite this, a high standard of design and documentation was maintained; with the final product delivered to the satisfaction of all client departments for occupation by the tenant on time, within 0.1% variation on budget.

Consisting of all custom-designed built-in furniture, emphasis was placed on warm wrapping timber planes contrasted against a lightly textured fibre-cement wall and raked ceiling. The joinery was executed to the highest standards using solid oak on high-wear areas and oak veneer elsewhere.

The project came together to form a unified high-end space that demonstrates the capability of local firms. It was completed in October 2017.

Byron Snow

Architects: Sakhisizwe Architects
Contractor: Bradgary Marine Shopfitters
Quantity Surveyor: Elke Hefer Quantity Surveyors
Client: Dube Trade Port Corporation on behalf of Invest SA



Live Designs, Pinetown

Live Designs is a 100% black, female owned company, founded in 2006 by Nondumiso Mngomezulu, a registered Senior Architectural Technologist, who has about 10 years' working experience in the architectural industry. Live Designs has been involved with "a wide variety of work in and around the creative industry" and has "big dreams and strategies for expansion".

An interesting recent project is the wall of remembrance at St Phillip's Anglican church at Enwabi.



Studio Jobe Architects & Project Managers, Glenwood, Durban

This practice was founded in 2014 by Sibusiso Sithole and Thandeka Maduna, graduates of the UKZN. The name of the practice combines the terms 'studio', being an "artist's workroom or a creative vessel" and 'Jobe', the clan name of one of the partners.

Methodist Church Re-development, Gamalakhe

The church is located in Gamalakhe, a small township on the KZN South Coast. The original building was opened in 1977 and now there is a need to redevelop the site due to the gradual but constant increase in congregants and the continuing state of disrepair of the structure. The church is located adjacent to the main road on an urban block which has started to define itself as a civic node.

The notion of light is quintessential to Christian belief; hence the design aims to capture this in various ways. The main façade, which is west facing, incorporates an opaque cross within the design of the angled fins for the tall slit windows. The aim of the cross is to emit light into the church during the day and to glow and radiate light out during the evening services.

The northern side with the extra-large doors faces the main road and provides an opportunity for attaching a tensile structure and extending the congregational area by 50% for very large services. The wall can also be used as a projection plane of the worship occurring on the inside. This is a form of attracting and connecting with passersby and further enhancing the link to the community.



My Architects, Durban

S'boniso Sibisi grew up in the rural area of Kwa-Maphumulo in northern KZN. As a young boy he enjoyed using pen and paper, drawing houses, cars and people figures as young kids normally do. He says he can also recall a time during his childhood where he was browsing through magazines and coming across images of people on construction sites with hardhats, holding drawings and pointing at buildings. This was a defining moment for him because it was in this moment that he told himself, "I want to be just like them one day". A seed was planted, he says.

After the completion of his matric, he decided to study Architecture at Durban University of Technology (DUT) to follow his dream and try to fulfil the penchant he had for the built environment. His first year at DUT was in 2003; thereafter he pursued his in-service training at FGG Architects in Durban. After completing his architectural studies he went back to work for FGG, now as an Architectural Technologist.

In 2013 S'boniso's own architectural practice was born, My Architects. Its greatest inspiration is drawn from contemporary and sustainable architecture.



Transformed township house.

Masha Designs, Durban

Masha Designs is a small practice established in 2008 by Bonani Shange and Sithembale Maselwa, who have over 30 years of combined experience and operate in KZN and the Eastern Cape.

"Our projects include schools, hospitals, offices and residential work for both private clients and government. We believe we have a duty to assist the client in finding an equilibrium or appropriate balance, which requires architecture and building design to be recognized as a socio-economic art form and not merely as a tool for bringing services closer to the people. Buildings should serve the people who utilize them, not those who commission and execute the designs."



Commercial development.

Indiginisation of Architecture in KwaZulu-Natal

When I first enrolled at the 'Natal School' in 1959, the class consisted of mainly white boys. There were only three young ladies in the whole establishment! At that time the standard specification for a Westville servant's quarters was, "squat pan, shower over, sill 6' 0" and separate septic tank system".

Today all of this has changed, thank God. White males barely made ten percent of the 2017 first year and forty percent of the class was female. We also now all sing to the tune of National Building Regulations (NBR).

Access for 'others'

Architecture used to only be available at White universities so the Minister's permission needed to be sought for 'other races' to enroll; the first Indian student, Hansraj Maharaj, started in 1967 and the first African, Peter Malefane from Lesotho, in 1973 (graduated 1979; see Obituary *KZNIAJ* 2/2004).

I still recall the surprise when a new student submitted his first assignment. They had been asked to apply anthropometrics by not only measuring up their bedroom but also to record the spatial impact of storage, making up a bed and cleaning. Geoffrey Buthelezi had drawn a huge figure filling the doorway, finger extended to command a diminutive figure under the bed wielding a broom. The western construct of perspective emanating from the eye of the beholder was replaced by size based on social importance.

Housing as a process

As a young lecturer, to flush my conscience out I used to prepare basic submission plans for indigent staff at the University. After a very detailed brief in isiZulu I asked the night watchman to make a model of what he had in mind. The result really opened my eyes

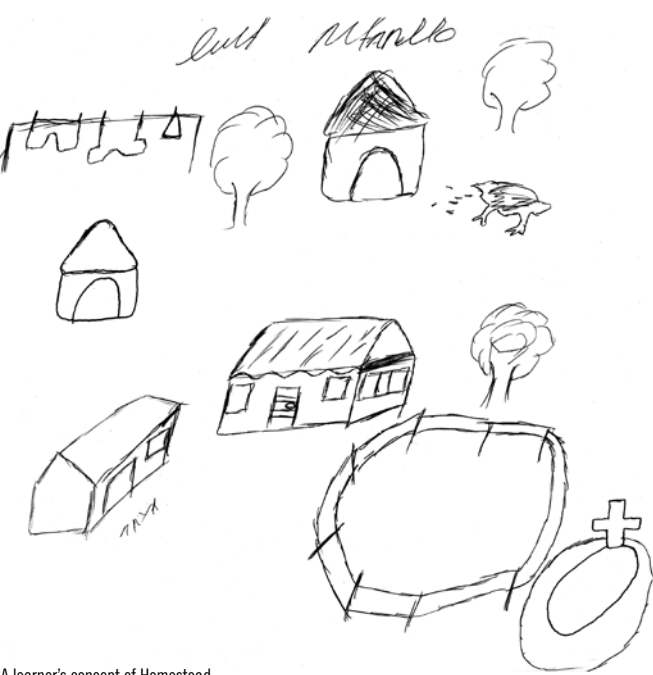


Night watchman's model of his proposed house.

The 'American Flat', 'Hi-fi' house or 'Ithala House' as it is variously known can be found all the way from Kosi Bay to Port St. Johns. Its main asset is that it can be constructed in three stages when funding becomes available. The central section is also an open invitation for individual creativity. Arches, a veranda or even Tuscan Doric columns!

It views housing as a 'process' and not just a 'product' which is very significant when compared to current fields of identical Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing, designed for generally non-existent nuclear families. A drawing by a young learner/scholar shows a much more perceptive idea of a homestead compared to our roll-out townships dominated by

engineers and only really watered down versions of the suburban model found in the northern hemisphere!



A learner's concept of Homestead.

Outreach

n 1986 as the grip of Apartheid loosened and informal settlements started to spring out behind the Berea in Cato Manor the staff at the Natal School set up the University of Natal Appropriate Housing Technology Unit (UNAHTU) on the lower, less developed campus (see *NIA Journal* 2/1994). Controlled experiments were conducted on wattle and daub, 'Juba (indigenous beer) carton' walling, earth stabilisation and waste disposal. This created sympathetic students, notably white, to the extent that a few took up residence much to the ire of the University.

The Built Environment Support Group (BESG) had preceded in 1983. This group, which still operates, was more multidisciplinary, wider ranging and largely funded from overseas and an excellent training ground. After liberation, many staff of their members moved up as highly placed cadres, one example being Sbu Ndebele (KZN Premier 2009-2012, and South Africa's current ambassador to Australia).

Transformation

The professions have transformed much more gradually. The Urban Foundation came into being as a national civic response during the '80s and provided many professionals with the opportunity to experience working in informal settlements (see *NPIAJ* 2/1984).

In March 1994 just before the first democratic elections, the Built Environment Action Movement (BEAM) came into being to take advantage of the proposed Procurement Policy. The twelve signatories read like a 'who's who' and are currently spread all over the world apart from a few like our firebrand Karuni Naidoo, the first Indian woman graduate from the Natal School.

Shortly thereafter the ACCESS Development Trust was constituted in what could now be viewed as paternalistic links between experienced practices and emerging black professionals to access Housing Board subsidy applications.

This was a time of fervent activity delivering community buildings, infrastructure and housing layouts. It is notable that at that time there were at least five ways of delivering housing: site & service, starter homes, in situ upgrades, new houses and others compared to the two delivery systems in evidence today!

After some eight years of trying, our office has recently had a stabilised earth house rejected by the municipality! This is despite endorsement by two professional engineers. So much for the NBR.

Multi-culture

Our voluntary professional institute is lagging with two Indian Presidents but at the time of writing no African has got beyond Vice-President. Young Indian graduates are now doing well judging by the stainless-steel driveway gates and Islamic Centres popping up all over.

However, Africa is barely represented by African architects apart from the 'ethno-bongo' variety associated with tourist initiatives. One seldom comes across the strong patterning of say Frances Kere or the interpretations of traditional materials by Luyanda Mpahlwa.

The fashion pages after events like the Durban July Handicap are a revelation of African experimental design. Artists like Tito Zungu or the townscapes of Derrick Nxumalo (see cover) are streets ahead. Why are there tyres placed on rural roofs and what do stones placed around the edges of a corrugated iron roof indicate?



Untitled work by Tito Zungu Circa 1980s



Sibusiso (Punch) Mbele's home in Bergville.

Why is this colonisation of the mind so? Could it be that Architecture is viewed as something from the north to aspire to? In this regard the Ugandan Minister of State warned of the danger of Africa becoming "a repository of replica architecture" (Sgoutas: 2017, p76).

Take ownership

Could it be that the main entry point for such young architects, due to the prevailing politics, are the departments of Public Works with their penchant for standard plans?

The answer could also stem from the current use of computers and their standard icons. In this instance, the University of Botswana was a revelation. Students there are told to design and draw in pencil right up until final year, and only use the computer as a technical production tool. Thesis projects were a revelation!

The authors of a recent colonial record stated in their concluding paragraphs: "The challenge to a new generation of students and their teachers is now very clear, especially to young African students - go out and continue this work of recording how people actually live and how they inhabit space and particularly how they overcome their predicaments. Observe how they use the spaces between buildings as extensions of small homes.

We can move beyond soulless mass housing that will ultimately destroy the very fabric of our society by unearthing and recording precedents of groups of supportive homesteads, their relationship to spiritual and cultural values and their innovative forms to absorb incremental growth. How do the reconstructed families cook and wash? This exploration will eventually bear fruit as the greater community recognise and take ownership of their own values and in so doing implement them" (Jacobs, Harber & Kearney, 2015: 117).

Rodney Harber

Practising architect and retired academic, Rodney Harber served as President of SAIA-KZN for an unprecedented 5-year period, 1994-98. *Editor*

Sources

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