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SAIA-KZN

**A TRIBUTE TO
RODNEY CHOROMANSKI
(1961-2018)**

NEWS

Corobrik KZN Regional Student of 2018

At a function held in Shepstone Building, UKZN, on Friday 23rd November 2018, Shuaib Bayat was named Corobrik KZN regional student of 2018. This honour was bestowed on him for his design dissertation entitled 'Exploring solar energy design systems in peri-urban settlements for responsive architecture', the principles of which he applied in a multi-purpose skills upcycling centre proposed for Cato Manor, and won him a prize of R10 000.

First runner-up was Peter Harel who designed a 'surf-hub' for Rivertown precinct, and second was Tegan Wright with an 'agricultural hub' for the inner city. Meloshan Pillay received the prize for the 'best use of clay masonry' as demonstrated in his Centre for Awareness and Research in the uMngeni precinct.

The submission by Shuaib Bayat will now go forward for national adjudication in Johannesburg in May when the Corobrik Student of 2018 will be announced.



Juan Solis-Arias, UKZN lecturer in Architecture and Master's Year co-ordinator; Shuaib Bayat, Corobrik KZN regional student of 2018; and Dirk Meyer, Corobrik managing director.

SAIA-KZN Regional Committee, 2019-20

At the AGM held at SAIA-KZN House, 160 Bulwer Rd, Durban, on Tuesday, 27th November, the following members were elected to the regional committee for 2019-20: Patrick Smith, Sikhumbuzo (Skura) Mtembu, Adheema Davis, Monique Gillespie, Robert

Brusse, David Tyson, Richard Horner, Bill Williams, Chen Sagnelli, Sbu Sithole, Carl Wright and Ken Lever.

In addition, the following were co-opted: Mandisa Daki, Clinton Hiralal, Kyria Van Soelen, past-President Kevin Bingham and immediate past-President Ruben Reddy.

SAIA-KZN President, 2019-20



Pat Smith, SAIA-KZN President, 2019-20.

At the AGM, Alwyn Patrick Knight (Pat) Smith was announced SAIA-KZN President for 2019-20, with both Sikhumbuzo Mtembu and Adheema Davis as Vice-Presidents.

Pat, as he is known to all, was born into farming stock in Creighton Valley, north-west of Ixopo, southern KZN, and without question farming was to be his vocation. However, to productively use the time between his discharge from military training and commencement at Cedara Agricultural College, Pat registered for a Diploma in Architecture at

Technikon Natal (DUT today) in 1985. With this skill he would be able to "draw plans for other farmers and country folk as a side-line", he thought. But, in-service training in the office of (Bruce) Stafford Associate Architects and working on the Durban central beach paddling pools changed all that.

Thus Pat registered at the University of Natal (UKZN today), 1988-92, and on graduating worked at Protekon Architects, where he rose to be appointed Manager, 1996-2002. During this time he earned a certificate in the Senior Management Programme of the University of Stellenbosch's Business School in 1999. Pat is currently the principal member of Walker Smith Architects, established in 2002 and based in Kloof.

International Union of Architects (UIA)



Kevin Bingham, UIA Councillor, 2017-2020.

At the 2017 UIA General Assembly held in Seoul, KZN and SAIA past-President, Kevin Bingham, was elected as one of the five councillors to represent Africa (Region 5) on the UIA Council for the period 2017-2020.

Kevin serves on the Professional Practice Commission (PPC) and is currently reworking the document Professional Practice Note 4 - Dispute Resolution. He is also a 'reportee' to the Council for both the Community Architecture and Public Health work groups.

Obituary: Derek Osborne (1937-2018)

The following is extracted from the eulogy presented by his lifelong friend and colleague, Sydney Baillon.

Born in Folkestone, south-east of London and after seeing active service in WWII Derek arrived in South Africa in 1971 when he joined Small & Pettit in Pietermaritzburg. Here Derek soon became a "vital and indispensable cog" as he was later in various other Pietermaritzburg practices.

Buildings such as the Hexagon Theatre, the Cathedral of Holy Nativity, the Law Courts, Tatham Art Gallery and the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg as well as the Playhouse in Durban owe their "high constructed standards and resulting longevity thanks very much to Derek's meticulous and non-compromising supervision and technical input during their construction and/or refurbishments". In retirement Derek was much involved as an advisor to Amafa, the KZN heritage agency, where his immense knowledge of historical detailing and construction was of particular value.

Beyond the profession, Derek was an "excellent full-bore marksman". He represented KZN and even participated in the competitions in Bisley, Surrey.

"Usually firms can claim that employees were privileged to have worked for them. In Derek's case, architectural firms, including mine, can conversely feel both honored and grateful that Derek Osborne was actually prepared to work for them, as for sure he would not have done so if any firm had not practiced and demonstrated his matching high standards of competence and professionalism".

Obituary: Olaf Pretorius (1929-2019)

A senior SAIA-KZN member passed away on 20th February aged almost 90. This avid tennis player is no more, and the men's choir without its baritone voice.

Olaf Louw Pretorius obtained a Diploma in Architecture from the University of Natal in 1952 and appears to have commenced practice immediately on graduating. His Ropes & Mattings administration building in Jacobs, which featured in SA Architectural Record of September 1957, was chosen by Architectural Review editor, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, for inclusion in the October 1959 edition on South Africa. But the practice, with Jack Peckham as of 1963, Barry Watson, Neville Smith, Rex Butland, and later Ian Poole, also has a good number of tower buildings in central Durban to show. Among which is SANTAM, 1967-69, in Anton Lembede (Smith) Street where an outer framework of slender columns at close centres was substituted for the beam and column design with reinforced concrete core.

In 1988 the practice amalgamated to become Artek 4, from which Olaf retired in 1994. Our thoughts are with his family and especially Anton, his architect son ison Anton in North Carolina, USA.
Editor

EDITORIAL



RODNEY CHOROMANSKI (1961-2018)

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Rodney Choromanski, a colleague who touched the lives of so many and died so young suddenly on 23rd October 2018.

Rod, as he was known to all, was a positive person who, despite the huge accolades of national and continental acknowledgement, never lost his enthusiasm for any person or thing, regardless of stature. Why someone so youthful and talented had to die aged 57 is a question we cannot answer, but we can certainly acknowledge our dues, which we do with deep respect and gratitude as we reflect on his life and work in this issue.

The contributors count among his closest friends. Silvia Bodei writes about Rod's architecture and she dedicated the Hallen exhibition to Rod's memory, the eulogy by Ruben Reddy includes messages from many friends far and near and various participants write about Seoul, the city of the 2017 UIA conference, at which Rod and Mhlengi Gumede presented uMkhumbane Museum and won an Outstanding Presentation Award.

Thank you Rod for having shared a part of your way with us and for leaving your imprint well engraved in Africa.

Walter Peters, *Editor*

SAIA-President, 2019



Luyanda Mphahla, SAIA-President 2019

At a function held in Cape Town on 6th December 2018, Luyanda Mphahla was inaugurated as the 67th President of the South African Institute of Architects. His inauguration reminded us of the challenges facing the profession and the need to address the historic imbalances characterised by race, gender and generational imbalances in our profession.

Born in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, Luyanda commenced architectural studies in 1978 at the University of Natal (today UKZN). He was among the first cohort of Black South African students who were allowed to study architecture in the country, as the discipline was then available only at institutions reserved for white students. This

meant that a 'permit' had to be sought from the Minister of Education, who added a condition, namely that on graduating Luyanda would have to return to the Transkei bantustan, now incorporated into Eastern Cape province!

Biographical Notes

The following notes were compiled with the assistance of Karuni Naidoo and Kevin Bingham. Editor

Rodney Choromanski was born in Durban on 25th September 1961 and attended Greenwood Park Primary and Parkhill High schools. He began studies in Architecture at ML Sultan Technikon (today DUT). During his in-service training at Ing Jackson de Ravel & Hartley, his potential and innate skills were recognised; however, without a Matric Exemption, university registration was not possible. But, with his Technikon results (T1 and T2 obtained in 1981) and, in particular, the support of practice partner Jean de Ravel, Rodney was admitted to the University of Natal (now UKZN) in 1983, from which institution he earned his B.Arch degree in 1989.

Rod worked at MA Gafoor Architects during and after his studies and in 1990 with VARA Architects & Planners. He practiced as Choromanski Architects between 1991 and 1995.

Following the advent of democracy, the National Department of Public Works compiled a Pilot Roster aimed at empowering black professionals who were previously excluded from state commissions. This led to the formation in 1995 of CNN Architects, an acronym derived from the surnames of the three parties to the collaboration, fellow student Karuni Naidoo and their near contemporary Sharendra Naidu who, however, relocated to Ireland in 2002.

CNN Architects achieved major success when in a collaborative effort in 2007, as Earthlab Architects, it won the design competition for the Pan-African Parliament building proposed for Midrand, unfortunately stillborn. Soon after, in 2008, Rodney re-established Choromanski Architects, together with Senior Architectural Technician Dhiren (Dean) Ramlal, while Karuni continues as CNN Architects.

In 2017 Choromanski Architects was announced winner of the inaugural Grand Prix of the Africa Architecture Awards for uMkhumbane Museum. The commission resulted from the winning entry by CNN Architects for the 2003 national competition for the Cato Manor Interactive Cultural Centre.

Totally unexpectedly, Rod succumbed to a fatal heart attack on Tuesday, 23rd October 2018. He is survived by his son Storm.

Luyanda was in a class with, among others, Mthembeni Mkhize, Khotso Moleko and Om Moodley, with Mvikelu Matutu and Jeff Buthelezi already in second year. After failing first year, he enrolled at the Technikon Natal (today DUT) in 1980 and was in a class with past KZN- and SAIA-President, Kevin Bingham, where Luyanda was the first Black student to be admitted.

Luyanda was caught up in anti-Apartheid politics in the 1980s, and was incarcerated on Robben Island in 1981, but released 5 years later. He left for exile in Germany where he completed his Master's degree in Architecture at the Technical University of Berlin in 1997. Since his return to South Africa in 2000, Luyanda has been practising in Cape Town and founded DesignSpaceAfrica in 2009.

He has received various awards, including a SAIA Award for Excellence in 2006 for the new South African Embassy building in Berlin. Luyanda is an advocate of the social dimension of architecture and was awarded an honorary Doctorate by Walter Sisulu University in 2010.

At the same function, Kate Otten (SAIA-GIFA) who also studied architecture at Natal, was inaugurated as SAIA-Vice-President, Jan Ras (FSIA) as Treasurer, and Cecilia van Rensburg (SAIA-Mpumalanga) as Deputy Treasurer.

REMEMBERING RODNEY CHOROMANSKI'S ARCHITECTURE

In September 2017, the uMkhumbane Museum in Durban, designed by Choromanski Architects, won the Grand Prix of the prestigious Africa Architecture Awards, an international recognition given by a jury of important architects and academics to commendable projects across the African continent (see *SAIA-KZN Journal* 3/2017). The impressive conical volumetric, in red brick and perforated metal screen, that intentionally recalls the motifs of Zulu beadwork, has thus been published in several international magazines, and the entire work of the architect Rodney Choromanski is officially part of the debate on contemporary architecture.

The building, defined by the author "as not just an icon, but as something that comes from the heart"¹, dismantles the canonical idea of museums and aims to find its deep meaning in the particular space in which it is located – the large and central township of Cato Manor in Durban – as a real social and cultural engine for the territory. In the original project (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2003), which was unfortunately not realised, the construction of the museum represented for the architect a significant step in a long work path, always attentive and close to the needs of his community.

On graduating in architecture at the University of Natal, Durban, at the end of the 1980s, Rod, as he liked to be called, after some small individual projects realised as Choromanski Architects, in 1994 joined the collaborative practice CNN Architects, but in 2008 re-established his own studio.² The office, led by Rod and his main collaborator Dean Ramlal, focused mainly on projects and competitions for public buildings, engaging with generosity and determination in defining, through architectural and urban forms, a new, post-apartheid South Africa. Now, a few months after his premature death, which occurred suddenly in the evening of 23 October 2018 in Durban, his hometown, it is important to remember this architect.

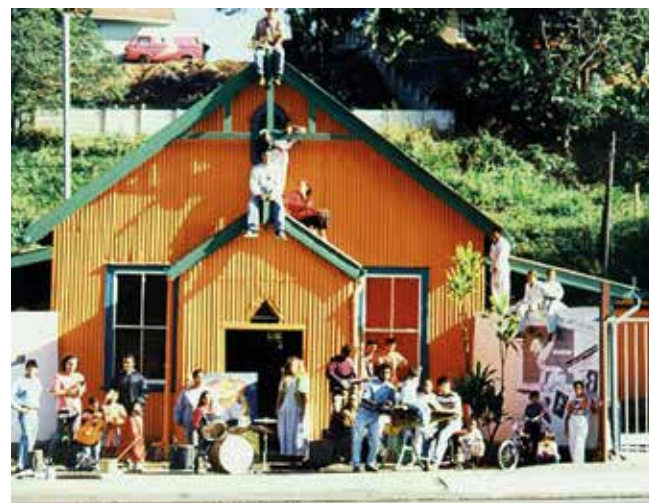
Going back in time one can reconstruct his career from its origins and grasp the formal and content choices, meanings and characteristics. Rod, who cultivated a variety of interests that went beyond architecture, knew how to design by simultaneously looking at Africa and the world, with the passion, ideals and hope of being able to improve the many contradictory aspects of his country.

Architecture of the community

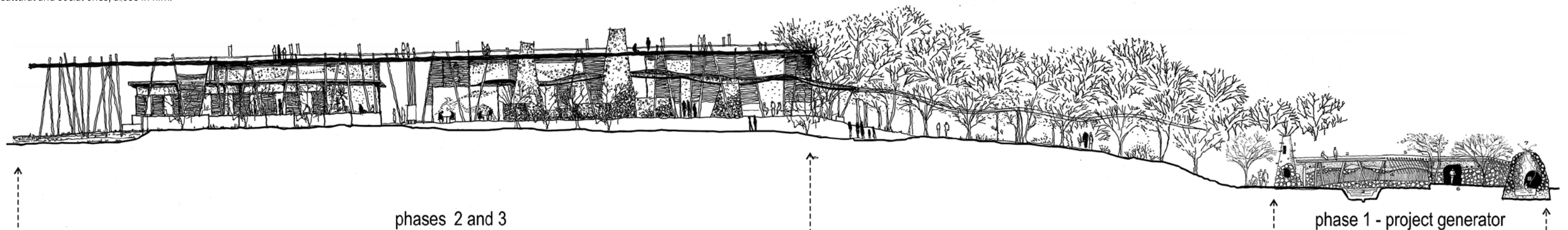
A rectangular, hip-roofed with gable building in Greenwood Park (Durban North) was the home of his family, and it is here, in the large single space with mezzanine, that Rod Choromanski lived his entire life, transforming and remodelling the home into a continuous 'work in progress'. It is here, in touch with his neighbours, people and forms that he loved, that a strong passion for architecture, art, music and its many aspects, including multi-cultural and social ones, arose in him.

One of the words that Rod used most in his projects was 'community', and the 'community' that he knew best was precisely that – the one in which he was born and in which he developed his vision of architecture. The careful analysis of the cultural and social stratification of the place is always present in his work, and provides extensive project material. It is important and necessary to emphasise this aspect, because architecture was not conceived by him as an external form and structure. Rather it was a system that helped to positively or negatively transform the styles and ways of life of individuals and populations. His idea, probably linked to the strong sense of belonging, forced by apartheid, and then deeply assimilated, was that of being part of a social group rich in culture and humanity, like Greenwood's 'coloured community'. Rod used this sense of community to observe and analyse reality and spaces in order to transform them into design choices and appropriate architectural forms and shapes.

One of his first major projects was Studio 849 Art Centre in Greenwood Park in 1995. [image/s from Dean] Inside the former Redhill Presbyterian Church, a corrugated iron building of 1905, together with the artist Leonie Hall, Rod realised a place for arts, architecture and karate that is dedicated to young people in the area. The project therefore started from the architecture, with the restoration of the historic wooden building, but then involved its community, through the inclusion of new activities within the wide space of the central nave, marked by a double-pitched roof that also characterised the volumetric from outside. As he explained Studio 849: "It operated for two-and-a-half years asserting art's ability to empower citizens", and "Heritage for people's sake has many more dynamic and profound results."³ The community was therefore always the centre of his discourse and realising architecture for the territory was the main purpose.



Historic corrugated iron church building recycled as Studio 849 Art Centre, Greenwood Park, 1995



Sketch proposal for all 3 phases, Lilani hot spring resort, Greytown district, 2003.

Working on a wider scale

One of the most particular characteristics of the office project was his consideration of the territorial/urban scale, in order to realise the social and economic reactivation of the place. Dean Ramlal, who continues to run the office, explained that sometimes, despite having a small project, Rod would extend the area of intervention by working on it on a wider scale. The observations of the territory, landscape, the people, their activities and their potential were essential elements of the final project proposal.



Siyabonga tourist centre, St Lucia Heritage Park, 2001.

This happened in the design of the St. Lucia Heritage Park, 2001. In this case, the client's original project consisted of the design and construction of some small service units, equipped with toilets, to insert into the natural park. The project was transformed, even without a specific request from

the client, into a master plan, which included the neighbouring village of St Lucia, with large natural spaces, and reset the borders and park: beach and park: village relationships. The service units were then defined as important 'hubs' that marked the paths along the park.

Following the master plan, which only realised the service units, the clients then assigned the task of designing the Siyabonga Tourist and Information Centre as a gateway to the village of St Lucia (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2005), which integrates the river boat station and a craft store. The plan – a building with a wooden and metal structure overlooking the river – is positioned along the driveways and pedestrian paths that link the rural community to the village, taking up the idea of connectivity present in the master plan.

A similar procedure was applied in the Lilani Hot Spring Resort in the Greytown district (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2005), in this case requested by the client. It dealt with a small tourist infrastructure, which included the resort, spa and pools. The intervention was divided into three phases, the first two having already been completed and the third was about to be assigned, and became part of a general master plan. The document proposed the re-organisation of the area and analysed the local resources, with the main idea of creating a diffused hotel system in the territory, where the local population managed the accommodation facilities. The project wanted to further improve the life of the locals by providing a source of income extended to the area and also precious professional skills.

Attention to local community life was the theme of many other projects, among which interesting to remember is the KwaMashu Town Centre (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2006) and the project for the Cultural Park, in which the uMkhumbane Museum is inserted and which is discussed overleaf.



The executed portion, phase 1, Lilani hot spring resort, Greytown district, 2003.



uMkhumbane Museum from west with UKZN Howard College campus in background.

Photographs by Roy Reed

The big public projects

The uMkhumbane Museum is certainly the most significant and known building of those realised by the studio. In the project that won the Grand Prix of the Africa Architecture Awards, the intention to create a Cultural Park is very clear. A park is linked to the territory, connecting a series of significant places with the residential areas and commercial and market spaces.

The re-internment of the tomb of 'Queen Thomo', the current Zulu King's mother, whom Rod referred to as his muse for the project, and next to which the museum has arisen, makes it a powerful element that was perceived as a 'capsule inside the park' in continuity with the 'storyline' of the building. However, it is also a cultural 'metaphor' for the entire park.



Interior, Queen Thomozile monument of commemoration.

The museum's 36 metre cylindrical volume in concrete, aluminium and brick is placed close to the tomb in a strategic position and is visible from several points in the area and positioned in line with the Memorial Tower building, UKZN Howard College, on the hill to the east.

The museum spreads over four storeys and on an open terrace on the roof it contains a triple-height atrium and galleries on three levels. The volume in reinforced concrete and brick was cut and put in place by community builders. To the north it is covered by a perforated aluminium screen, which filters the sunlight, creating a trick of light and mitigating the internal climate. For Rod "The heritage of the people ... is an inspiration for the development of a complex, which celebrates life and growth" (Portfolio, 2018: 25).



Gallery on Level 2.



Atrium giving access to Entrance and multi-purpose centre.

Another important public work was the Princess Magogo Stadium and FIFA training ground (see *KZNIA Journal* 1/2010). The intervention was realised on the occasion of the World Cup in the township of KwaMashu, and extended the structure of the existing stadium to cover the new layer of accommodation with a mono-pitch roof, creating a butterfly roof with box gutter. The complex, located in a peri-urban area of Durban, was conceived as a large sports hub, with its own 'city centre' integrated within an urban park and equipped with commercial and recreational activities, with the function of reconfiguring the space of the township and creating a point of attraction for the region. KwaMashu, conceived as a dormitory suburb (1957-68), today has its own urban centre and has become an important economic hub for the entire urban area. The stadium project is inserted in an organic way within this important process of change (Portfolio, 2018: 39).



Princess Magogo stadium, KwaMashu, 2010.

Missed opportunities for positive development

At this point, it is necessary to take a little step backward in time and briefly analyse two previous unrealised projects, the Pan African Parliament in Midrand (2007) and the new Berea Road train station in Durban, inserted in the 'Guidelines to Durban's Warwick Precinct' (2012). The parliament project

was the result of a competition won in 2007 (by CNN Architects, i3Lab and Reynolds & Vidal Architects under the banner of Earth-Lab Architects), whose construction was unfortunately interrupted at the beginning, when the earthworks were taking place. The basic idea of the project was to generate a dialogue of peace between the nations of the continent, creating an "inclusive building embodying the African attributes of: Darkness and Light, Construction and Space, Solid and Transparent" (Portfolio, 2018:19). Starting from these premises, the complex was designed as a long, vaulted volume intended for the gallery, orientated on the east-west axis, and adjacent to a cylindrical volume that rises from a mirror of water and which houses the space of the parliament and acts as a reference point within the linear form.

"The chamber, housed in a glass cylinder and enclosed in a double timber screen, was to be the focus along the backdrop of the linear southern façade. Glazed and timber façades were expressive of the stark landscape. The building was conceived as a protective place to encase the user within its two walls, and though secure and safe was also transparent" (Portfolio, 2018: 19).

The project for the expansion and redefinition of the Berea Road Station envisaged the modernisation of the existing station and integrating it with a commercial area, adjacent to the existing markets, to be realised from scratch. The Station is an important strategic point of Durban; it is the eastern gateway to the city and has a pedestrian traffic count of more than 300,000 people per day. The proposal devised by the study was based on strategic ideas: integration of transport with the commercial area, connections between public and built-up areas, insertion and connection between formal and informal commercial activities, and research into an architectural form appropriate to the character of the place. The urban project defined the intervention as a 'cultural hub' for mixed activities, with a strong impact on the development and transformation of Durban.

Despite their differences in place and function, the Berea Road Station and the Pan African Parliament would have been two iconic and meaningful projects, and represent missed opportunities for positive development.

Pan African Parliament, 2007

A juror's recollections

The design competition for a Pan African Parliament was thrown open to all Architects from Africa. The site was in Midrand in the shadow of the Development Bank of Southern Africa. There was a rather clumsy panel of judges of over a dozen with myself one of three nominated by the Africa Union of Architects.

The cabinet minister and an acolyte who were also on the panel favoured a certain scheme. I recall that it was truly monumental kitsch. South Africa was notorious for diamonds so the office tower was a glass tower stepping inwards for about seven storeys to represent this. Protruding on the front were the crudely crafted forelegs and head of a massive elephant!

This was a political hit so I was delegated to persuade the minister that it wasn't practical. While it may have been possible to accommodate the staircase within a giant foreleg it would have been impossible to fit a fire escape into a tapering,

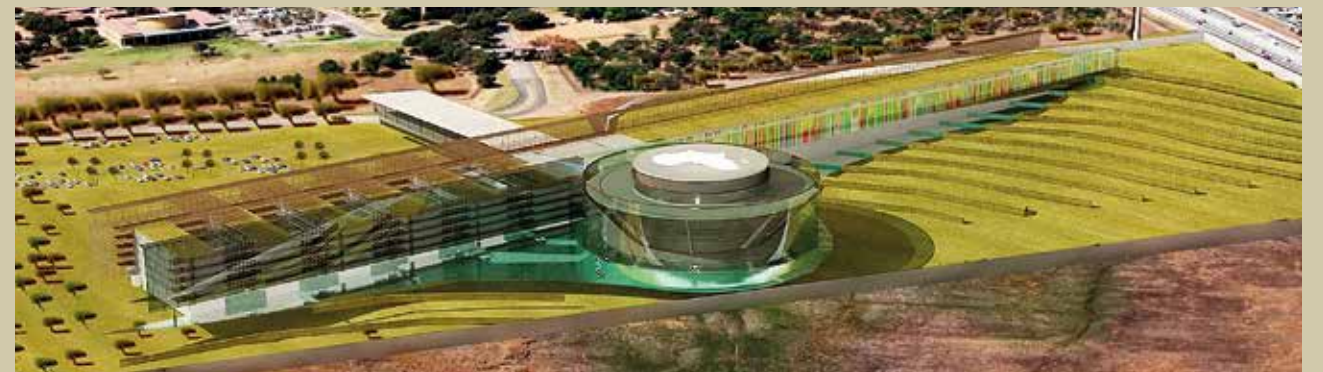
curved tusk! She bowed, disappointed, but under such practical advice she left the architect jurors to continue.

By contrast, the winner was a team led by Rodney Choromanski. Their submission was elegant in its simplicity as it spanned across the valley with the Reichstadt-like chamber nestled in the valley, surrounded by water. The panel was particularly impressed by the flagged 'ceremonial way' running along the rooftop so acknowledging the love of such features by politicians.

Sadly the project was abandoned after construction commenced. The practitioner who prepared the Environmental Impact Assessment hadn't disclosed the underground water flowing through the site; was charged and had a sojourn in jail!

Apart from how it would have changed South Africa's destiny it would also have launched this creative genius nearly a decade ago!

Rodney Harber



Other projects for Durban

Walking through the Durban Inner City one can easily meet and discover other significant projects by Choromanski Architects. Starting from the Point, an area of the city currently undergoing great development, the architect was already involved early on in the Waterfront project and realised (with CNN Architects, 2001) part of the public space on the canals that cross the district (see *KZNIA Journal* 1/2008). There is the pedestrian bridge and two very special projects: Timeball Square and the Point harbour tunnel entrance, all of 2008. There are small episodes of urban architecture that contribute to a rhythm in the public space, articulating it and creating strategic rest points.

Timeball Square, a project that won an award (see *KZNIA Journals* 1/2008 & 2/2009), is located along the canal that crosses the Point district, and is made up of several inter-related interventions: an information desk, a viewing deck, and public ablutions. The tower, made up of a 48 metre high structure in reinforced concrete, covered with metal structural rings and tie rods, functions as a landmark and a reference point for the public space next to the canal, but is also, as specified in the project “a tangible connection to the memory of Durban’s old Timeball tower used by ships during the early 1900s to determine local time” (Portfolio, 2018: 59).



Timeball Square, Point. SAIA-KZN Award for Architecture, 2009.

The whole project is rich in elements and was conceived as a “poly-rhythmic layering of structure, aesthetics and memory – making the Timeball a contemporary urban intervention”. The structure originally integrated the basement with the information desk and a small square, now transformed into a bar. “The historical significance of the Timeball is mapped out along the timber deck floor in the form of sandblasted artwork within glazed roof lights which also incorporates a narrative text and images of neighbouring markers” (Portfolio, 2018: 59).

Just a few minutes’ walk from the tower is the top structure of the sub-aqueous services tunnel which connects the Point with the Bluff (see *KZNIA Journals* 1/2008 & 2/2009). This is a perfectly integrated dynamic volume, with adjacent outdoor area and different levels of a public garden space. It is a small but significant object, because it transforms a technological facility into an interesting landscape work, also marking what will be the final point of the Durban beachfront.

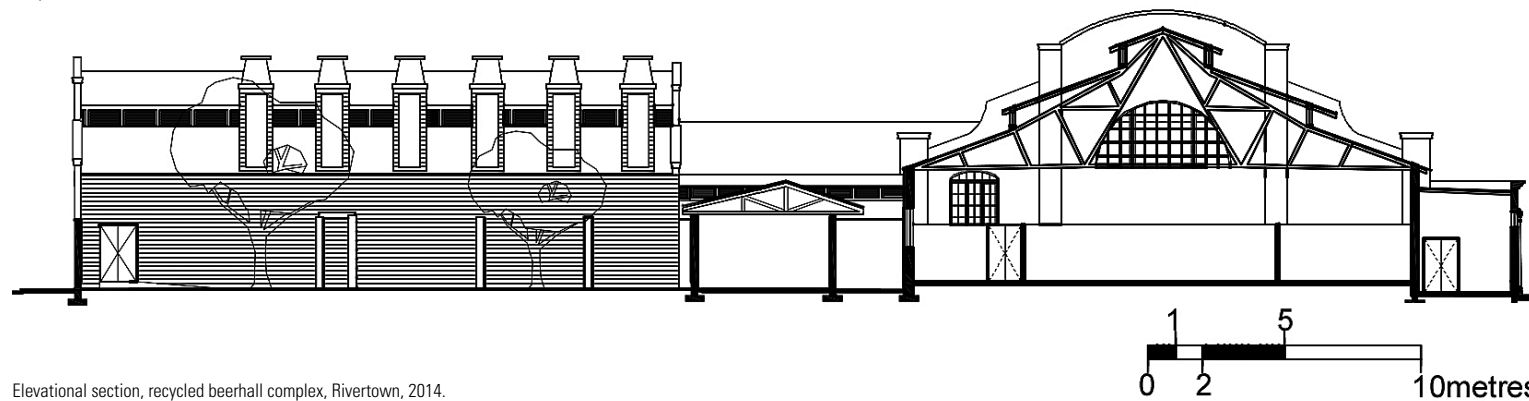
Heading for the district of Rivertown, next to the major thoroughfare of Pixley KaSeme Street, we meet the Palmer Street Cardboard Pick-up Facility begun 2017 and still under construction. This is a cardboard collection and recycling facility, conceived as a prototype building and based on a modular system consisting of a ‘kit of parts’, whose individual components are standardised and reproducible to build similar structures in other parts of the city of Durban. The



Top structure, harbour entry tunnel, Point, 2008.



Recycle station, Palmer Str, Durban, 2017.



Elevational section, recycled beerhall complex, Rivertown, 2014.

simple volumetric, with a triangular plan, is characterised by a multi-coloured façade that integrates the public space through the realisation of a park square, crossed by pedestrian paths, in front of the entrance.

Not far away, in the centre of the Rivertown precinct, one can see the work of renewal and reuse of the historic building of the Beer Hall (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2014), which is currently being completed. As explained in the project report, “the Beer Hall project was conceived as the establishment of a centre for creative city projects thus developing a key facility for art, culture and heritage within the inner-city, with relevant performing and creative arts’ studios, directors’ offices, administration offices and large meeting spaces” (Portfolio, 2018: 66). It is a delicate intervention with attention to detail (e.g. covers and openings, consolidation of materials, restructuring of small chimneys that mark the profile of the building) that Rod followed personally during the construction.

The area had already undergone some interventions, in the same Beer Hall and in the adjacent street, in 2014, on the occasion of the XXV International Union of Architects World Congress, held in Durban. Choromanski Architects had actively participated in those works, together with the eThekweni Municipality’s City Architects (Choromanski, 2014: 4). The building’s location in the city centre and in the former industrial area makes it a strategic place and “a sustainable and creative catalyst for the upliftment and rejuvenation of the Rivertown precinct and Durban” (Portfolio, 2018: 66).

Architecture designed and linked to the project of community

When speaking about urban space, Rod often loved to cite the book *Townscape* by the architect and urban planner Gordon Cullen, where he explained that “in the continuing narrative of the street, function and pattern change from place to place; this should be acknowledged by some physical signals”.⁴ And these are precisely the physical signals of his architecture, which, positioned with consistency and rhythm in the chosen space, built the leitmotif of the urban landscape created by him, and become for us supporting elements of his personal history as an architect.

Rod often used to say that he was fascinated by the different layers of the territory so that he would observe and study them before starting a project. This type of analysis, together with the careful consideration of the territorial and urban scale represents the significant traits of his architecture. Methods that required him to have a sensitive eye for materials, colours, forms and construction techniques would complement and harmonise the locations where the work would take place.

This is the case for the bricks of the uMkhumbane museum and the Zulu motifs of its metal screen, together with the texture of the stones collected by the local community and used to build the walls of the service modules of the St Lucia Heritage Park and the Lilani Hot Spring Resort.

Rod’s multiple cultural and individual interests and/or those linked to historical heritage, together with his being a musician, poet and artist, closely connected his vision of architecture to the arts. The relationship with art and the traditional culture of the places, cultivated with passion over time, is present, as mentioned previously, in all of his projects, and in a disruptive way in the building of the uMkhumbane Museum. And it is here in this museum that during the memorial service for Rod a tree was planted as a small sign of life to remind passers-by and visitors of his work and continuous commitment – carried forward with great difficulty – to build architecture designed and linked to the project of community.

Silvia Bodei

Silvia Bodei was a dear friend of Rodney Choromanski and the contents of this article are also due to the passionate conversations about architecture she would often share with him.

Special thanks for helpful assistance to Dhiren (Dean) Ramlal. Dr Bodei was appointed a Senior Lecturer in Architecture at UKZN in 2017. Editor

REFERENCES

Portfolio of Choromanski Architects, January 2018.
Choromanski, R. 2014. Rivertown & the Beerhall complex. *KZNIA Journal*, 3/2014, p.4.

FOOTNOTES

1. Choromanski, R. 2017. Rodney Choromanski. Grand Prix Winner. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uF9PxEpUck> [Accessed 15 Feb 2019].
2. The practice of CNN Architects was begun in 1995 by Rodney Choromanski, Karuni Naidoo and Sharendra Naidu. After the departure of Naidu in 2002, Choromanski resigned in 2008 to re-found Choromanski Architects, while Naidoo continues as CNN.
3. Quoted in Moodley, R. 2017. Commercial development damages heritage building. [online]. Available from: <http://www.Choromanski.com> [accessed 15 Feb 2019].
4. Cullen, G. 1961. *Townscape*. New York: Reinhold. This source is cited in the urban analysis for his design dissertation, An entertainment pier for Durban. Unpublished B.Arch dissertation, University of Natal, 1989.

Born in Cagliari, capital of the island of Sardinia, west of the Italian Peninsula, Silvia studied Architecture at the IUAV University of Venice, obtained her doctoral degree at UPC, the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in Barcelona, and served a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Cagliari in her home town.

The topic of her doctoral thesis, published in Italian by Quodlibet in 2014, was Le Corbusier’s Olivetti building in Rho, along the Milan-Turin highway, 1962, which she termed ‘The Green Factory for the Electronic Calculation Center’. Articles by Silvia have featured in Il Giornale dell’Architettura, Domus, and Massilia, the annual publication of Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris.

EULOGY

The following is extracted from the eulogy presented at the commemorative gathering held at uMkhumbane Museum on Saturday, 27th October 2018 by Ruben Reddy, then President of the SAIA-KZN Institute for Architecture, and a fellow student of Rodney Choromanski at the University of Natal (today UKZN). Unless otherwise acknowledged, the people mentioned and the tributes received (edited) are from members of the ‘class of ’88’, that is, those who studied with Rodney at the ‘Natal School’ from 1983 to 1988.
Editor

“Irony abounds as we gather in this magnificent space for the first time today. It is ironic because this majestic building is yet to be opened, and we are here to bid farewell to its creator. A building so beautifully crafted by one so enormously talented and a giant in our profession who walked without the swagger of those who possess such unique skill.

From as early as I can remember him at Architecture school, Rodney had a special talent but at the same time expressed it with great humility. He cycled to varsity every day from his parent’s home in Heather Grove, Greenwood Park, a distance of some 12 km.

Rodney was the one who would never change, forever being youthful. He will remain our James Dean but without the narcissism! He was so gentle in voice and demeanour that sometimes we forgot that this man was a walking weapon.

He represented South Africa in ‘full contact’ karate in a tournament in Japan, after we had graduated as he then had more time to train. In a tournament in Cape Town he had his jaw wired after an opponent broke it, and I, concerned as well as cynical, asked why he didn’t block. His giggling response was: “You should see the other guy!”

It is only once that I saw that skill in action. We had just completed what was a horrific exam. All but 5 of us passed. It was a shocker of an exam. Poor Barry St Leger Denny had just bought a piece of beautiful Walnut which he had painstakingly sanded and planed for a model he was making. He had placed it between two studio stools in the middle of the Crit space. Rodney walked in, and to this day I don’t know if he kicked it or hit it with his hands, but this piece of Walnut exploded into a thousand pieces. Barry began by protesting that it must be replaced at once, but soon realised the state of Rodney at the time and meekly suggested that “It’s okay I can always get another“! Rodney, of course, soon apologised. This man was stronger than most human beings, which again is indeed ironic.

Just how did we get here today? Just how? I will continue to ask that question”.

Basil Vogas, from Perth:
“Rodney and I were close while at Uni. From first year he used to take me to the sports centre almost every day to ‘train’ me in Tai Chi and karate. But not many of the Archi students knew that outside of Uni, Rodney dedicated his time to teaching karate to disadvantaged kids in his community. He had the physical skill to take on anyone yet he was softly spoken, unassuming and the most generous person I knew. Rodney, thanks for making time for me and for our time together”.

Mark Damant, from Brisbane:
“Rodney was a free spirit with outrageous physical ability...a glint in his eye...always smiling....always optimistic...and completely certain of who he was and his place in the world. Bang.....There he was, that long, shaggy rock-star hair, the identical cheeky smile, this amazing aura radiated from every pore of his body, breathtakingly beautiful. I am sincerely grateful to have known you”.

Steve Millier, from Guildford, Surrey, UK:
“Go in peace my friend and thank you for being a bright guiding star for my journey and those around you. Shake things upup there, won’t you?”

Kevin Bingham, Durban:
My three indelible recollections of Rodney in those years are: first, a slender rocket of energy, who danced his way around the studio, or was on his back on the floor, break-dancing; second, a talented artist who’s almost cartoon-like free-hand sketching, particularly of people and trees, was a joy to behold; and third, a valued companion on our Architectural Conservation field trip to the Eastern Cape village of Rhodes, in 1987.

Karuni Naidoo, Durban, *a former practice partner:*
“I recall Rodney from Level 7 of Denis Shepstone building, UKZN, in the early 1980s wearing wooden Japanese sandals; breakdancing with his brother Derek in Greenwood Park at the launch of the Redhill Youth Movement (RHYTHM); and then on his bicycle during our final years of Architecture.

When we teamed up in practice, Rodney ensured that we entered every architectural competition, and we would go on to win many of these. We began work later than most offices and battled to maintain balance. We would succeed in some areas of our lives, but be messy with the others. Unlike our architecture, our lives would be imperfect or flawed.

To Rodney: I am all the better for having had you as a friend and business partner. I thank you, and I forgive you and release you. Go in peace.”

Sharendra Naidu, from London, *a former practice partner:*
“I have known Rodney for the past 35 years both as a friend and a business partner. It is an incredibly sad and an immeasurable loss to those who were fortunate enough to have known him. My thoughts and prayers are with his family. RIP dear old friend”.

Rohan Persad, Durban, *a former advisor within the KZN Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism:*
“Rodney was appointed as the architect to develop the Shu Shu and Lilani Hot Springs (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2005). With his inimitable Choromanski style, Rodney just grabbed the bull by the horns and drove the project with the local community. He designed the project with them, secured their participation in the identification of local materials, construction, operations and maintenance processes.

He disarmed all the officials by inviting them after the first meeting to the local tavern where he proceeded to have a couple of drinks, then whipped out his guitar and performed which only Rodney could do. A typical example of the Rodney I came to know and respect.

We will miss your boundless energy, creative and innovative mind and most importantly, a character not bound by his ego. This set him apart in his profession. Rest in Peace bro!”

Luyanda Mphalwa, Cape Town, *now President of the SA Institute of Architects:*

“One thing about Rodney is that you could not place him in the ‘traditional definition and appearance’ of an architect as we know it! Always casual, in a T-shirt and jeans, but in black, which is the closest to the architects label; you would probably mistake him for a musician, artist, sportsman, which he also was. Yet he lived, spoke and created Architecture, in the most passionate way.

It is a very difficult and sad experience to lose a colleague, fellow architect and a great person at such a young age. Hamba Kahle Rodney, your legacy will live on.”

*To commemorate Rodney’s role on the Museum project, his colleagues and friends in the **Architecture Department of eThekwin Municipality** have selected a tree to be planted on the museum grounds, a Warburgia salutaris more commonly known as a pepper-bark tree or isibhaha in Zulu, rare, adaptable and evergreen. Following the cremation, a part of Rodney’s ashes is to be buried with the planted tree to take root within the African soil.*

Andrew Makin, Durban colleague, who sent this prose from Mexico:
*Cinnamon man Neil Young,
Kurt Cobain kept unkempt hair
a kind of Redhill stalk for a walk
a smile more often than words
a morning to Addington beach
a panel van or bakkie
a team of soccer children
he said it was what he did on the weekend
Friday or Saturday night
The Chairman on Mahatma Gandhi
setting up the band at the end of the courtyard then the Salsa starts
the Cuba beat,
the sexy sound,
when all there is, is pure life
where real living is celebration of the ordinary
one minute being in this living
like it will last forever
like a river will always flow
like the sun will always only rise
the next minute
without warning
memories
and mourning
the frail nature of transience
the exquisite beauty of the flower
that blooms for just one night
and then blooms forever
inside us all.*

Nina Saunders, Durban, *who worked closely with Rod on the uMkhumbane Museum:*
*Rod, you did human so well.
You did super-human even better.
You came in with your very own lode star and a pretty big script.
And you did that script justice. Helped by a super-sized dose of creative.
My strongest sense of you was your unfailing belief that good wins the day: good ideas, good design, good intention, good connection, good vibes, good humour, good heart.....
And your relentlessness until it did.
You were brave, passionate, generous and kind.
Catch you at the big gig in the sky, Rod.
You made this gig so much more fun.*

EXHIBITION: HANS HALLEN. COLLECTIVE ARCHITECTURE IN DURBAN

The exhibition Hans Hallen. Collective Architecture in Durban, displayed at the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture, 160 Bulwer Rd, Durban, 16th November-14th December 2018, resulted from a one-semester's project in the course History of South African Architecture. The work was carried out by 3rd year students under the direction of Dr Silvia Bodei, senior lecturer in Architecture, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and "dedicated to the memory of Rodney Choromanski and his great passion and vision for the city".

The exhibition presented a critical analysis of six buildings designed by Hans Hallen (b. Durban, 1930), prominent architect in KwaZulu-Natal of the 1960s - 1980s. The work on display focused on 'collective buildings' located in Durban, which were related to the idea of living or working in a community and sharing spaces. The selection included Huletts Head Office in Umhlanga (1978), Saint Olav Norwegian Lutheran Church (1967), Bellevue apartment block in Musgrave suburb (1965) and John Bews Residence (1964), Scully Dining Hall (1965) and Mabel Palmer Residence (1966) on the Howard College campus of UKZN.

The material was laid out in two sections. The first included an introductory panel with the biography of the architect and ten original drawings, on loan from the Hans Hallen Drawings Collection and Archive held in the Barrie Biermann Architecture Library, UKZN. The second section displayed the work by the students, which comprised a two-minute video of each building made by the respective group, two sectional models (format 50x50 cm) and a booklet that included an essay, drawings and illustrations.

The projects involved studying the original documents held at UKZN, carrying out site inspections and the preparation of a bibliography based on the few published articles about the architect's work. The Archive holds many documents by Hans Hallen and other architects, and the project for the exhibition was an important occasion for exploring this material, discovering its contents in detail, and revealing a part of it to the public.

The experience of studying the history of architecture in a practical and more concrete way was very important for the students. Indeed, the use of first-hand sources and personally visiting the buildings was a crucial exercise in developing an awareness of the composition and articulation of the built forms and ideas.

The approach commenced with a study of the documents and the general hypothesis that the architectural work itself presented both a dynamic being 'in progress' and a concrete solution to tangible and defined challenges and difficulties. Some of these issues were interwoven into the project material.

The investigation stemmed from the object itself, the building, which was observed with the tools for designing, of making architecture, and at the same time asked a series of contextual questions. What interaction, for instance, was established between the place and the shape of the building? What relationships were created between the paths, the plan and sectional drawings? Are the solutions as presented in the original drawings the same as those we find in the built architecture today?



Original drawings on display in Section 1.



Student work on display in Section 2.



Student work.

During the investigation, the students were advised to analyse different aspects of the project, like site and context, typology, entrance and routes, functions (public, semi-public, private and service spaces), relationships with the exterior and interior, architectural form (including

façades, skylights, roof solutions), structure, membrane and interior spaces. These different aspects were researched by the students and taken into consideration in the narratives they developed for the seminar and were also included in the booklets and models on exhibition.



From left: Dr Silvia Bodei, Tyneal Shavanay Chetty, Trevin Naidoo and Uzair Khaliq. Back row: Bhavisha Hurribhujan, Katelyn Meyer, Dylan Crowley and Kershlen Moodley. In front: Progress Mthembu.

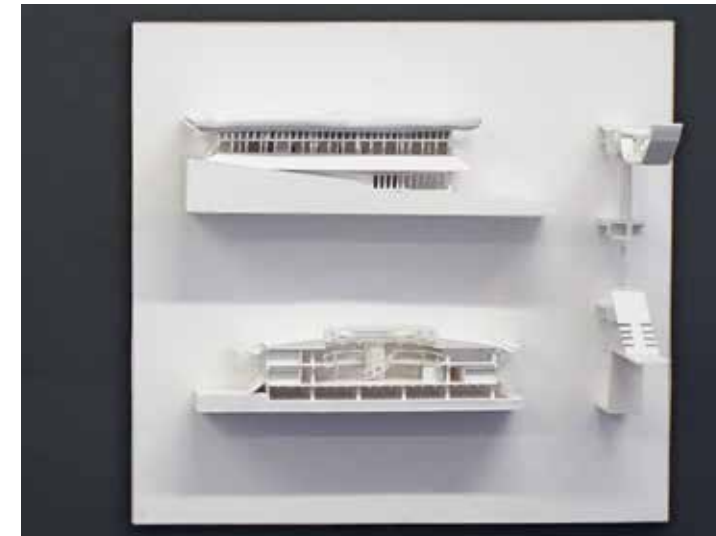
An important result of this work was to discover the close connection between the architecture and the site in terms of climate, materials and landscape. The form and section of the roof, its integration with the piped services for drainage, the skylights and fenestration, and also the use of concrete and bricks, were some of the themes constant in the investigation into Hallen's work, and contributed toward creating an interesting link with the place. These characteristics were especially emphasised in the collective functions of the buildings, including the design of extensive communal areas with special solutions for light and space.

The research also revealed a range of references incorporated in each of the buildings, which were often derived from projects designed by significant architects of the Modern Movement, like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn. The ultimate aim of the project was to enable students to read architecture at multiple levels and to encourage the application of appropriate references in practical work.

The exhibition's opening day was concluded with the presentation of a short video sent to the students by Hans Hallen from Sydney, to where he had emigrated in 1987. Hallen explained his relationship with the city of Durban and his habit of making drawings and paintings of the urban landscape and the harbour. Indeed, painting, sketching, visual representation and art in general were found to have been very important in his buildings. As evidenced by the drawings presented at the exhibition, he used to work with sketches and a collage to represent projects, and he also worked with different artists to enrich the details of the architecture. "Architecture with art is a wonderful combination", he concluded, "with art you can enjoy your life".

Silvia Bodei

The exhibition was curated by Dr Bodei, Michele Jacobs of the UKZN Barrie Biermann Architecture Library, and Roanne Moodley. Editor



Huletts head office, Umhlanga (A Bharath, L. Govender, Khaliq, K. Moodley, N. Pather and T. Suliman).



John Bews Hall, UKZN, Howard College Campus, 1966 (L. Esau, M. Manyathela, N. Mazibuko, N. Mohanut, K. Naicker and K. Singh)

TRAVEL DIARY: SEOUL

Following the UIA conference held in Durban in August 2014, the next took place in Seoul, capital of South Korea, 2 – 10 September 2017 – with some 10 670 delegates in attendance. It was at this conference that Rodney Choromanski and Mhlengi Gumede, eThekweni Area-Based Manager for Cato Manor, received the Outstanding Paper/Design Work award for their presentation of uMkhumbane Museum. What follows is a compilation of contributions submitted by various participants from South Africa. Editor



Seoul, capital of South Korea.



View from Lotte World Tower: downstream (west) over the Han River across Greater Gangnam and Seoul city centre across the river (north). In the foreground, housing developed through the rural land readjustment programme of the 1970s.



Rodney Choromanski holding the certificate awarded himself and Mhlengi Gumede for Outstanding Paper/ Design Work, clearly shied by the honour.

Laura Hunt, eThekweni Municipality, Durban. “From the 123rd glass floor observation deck of South Korea’s tallest building, Kohn Pedersen Fox’s ballistic **Lotte World Tower**, Seoul is indeed the city of mountains and rivers. The metropolitan area covers 605km² with an undevelopable 40% given over to eight distinct mountains and the Han River which continue to hold their own against the scale of its skyscrapers after 2000 years of city-building.

Later, walking through the heritage mini-town of **Bukchon Village** I learnt of the planning principle, *baesanimsu*, which pertains to the traditional Korean house, the *hanok*, oriented with a mountain at the rear and river to their fronts.

At dawn, the **Noryangjin Fish Market** modernised ten years ago, is an Olympic stadium for small and large farmers’ seafood selling skills.

After a breakfast of stewed spicy fish and rice, my impression is that Seoul has achieved its dream of a happy city where everyone can live in a safe and pleasant environment.”



Photograph by Rod Choromanski

Bukchon Hanok Village



AMOOO Architects

Noryangjin Fish Market



Early morning in the Noryangjin Fish Market

Nina Saunders, eThekweni Municipality, Durban. “It was exciting to see an urban intervention which had formed a precedent for one of the Durban Spatial Legacy Projects. During the UIA 2014 Congress, River Town urban renewal intervention (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2014) saw the raising of the concrete ‘lid’ over a portion of the John Milne Road, revealing the watercourse below.

Similarly, the **Cheonggyecheon Stream** is an 11km urban renewal project which saw the restoration of the ancient stream, covered with a highway after the Korean War (1950-53). In 2003 the Seoul metropolitan government dismantled the 10-lane roadway as well as the 4-lane elevated highway to restore the stream. The restored stream runs from the Cheonggyecheon Plaza and passes under 22 bridges before flowing into the Han River. The water course runs well below the surrounding road level, accessible from entry points along the entire length of the 5.8km urban park astride the stream.”



Cheonggyecheon Stream

Tim Hewitt-Coleman, NOH Architects, Port Elizabeth. “The **Dongdaemun Design Plaza** (DDP) is a shiny stainless steel and aluminium amoeba-shaped building designed by Zaha Hadid and located in a very busy part of central Seoul.

Maybe I was in a bad mood, but surprisingly I was neither impressed nor mesmerised. In fact, the building left me confused and disorientated. I began wondering: If Zaha Hadid’s DDP was the answer, what was the question the people of Seoul had asked? Was the question perhaps: Please explore the outer limits of what aluminium and steel can do. Can they be made to curve and bulge like a jellyfish?”



Dongdaemun Design Plaza; Zaha Hadid’s ‘Metonymic Landscape’ won the competition in 2007.

Mhlengi Gumede, eThekweni Municipality Cato Manor Area-Based Manager, Durban. “Touring the **Demilitarized Zone** (DMZ) is a must for anyone visiting South Korea. DMZ is a strip of land some 250km long, and about 4km wide, which runs across the Korean Peninsula some 50km north of Seoul. It was built in 1953 as a buffer between North Korea and South Korea, is one of the last remaining borders of the Cold War and counts as the most heavily guarded in the world.

From the huge observation area one can see far into the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and get a bird’s eye view of Freedom Bridge. Peer into the secretive society of North Korea from the optimal vantage point at the Dora Observatory where barbed-wire fences to the south and a watch tower to the north mark the framework of the DMZ, the actual international border lying between the two. A gleaming North Korean city stands on the horizon while a decoy propaganda village lies to the east.”

The UIA conference is held triennially. The next is scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2020 with theme ‘All the worlds. Just one world.’ Editor



Rodney still in disbelief the day after. From left: Laura Hunt, eThekweni Municipality; co-presenter Mhlengi Gumede, eThekweni Municipality Cato Manor Area Based Manager; Rodney Choromanski; and Mlondolzi Hempe of Broad Based Design Architecture Studio, Cape Town.

WiASA-KZN, 2018. WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE: BEYOND THE BINARY



Karuni Naidoo, chair of WiASA opened the proceedings.

As architects, women can be agents for change both in the workplace, and in the way we approach designing the built environment.

The 2018 Women in Architecture South Africa (WiASA) CPD workshop, sponsored by *Corobrik*, brought together 60 architectural professionals on 24 August at their head office in Avoca. The theme 'Beyond the Binary' took discussions to a new level, when compared with the previous years' events, which focused on women sharing, getting to know one another and learning about our diversity.

Noting that the 21st century had seen a groundswell in the gender revolution with a greater awareness that gender and sexuality are fluid, both speakers and panelists explored and unpacked this international movement.

Karen Petersen, first female Director of Tongaat Hulett Developments responsible for strategy and business development, and also a member of the Women's Property Network, highlighted the need for transformation in the property sector, addressing gender inequalities whilst also motivating her fellow professionals to build their confidence as leaders.

Professor Monique Marks, Social Worker and head of Urban Futures Centre at Durban University of Technology, shared her own story and her work with drug users within the city, and urged women to challenge stereotypes.



The opening of the exhibition displaying the work of 14 women architects in KwaZulu-Natal concluded the day.

Cultural and inter-disciplinary researcher, Russel Hlongwane, explored issues around black identity in the contemporary world via poetry, and shared a powerful and thought-provoking audio visual presentation that led seamlessly into the panel discussion.

Part one saw panelists reflecting on the notion of binaries, and the importance of challenging them. During part two, panelists outlined how duality had become spatially entrenched and looked at aspects that needed to be considered to create a more inclusive built environment.

Kerry Frizelle, panel chair and a psychologist shared how people are primed to think in a certain way from infancy, and how this had implications for relationships. Training one's brain to think beyond binaries created a dialogue and a potentially rich, creative tension between the emotional and rational. How can we use this in architecture, which is a fundamentally creative profession? She also spoke of how "spaces have implications for social relationships".

Russel Hlongwane then shared how we could use "the otherness of ourselves" to reflect on the judgements we make when we look at the "otherness of others". The western approach to practicing architecture is a very direct system of "othering". Architecture is often a symbol of opulence and "a luxury rather than a process of creating justice". We need to become more conscious of this. We do not need an alternative, but "parallel systems of practice".

Senzekile Mlambo, a Senior Architectural Technologist emphasized that it was important for architects to interact with end users to really understand their needs and what they are facing. "We need to educate and sensitise ourselves. We are all human, and we all feel". Architects and urban planners can and do solve social problems. There is much value in participatory planning and working across disciplines.

Linda Danisa, Candidate Professional Architect from eThekweni City Architects, spoke of gender and racial divisions, and declared that "we need to make sure that the spaces that we create don't leave traces of our ignorance". Spatial planning was used as the primary tool to enforce apartheid. The flaws in our current spatial planning system continue to exacerbate the problem. We have to work very hard to undo that legacy. She ended with the challenge "if it was designed that way, we can surely design ourselves out of it".

Professor Marks proposed that the real challenges were how to engage with those who were excluded and vulnerable, how to erase boundaries between people, and advance more inclusive rather than exclusive design processes. She challenged us to work more closely with social scientists so that we can learn to understand better and learn to design and plan in ways that are able to break the divisions. How do we respond by "designing environments that stop the binary from being so stark"? Our City is doing nothing for the homeless. How can we dignify the urban spaces and places where people are already living?

The panel discussion was seen as the beginning of an ongoing conversation. We were not expecting to find quick solutions, but if we want to go "beyond the binary", it is clear that we need to be creative and keep ourselves open to change. Architects need to communicate and work with others to tackle broader social issues. Binaries, most obviously within gender and sexuality, are "dissolving" while some are becoming "more stark."

The day culminated in a creative bricklaying workshop with groups of women all participating in the largely 'male' activity of building walls and paving under the watchful eye of Corobrik master bricklayer and trainer, Derek Dimba.

The long day closed with the opening of an exhibition in a Florida Road gallery sponsored by Corobrik and Urban Lime, and organised by SAIA KZN. Janina Masojada, architect and Sophia Gray laureate opened the exhibition which included the work of 14 practicing KZN women, namely Amanda Lead (Amanda Lead Architects), Angela Wilson (Angela Baker Architects), Chantal Pieterse (Architecture Fabrik), Joanne Lees (Lees and Short Architects), Jodi Davids and Renee van Rensburg (TJ Architects), Karuni Naidoo (CNN Architects), Lindsay Napier (Lindsay Napier Architects), Mandisa Daki (Qhakaza Africa Consulting), Mayuri Bhana (Creative Axis), Michelle Quarumby (Ocean Architects), Monique Gillespie (Gillespie Architects), Nomagugu Manci (NSM Designs) and Raewyn Hayhoe (Evolution Architects).



Jodi Harber and Sandy Naicker at the exhibition.

The evening concluded with the award of two WiASA bursaries to women or gender non-conforming persons. Rohini Singh of DUT, received the Corobrik bursary and Hlengiwe Ngubane of UKZN, the ABSA bursary. Other sponsors of the event include Pelican and Mr Price Home.

The organisers of the 2018 WiASA worked as a collective, and included Karuni Naidoo, Monique Gillespie, Nina Saunders, Karen Major, Cristina Giampietri, Senzekile Mlambo, Mandisa Daki and Joanne Lees.
Karuni Naidoo

Ms Naidoo is a member of the SAIA Transformation Committee and leads the 'Women in Architecture SA' (WiASA) initiative nationally. Editor

Creative bricklaying workshop



Carina Cloete trying her hand at bricklaying.

The WiASA-KZN programme included an unforgettable 'creative bricklaying workshop' held at the Avoca Corobrik factory. Unforgettable because I managed to trip over a line of bricks only one course high, with my roving camera bearing the full brunt of a 'superwoman crash' into a pile of bricks. Along with dented cartilage, bruises and grazes, that was the end of my visual documentation of a hilarious and rewarding afternoon of messy physical activity. Over 50 participants were divided into 10 groups. Half the groups had to do paving, the other half had to build a one-brick wall about 1m x 1m. The site and the action plan had been meticulously prepared by architect Karen Major with the support of Corobrik personnel. Interconnected sand beds demarcated for pavers formed a "W" or "M" depending on one's perspective. Bricking profiles set up with sneaky building lines framed and defined the workspace.

On arrival we were shown the proper way to lay bricks in stretcher bond by the congenial Derek Dimba of Corobrik. Bonding, buttering or pointing seems easy until the trowel full of mortar is in one hand and the brick is in the other. I seem to remember a 1st year lecturer once telling us that brick size is determined by hand size... but whose hand?

On the word 'go' there was a surge of brick-hogging as groups gathered their desired stock of shapes and colours. Two approaches quickly emerged: either break or follow the rules. The rule-compliant laboured carefully and gradually mastered their craft under the exacting - and at times over-zealous - watch of Derek's trainee assistants. They also paved the way for self-sustainability and viable alternate income streams as and when the cruel world of Architecture spits them out.

The deviant bricklayers, on the other hand, had no use for levels, pointing rules, building lines - even trowels were tossed aside. Instead, the pavers' mallets were appropriated and exercised with glee: bricks were smashed and shards were poked into blobs of mortar in between precariously balanced cantilevers and bridges. 'Security feature' was mentioned as a one-brick wall had morphed into a half-brick wall, and it rose rapidly to superior heights, inspiring or perhaps intimidating some of the formal bricklayers to abandon caution and begin deconstructing their upper courses.

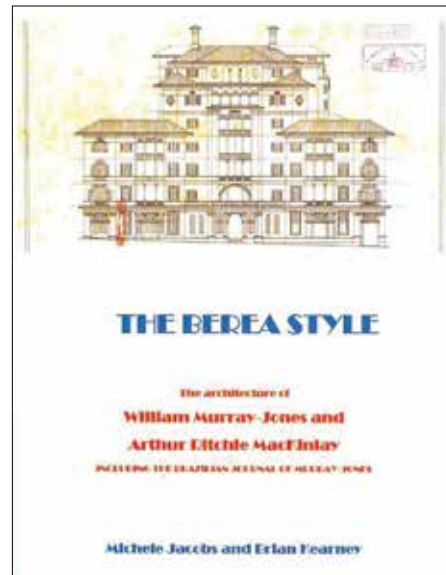
The simplicity of the level paving designs was deceptive: in the layout consisting of black and white bricks, the graded tonal density was sublime in its restraint. By contrast, there were groups of paving deviants who conspired to build exquisitely beautiful obstacle courses for anyone who would dare to take a stroll. The rich texture and 3-dimensionality of these vertically extruded paving fields became magical with the lengthening afternoon shadows. With sadly no camera to capture this late show I simply stayed and watched to the end.

Maria Cristina Giampietri

BOOK REVIEW

Berea Style

Michele Jacobs and Brian Kearney.
Published by Durban Heritage Trust, 2018.



With the street elevation treated as a centralised composition, Belmont on 15 Dr Pixley KaSeme (West) Street, Durban, was a prime example of the Berea Style. Architect AA Ritchie MacKinlay, 1927.

When Brian Kearney was preparing the *Revised listing of the important places and buildings in Durban* (1984), he coined the term Berea Style for an inter-war architecture, and in his article thereon, published in this Journal (3/4, 1992), advised that the term designated a group of buildings “quite unique in Durban”. Indeed, the book now released in collaboration with Michele Jacobs identifies only a few exceptions, which are in Pietermaritzburg.

Essentially, the book of 146 pages focusses on the works of the two pre-eminent designers of the style, William Murray Jones and Arthur Ritchie MacKinlay. There are definitions stretching from Cape Dutch revival, Art Deco and Style Moderne to the early Modern Movement, in a time Kearney asserts as “searching for something to replace the past...[and] correspond with...the modern age of the motor vehicle, the aeroplane, the dance hall, jazz and the radio”, and an acknowledgement of the concomitant development of the clay building materials industry.

The drawings featured and interrogated have their origins as approved plans in the Durban municipality, which on the advent of the microfilm, would have been discarded in the mid-1970s had not Kearney been approached and accepted the collection for holding in what became named the Barrie Biermann Architecture Library, UKZN. Here the drawings were curated and later digitally scanned by Jacobs, technical reference librarian.

Jones was borough architect of Durban, 1926-43. However, this was no ordinary career or public architect. On training in London, he had spent more than a decade “travelling”, as he termed the period working abroad with construction companies from 1907 on. Unusually, and most adventurous, the first six were spent in north-eastern Brazil, in the coastal city of Belém, gateway to the Amazon River along which he had participated in three expeditions, for which reason his “fascinating Amazon journal” is included, then Spain and the Far East. Having lived in the Tropics for so long, he then found the English climate “impossible”, and opted for Durban.

With the substantial experience gained in infrastructure architecture in exotic destinations, which “encompassed a much bigger picture than the individual building”, Jones’ skills well fitted into Durban of the 1930s. If not designed by him, then under his direction were realised park structures, public toilets, barracks, public swimming pools, market halls and even Nagle Dam and the first airport terminal building at Stamford Hill, with a symmetrical plan in the form of a fuselage and angled wings symbolic of its purpose. Coincident with the years of the great depression, many of the projects were never built, except for the beachfront amphitheatre and sunken garden, 1932 (see *KZNIA Journal* 3/2010), arranged to create work for the unemployed.

On arriving in Durban Jones re-connected with MacKinlay, also London trained and then in private practice. But it appears that Jones might have been the concept architect of much of MacKinlay’s oeuvre and, as Kearney concluded “What is quite remarkable about [Jones’] work is the way he could easily shift from the use of the Beaux Arts tradition, in which he would have been trained, to the Berea Style or to a much more modern vocabulary”.

Of the Berea Style we read, “the basic ingredients were those of the Mediterranean world: roofs that were hipped and covered with clay tiles most often of the Marseilles pattern; loggias with arcades and precast concrete columns of Tuscan or Doric form; small paned windows at times with timber shutters; slate paving and small stoned walling; and the eloquent symmetry of Palladian Italy. The primary design technique was symmetry, probably inspired by classical templates. Within such symmetrical compositions there was a repeated use of a strong central and vertical axis composed of doors, windows, arches, tiled spandrels and classical motifs – pilasters, volutes, aedicules and entablatures”. To this could be added the ‘pronounced’ eaves.

A great deal of the work of MacKinlay was residential. Among his best known is Quadrant House on Margaret Mncadi Ave (Victoria Embankment), 1927, designed as a ‘rooming house’ i.e. with single rooms and communal shared ablution washing and cooking facilities. To this I would add a personal favourite Llanberis, 1931, at 734 Currie Road. But, at least two tall buildings in the city centre were by MacKinlay, in which “sculptural effects reached their ultimate”, the Theo Schloss and AA buildings, unfortunately long demolished.

It was not only Jones and MacKinlay who were interested and skilled in the Berea style. Others who subscribed were Arthur Stanley Frost, who seems to have been Jones’ immediate predecessor in office Ing & Jackson and Chick & Bartholomew. This publication thus includes some of their work too.

Unfortunately there is no map, besides those of the Amazon River, and although many Durban streets were renamed as of 2007, the book is oblivious thereof, which makes finding ones way around the contemporary city rather difficult, especially for millennials.

Regardless, in the 25 years since his retirement at the end of January 1993, Kearney has been prolific in research and publication and consistent in scholarliness, even exemplary. Now we await the next publication.

Copies are available from Michele Jacobs (jacobsm1@ukzn.ac.za). **WP**

THE SCHIZOPHRENIA OF AN ARCHITECT. ARE WE INSULATED FROM OUR POLITICS?



Bangalore city skyline

SAIA-KZN immediate past-president, Ruben Reddy, was one of 6 speakers invited to address the 61st annual convention of the National Association of Students of Architecture, India, one of the largest of such organisations in the world, held at the SJB School of Architecture and Planning in Bangalore, south India, 19-23 January. What follows is an edited version of his speech. Editor

My talk today is focused on two main themes that have been the central pre-occupation of my adult life, architecture and democracy. It’s no secret that I was an activist involved in the fight against apartheid and was a staunch proponent for the adoption of democracy in my country. However, I’ve recently begun to wrestle with the notion of how I can reconcile my political ideologies with my profession against the backdrop of the recent political climate in my country and in other parts of the world.

We can thank the ancient Greeks for both the ideology of democracy and the profession of architecture in its purist form. In today’s world we can thank the huge financial resources of the energy world of the US, Europe, the Middle East and the Far East for capturing the ideals of the once noble pursuit of good architecture. But I’ll leave you to decide who has soiled the reputation of democracy. Democratically elected leaders will knowingly and deliberately implement policies that keep the majority ignorant and financially down-trodden to the extent that the majority becomes essentially powerless to effect meaningful change. They know no different and the alternatives are even more facile.

The only way we can combat the issues that we face is to provide the majority with access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other basic services that we all here today take for granted. The only way to do this is to promote urbanisation in a meaningful and positive way. This is the role of the built environment professional. It is a discourse and engagement outside our silos that we so slavishly protect and allow no other into but has rather resulted in us being followers as opposed to those who should lead.

The identity of a space is defined by how people experience and interact with it. I am of the mind-set that the right kind of human experience fosters a sense of place within the individual. This in turn creates a sense of belonging and gives individuals their unique identity. They begin to see that they do not exist alone in space but are rather part of a collective. Once we acknowledge that we are part of a collective society, we start to develop notions of mutual respect among individuals as well as respect for the surrounding environment. We begin to see that the way in which a person experiences space is fundamental to creating a society that places value on ideals such as encouraging diversity, integrity and respect. We need to strive to create spaces that foster the right kind of human experience. Further than building inspirational structures, our architecture must generate enduring social, environmental and economic returns while creating a sense of place among the people who interact with them.

The challenge that we face as architects and urban planners is to create dense spaces that still have a soul and identity. This is by no means an easy task but we need to set up a discourse within our profession to start to grapple with

these ideas. Clearly, if the world economy and in particular the developing world is to grow more rapidly and to do so in a way that creates mass employment, reduce poverty and develop human rights, this growth can only be done in cities.

It’s frankly quite embarrassing that groups of economists and social scientists are critiquing our profession and finding holes in the way we go about our business. We can no longer adopt the romantic view of the architects of old who found value in their work purely from the beauty of the buildings and monuments they designed. The role of the architect has changed and our function as a driver for change and social liberty has become more prevalent than ever. We can no longer remain detached from the politics of the country and the world as a whole.

There is a degree of schizophrenia in our profession. On the one hand we want to keep the profession pure by creating beautiful structures that are detached from the socio-political landscape. But on the other hand, built environment professionals are in a position to effect meaningful change in society. We need to allow politics and the broader socio-economic issues that arise from it to shape our work thereby creating the change that we want to see in society.

The degree to which we allow this to happen needs to be seriously interrogated and at times even questioned. The romantic age of the built environment professional is over and it’s time to get our heads out of the clouds and start to tackle the real issues that society is faced with. Never ever be afraid to speak truth to power!

END PIECE

Informality

South Africans are generally unaware of the impact of UIA DURBAN 2014 and its theme of ‘Otherwhere’. This enigmatic word attracted thousands more than originally anticipated to our Congress and has since got tongues wagging in the UIA. For example, delegates were amazed how they came across a congregational mosque, an Islamic shrine, a Catholic cathedral, a Jewish cemetery, Gandhi’s Library and a shared Ecumenical Centre all juxtaposed and interacting compared with the situation in other countries.

The UIA Education Commission under pressure from countries in Africa and the Far East and South America consequently adopted a theme of ‘INFORMALITY’. This is being teased out with international student essay writing competitions and academic papers. INFORMALITY will be the theme of a forthcoming issue of our Journal. What can we learn and gain from it? What impact has informality had on our cities and countryside? The plethora of razor wire on high walls in our suburbs?

Holy Cows will be confronted across the spectrum. For example, the current cry for pit toilets to be eliminated from all schools, can we really afford to flush every contribution away with nine litres of potable water? Our National Building Regulations currently have no guidelines for earth construction. Is this realistic in a developing economy in Africa? On the other extreme: land redistribution without compensation! Is all the panic warranted? How do poor rural dwellers really utilize their land and what are possible settlement patterns?

A series of writers will tease out this theme, but WHAT ABOUT YOUR IDEAS? Please contact the SAIA-KZN administration if you have issues you would like to be considered.

Rodney Harber, guest editor for the issue.



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