



Crofton & Benjamin



THERE IS OFTEN A CANTILEVERED canopy that juts out, sheltering you from the scale of the building above, encouraging a view upwards, or giving you a welcoming embrace. The influence of the Brazilian Modernists Oscar Niemeyer and Affonso Eduardo Reidy are apparent.

Curiously shaped window openings are another signature of Crofton & Benjamin. At Hurlingham, the rake of a staircase informs the polygonal opening and the balcony next to it. The lines connect to make yet another playful composition, augmented by organic forms.

Berea Area

- 1. HURLINGHAM
478 Currie Rd, Essenwood.
- 2. HYDE PARK
69 Peter Mokaba Rd, Berea.
- 3. FARRINGDON
87 Calo Rd, Glenwood.

The Embankment

- 4. HAVEN COURT
133 Margaret Mncadi Ave.
- 5. WESTPOINT
131 Margaret Mncadi Ave.
- 6. RIVIERA HOTEL
127 Margaret Mncadi Ave.



Beachfront Area

- 7. LAS VEGAS
167 Snell Parade, North Beach.
- 8. LANCASTER GATE
11 South Beach Ave, Addington.
- 9. SILVER SANDS
20 Erskine Ter, Addington.
- 10. GROOTE SCHUUR
2 Erskine Ter, Addington.



Finding Crofton & Benjamin in Durban

THE BUILDINGS OF DEREK CROFTON AND ISAAC BENJAMIN generally have a differentiated 'front' and 'back' that expresses their specific purpose. The back gives access to the units and turns away from the street for privacy, while the front expands to enclose the garden space. At the same time, rather than creating a flat façade, the architects pushed the spaces in and out, allowing rooms and balconies to have differing views of the city.

The buildings that resulted from their decade-long partnership represent a muscular and expressive approach to form-making that is combined with a simple but delightful structural awareness of how loads are transferred to the ground.

Crofton and Benjamin's work is in many ways defined by a precise ability to mediate between the conflicting constraints of site, programme and environment and create opportunities for an exuberant, formally expressive architecture that reflects its locale. The abstract compositional nature of their work, the play of line, shape, weave, material and texture unite in buildings that are appropriate to their place.

A RAPID PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT Las Vegas was one of several blocks built post war along the northern beachfront. The northern unit returns down the side street, taking advantage of north light for the bedrooms, while the central and southern units are angled to engage views up and down the coastline.

BOTH MEN STUDIED ARCHITECTURE at the University of the Witwatersrand, and met at the Johannesburg architectural practice of Harold Le Roith, an important mid-century commercial firm responsible for a variety of buildings. Their practice had its genesis with a commission for the Claridges Hotel on Durban's beachfront, which was completed in 1955.

In the years they worked together, they were responsible for many iconic residential and hotel buildings in the region, up and down the coast and inland to Pietermaritzburg. They also designed residences for private clients, and provided 'upgrades' to standard township houses for less well-off clients.



Crofton

&

Benjamin



JAZZY APARTMENTS AND HOTEL BUILDINGS
DESIGNED IN THE 1950s AND '60s THAT ADD
A RICH LAYER OF MODERNIST EXPRESSION TO
DURBAN ARE THE SEMINAL WORK OF



Las Vegas



FUTHER READING

Benjamin, I. (1997). Issy Benjamin: Durban, My Kind of Town, My Kind of People, KZNIA Journal, 2/1997: 6-7.
Butler, A. (1987). Issy Benjamin: Aspects of his Durban Architecture, NPIA Journal, 1/1987: 9.

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