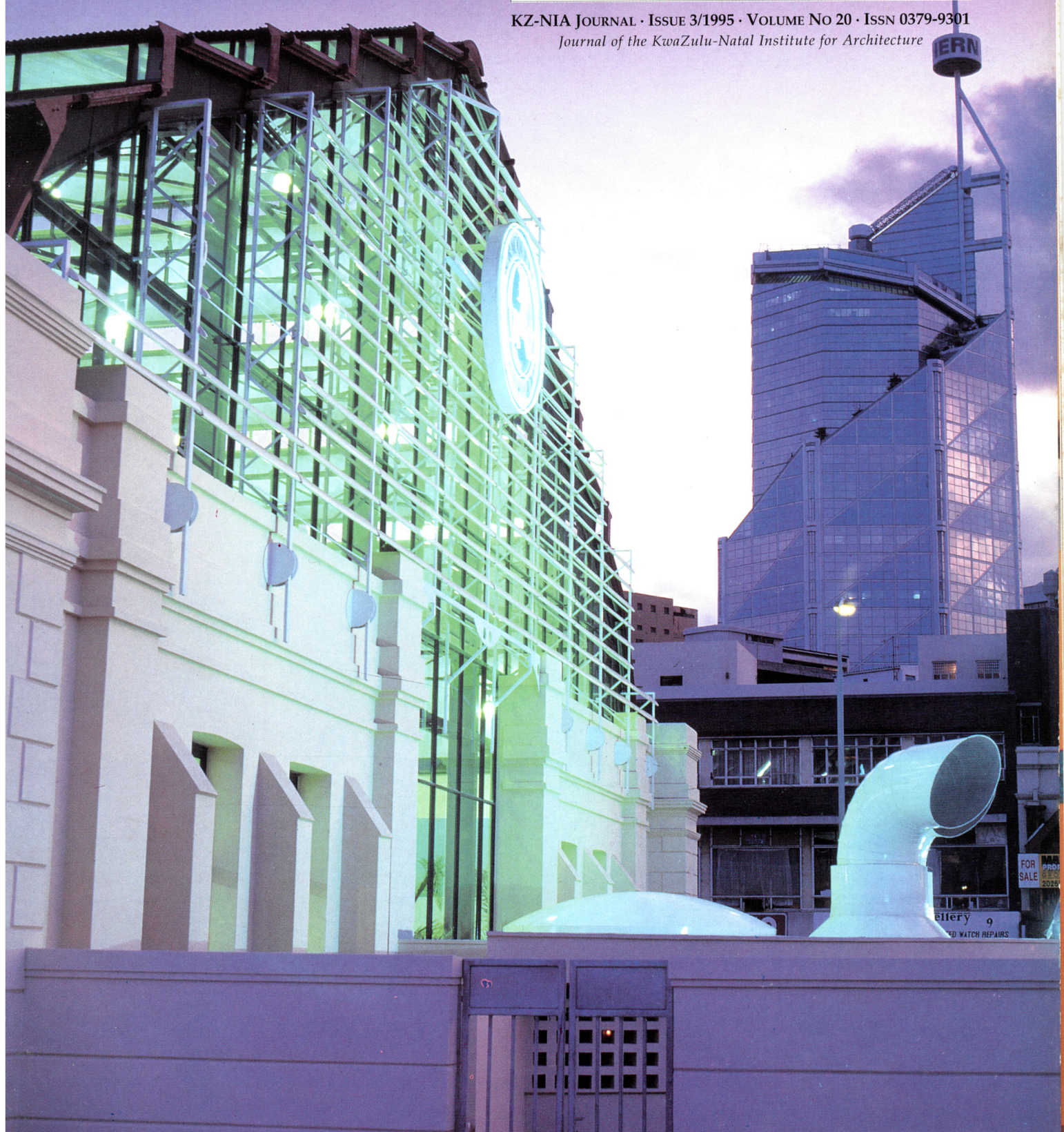




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Journal of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture



1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards



Editorial

Some thoughts on the 1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

This issue presents all of the 23 submissions received for the 10th biennial Institute of South African Architects, KwaZulu-Natal region Awards of Merit programme, as well as the 8 submissions for the Conservation Awards programme – a new record in each category. These programmes covered buildings completed between January 1993 and December 1994. In the event, four buildings were successful in the former category and one received a Special Mention, a particularity of the KZ-N, and two buildings received Conservation Awards.

As is customary, the jury was appointed by the KZ-NIA Regional Committee with Sydney Baillon as co-ordinator. David Yuill from Bloemfontein, who served as an architect assessor external to the Province, was elected by the jury as its chairperson. Ismail Cassimjee, Janina Masojada, and Dean Jay (a new collection of people) were appointed KZ-NIA representatives. Michael Lewis, Professor of Art at Williams College, Massachusetts, and Visiting Lecturer at the University of Natal, was appointed lay member; and the writer appointed as academic architect.

As a matter of principle, all of the 31 entries were visited. In consequence, jurying took 3 full days, and in a geographic region stretching from the Drakensberg to Zululand the hired combi clocked up some 1400 kms.

A few points emerged: no entries from Pietermaritzburg (perhaps reflecting the uncertainty about our capital!); the high standards of work by the Architectural Services Division of the City of Durban in both new and conservation projects; and the relief that in that city the fates of the historical railway terminal building and train shed are at last sealed. But, while the jury lamented the fact that so few community buildings were sub-

mitted, it delighted in the refreshing approach to schools design in the Midlands, their informality, the external spaces, the climatically appropriate design, and the pleasant combination of material and colour.

The Awards programme is an overt way for the Institute to set standards for the public and the profession. But decision making was no easy task and involved eating, drinking and sleeping architecture for three days! And a further meeting a few days later. At least one building achieved an early unanimous acceptance, and that is the former train shed recycled as Durban Health & Racquet Club. This year's programme is the first that has rewarded office towers, and two at once, and both within a stone's throw of each other! And, having at last cracked the code in 1991, an award has again been made for a domestic house; and the KZ-N variant of Special Mention was given to the Chatsworth crematorium.

As to the Conservation Awards: here the thoroughness of the invisible additions to Clarendon Court and the shoehorning of additional accommodation for Investec within the historic envelope of the Reserve Bank, took little convincing.

As this issue is going to print, I have Gordon Small who died on 19 September on my mind. He was a veteran Award juror and himself an Award recipient for the Faculty of Arts building in Pietermaritzburg (1977), the Natal Playhouse (1987), and the Tatham Art Gallery (1991); he was a stalwart Pietermaritzburg member of the KZ-N Institute, Natal President (1979-80) and ISAA President-in-Chief (1980-81). This issue of the *Journal* is dedicated to his memory. Gordon loved life, his family, his practice and the Institute. Our thoughts are with his wife Joyce and the family.

Walter Peters, Editor

I didn't really start to think until I began running out of synonyms. Only then did I realise how little I understood the architecture of South Africa. We were on a three-day journey to evaluate the nominations for the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture Awards of Merit, and I found myself repeating my standard criticism at one-hour intervals. Already I had dismissed a modern highrise ("insubstantial"), a religious facility ("flimsy"), and a school ("lacking solidity") and now I was getting desperately short of fresh ways to say the same thing.

There were six of us: Walter Peters, David Yuill, Ismail Cassimjee, Janina Masojada, and someone who seemed to be called "Spook" in conversation but Dean Jay on paper. I was the odd man out: the others were all practising South African architects while I was an American professor who had not previously come much closer to the equator than a pizza shop in south Philadelphia. When we first met on Wednesday night, August 23, in the charming rooms of the Institute, and started passing around the dossiers, most of us were strangers. But we were soon doing what juries do everywhere—grumbling about the miserable presentations, wondering about the missing candidates ("where are the buildings from Pietermaritzburg?") and making snap judgments based on one or two pathetic snapshots.

The others soon set me straight about the "flimsiness" that I thought I saw everywhere. By Friday afternoon, after we had toured a crematorium, a sandstone house, several highrises and a few office buildings, they explained the characteristic physiognomy of South African architecture. Naturally and unconsciously I had been evaluating buildings in terms of my own climate. The point where an American building meets the weather is a battlezone, and wherever ground or sky is touched is a point of infiltration for dampness, wind, and temperatures of 30 degrees Celsius below and 40 degrees above. But in benign Natal, building skins can be looser, freer, a



Cover: Durban Health and Racquet Club
Photograph: Craig Hudson

ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

Travels & Travails of a jury

relaxed enclosure of a volume. I was criticising shirts because they didn't look like coats.

We soon loosened up, and began making odd discoveries. Again and again we encountered a circle on our ground plans, a geometric figure that was lodged within a building, half inside, half outside. On the inside it might be used to locate a partition wall while beyond the facade it would perhaps define a terrace. "Here it is again!" I remember Spook laughing, surprised to find it again in the clubhouse of a golf course the day after we spotted it on a house by the Mzimkulu river.

Of course this is the classic signature of '90s architecture, the device of applying a geometric order to the building through an abstract union of a square and a circle. Naturally this was done on postmodern terms, not to create some sort of axial arrangement of clarity and control, but instead as a sign of disintegration, making that quintessential postmodern gesture, the fragment of a disturbed order. Unlike historical geometry – which served to orient you to important places like thrones and altars – these new fragments of geometry just serve to move you around, clueless and a bit disoriented.

Some of us grumbled about the arbitrariness of this form but the older jurors were more tolerant. This was typical of the inexperienced designer, we were told: thinking graphically on paper, and creating relationships that were visible on the plans but would never be apparent in the realised building.

We soon realised that we were split by age into two factions, roughly divided at forty. The younger jurors were vocal in their judgements, which tended to be especially polarized, either harsh or wildly enthusiastic. They insisted on the highest integrity and consistency, and placed much value on the personal hand of the architect. The jurors who were older, if only by a few years, tended to be more forgiving and less judgemental. If they perhaps thought in more institutional terms, they were more aware of practical difficulties and compromis-

es. They tended to prefer the ambitious project, even if flawed, that achieved some degree of success. We younger jurors, on the other hand, preferred the smaller project, something of absolute jewel-like precision where execution and conception were on the same flawless level.

So it went, lively and volatile, until Friday night dinner at the Hluhluwe Game Reserve. As we staggered outside to find our huts in the darkness, overcome by shakiness in our legs at the burdens of deliberation, the list of prize-winners seemed settled. And then we discovered next morning, once we began to haggle over the final vote, that our split had turned into an unbridgeable chasm.

I remember vividly each juror arguing with passion for his buildings, presenting the case in each person's idiosyncratic style. I picture Wally shaking his head as he discovered some poorly resolved detail, judging each project as if it were one of his second-year students at the university. I see Janina striding through the spaces of a house, rolling her eyes as she passes in the hall, her look

communicating *this one is definitely out*. And I remember Ismail, thoughtful for hours, then suddenly speaking up from the back of the combi, an impassioned plea for the high seriousness of architecture, speaking movingly about the poetry of the first lines made on the site. We made our decisions, signed our names, and then tossed it all out again. In the end it took a week of phone calls and faxes until we were all satisfied.

Looking back now, two months later, I recall the moments of intense pleasure during the

trip: the sight of Zulu school children pouring in high spirits across the courtyards of their school, an axial complex that dissolved into a gentle grouping at the foot of a mountain. The superb brickwork of a subtle addition on Ridge Road, where the rich mortar joints were of sensual delight. A thrilling moment at Hluhluwe when our combi was caught amongst two dozen elephants crossing the road while Sylvia's controlled voice rang through the combi ("Sydney, I think it's time to back up. Sydney! Back up!") And the odd delight at seeing a jaunty client whose own personal style was so harmonious, so calibrated, so at one with his building, that you could imagine his wardrobe included with the specs.

And then I become a little melancholy to



The 1995 Awards jury: Ismail Cassimjee, David Yuill, Walter Peters, Janina Masojada, Dean Jay and Michael Lewis.

think how rarely we do this, go to a place and experience the thing itself, rather than an image of it. And how precious little time there is to walk around and stand with friends in buildings, pointing to joints, hearing the echo of their voices in high-waisted rooms, and watching the fall of lengthening shadows across rough-grained walls.

Michael Lewis

Dr Lewis, Assistant Professor of Art at Williams College, Massachusetts, visited the Natal School of Architecture during August and September 1995 under the auspices of the Students Visiting Lecturers Trust Fund.



1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

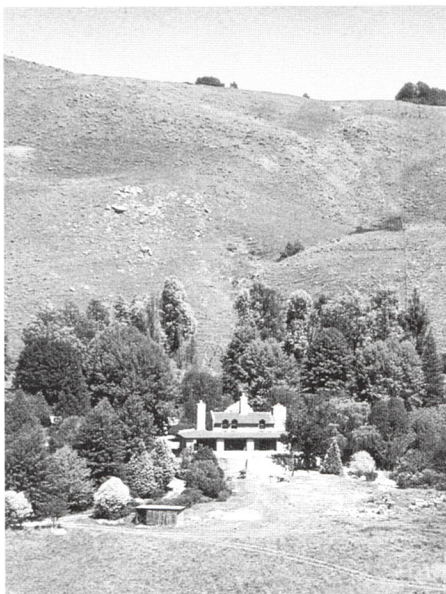
Awards of Merit

Glen Towy Holiday Cottage, Underberg
Johann Slee Architects

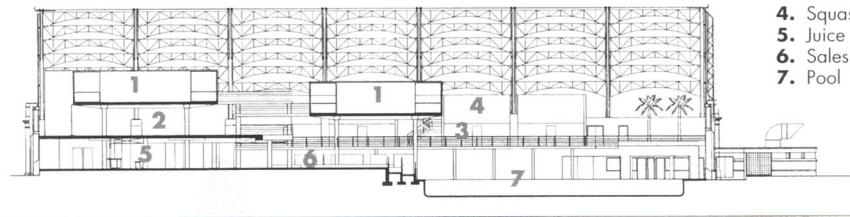
For this Drakensberg retreat the architect opted for a response both warm and often meticulously detailed. At the heart of the house and separating dining and family areas, is the hearth; the principal habitable rooms open on grade to the terrace, to the sun and to the view to the Mzimkulu River.

The materials employed are limited and mainly natural. Exterior and interior walling is of Lesotho sandstone, a material generally excluded from the materials palette for residential architecture. Floors and ceilings, window, door and cupboard frames are of Malaysian Teak obtained from recycled railway sleepers.

Despite reservations about site and services integration and the lapidarian skills, the jury commends this cottage for the ambience achieved in the remote rural location.



Durban Health & Racquet Club
Johnson Murray Architects



- 1. Aerobics Studios
- 2. Training Floor
- 3. Cardiovascular Training
- 4. Squash Courts
- 5. Juice Bar
- 6. Sales
- 7. Pool

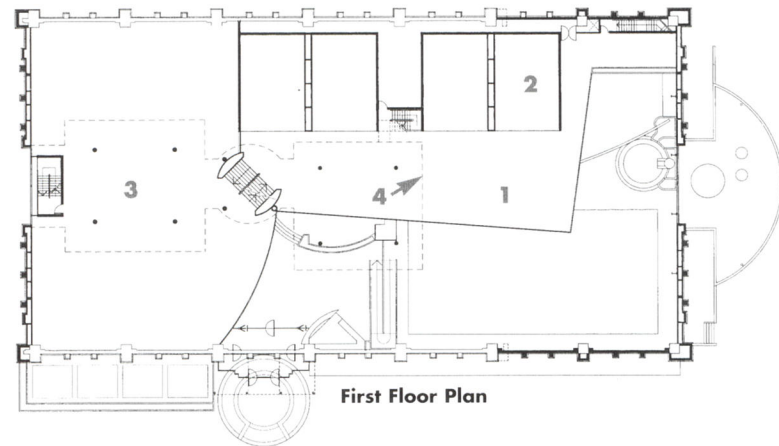
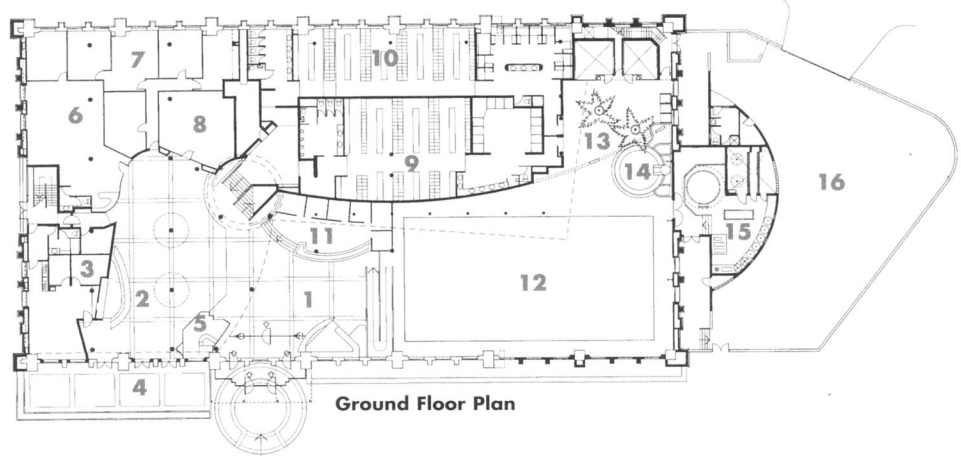
This building concludes a conservation battle that began in the early 1970s when the railway ceased to penetrate the city centre.

It was the interior of the building that most impressed the jury where, upon entering, the organisation of space and circulation are presented with much clarity. New life has been breathed into the shell of the redundant train shed with an insertion that is visually and structurally totally independent. The new work is restrained, never dominating the original, but serving to reinforce the old train shed's character principally by preserving the spatial volume.

While the exterior maintains its Victorian utilitarian character and the building still lacks



proper integration with the Centrum site, the jury was unanimous that this intervention which had achieved "more with less", set a new standard for emulation.



Ground Floor

- 1. Reception
- 2. Juice Bar
- 3. Kitchen
- 4. Terrace
- 5. Shop
- 6. Kids Club
- 7. Administration
- 8. Lifestyle Centre
- 9. Male Change
- 10. Female Change
- 11. Sales Area
- 12. Pool

- 13. Relaxation Area
- 14. Plunge Pool
- 15. Plant Room
- 16. Service Yard

First Floor

- 1. Cardiovascular Circuit
- 2. Squash Courts
- 3. Weight Training
- 4. Line of Aerobics Studios above

1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

Awards of Merit

136 Victoria Embankment, Durban
Interarc Architects

This office block exemplifies a highly responsive form of contextualism at the interface of the City and the Bay of Natal. It transforms the established modern idiom set by the triad of buildings by Crofton & Benjamin in the 1950s by translating the details, proportions and rhythms into a precise, contemporary expression while meeting the severe development constraints of the site.

The jury was impressed by the plays of symmetry on the bayside where the segment-vaulted hood reconciles the split-facade below, but was concerned about interface with the public along the side lanes and the entrance foyer. Readers are referred to NIA Journal 2/1993 in which this building was featured.



Tony Smith



Tony Smith

Metlife, 391 Smith Street, Durban

Stafford Associate Architects in association with Dirksen Blumenfeld & Krause

Metlife building has provided Smith Street with a point of reference. While the simple rectangular plan for this tower office block provides a very economical building solution, the sophisticated building envelope and the distinctive articulation at skyline level, called for special skills.

Despite a lack of consonance between elevations and of resolution at pavement level, the jury felt that the building had been well crafted and exuded durability. They particularly commented on the design of the internal public spaces and the articulation of the bowed curtain wall front.

Readers are referred to Architecture SA Jan/Feb 1995 in which this building was featured.



Angie Buckland

KZ-NIA Award of Merit Special Mention

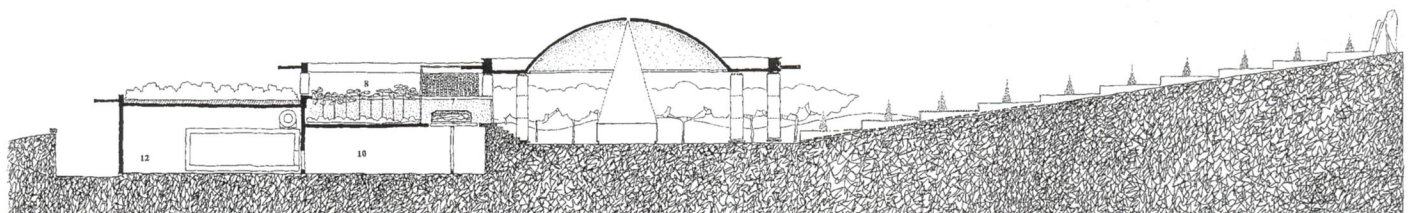
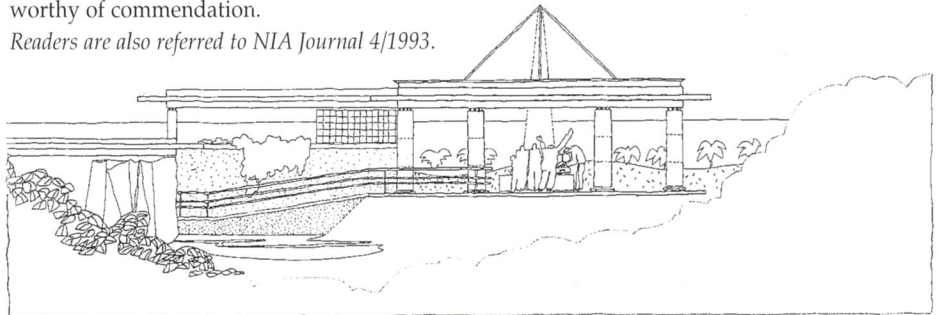
Chatsworth Crematorium, Higginson Highway, Mobeni Heights, Durban
John Royal Architects

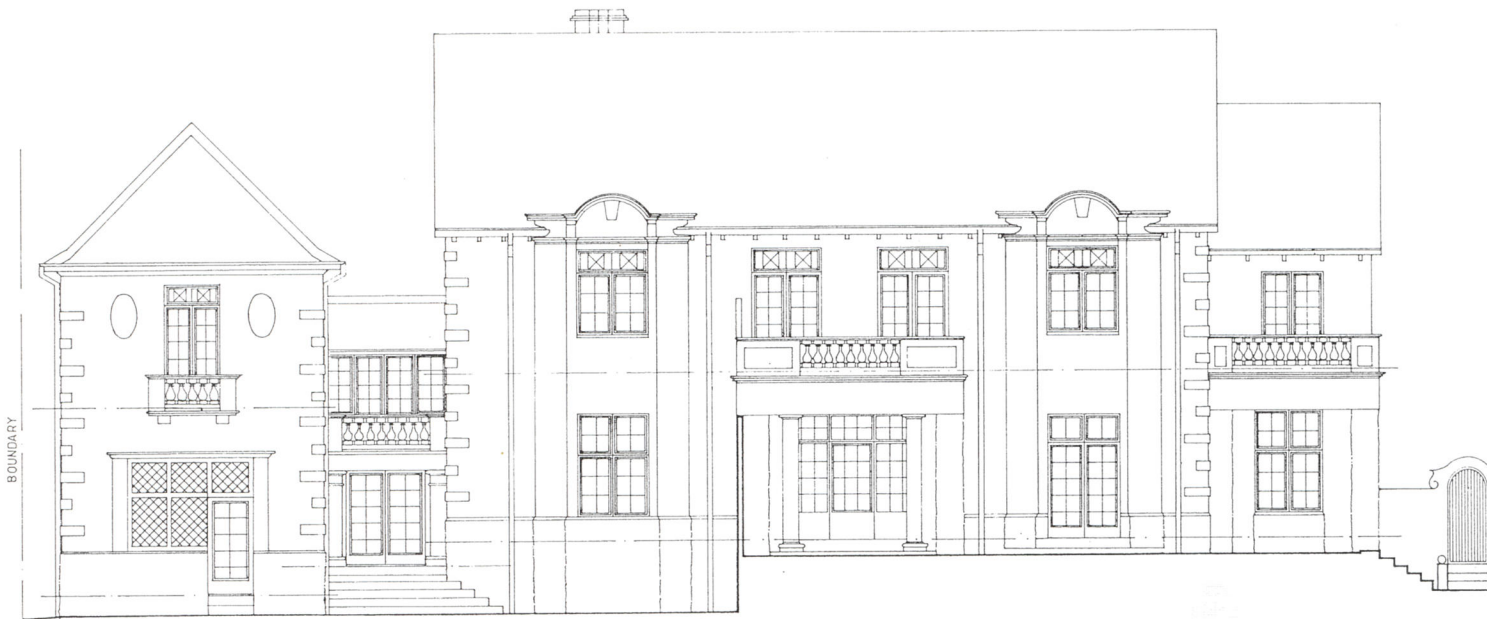
A crematorium is a building type that requires from its architect special sensitivity to mood and ambience. This crematorium has been topographically sensitively planned and the seriousness of its function has been indicated

in a few simple geometric forms. The combination of axially ordered compositions with a series of informal paths that weave between the axes, provide gentle spaces for strolling and contemplation during the several hour long ceremony.

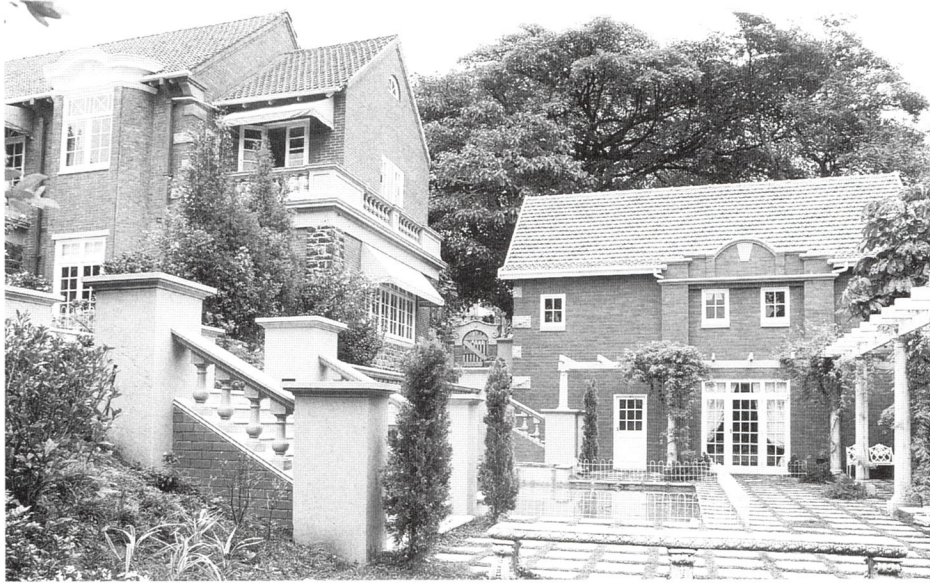
While the jury expressed reservations about the aging of materials, the integration of industrial accessories, and user comfort in inclement weather, it regards this building worthy of commendation.

Readers are also referred to NIA Journal 4/1993.





EAST ELEVATION



Patrick Royal

Clarendon Court, 378 Ridge Road, Durban
Robert Brusse Architect

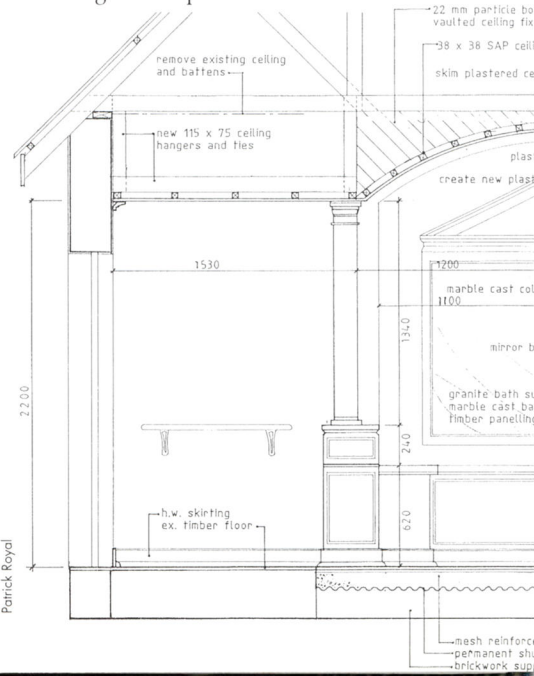
Clarendon Court, a superb 1918 Edwardian house by Street-Wilson & Paton, had undergone a series of unsympathetic alterations, including division into two units.

The architect has now restored the house while making a series of understated additions in the style of the original. A handsome garage extension, the replacement of missing woodwork, the creation of a terraced garden behind the house, even the treatment of the brickwork and pointing: all bear the mark of patient study and attention to detail.

Whereas many restorations succeed in replicating the details while losing the feeling of the old, this project is distinguished by the scrupulous way in which the materials and their patina of age are respected.



Patrick Royal



Merit and Conservation Awards

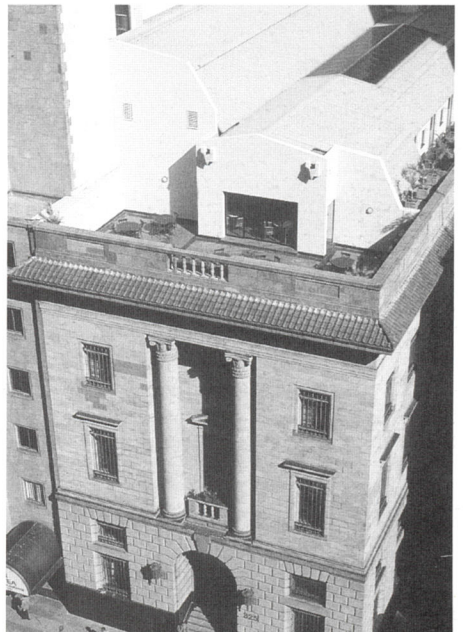
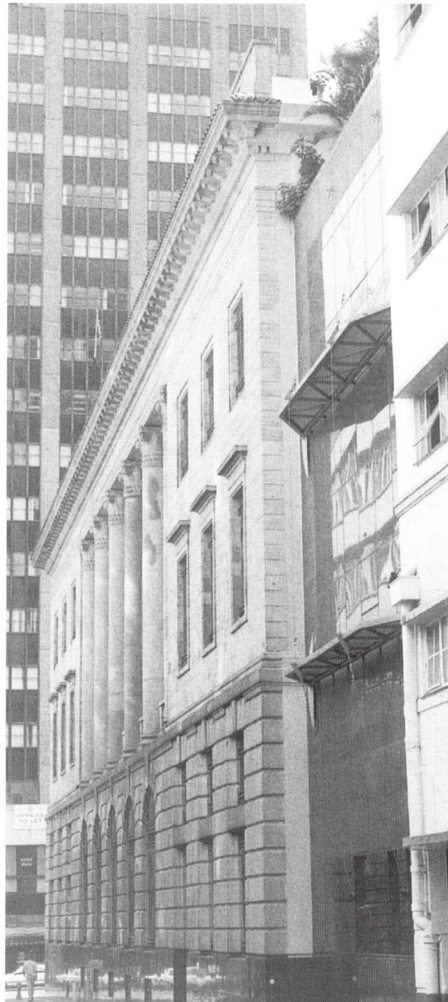
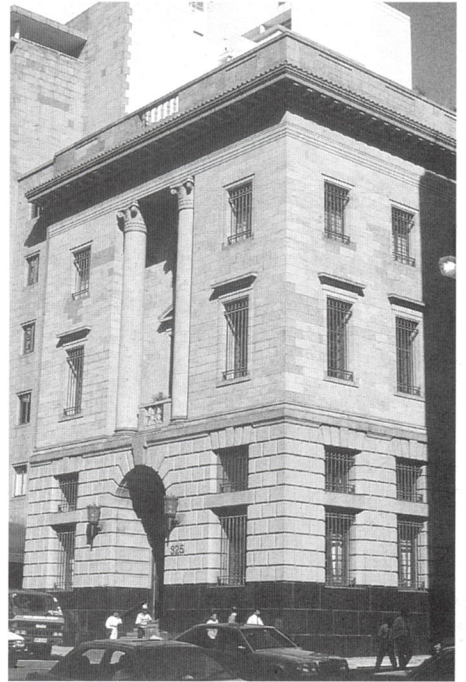
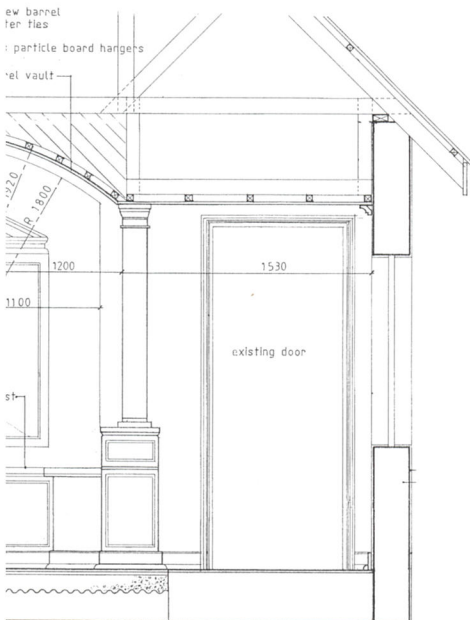
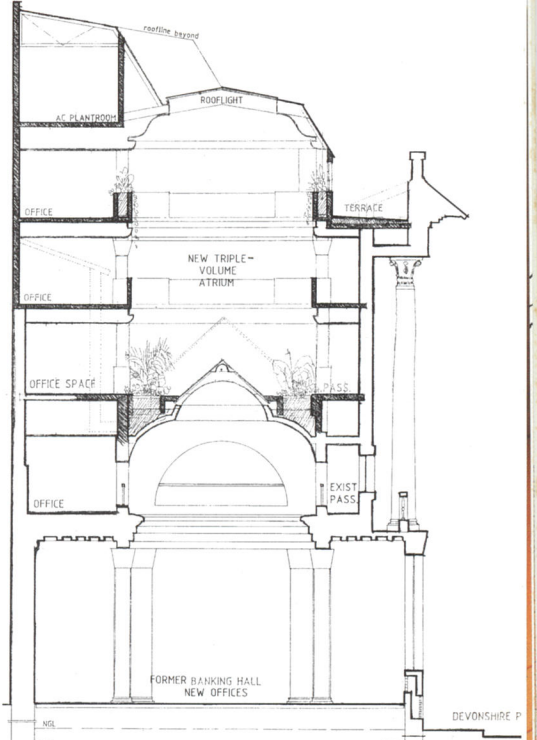
Awards

Investec Bank, 325 Smith Street, Durban
Architects in Association: Stafford Associate Architects cc and Koseff Van der Walt Architects
 The former Reserve Bank (1935-39), of impressive Roman classical design, has not only been restored but has been significantly enlarged with a major roof addition and a rear wing.

Because of the rich granite and sandstone of which the original building was constructed and because of the resolution of the classical composition, additions had to be discreet and subtle. The roof addition is set back from the street and is concealed from passers-by.

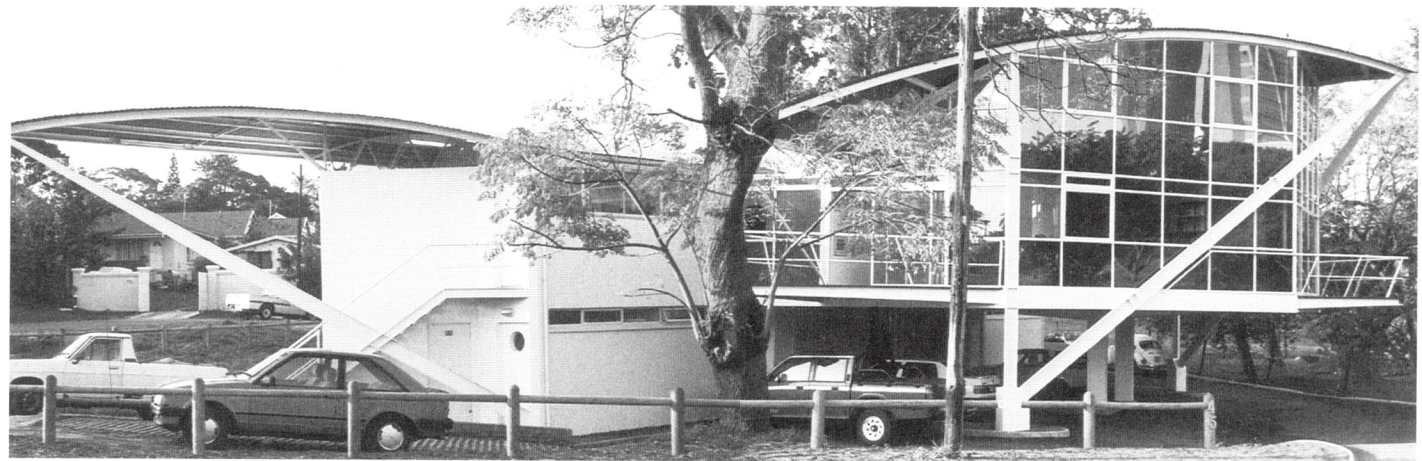
Likewise, the rear addition, in a muted modern character, recedes self-deprecatingly from the streetline as a thin planar object behind the solid mass of the Bank. Even more ingenious was the three-storey addition above, which threatened to block the natural light that filtered through oculi into the domes of the banking space. At a considerable loss of space, the upper stories were composed around an atrium, skylit at the top, to bring sunlight into the domes of the banking hall below.

Both client and architect are to be congratulated, the former for willingly sacrificing valuable space, and the architect for deferring to the character of the existing building.



1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

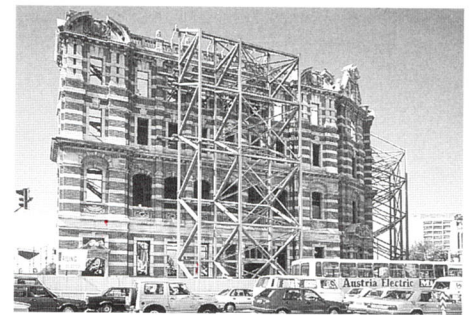
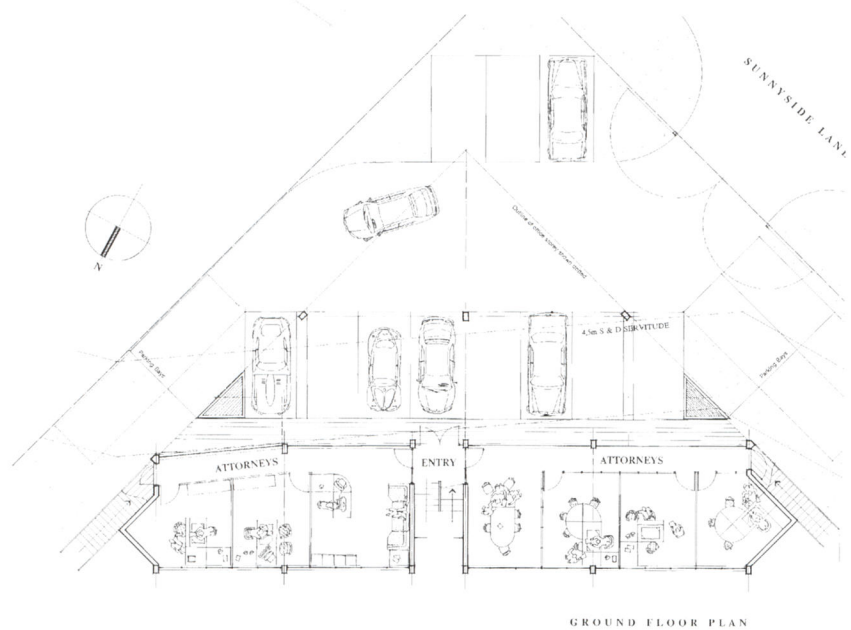
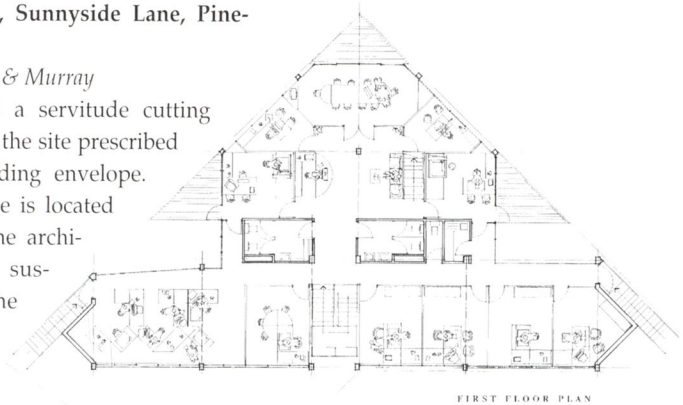
Merit Submissions



Architects' Offices, Sunnyside Lane, Pine-town

Myles Pugh Sherlock & Murray

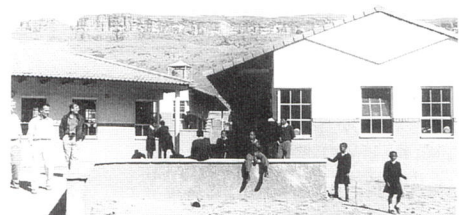
Building lines and a servitude cutting diagonally through the site prescribed the triangular building envelope. Lettable office space is located to one side, and the architects' offices are suspended over the servitude.



Redevelopment of former Durban Station Terminal Building

Ing Jackson de Ravel & Hartley

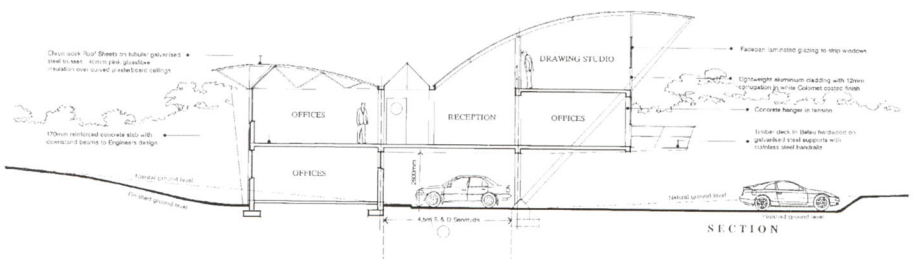
This project involved the integration of extensive office accommodation and two parking levels (one below the level of the existing foundations) with the historic station facade on the corner of Soldiers Way and Pine Street. To meet with such a brief, the weight of the facade was temporarily transferred to a steel scaffold erected on the pavement until the basement was built.



**Thendela Primary and Secondary School, Kamberg;
Jabula Secondary School, Lidgetton;
Primary School, Rosetta; and
Dabula Manzi Pre-primary and Secondary Schools, Klein Mooi River.**

Hughes Bryan Birss cc

The Midlands Educational Trust represents an attempt by the communities in three of the commercial farming districts of the Midlands to provide quality education up to Matric. In turn, the architects have provided schools with individual identity within exceptional cost restraints.



1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

Merit Submissions



Lucas Gardens, 541 Ridge Road, Durban
Mullins Associates

The facade to Ridge Road of this development for retired people serves to "project an outwardly active, colourful and dynamic presence, removed from any musty or negative connotation with being old and retired". At the core stands the former Edwardian villa of c1915 now containing communal facilities.



Edge of the Sea Apartments, Umhlanga Rocks
FGG Architects

This stepped block of luxury apartments is literally on the edge of the sea at Umhlanga Rocks.

As this submission, the first of three building phases, with the next currently under construction, does not allow for a full appreciation of design intent, the jury has recommended that it be accepted at the next Awards programme.

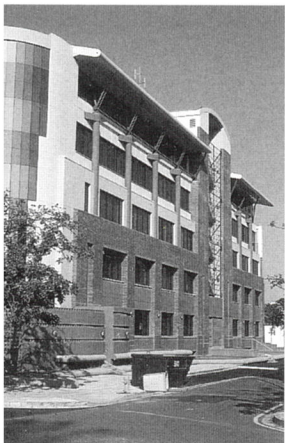


Additions to City Police Headquarters, Old Fort Place, Durban;
Papwa Sewgolum Golf Clubhouse, New Germany Road, Durban;
Kings Park Olympic Pool Redevelopment, Battery Beach Road, Durban; and
Durban Electricity Customer Services Building, Jelf Taylor Crescent, Durban
Architectural Services, City of Durban
See also NIA Journal 4/1993

Water & Waste Head Office, Ordnance Road, Durban
Johnson Murray Architects

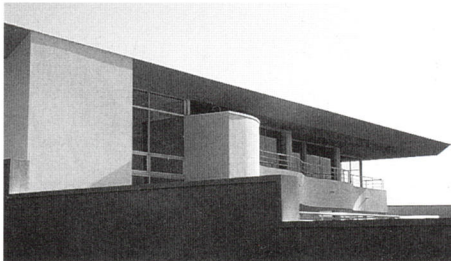
A site with roads on three sides and a public square on the fourth demands an architecture of "front" elevations only. Also, the building needed to address the scales of both the Centrum, which it abuts, and the existing streetscape, the latter being acknowledged by the facebrick base.

See also Architecture SA Jan/Feb 1995.



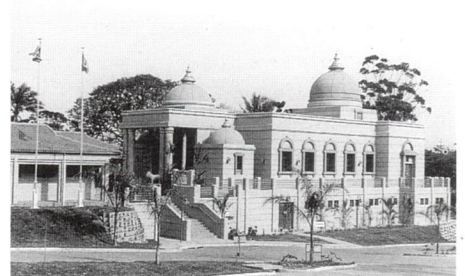
Hilltop Camp, Hluhluwe
FGG Architects

This project, in the oldest proclaimed game reserve in Africa (1895), involved upgrading existing and providing further accommodation, a restaurant and visitors' centre.



House Van der Vyver, Umhlanga Rocks
Elphick Proome Architects

"An exciting brief, a well located site and a client wishing to make a statement with a budget to back it up are the crucial ingredients of this design".



Ramakrishna Temple and Ashram Complex, Glen Anil, Umhlanga Rocks
Naren Mistry & Vikram Desai Architects cc

This complex constitutes the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, a Hindu cultural organisation.



Atherton Office Development, 291 Florida Road, Durban
Stafford Associate Architects cc

Taking into account the residential character of Florida Road and the adjacent Edwardian villas, this building had to harmonise with the environment.

Eric Brinkman

1995 ISAA KwaZulu-Natal Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

Conservation Submissions



Charleston, 14 Waverton Road, Durban

Stafford Associate Architects cc

This villa on the crest of the Berea was designed by William Emery Robarts c1885.

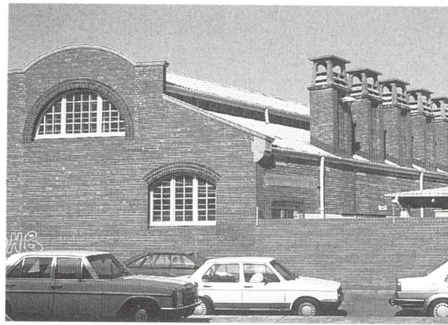
Serving as the British Consul's residence for many years, it is distinguished by the verandas and the widow's walk. Restoration involved reroofing with corrugated metal, renovating the kitchen and bathrooms, a complete redesign of the pool side, and the building of a new boundary wall. During the restoration a vaulted ceiling was discovered in the billiard room and restored.



Cultural & Documentation Centre, Epsom Road, Durban

Architectural Section, House of Delegates

Minimal intervention characterises the recycling of the Baker inspired former Epsom Road School (1913) as a centre for the preservation of Indian heritage and culture. Established to commemorate and reflect the cultural heritage of South Africa's Indians since their arrival in 1860, as well as their interaction with other cultures, the Centre includes a library, display rooms and a hall for staging music, dance, drama and workshops.



Conservation workshops, 102 Prince Alfred Street, Durban

Architectural Services, City of Durban

This building of 1920 was designed as a brewery, beerhall and refectory for Africans. In converting it to art, textile and paper conservation workshops, the architects inserted removable drywall partitioning to the interior spaces, and generally renovated the structurally sound and formally bold building.

The Mansions, 535-45 West Street, Durban *Stafford Associate Architects cc*

The architects were commissioned to refurbish and repair the front and side elevations of this 4-storey cast and wrought iron verandahed landmark of 1904, which began its life as an hotel with (as is still the case) furniture shops on the ground floor.

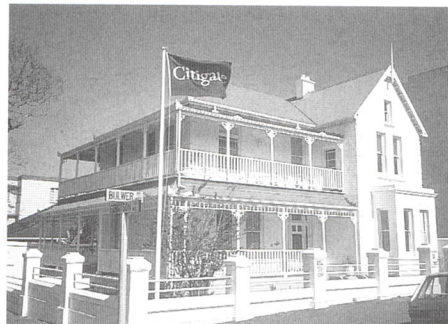
Despite the structural engineer's initial condemnation and the client's original wish for demolition as a far more viable option, selective cutting and replacement saved this historic veranda.



Victorian Villa, 203 Bulwer Road, Durban

Roy Farren Associates

This project involved the careful restoration and conversion of a double storey Victorian villa to office usage. In so doing, a new stair was set in the original stair position, attic space made accessible, and a conservatory added to the rear. The brackets to the catslide veranda are new and inspired by reference to the company's logo of sky and clouds.



KwaMuhle Museum, 130 Ordnance Road, Durban

Architectural Services, City of Durban



In this project the former Bantu Affairs Commission building (1927) was recycled as the KwaMuhle Museum of 20th Century Durban with its focus on the urban African community.

While some might say nothing was done, this building called for restraint and for doing as little as possible to conserve the sombre bureaucratic ambience.

See also NIA Journal 4/1993

Obituaries

Eric Pettit and Gordon Small

The founders of the Pietermaritzburg practice Small & Pettit, established 1965, died within 3 months of each other.

Eric Pettit 1919-1995

Eric Pettit was born in Benoni on 17 December 1919. For family and economic reasons he left school in Std 9 to earn a living, and joined the Carbineers when war broke out. Towards the end of the war he volunteered to become a pilot, but while on a training flight he was involved in a crash that led to 2 years of plastic surgery, half the time in hospital. On recovery he completed Matric by correspondence and enrolled for a BArch at Wits, qualifying in 1951. From 1953-1960 he was in practice on the South Coast. In 1961 Eric joined the NPA in Pietermaritzburg. When Gordon Small invited him to join his expanding practice in 1964, he welcomed the opportunity. Their skills and interests complemented each other and each drew on the other's strength. Eric was absorbed with practical, innovative solutions. His designs were invariably clean, direct statements, and his working drawings models of clarity. His main contribution to the firm's success was his administrative ability and business acumen. Quiet, resolute, efficient, hard-working and likable, he provided Gordon with invaluable support.

Michael Dyer

Gordon Small 1927-1995

In a tribute to Gordon Small his friend, Simon Roberts, prominent attorney and regular Awards juror, said at the funeral service:

In the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral in London there are memorials to some of Britain's greatest sailors and soldiers and airmen. To the right of the doorway which leads down to the crypt there is a modest plaque which says (in Latin) – "if you would see his monument look around". This is the monument to Sir Christopher Wren.

Well, if I gaze around me for a memorial to Gordon Robinson Small, I see firstly this throng of grieving friends. And secondly, outside this building (Cathedral of the Holy Nativity) I see – not only in Pietermaritzburg but dotted all over Natal – an impressive list of monu-

ments. So I want to say something first about Gordon the Man whose life on earth has now come to an end; and then to offer some words about Gordon Small the Architect.

Gordon was born in Scotland in 1927. His father, William Wells Small, brought his family out to South Africa in 1936. He was a cabinet-maker and a fly-fisherman and he had that rare quality of taking infinite pains about whatever he did. And he passed this quality on to his sons Billy and Gordon.

Gordon was hilarious when he talked – as he often did – about his early recollections of Natal in the 1930s and 1940s. At DHS he was not (and I think he would have been the first to admit it) a distinguished scholar. But he was sensible about cultivating his talents in the arts and in those many things that make for a civilised life. So it was that he acquired a lively yet sensitive feeling for history; for literature; for music; for "wine, women and song"; but most particularly for the theatre.

He had that remarkable quality, not definable, of making his friends and even acquaintances feel that they had always known him. Gordon was, I think, touchingly delicate – even tentative – in his dealings with his friends and with his family. Yet when things did matter, he could become the stern authoritarian. And on the building site he assumed an imperious assurance calculated to strike fear in the hearts of contractor and client alike – even if at times the working details were set out on the backs of his famous cigarette boxes.

He loved people. He loved non-malicious gossip. He seemed to know everyone, particularly in the theatre and in the world of the arts, and he could hold a dinner table enthralled.

Gordon's death leaves a great hole in the cultural life of the City (Pietermaritzburg). It came to be accepted generally that if any question touching the cultural life of our City had to be answered, the person to turn to was

Gordon Small. I think of the Macrorie House Museum and the Van der Stel Foundation. I think of the Pietermaritzburg Society; the Civic Centre Committee; the Elevation Control Committee. I think of his endless and loyal and innovative involvement with the Friends of the Tatham Art Gallery and his membership of the Acquisitions Committee of the Gallery itself. And his astonishing

transformation of the Old Supreme Court landmark of 1865 into one of the most beautiful art galleries in our country. He was always looking, discussing, digesting, suggesting. And his conducted tours of "The Lanes" became famous, so much so that the City Council accorded him the honour of naming one – "Small Lane" – after him.

But Gordon did not serve Pietermaritzburg alone. Through the theatre and his involvement with the South African Institute of Architects (of which he became President-in-Chief at one time and from whom he received a gold medal) his knowledge and enthusiasm sent pulses throughout the country and kept him in constant touch with the ephemeral world of theatre in particular and of the arts in general.

It is generally acknowledged, that Gordon's masterpiece was the conversion of the old Princes's Cinema and the re-cycling of Schlesinger's Tudor Playhouse to raise up, Phoenix-like, the new Natal Playhouse. It was a prodigious feat of imagination and complicated planning. This he achieved, at about one-half of the cost of the equivalent and grandiose status symbols created elsewhere in the Republic.

In the jargon of the profession he was called "an Architect's Architect". As a layman I take this to mean that his peers recognised in him special and superior qualities of invention which they acknowledged ungrudgingly. Those special qualities, I believe, consisted of an uncanny feeling for space, for sight lines and for axes and for those values we rather loosely think of as the values of Western civilisation.

This is no time to dwell on his technical skill and ingenuity. Yet I cannot refrain from referring to some of his more notable buildings. The Law School at the University here in Pietermaritzburg. And the Arts block with its magical Hexagon Theatre. And to the gem-like theatres he produced for Cordwalles and Cowan House. To the additions to St Alphege's built on a church mouse's budget. Or to the massive new Supreme Court building.

What is triumphantly clear to all of us as we look about Natal, is that Gordon Small the architect has left us a rich legacy of buildings which in themselves will remain a lasting monument to him, the Architect, long after the echoes of the words of the last of us here today have faded quite away.

But until we do, each one of us will – I know – continue to cherish in our hearts the warmest recollections of Gordon Small the Man – a remarkable and a very sweet man.

