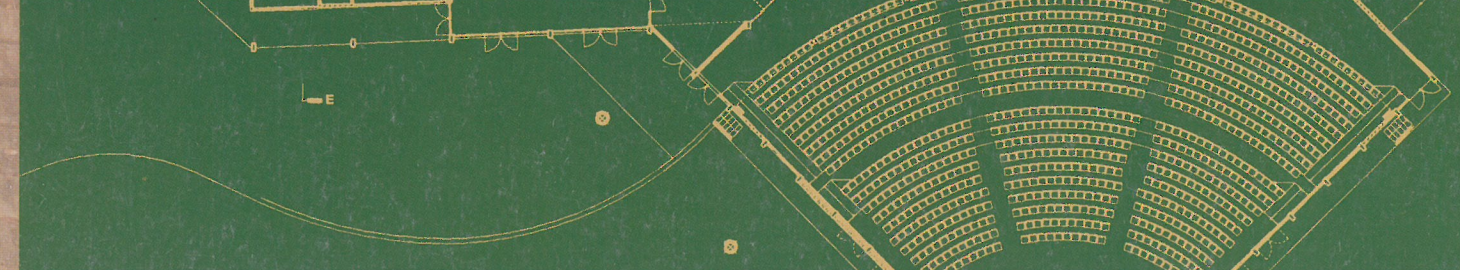
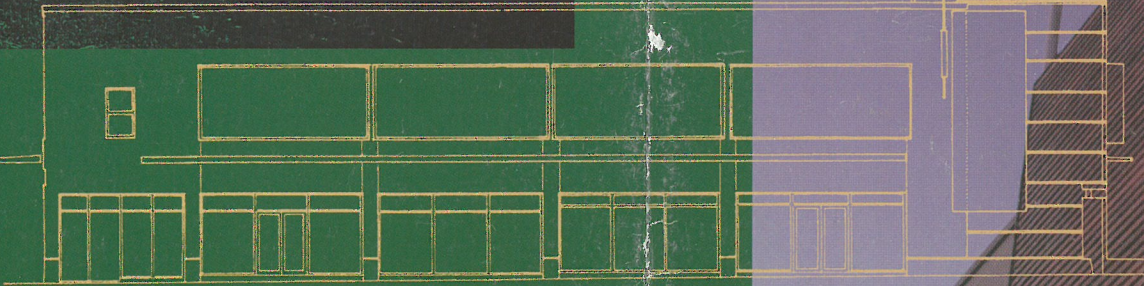
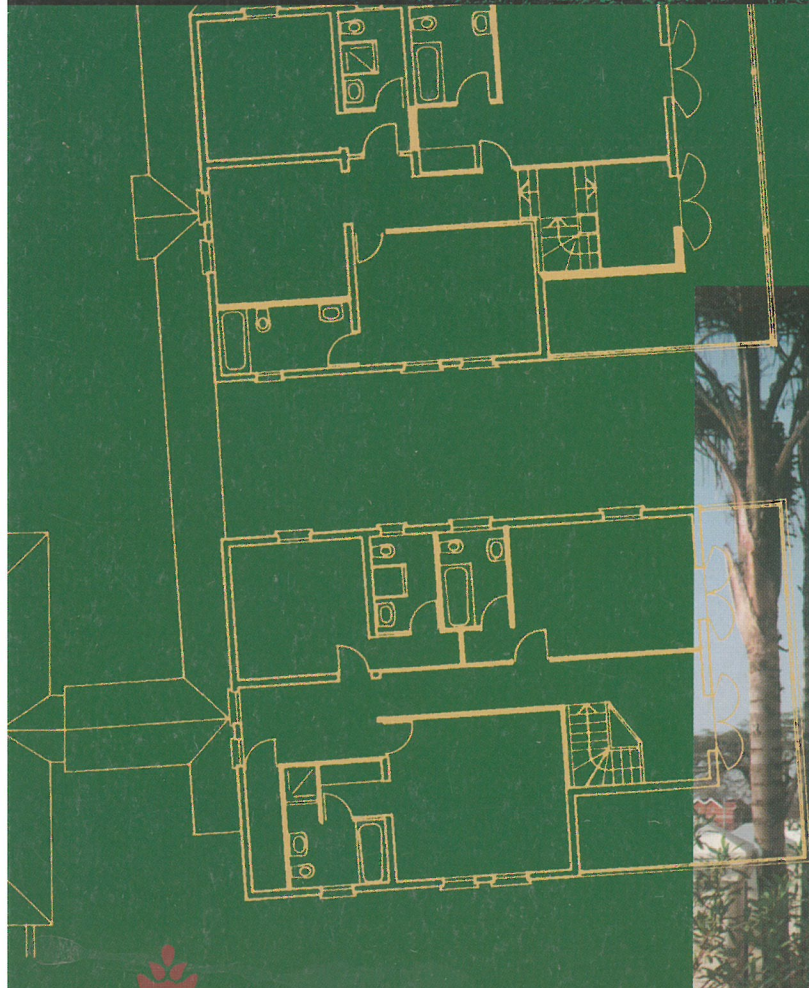


KZ-NIA JOURNAL · ISSUE 3/1997 · VOLUME NO 22 · ISSN 0379-9301
Journal of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture



1997 SAIAKWAZULU-NATAL AWARDS OF MERIT AND CONSERVATION AWARDS



COROBRIK®



KZ-NIA JOURNAL · ISSUE 3/1997 · VOL 22
ISSN 0379-9301

Editorial Board

Brian Johnson (Chairman) John Frost
Paul Sanders · Paul Mikula · Rouxlene van Zyl
Production Editor Walter Peters
Editorial Assistant Ted Tollman
Design Maria Criticos

Published by the KWAZULU-NATAL
INSTITUTE FOR ARCHITECTURE
160 Bulwer Road, Glenwood, Durban 4001
Telephone: (031) 21-7590 · Fax: (031) 21-7586

Introduction

1997 AWARDS PROGRAMME

In this issue are featured the winners as well as a selection of the 24 Award of Merit and 6 Conservation Award entries submitted for the 1997 Awards programme of the South African Institute of Architects for the region of KwaZulu-Natal. This time the 11th biennial programme covered buildings completed during the period 1 January 1995 to 30 June 1997, and as always, has been restricted to members of the Institute.

The jurors were Prof Ronald Lewcock (visiting South Africa for the first time after an absence of 27 years!); Dr Sabine Marschall (Art Historian at the University of Durban-Westville) as a non-architect member; and KZ-NIA members Ms Karuni Naidoo, Ismail Cassimjee, Sydney Baillon (Chairman), and the writer as co-ordinator. The tour of inspection in which all 30 entries were visited, took 3 days and the jurors covered some 1200 km.

An Award of Merit and, for that matter, a Conservation Award, is given to acknowledge outstanding buildings but does not imply perfection. Awards are given for specific attributes and these are stated in the citations and thereby communicated to the profession and to the public.

Walter Peters, Editor

Correction KZ-NIA 2/97

The cross-sectional drawing of a traditional Tembe hut was not by the late Barrie Biermann, but by Dennis Claude.

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



COROBRIK®

THE WAY TO BUILD

OBITUARY

Paul Connell 1915-1997

Paul Connell was appointed the first Professor of Architecture at the University of Natal in Durban in 1949, one of the youngest professors ever to be appointed to the University, aged only 34.

Connell was born in York, England. He studied architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, was a student member of Martienssen's Transvaal Group and served as its secretary at the time of inviting Le Corbusier to the Town Planning Congress of 1938, the year Connell graduated (Herbert, G Martienssen and the International Style in SA).

After joining the staff at UCT, he was appointed a founder member and first Head of the Architectural Division of the National Building Research Institute of the CSIR in Pretoria.

Under his tenure the Natal School of Architecture established the degree course in Architecture which then became recognised by ISAA, RIBA and ARCUK. Subsequent to a Carnegie sponsored tour to USA, Connell invited to Natal, Buckminster Fuller, who in 1958 together with students, carried out a geodesic research project inspired by the indigenous Zulu *indlu* or beehive hut.

Connell relinquished the Chair of Architecture in 1964 to take up the post of Planning and Development Officer to the University of Natal, and subsequently at Technikon Natal.

Paul Connell was a gentleman, highly intelligent yet self effacing. Because of his religious convictions, his latter years were extremely private. He died in March 1997 and is survived by his wife Aileen and 2 married daughters.

Leslie Croft

HOUSING GENERATOR COMPETITION

First prize in the Dutch-South African housing competition for Cato Manor went to the all-women team of Theresa Gordon, Joanne Lees, Barbara Southworth, and Suzanne du Toit. *Very well done!* There were four honourable mentions.

UNIVERSITY OF NATAL CONVOCATION AWARDS

Jo Noero is the recipient of the 1997 Prof Alexander Petrie Award for outstanding contributions to the Arts and Humanities. Jo graduated at the University of Natal in 1978, and recently assumed the Ruth & Dorman Moore Chair in Architecture at Washington University, St. Louis, USA.

Returning to a region that had formed a major part of adult experience after an absence of twenty-seven years is bound to be surprising. Compared to changes in the same period in many other areas (Australia, Middle East, the Far East), I found Natal still familiar, many of the old landmarks still in place and the wonderful topography, vegetation and light continuing to benevolently bless the vagaries of human endeavour

It seems a much better place to live in now than it was then. It is tempting to think that some of this, at least, is due to design, to the efforts of architects and urbanists to improve the environment, to the pressure put on the government and the public to preserve, protect and restore the best of the old or to rehabilitate and upgrade it to a new life. The result is a vital, cultured and engaged Province, well equipped, it seems to me, to enter into the new, challenging stage of social change and integration.

It was therefore a privilege and pleasure to join as a member of the team of assessors in visiting so many sites and buildings, to see the process of that transformation taking place. In the event the experience proved sometimes truly inspiring, sometimes sobering.

First the Conservation Award – as we visited the projects submitted I became concerned by what I felt was some confusion in the terminology of the Awards. This involves the different currently accepted uses of the words conservation and rehabilitation.

In both of them, the architect needs to deal first with technical issues, rising damp, dampness from parapets, eaves and roofs. In both he or she needs to research carefully and thoroughly what was there during the period of first building. But from then onwards conservation changes to be distinct from rehabilitation.

In the former, the architect has a responsibility to give an extended life to the character of the building as it is now, intervening only very discretely to strengthen, to repair and to remove unnecessary later additions or disfiguring blemishes which reduce the effectiveness of the building as it was intended to be. The

COVER – FRONT: 50 Prince Alfred Street,

Durban. Photo by Angela Buckland.

COVER – BACK, TOP: Auditorium and Church

Centre, Pinetown. Photo by Paul Changuion.

COVER – BACK, BOTTOM: Quarters, Durban.

Photo by Angela Buckland.

RIGHT: The jury in debate: Dr Sabine Marshall, Sydney Baillon (Chairman), Prof Ronald Lewcock and Ismail Cassimjee. Having a break is Ms Karuni Naidoo, just visible at the extreme left.

1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit & Conservation Awards

Impressions: Ronald Lewcock

point here is the retention of the patina of age and of the evidence of the life of the building since it was built. In the second, the architect's responsibility shifts to making the building viable for a new function today and creating a bridge since it was built, between the world of the past and the contemporary world.

The former, conservation, is exemplified by the attitude taken to the Pantheon, or the buildings of Pompeii, the second to the attitude adopted by such architects as Carlo Scarpa – to cite a much-admired example. One really can't do better than to look at his works of rehabilitation, as examples of a sensible approach to the problems. His genius lay in handling the layering of a site and of a building, to clarify both past and present and keep them in perfect balance – a perpetual judging act which allowed the architect to play off one against the other in the most surprising way to create that perpetual delight which is the hallmark of the good contemporary architect. That is a long way from conservation, let alone restoration – both of which are concerned only with the delight evoked by the genuine past.

All of the submissions for the Conservation Award this year seem to me to fall into the rehabilitation category, since none were strictly conservation projects. Why should they be, when the buildings were in ongoing use, not monuments or museums? I would therefore prefer that the category be renamed "Conservation and Rehabilitation".

Returning now to the assessing of the Award of Merit – I was struck by the fact that in America today, where I work at present, architecture is largely concerned with advertising, with carrying messages about the success

and dependability of commercial companies, or about the affluence and comfort of private individuals. There is a surface quality to it all.

In Natal, judging by what I saw in those few days, there is little concern with this and more concern with generating environmental use. This proved to be a strong positive quality in much of the architecture visited by the assessors.

Having said that, I was also struck by the persistence of architectural characteristics which were already around in South Africa when I was a student in the late 1940s. The particular modernist language, with a South African accent in form and colour, that I first saw in the work of Andrews & Niegermann in Cape Town, and the Johannesburg school, seems to have lasted and, on the evidence of this journey, is flourishing today as much as it did then. This might imply the growth of a kind of a contemporary, modern vernacular in South Africa. Both a good thing and also possibly a dangerous one – evidence, perhaps, of an architecture suffering from the lack of stimulus which might be provided by greater concern with the ideas about architecture being generated overseas.

It seems to me that our profession is concerned in the late twentieth century with two things. First, as always, with those decisions that are necessary to solve the design problem and construction as efficiently as possible. Second, with the degree to which the architect can make the building speak to people, doing this, at least, by using elements which they recognise as peculiarly familiar to them, to their culture or to effecting some continuities in the environment. In the minds of many peo-

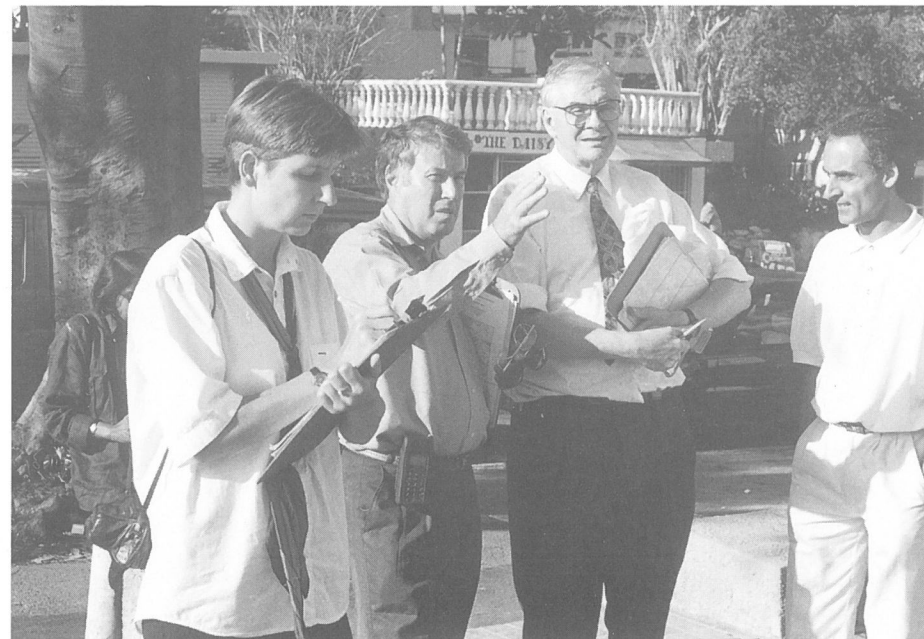
ple these dimensions – which are essentially political dimensions – have greater importance today than they have had at any time since the French Revolution.

Architecture is meant for delight, as was skilfully achieved by several of the winners of Awards. But the elements of a particular delight cannot be used too often, or, like an old joke, they become stale and eventually counter-productive – boring, instead of enjoyable – the former an unfortunate quality that I found a little too close for comfort in some of the other buildings submitted.

One reaction I had to the buildings nominated for these awards was that there didn't always seem to be much concern with the relationship of the building to its setting. Perhaps I can illustrate this best by referring to the buildings of central Durban. Of course there are some exceptions, but my general reaction to Durban was that the skyline was dull, reflecting perhaps a lack of commitment by some designers to the establishment of a sense of place and identity. Too many buildings have turned out to be brutal blocks, with vast flat profiles. Some have even become aggressively brutal against the sky. Very few respond to their site, to their surroundings, in ways that seem to me really sympathetic. Here, I rather prefer the commercial buildings of that city that happens to be my home in America at the moment, Atlanta, where the best architects compete to create the most entertaining profiles against the sky, and the most innovative relationship to the ground and to the city.

Finally, I didn't feel often enough, in the works under review for award, the presence of that necessary struggle in architecture to replace established arrangements with alternative ones; of relativizing engagement, rather than reinforcing the contrast between the extremes of building activity, mass production and custom building. Natal's situation seems to correspond with the calls for new ideals for architects made by such philosophers as Robert Unger (*Harvard GSD Review*, Fall 1996): "The buildings of a pluralistic society display that pluralism by standing as proposals for one way of living and working together, in open confrontation with other ways, exhibited ...all around them... Such an architecture opposes the idea of the building as a closed and almost sacred object, sufficient unto itself and bound to the spirit of its creator. It wants to be just one more way by which we, collectively, make collective futures within the collective present".

Professor Lewcock is Distinguished Professor in the Doctoral Program at Georgia Institute of Technology, USA.



1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit & Conservation Awards

Award of Merit

50 Prince Alfred Street, Durban

Dean Jay Architect



Angela Buckland

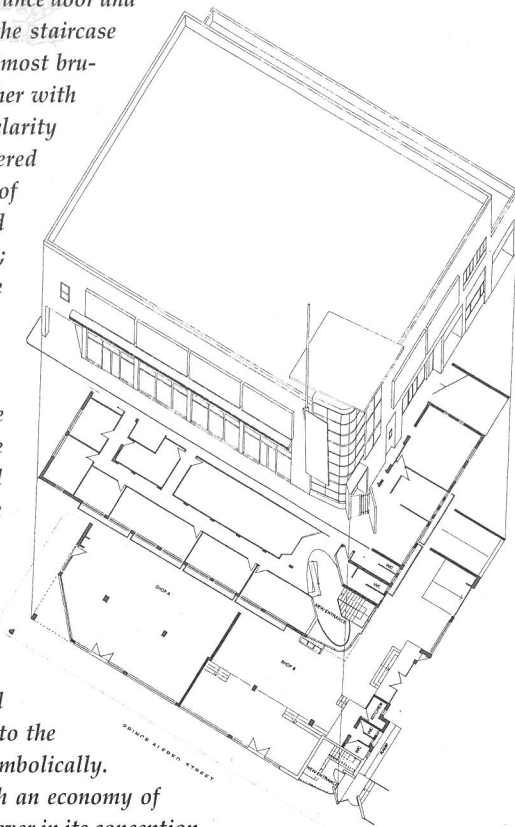
Brief: The architects were commissioned to give a "face-lift" to a '50s building, including a new entrance and reception area, "in keeping with the dynamic image of a growing shipping company."

Citation: *The curved shape of the glass volume contrasting with the square form of the suspended ceiling, the latter being mirrored by the cantilevered square plane floating above the roof; the angled gateway leading naturally and directly to the entrance door and onwards to the foot of the staircase inside; the stair itself, almost brutally metallic, put together with an elegance of style and clarity of parts; the cantilevered elliptical deck at the top of the stair, suspended within the glass volume; and the reception space where an enquiry counter of two inter-meshed but displaced green boxes and a change in floor finish, announce a change of mood and space from noisy public to quietly private; - all these elements mesh together to evoke a memorable experience.*

This is a satisfying and skillful design, speaking to the visitor rationally and symbolically. It achieves its effect with an economy of architectural means, is clever in its conception, is technologically sound, and results in an elegant solution. It promises great things of the architect.

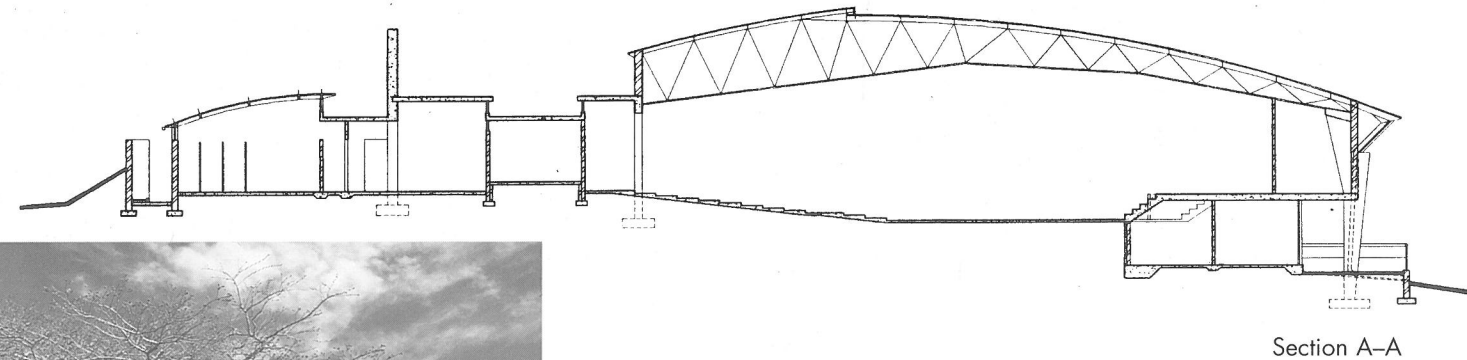


Angela Buckland



1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit & Conservation Awards

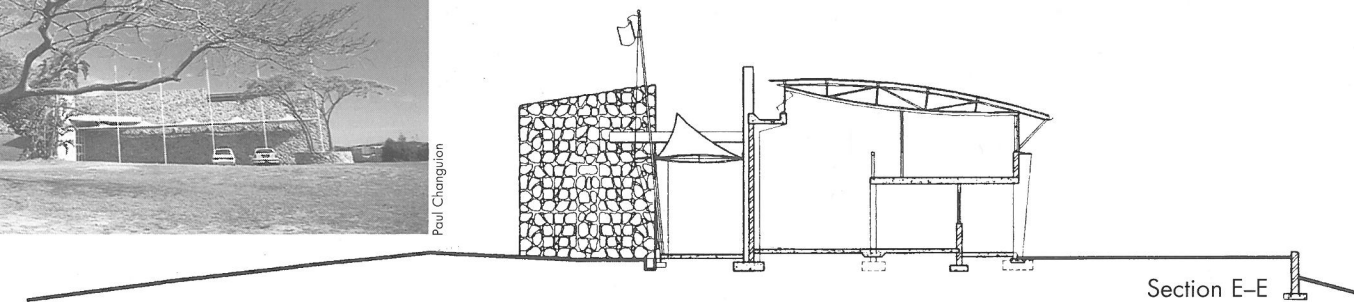
Award of Merit



Section A-A



Paul Changchien



Section E-E

Auditorium and Church Centre,
90 Seventh Avenue, Pinetown

Architects: Myles Pugh Sherlock Murray cc

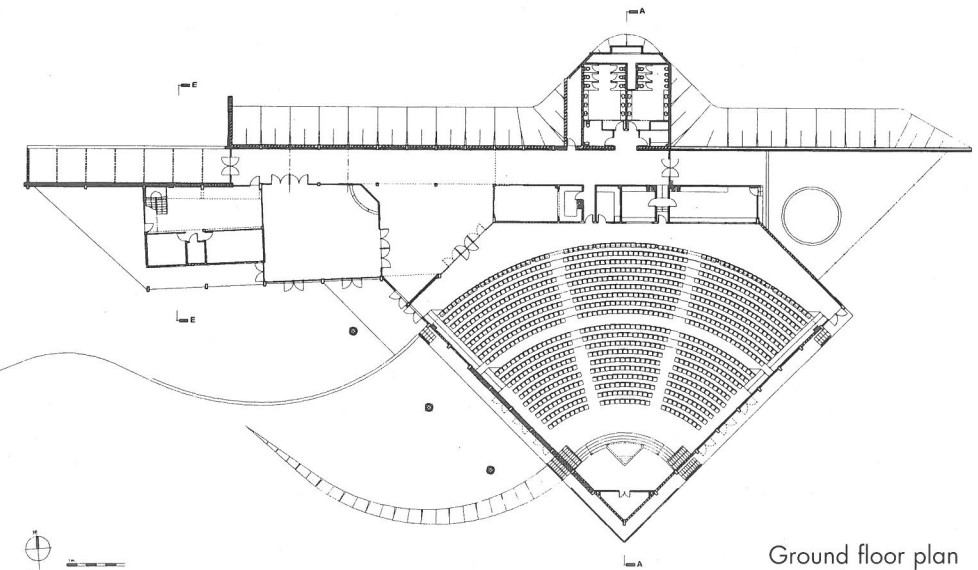
Brief: The brief called for a home base as well as a training centre for "church planting" in foreign nations on a site bounded on the north by the N3 freeway.

Citation: *A direct solution can often appeal by that very directness, especially if joined to it, is an expressive and bold use of materials, contrasting heavy and light, rustic and industrial, and timeless performance with transitory present.*

A stone wall set back deeply from the freeway, serves not only to screen noise but to create a strong unifying spine for the auditorium and church centre. Grassed banks reduce its height on the freeway-side, so that the scale and length is varied and the wall seems to blend into the landscape.

On the interior, the wall serves as one side of an airy mall, off which the key volumes of the church centre are skillfully arranged to capture community spirit and relate directly to the landscape outside.

The jury was impressed by the architectural response to the site, the peacefulness of the interior, and the generous proportions of the major spaces.



Ground floor plan



1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit & Conservation Awards

Conservation Award

Quarters, 101, 105 and 109 Florida Road, Durban

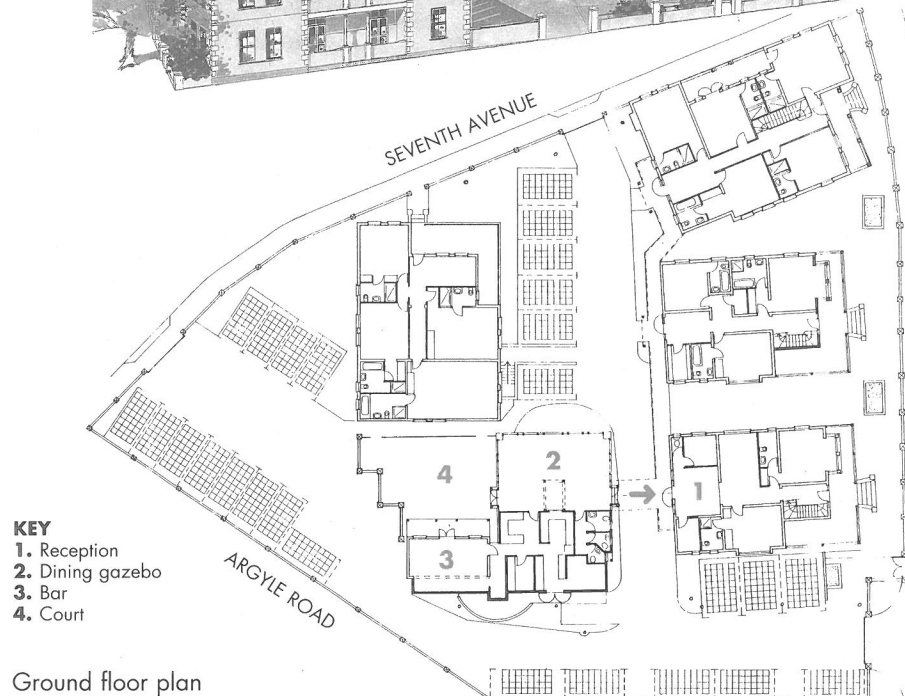
Emmett : Emmett Architects cc

Brief: To integrate and convert 4 dilapidated or substantially altered old houses and an out-building, on a truncated urban block to a bed and breakfast establishment.

Citation: This is an exemplary restoration project combining a number of old houses. Use was made of the original drawings in the records office of the city council, backed by sound judgement on the part of the architects.

Behind the delightfully reinstated verandahed streetscape lie the converted bedrooms as guest suites. Covered walkways link the various buildings and there has been a clever retention and reuse of an outbuilding as a bar, opening to a courtyard. The adjacent new dining room, in what had previously been a backyard, was fittingly conceived as a gazebo.

Landscaping, vehicular movement and parking, have been thoughtfully considered and when mature, the generous landscaping will unify the complex on its island site and tend to screen it from traffic noise.

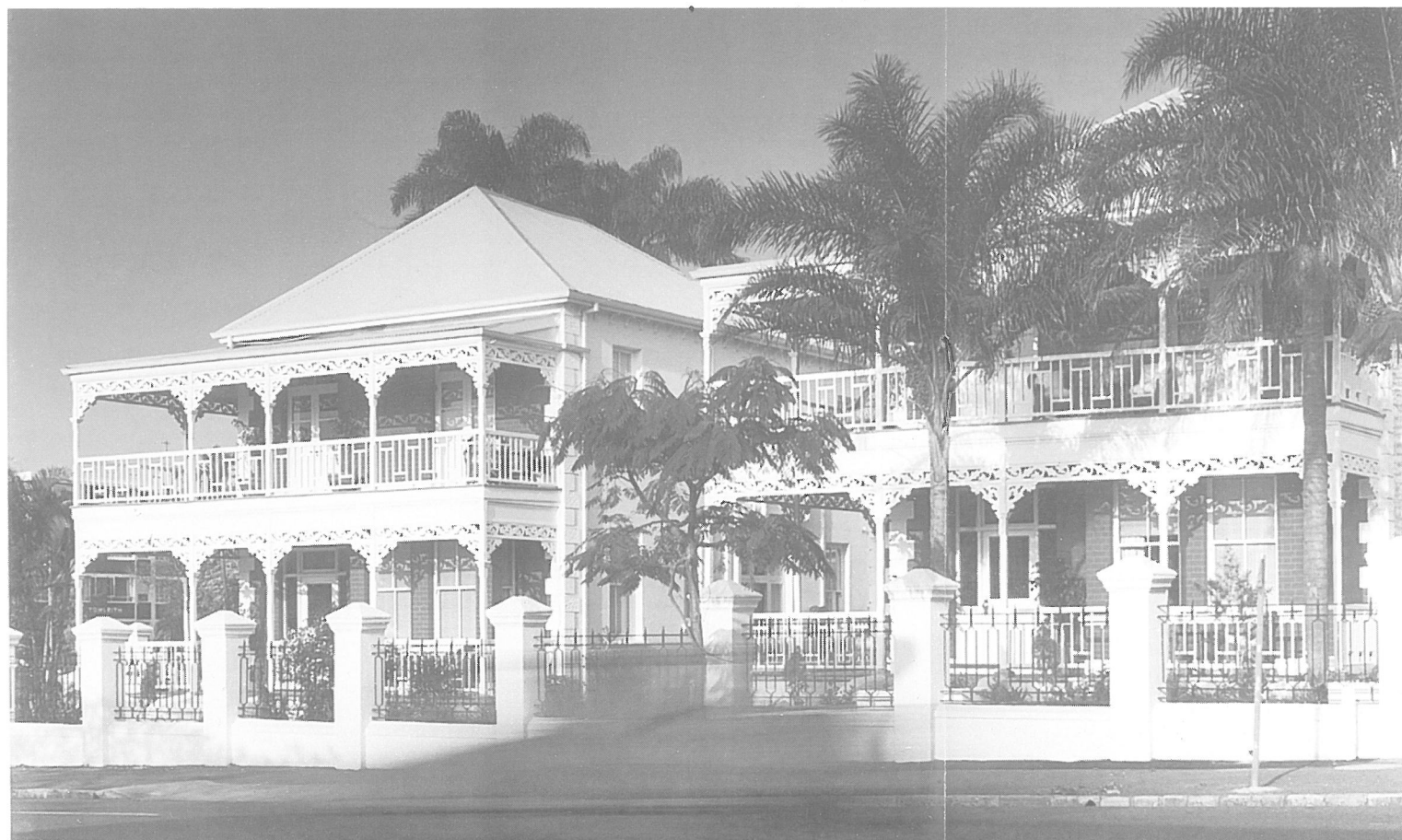


- KEY**
 1. Reception
 2. Dining gazebo
 3. Bar
 4. Court

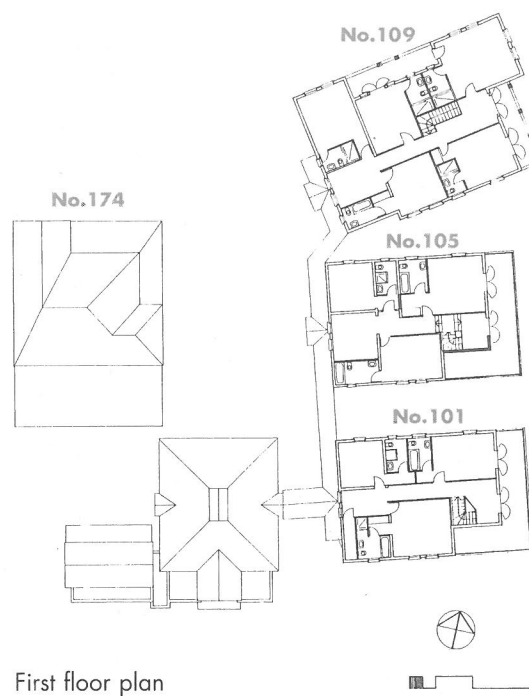
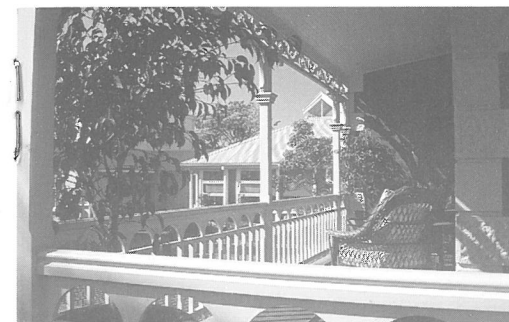
Ground floor plan



Front Elevation
 Scale: 1:100



Angela Buckland



First floor plan

1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit and Conservation Awards

Special Mention



Thembalihle Railway Station, Malandele Road, KwaMashu

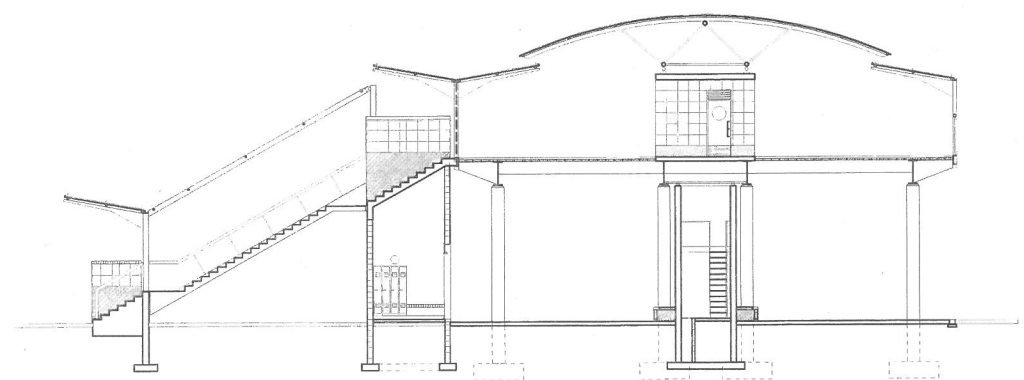
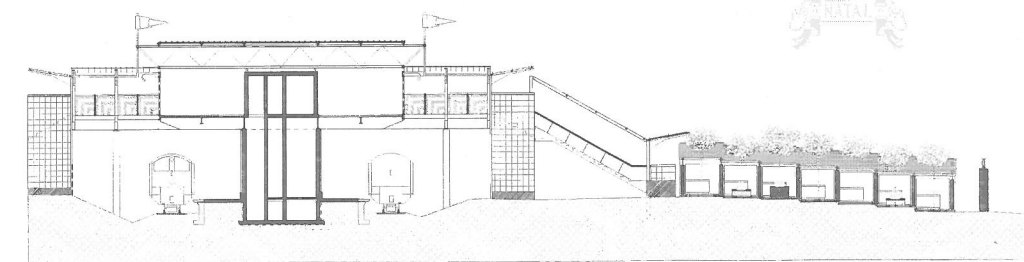
Architects Collaborative cc (A Duvenage, P Mikula) in association with John Royal Architects cc

Brief: Upgrade and improve existing facilities, and provide a secure and user-friendly station that will efficiently process commuters while acknowledging the physical and social environment of its location.

Citation: The architects' intervention in this station transformed a rudimentary shelter into an attractive facility with a new and spacious bridge, ticket dispensers, turnstiles, drinking fountains, seating, public toilets and innovative vending outlets. The bridge is provided

with an over-arching roof and the new work is executed in a mixture of materials, dominated by galvanised steel, in a series of clever decisions taken to minimise cost and maximise utility. It provides an appearance that is vandal-proof yet stylish and appropriately modern, technically accomplished yet softened with painted murals.

Whilst the jury welcomed the reborn station as a truly innovative community focus, it had reservations such as the steepness of some flights of steps, the absence of a central handrail, and the somewhat "brutal" design of the entrance portals.



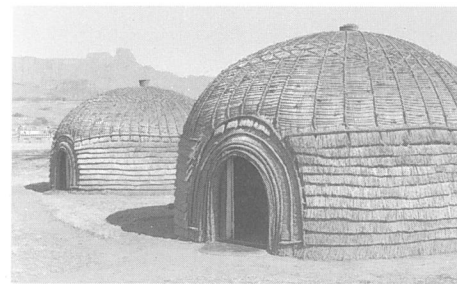
1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards of Merit & Conservation Awards

Expectations and Hope: Sabine Marschall

"You are the lay member of the team", explained Sylvia Grobler, Executive Officer of the KZ-N Institute for Architecture, "but that's not a bad thing", she quickly reassured me. Unburdened by the baggage of sound technical knowledge received in proper architectural training and practice, my job was to focus on assessing each one of our 30 entries for the 1997 SAIA KZ-N Awards programme from the 'people's point of view'.

So off we went: Sylvia and Wally Peters as organisers, and the five judges: Professor Ronald Lewcock, who had returned to visit South Africa for the first time since leaving in 1970; Ismail Cassimjee; Karuni Naidoo; Sydney Baillon and I. While the architects critically debated the structural aspects of our candidate buildings ("Is this galvanised beam really strong enough to support that structure?"), I tried to imagine what it would be like to be a pupil in this classroom, a worker eating in that canteen, a worshipper in that church, or a resident living in that house. What I encountered ranged from a medical centre whose clinical appearance inside and out reinforced in every detail the unpleasant sterile atmosphere every patient hates about hospitals, to an education facility with classroom acoustics that could well feature in an acoustics manual under the heading 'most common mistakes'.

As an architectural historian, my judgement was invariably influenced by my own research into what I call 'relevant' architecture. Consequently, I noted with disappointment that very few of the submissions showed a particular concern for an appropriate response to the local climate, whether by exploring ways of natural temperature control or establishing relationships between indoor and outdoor spaces. Perhaps most disappointing was the absence of a contextual response of many entries, epitomised by a hostel building and the high-tech aesthetic of a retreat in a rural area. It quickly became evident that most architects are still overwhelmingly concerned with a striking exterior design, a conception of a building as an autonomous object. A very annoying observation was the constant recurrence of a few momentarily fashionable materials (can anybody finish a building without using slate tiles?), which will allow future generations of architectural historians to date buildings almost precisely to the month. Disappointing too, was a common superficiality and lack of care that pervaded both the overall architectural design and particularly the detailing, which – I am told by my fellow jurors – is mostly attributable to the extreme time constraints and often unreasonable demands that architects in South Africa are facing these days. We were also worried about the generally poor standard of workmanship and the obvious lack of concern for maintenance (the team saw more than one building that had already started to fall apart). It sometimes



occurred to me that the beautiful beehive huts we were fortunate to discover near our place of accommodation in the Drakensberg were more deserving of a merit award!

And so to the positive trends: writing this a few weeks after the event, I still find myself struggling to decide what was positive about the new architecture in KwaZulu-Natal. One encouraging trend was perhaps the relatively large number of entries that consisted of additions, upgrades or alterations to existing buildings, replacing the deplorable modernist 'tear it down and start from scratch' attitude. Many of these entries were well done, showing creativity and a sometimes remarkable sensitivity towards the existing building. This is best illustrated, of course, in Dean Jay's award-winning office up-grade in Prince Alfred Street, the first building that immediately impressed everyone on the jury.

Even more encouraging in this regard is the fact that the number of entries for the Conservation Award has remained fairly steady. For someone like me, who used to work passionately for the conservation cause during internships at one of the state conservation departments in Germany, it was wonderful to see that there are still people who consider the conserving or rehabilitating of old buildings important. It is my sincere conviction that future generations will be more impressed and appreciative of each one of these conserved buildings than of any one of the new vintage. In these difficult times of shifting priorities, faced with the enormous expense of low-cost housing and the unfortunate building reality of fast-track office and townhouse developments, all municipalities, private businesses and individuals who support the conservation of our architectural heritage deserve the highest commendation!

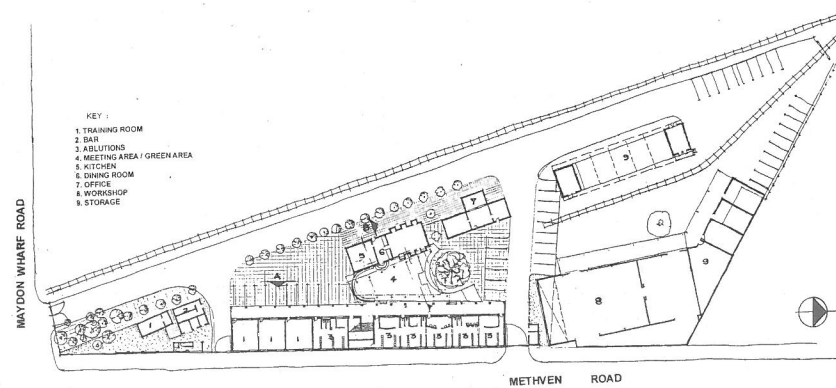
But back to the new architecture. The only really positive aspect that comes to my mind is the humanising character of some of the buildings we saw (and this is where a glimmer of hope comes in). One could, of course, attribute that to the Postmodern influence – for once understood in its true meaning, as opposed to the all too common interpretation, as a superficial imitation of imagery. But it is also perhaps

a reflection of the gradual democratisation of our society and one can only hope to see more of that in the future.

Good examples are the two upgraded railway stations in KwaMashu by Architects Collaborative & John Royal Architects one of which we found deserving of commendation. With their vending stalls, public water taps, toilets, benches and lock-up storage facilities, the railway stations provide a new community focus, besides bridging the railway lines and cleverly linking eg. shopping centre across the road. The colourfully painted walls and the murals help soften the place and one immediately feels that there is a human touch to the architecture, a relief in this tough environment of monotonous township houses and shacks.

Much the same applies to Protekon's Hlanganani Workers Facility at Maydon Wharf where a number of refurbished and reused buildings now form an integrated complex with a clear focus. The space between the larger office building – in which employees themselves determined the colours of each room – and one of the smaller structures, has become an outdoor sitting and dining area with a pleasant beer garden atmosphere. A surrounding sapling screen and the roof provide a rustic feel and introduce a touch of nature in this drab industrial environment.

A factory complex can be mentioned in the same breath, even though most of us were disappointed by the sense of arbitrariness emanating from this disconcerting jumble of forms that denies the eye a restful focus. What was nice about it, particularly in comparison with the older factory development in Springfield Park, was



Hlanganani Workers Facility, Maydon Wharf
Protekon Architects (Jeremy Streere)

Brief: This project which involved the recycling of former railway barracks, was to provide facilities for 250 workers as a meeting place, which the name proposed by the users implies. The wedge-shaped

space between two existing buildings lent itself to the creation of a roofed recreational area, with the dining room to one side and the change rooms to the other.

Construction was devised as a training programme whereby unskilled people were recruited and empowered by their various involvements in the project.

The jury was impressed by the caring design and commends Protekon Architects especially for the construction process, which experience it recommends and encourages for dissemination among members of the profession.

the compact grouping of a large number of mini-factories around a roughly circular interior access road, where – very much unlike Springfield Park – people actually feel comfortable enough to walk around and where the facades are developed according to a human scale. This humanising effect could easily have been taken a step further by adding some landscaping and providing a gathering place such as a cafeteria with outdoor seating.

On a completely different level, the 'humanising factor' played a role in two of the most memorable experiences of the journey. Both are related to buildings associated with the South African justice system (which is not

exactly known for its humane character), and in particular an encounter with the officials working there. The first was our visit to the old Alexandra Road Police Station in Pietermaritzburg, built around the turn of the century specifically for mounted police, where we were able to walk around freely and peek into every room. While discussing issues of historical accuracy by comparing the restoration work with old photos, the colonial past suddenly seemed to be brought back to life when two policemen on horseback happened to ride through the gate, as if staged for the assessor team! The friendly policemen willingly agreed to pose for a photo.



New Medical Suites, Kingsway Hospital

Stauch Vorster Architects



Urban Housing, Jacobs

Stauch Vorster Architects



Community Development Centre, Mangosuthu Technikon, Umlazi

Stauch Vorster Architects in association with AFA Architects



The Hideaway, Thornville

Elphick Proome Architects



Northmead Industrial Place, Red Hill

Elphick Proome Architects



Magistrates Court, Dundee

Leach and Van der Walt



Moreland House, La Lucia Ridge

VARA Architects



Alexandra Road Police Station, Pietermaritzburg

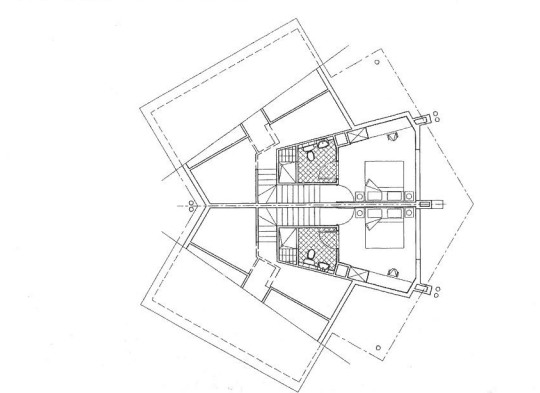
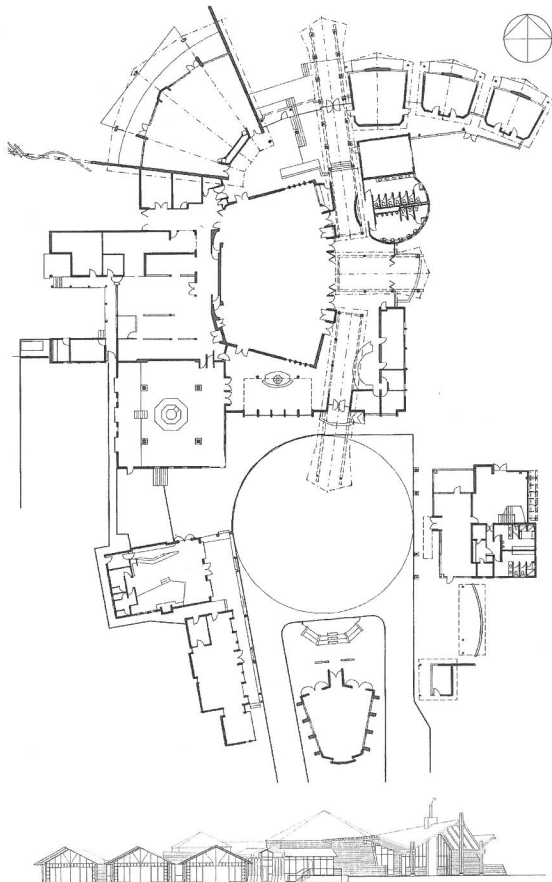
Interplan Architects



Alpine Heath Resort and Conference Village, Northern Drakensberg

Clark & Thomas Architects

This development of 74 freestanding buildings is bigger than many a small town, hence the decision to create a village square at the hub of the conference and commercial facilities where the church tower provides the vertical accent. Within this magnitude of development, the architects aimed for compactness of layout and a blending in of the buildings within the natural environment.



Loft Chalet – ground floor

First floor

The other experience in this category happened the day before, when we arrived – way behind schedule – at the firmly locked doors of the Dundee Magistrate’s Court in the dark of the night. Eager and thorough as we were, Wally and Ron managed to track down the unbelievably co-operative local magistrate, who immediately opened up the building for our critical inspection, produced old photos and provided valuable information.

After this uplifting experience, the exhausted crew was quite desperate to reach the last submission for the day, the Alpine Heath Resort in the Northern Drakensberg, where we enjoyed being able to inspect not only the architecture but also the cuisine and – most thoroughly – the beds.

Three days and 1172 km later, the team seemed unanimous about the merits or other of most of our submissions, and it wouldn’t even have been necessary to engage in heated discussions, embark on passionate defence statements and strategic trade-offs, had it not been for the earlier mentioned Hlanganani Worker’s Facility at Maydon Wharf. This building incited a fierce debate that started in the Berg and kept the exhausted team deliberating long after our arrival back in Durban.

A remarkable parallel to the 1995 adjudication struck me when I read Michael Lewis’ report in the 3/1995 issue of KZ-NIA Journal, where he describes a “split by age into two factions, roughly divided at forty”. Interestingly, however, while two years ago the younger party was insisting on “the highest integrity and consistency” and the more experienced architects tended to be “more forgiving”, the situation seemed to be somewhat reversed this time. The main point of disagreement about Hlanganani was whether the quality of execution and some shortcomings in the architectural design (upon which everyone agreed) should prevent the building from being commended or whether the concept as a whole (which everyone approved of) would be sufficient to warrant commendation. Since the party arguing the latter point (which included me) lost, in the sense that the building was not given a commendation, it was agreed that I would be allowed to throw in a few good words in support of the project at this occasion.

As a European who has lived in the United States for many years, it seems to me that architecture in KwaZulu-Natal (and perhaps South Africa in general) finds itself at that odd juncture of neither reflecting an authentic South African character, nor living up to the standard of quality and technology of the European or American models. To me the Hlanganani Workers Facility was perhaps the only project that had a certain genuinely South African character about it. I don’t want to be misunderstood to advocate a lower standard of execution or excuse the problematic aspects of this structure

but it must be taken into account that the building was constructed by unskilled labour, most of whom were trained on the job as part of an empowerment project. My search for a truly South African architecture goes beyond the actual appearance of the building (architecture as end product) in advocating a shift towards the notion of architecture as process, or architecture as a living organism, where such factors as the actual design and construction process, the growth of the vegetation, maintenance, vandalism and other time-related aspects play an important role. The Hlanganani Workers Facility “defence party” felt that a commendation would send the right signals and encourage architects who try to move away from the Eurocentric models featured in glossy magazines and produce something more characteristically South African, even if less presentable.

In conclusion I must say that I tremendously enjoyed being part of the assessor team and – apart from the fun we had together – I feel that this was a great learning experience for me. A special treat was to have Ronald Lewcock on the jury, whose critical assessment and remarkable ability to ‘hit the nail on the head’ in characterising the essence of a building, has probably left most of us filled with admiration.

Dr Marshall is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Fine Art & History of Art at the University of Durban-Westville.



FNB, Florida Road, Durban

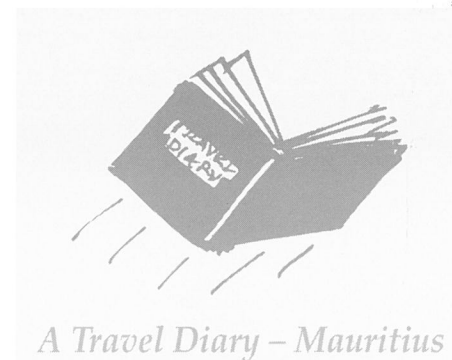
Dean Jay Architect

A requirement of the city was that this building adhered to the style of the area. Hence the “olde world” architecture.



Taxi Ranks, Soldiers Way, Durban

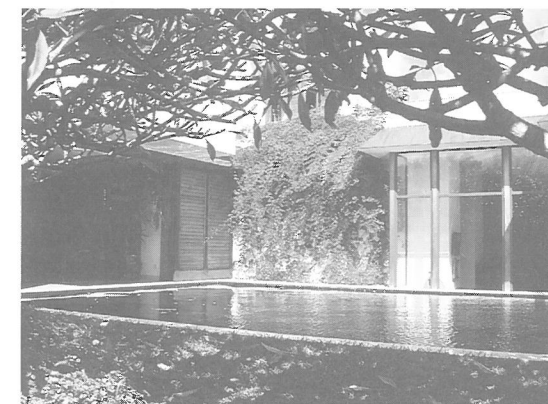
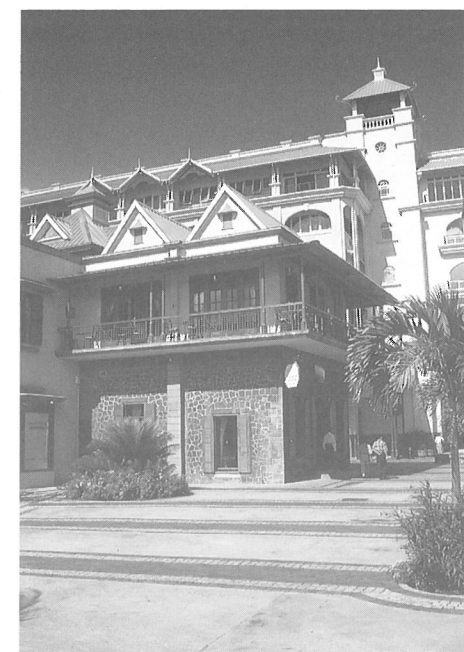
Architectural Services, City of Durban (G.Adams)



A Travel Diary – Mauritius

Besides the spectacular beaches and the mountains of the interior, the new waterfront developments at Port Louis and the recently completed buildings by Geoffrey Bawa and Charles Correa may be of interest to readers.

Port Louis is undergoing a revival which Durbanites would envy. In 8 years the first phase is complete. The scheme by Mauritian architects Maurice Giraud and ZAC Associates makes reference to French classicism tempered with Mauritian characteristics such as basalt masonry walls and dockside ironwork. The development which includes a 5-star hotel and casino, shops and offices, backs the major public space and overlooks the harbour. The favourable climate has allowed the architects to create external spaces lined with wide, high colonnades to provide shelter. Parking is provided across the canal which is linked directly to the shopping area by bridge. However, the total lacks the spontaneous character usually achieved where there are existing buildings on



the site, and points to the need for more practices to be involved within the overall design framework.

Nearby stands the recently completed LIC Centre by Correa in association with local architect Pravin Desai, noted for its generous shaded forecourt in the cramped downtown environment. Beneath this pergola, extending to the site boundaries, the building envelope is stepped in terraces toward the view of the mountains. The openings on the side elevations are restricted, the higher, larger openings acknowledging the views afforded over the waterfront.

Following the vernacular tradition of Mauritius, House Currimjee is flat roofed to protect it from cyclones. Hence the solution of clipped eaves and copper hoods over window openings, so unlike Bawa. Structured along a series of 2 axes which terminate on features in the garden, the plan evokes memories of early modernism while drawing on local building traditions.

Glanville Jacques

Mr Jacques is a partner in the Durban offices of Stauch Vorster Architects.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Waterfront; House Currimjee; LIC Centre.