

KZNIA



WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE

NEWS



Corobrik executives, jury and finalists, from left to right: Musa Shangase (Commercial Director, Corobrik), Andre Eksteen (juror, Earthworld Architects), Phil Mashabane (juror, Mashabane Rose Architects), Ulrich Pieterse (Tshwane University of Technology), Karuni Naidoo (juror, CNN Architects), Jaco Jonker (University of Johannesburg), Nlene van Niekerk (University of the Free State), Matthew Mills (University of Cape Town), Najeeba Hassim (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Vedhant Maharaj (University of the Witwatersrand), Leon van der Westhuizen (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), Peter du Treuvou (Chairman: Corobrik), Gillian van der Klashorst (University of Pretoria), Isaac Letsholo (Staff Trust Director, Corobrik), and Dirk Meyer (Managing Director: Corobrik)



A delighted Vedhant Maharaj, Corobrik Architectural Student of the Year 2015.

COROBRIK ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT OF 2015

At a function held in Sandton on 11th May, Wits student Vedhant Maharaj was announced winner of the prestigious title from eight competitors, the recipients of regional titles of each of the accredited Architecture Learning sites. The jury consisting of Karuni Naidoo, Phil Mashabane and Andre Eksteen concluded that Maharaj's design for a purification plant entitled *Yantra, Infrastructure of the Sacred and Profane*, demonstrated innovation, technical excellence and a keen understanding of the social, economic and environmental conditions of its setting along the polluted Ganges River.

COROBRIK SAIA AWARDS OF MERIT AND EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE

The South African Institute of Architects has advised that the Corobrik SAIA Awards of Merit and for Excellence will be presented at Shine Studios in Braamfontein on Friday, 2nd September 2016.

With five KZN entries, let's hope the highest accolades that can be bestowed on buildings in South Africa again find favour in our Province. *Editor*

ARCHITECTURE AT DUT

Louis du Plessis has been appointed Head of the Department of Architecture of the Durban University of Technology for the three year, renewable term, beginning 1st April 2016.

At the April graduation ceremony, 40 diplomas in Architectural Technology were awarded as were 46 Bachelor of Technology degrees. Of the latter, the degrees of Denise James, Dinolan Pillay, Meloshan Pillay and Nickiel Paramanand were awarded *cum laude*, while the last named also landed the Dean's Merit Award.

VISIT BY HANS HALLEN

For two weeks of May, Hans Hallen who had emigrated to Australia in 1987 visited his city of birth, education, training and practice. Besides inspecting various buildings of his, a special function was arranged at KZNIA, where an exhibition had been curated by Peter Engblom and members reminisced. At the conclusion of the evening, KZNIA-President Ruben Reddy conferred on Hans Hallen Honorary Life Membership "in recognition of the enduring legacy set by his practice during the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the invention and imagination of which continues to surprise". In response, Hallen added "This means more to me than any other honour I have received".



Hans Hallen, left, with Rodney Harber (right) in reminiscence on the design of the former Convent for the Society of St John the Divine, Wentworth, 1966-8.

EDITORIAL

Women architectural professionals are worthy of a special issue.

It is necessary for women to document their journeys, experiences and contribution to architecture as professionals.

It has been a privilege guest-editing this issue on women in Architecture in KZN, a topic about which I am passionate. I have worked with an exceptional team of women who have brought such creativity, vision and depth to the work contained in this journal. They include Janina Masojada, Joanne Lees, Nina Saunders, Prof Debbie Whelan, Chantal Pieterse, and others who contributed during our extended Women in Architecture South Africa WiASA KZN meetings. I am indebted to CNN Architect's Nereshia Debipersadh and Milona Ramnarain who co-ordinated the submissions and to my sister, Anusham Ray, for reading and editing.

The journal issue has been well-timed, affording the WiASA KZN group the opportunity of something to organize around. I reconnected with colleagues, made new friends, discovered new connections, learned about new cultures, grew more tolerant and dealt with some personal issues in the process. I feel certain that we have been empowered as a group.

The intention was to cover women in Architecture, particularly those who studied, worked, or were involved in architecture in KwaZulu-Natal. Invitations were sent by the KZNIA and certain men and women, who the team believed should be included, were invited to contribute.

All content and visual material submitted went through a process of checking, reviewing and editing. We had two lively pin-up exhibitions of work at the KZNIA before finalizing content. We debated content and relevance in terms of our criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Contributions have been included in the journal in a manner which exhibits our diversity as a group, with no particular sequence. To all the contributors, we offer our heartfelt thanks.

Here is a glossary of terms to make reading and understanding easier.

Patriarchy: A social system in which males hold primary power, predominantly in roles of political leadership, moral authority and social privilege. Historically, has manifested itself in the social, legal, political and economic organization of a range of different cultures.

Gender: The state of being male or female, typically used with reference to social and cultural differences, both perceived and material. It is a construct and is not determined biologically.

Transformation: A marked change in form, nature or appearance; the process by which one figure, expression or function is converted into another one of similar value.

Diversity: A reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. It includes knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside groups to which we belong, yet which are present in other individuals and groups.

Intersectionality: A framework which can be used to understand how systemic injustice and social inequality occur on a multidimensional basis; how various biological, social and cultural categories of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels.

I hope that you enjoy the journal issue as much as we have enjoyed preparing this.

Our vision for a healthy and transformed architectural profession includes practices, institutions and organisations that are able to address our diversity and be inclusive of gender, race, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, ability and ideology. These will be the new creative spaces where we understand each other's needs, support each other and act in a socially responsible and ethical manner. This can only result in "excellence in architecture".

Karuni Naidoo
CNN Architects
Chair: Women in Architecture SA

OBSERVATIONS

Karuni Naidoo

Our strengths and challenges... with many questions still to be answered.

Great deal of **creativity** in stories of women in architecture
Our lives are rich, stories are varied, deep, multi-layered and complex
Very few clear and slightly louder leading voices, inspiring others

Experiences display the range of our **diversity** as a group
Gender, race, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, ability, age, nationality
Socio-economic status, educational background, political beliefs, ideologies
Opening up the conversation on "race" is the challenge
"All-white-women" spaces, committees, teams and panels are counter-productive

Women have difficulty in **expressing gender**
"don't regard myself as a 'woman' architect"
"prefer working quietly in the background"
Making excuses for the difficulties they face in the profession

Easiest for women to express the **stresses** of being a mother
Being both "mother and professional" – choices between "this or that"
Profession not creating the space for women architects to be child-bearers
Are women therefore forced to resign after having children?
Need for alternative models for maternity leave and family responsibilities

Women are developing new **'work-from-home-practice'** models
Need to support women working from home-based practices

Difficulties in identifying **other challenges** in professional life
Not wanting to delve too deep, exposing ourselves
Only a few are clear about what their challenges have been

The **psychological effects** on our personal lives, relationships and families
Women architects inadvertently take on male behaviour and styles
Control issues, ego and dominating personalities

Women are **insecure** and not used to having their work published
"I'm not used to showing-off, I prefer working quietly on my own"
"What will the profession think of me and my work?"
Fear of being compared with men and appearing inadequate
The need to constantly seek affirmation from colleagues

Working quietly **in the background** as partners, associates and staff
Do we actually know the women behind the architectural work we see?
Who attends public events and who takes the credit?

Pressures of **performing as equals** in partnerships, legal rights and the law
What factors in home and society prevent women from being equal?
Women do not receive support in child rearing to allow them to be equal
Women have rights and are protected under the Constitution

Women working at the **edges of architecture** and the profession
Reluctance to join in and contribute to the discussion on gender

Women needing **validation as a group** around certain issues
Difficulties in speaking as individuals on obvious issues
Are we really experiencing sexual harassment in a clearly sexist environment?

The experience of **sexual harassment** is common, both subtle and direct
To what extent are our male colleagues aware of this?
Our practices and organisations continue to entrench patriarchy
Professional practice exams should include social responsibility, gender and ethics

Schools promote **stereotypes** which play-out in the architecture studio
Women students experiencing sexual harassment from peers and lecturers
Need to include gender into the curriculum at schools and universities
Alternative and more responsive teaching methods needed

Women are becoming more aware of the **strengths** they bring to architecture
Trends are collaboration, teamwork and non-hierarchical structures
How can women receive support to remain in the profession?

Organizational **record-keeping** of women in architecture is non-existent
No statistics of women graduates, recipients of awards and accolades

Limited **numbers** of women in the architectural profession prior to 1980s
Few white women architects working and practicing, few awards, few role models
No black women graduates prior to 1988, fewer black role models
Women in leadership acknowledge they have not been able to effect change

The **same women** in architecture are being promoted over-and-over again
Are we marketing success by the number of awards and being published?
Promoting women from marginalized groups without being patronising
A new generation of women leaders needs to be identified and nurtured

We have **progressive male leadership** in our organisations
Responses of insecurity from male colleagues to a "women's-only" journal
"this is a girls issue", so we need a "boys issue"
Need for basic training and education around gender as a profession



Karuni Naidoo
CNN Architects



UKZN Architecture Final Year 1988



Durban North Police Station



Fairlands Project, Gauteng, in Continuum Architects JV



Durban North Police Station



Ohlanga Town Centre



Urbanity



Sea Vessel



Earth's Crown

An overlapping of several threads, which occasionally clash, with either a positive or negative outcome

HERITAGE

Indian Tamil culture, art, south Indian carnatic music, violins
Spirituality, values, humility, respect for all
Awareness of my daily life and actions
Parents' hardships, value of education and career
Need to read, study and work hard
Progressive parents and modern upbringing
Raja yoga meditation as a way of life, spiritual understanding
Inheriting family responsibilities
Extended family of friends, enduring relationships.

EDUCATION

Schools built by community, under resourced
Love for art placed on hold, no art teachers, focus on matric
Permission to study at white university, black student struggles
Disempowering, catching up with white colleagues
Class, culture, SADF¹ army conscripts, Rhodesians
Questioning whether I made the correct choice
Lecturers, course content and relevance
Inspiring practical training year at Urban Foundation
Dropping out to be an activist and going back to complete
Making a statement not attending graduation, no celebration
First black woman architecture graduate at UND²
Lecturing to diverse group of architectural students at DUT
Continuing studies in housing, gender, meditation, ceramics.

ACTIVISM

Repression, states of emergency, detention without trial
Community, family and friends, no choice but to join
Building grassroots democratic structures
Harsh early lessons in race, class, poverty, gender, patriarchy
Inspiring leadership, intellectuals, committed comrades
Sacrificing our youth, messed up lives
Principles, doing the right thing, speaking truth to power
First generation black architect, leadership responsibilities
Developmental challenges, BESG³, BEAM⁴, ACCESS⁵
SABTACO⁶, frustration of clients not appointing blacks
Lack of transformation in architectural profession
Still feel excluded from the profession.

GENDER

Strong women's organisation and leadership in community
Refusal to support apartheid structures, speaking out
Taking care of our own issues, less fortunate, charity
Committed young women activists, fearlessness
Broader women's movement, inspired by feminists
Final year dissertation: "A Women's Centre for Durban"
Identifying with women's leadership in construction industry
Work in gender with women from Khuphuka⁷, SAWIC⁸, WFF⁹
Work in SABTACO highlighting the plight of black women
Male leadership placing gender on hold, frustration
Initiating WiASA, lack of black women in architecture.

ARCHITECTURE

Inspired at 15, crazy trip through Europe with mother
Did not fit in well, architecture at odds with my political beliefs
Experiences and challenges as a black woman architect
Building a practice through affirmative action appointments
Being taken seriously as a woman in the profession
Partnership lessons, expectations to perform as equals
Strengths in management, taking on unpaid work
Feeling harassed and inadequate, self-doubt
Freedom of practicing solo, new culture and style
Leading by example, less ego, team work, collaboration
New leadership style, office, boardroom, on site.

CERAMICS

Not expressing myself creatively in architecture, something missing
Architecture has made me acutely organised and systematic
Not the right type of architectural work, much never gets built
Experiencing the joys of working with clay
Working intuitively and spontaneously, trusting, letting go
Creating objects by hand, organic, free-form experiments
No perfection, no lining up
No conforming to drawings and specifications
Completing the passion for art I had as a child
Balanced, more forgiving, open to change and new ideas.

I am a fabric woven from these.

- 1 South African Defence Force (whites only during apartheid)
- 2 University of Natal, Durban, now UKZN Howard College Campus
- 3 Built Environment Support Group
- 4 Built Environment Action Movement
- 5 ACCESS Development Trust
- 6 South African Black Allied and Technical Organisation
- 7 Khuphuka Skills Training and Education Programme
- 8 South African Women in Construction
- 9 Women for Housing

Ruben Reddy

Incumbent KZNIA President

Ruben Reddy Architects

It is with pride that I pen this short note to be included in this, the first KZNIA Journal issue dedicated to our women colleagues.

Women remain the most disadvantaged of our society and the profile of our profession is indeed a reflection of that observation. It is therefore extremely important that the role undertaken by women architects past, present and in the future are highlighted to enable all persons associated with the profession to be aware of the special circumstances that women have faced and continue to face.

All progressive, non-racist and non-sexist people should contribute to, and advance, the gender debate. It needs to be central to all our activities more so as we are a learned society. This organisation will not tolerate language that seeks to demean or insult our women colleagues, nor ignore any discriminatory practices against women.

We wish the editorial group led by Karuni Naidoo all the success and I look forward to a vibrant, thought provoking publication.

To our readers, join us in embracing diversity and fundamental change in our profession.

Helen Labuschagne

"Hello, I'm the Helen" she said when we first introduced ourselves over fifty years ago. She typed at a soap factory in Mobeeni, so when John Frost first established the Architectural Heritage Committee during the 1970s, Helen was approached to take minutes and type them. Little did we know then that she would evolve into THE Heritage Committee.

When she retired, she became more deeply immersed in heritage. Eventually the ever approachable Helen and her computer became the driving force in Friends of Architectural Heritage. She set up and managed a monthly visiting schedule for dozens of like-minded individuals to places of interest all over the Province.

An appreciation of the value of our architectural heritage to provide a perspective of time was spawning, and Helen played a major role. Every visit was accompanied by a chatty information sheet albeit carefully researched. Lifelong friends were made... All this evolved into an effective Heritage Movement under different guises – the Art Deco Society, Friends of the Berea, amongst others.

Today, we find the ever approachable Helen still perched in her flat overlooking the curve of the Esplanade, and surrounded by a growing mountain of informative clippings, books and letters.

Rodney Harber

Nelile Conco

Conco Bryan Architects



I was born and raised in Pietermaritzburg. I grew up in a middle class environment in which education was a priority. We were raised to not lose sight of our identity, spirituality and values.

My exposure to the world of creativity began at Primary School when I was introduced to A3 paper and a box of oil pastels. The subject was "colorful birds". My decision to study architecture was influenced by History of Art at the Pietermaritzburg Girls High School. I completed a Bachelor of Architectural Studies with a Department of Public Works Bursary. This gave young graduates the opportunity to gain work experience in local firms. Academic studies paled in comparison to the professional architectural practice. I was mentored at Llew Bryan Architects for 3 years, after which I was made a partner at Conco Bryan Architects. I have had the opportunity of being part of the team on the new University of Mpumalanga.

eThekweni City Architects

Nina Saunders



Dharsha Naidoo



Sandy Naiker



Mary-Anne North



Nasreen Arabi



Helen Reeves



Laura Hunt



Drawing on all sides of our brains: working in the public sector

Public sector architecture goes beyond delivery of a product, into post-delivery responsibility for leveraging economic development, socio-spatial integration, quality living environments and city pride. This is where we are challenged to draw on all our diverse skills to make this difference in the delivery of 770 projects over any 3 year budget cycle. The municipal architecture department has a professional staff of 52, of which 9 are women, and is responsible for a R3 billion annual capital budget and for maintenance within 5000 building assets.

The municipality has great appreciation for diversity and it is increasingly common to see women in traditionally male-held positions. Whilst we are still a minority in most meetings, this sensitises us to marginalisation in the broader community. The benefits of greater numbers of women in the

public sector and in the profession are clear, and we seek to grow interest in the profession through internships and workplace exposure.

The ability to engage with diverse projects in the public realm from the scale of small traders' stalls to a new 10,000 unit neighbourhood, more than compensates in excitement and satisfaction for the frustrations of arduous procurement and official procedures.

Freedom to interpret our client departments' needs outside the commercial or aesthetic concerns of the private sector means getting back to the basic principles of value for money but also opens wide opportunities for innovation in the means by which we harness community participation, and the means by which we design new ways of procuring large economic development initiatives which will continue to make a difference.



"Wrong hand self portraits and what we love about our work" Left to Right: Nina Saunders, Dharsha Naidoo, Sandy Naiker, Mary-Anne North, Nasreen Arabi, Helen Reeves and Laura Hunt

Mayuri Bhana

The Creative Axis Architects

I grew up in my dad's architectural practice and didn't really have any female role models. But that didn't make me feel like it wasn't a career for women. Perhaps not having male siblings and attending an all girls' school promoted gender equality and female empowerment.

My experience on campus, however, was a little different to my upbringing. For the first time I felt that in order to be taken seriously as a female student in architecture, you had to look a certain way, call it "grungy or bohemian", and made to believe by some that "Indian girls" didn't have what it takes to survive this grueling course.

Be that as it may, there were a good handful of us who made it through and proved the naysayers wrong.

Learning about the business of architecture in the real world has been a turbulent ride and a steep learning curve. I don't remember tendering and getting onto databases featuring in any architecture course!

Then, the dilemma that many career women have faced; when you finally feel you have gained experience in the industry, your personal life plays catch up – marriage and children. The biggest challenge I now face is juggling to fulfill the different roles I play.

I am in awe of the men and women out there who are able to achieve a work or life balance.

I hope that one day I'll be able to DO IT ALL and DO IT WELL!

"You have to really believe not in yourself, you have to believe that the world is actually worth your sacrifices."
Zaha Hadid



800 Bed Student Residence at Steve Biko Campus, DUT



Alethea Duncan-Brown

Duncan-Brown Architect

was given the opportunity to understand more about the discipline of architecture, and much like a beautifully woven carpet with its weft and weave, I learnt about making spaces, understanding structure and good design.

Returning a year later to continue my studies, I was now the singular girl in the second year. In my third year I was the only girl entrant in the (national) PG Glass Competition, and I won. Upon completing my degree, I was the 7th girl to graduate from the school.

My first job as a graduate was an eye-opener, the only female in the office. I felt like I was wearing an ill-fitting suit. I returned to NMU to a part-time lecturing post and began my Master's degree, becoming the first person to obtain this at NMU.

I lectured for 21 years, first at the PE Technikon (now NMU), and from 1996 at UKZN. I was Programme Director for 6 years. In 2009 it was time to move on, to make way for a new generation of academics.

In the meantime, I have continued to grow my practice. This has taken me full circle from a young child imagining, dreaming and playing at architecture, to applying my knowledge to create homes for families, bringing them joy, happiness and delight.

The idea to study architecture began when as the third daughter in a family of four girls, and with my father's frustration at not having a son, I was given Meccano sets and Lego toys to play with.

I began my studies at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE, now Nelson Mandela University) in a class of 20 with only 2 females. The total number of females in school was less than 5%. Then I failed second year! Rebelliously I wanted to become a chef. My mother insisted that I first work for an architectural practice. Here I

Yashaen Luckan

Incumbent President South African Council for the Architectural Profession

Yashaen Luckan Architects

SOCIETY NEEDS WOMEN ARCHITECTS

Women, by their very nature, can play a vital role in transforming the built environment for the benefit of society. Architecture faces increasing criticism for failing to respond to the realities of society. We require a departure from an egotistical, idealistic and objective architecture, to one which is more responsive.

Women are compromised in a male dominated profession and face challenges at many levels, from university, in practice, and within their homes. The attrition rate of women as students and professionals is alarming.

If we are serious about transforming the built environment, surely the vital place of women in architecture needs to be enhanced and nurtured. Their individual and collective voices need to be heard.

SACAP has included WiASA as a strategic project, the platform for critical discourse in the interest of a sustainable and transformed profession, to the benefit of society. I am certain that WiASA will make its mark on the profession, and will remain part of the vital conversations, dialogues and debates in architecture.

Bridget Horner

Lecturer University of KwaZulu-Natal



so urban mother you sit divided

women walked your path [in 1956] to claim rights to your city space

you struck a rock as my sisters said, but still you did not open your gates

your urban roots now dig deep but they hold with no force on the dry parched earth

your informal routes spread like rhizomes across the land circumnavigating the city like buffalo horns

the landscape within your chapped hands is littered with buildings and things

those precariously positioned are easily smashed by the tyrants of time or the torrent of seas

catching you in your swollen belly is the child unborn waiting for her time to come... waiting

you breathe in and the internal child breathes with you fighting for the same air you breathe

your neck is weighed heavy by the guilt you bear for reaching for the sun

too quick you rose so too low you now stoop to cover the burden you bear

urban mother is it not clear you cannot swallow the ravages of time on your own

we are here at the gate let us in

Trish Emmett

Emmett : Emmett Architects



Induction as SAIA-President, 2004, with daughters Caitlin (left) and Shannon (right)

My mother the architect and leader: Trish Emmett. My mother is an architect. This is who she is, how she functions, what excites her and is her contribution to society. What is an architect? A creator, an idealist, a visionary. A restoration architect sees the potential and promise in the derelict and discarded. While climbing across collapsing floorboards, they can see order and purpose. Architects create the spaces, shapes, light and shelter that allow the rest of us in their community to feel both secure and inspired. Architects are listeners who turn other people's thoughts into structure. My mother is an architect.

Growing up as children of Trish and Frank Emmett, architecture was part of the family. Early memories were of stacking tile samples under Mom's drawing board and making masking tape balls. We earned pocket money holding the ends of tape measures, colouring in submission drawings and making trees for models. Buildings dominated family holiday photos. We learnt the phrases "touch the earth lightly" and "the aesthetics of function". We also knew that our parents would prioritize being present for our events at galas and athletics days between their site meetings and other commitments. We witnessed the long hours and frustrations of self-employed architects and celebrated their successes and awards.

Designing has always been Mom's happy place, especially if the music is turned up. She can design anywhere. Her clipboard and pen were her survival tools for endless swimming galas. She thrives on challenges and problem solving.

My mother is a leader. She is not bound by convention. She was one of the first women architects' trained at the University of Natal. She was the first woman President of the KZNIA and went on to become SAIA President. She was also a council member of SACAP and the Africa Union of Architects. At a couple of Mom's international meetings I was able to meet some of her predominantly male Africa Union of Architects council members. I saw the trust and support she had earned. Mom went on to become the Vice-President of the International Union of Architects (UIA), Second Vice-President and the Treasurer of the UIA. As the chair of the UIA Bid Committee, she successfully led the bid for Durban to host the UIA in 2014. My mother is an example, to us as her children, of not living limited by other people's expectations.

I am both inspired by and deeply proud of my mother, Trish Emmett.

Dr Shannon Emmett



Dockpoint Row Houses, Point.



Dockland Courtyard, Point



Graduation, 1977, with Shannon.



Quarters Hotel, Florida Road



Lion Match Head Office and Distribution Centre, Point



Jodi Davids-Harber

TJ Architects
Durban

Having grown up in the "Coloured" township of Wentworth south of Durban I cannot say that my immediate surroundings contributed in any way to an understanding of what quality living environments were. What it did though, even at a very young age, was to highlight the plight of the environments of marginalized communities in our country. My interest in architecture stemmed from this romantic notion to set myself on a career path that would enable me to contribute to physical and social change; hence the years spent toiling through all-nighters at UKZN studios... incidentally some of the best years of my life.

Though my professional aspirations are a lot less romantic these days, I cannot ignore the sacrifices required to have been afforded the opportunity of working on projects of varying natures of design, location, complexity and value, both locally and abroad which have allowed me to grow and develop.

The challenges as a woman are innumerable and there is much work to be done to engage gender transformation in our profession. As South Africans our constitution is the framework from which to access our rights to gender equality. However it is clear from the struggle of many women in the industry that this is not the reality.

My position as a partner in TJ Architects has afforded me many professional opportunities and the challenges which have come with that role continue to fuel my passion to learn, design, develop, inspire and contribute.

Outside of architecture and family my other passion is travel. I was awarded the Geoffrey Le Seuer Travel Scholarship in third year and I embarked on my first solo backpacking trip through Europe... and the world of architecture seen only in books and dusty journals became a tangible reality. The euphoria of that first adventure has never quite dissipated and I continue to prioritise my travel bucket list each year, now sharing these experiences with my husband and adventurous 6 year old daughter.

Many architects, particularly women, would argue that the pursuit of happiness while engaged in this profession is incongruous, and though I still struggle with the life/work balance I have long since passed the notion that one must suffer for their art.

I believe that empowerment is about increasing choices. Of all the choices I have made in my life the best was to be a mother and though I've missed many a bedtime story due to late nights at the office, both family and work continue to be a fulfilling part of my life due to the unfailing support of my husband, family, friends and business partners.



Monique Gillespie

Gillespie Architects

Architecture is not for sissies!

I often warn hopeful students who come through my practice, about whether the profession of architecture is something they really would like to pursue. They realise, since I am a girl – a 'sissie' – that I am not being literal. But the challenges facing the profession now are so multi-faceted that sometimes it is difficult to recognise it as the same profession one started out in.

It is easy to get bogged down by the need to respond to tight budgets, client expectations, legislation and bureaucracy which seem aimed at sucking the soul out of creativity and the demands of running a business – all without consideration for creating a home and raising children.

Ironically, I believe us sisters (sissies) are uniquely talented to deal with the Architecture of today. Women often find it easier to tap into the resources of intuition, sensitivity and practicality. Our work

often calls for extreme tact and diplomacy, cooperative skills and objectivity. Architects need to multi-task on a permanent basis and believe in many different, sometimes conflicting points of view simultaneously. And in the midst of this find joy.

I started my practice 10 years ago, mainly because I sought the flexibility that being self-employed would give me. It has grown steadily and I have had to grow with it. Having had two beautiful daughters, my practice is my third child, and the most demanding! My work has informed my parenting and vice versa. The skill required to debate over some minute point with your teenager assists in dealing with unreasonable and belligerent civil servants. The ability to use gentle, persuasive tactics with an egotistical client is useful when dealing with a tantrumming toddler.

I am always aware that within the industry I am seen as a woman first and an architect second. I am used to the curious stares on site. And although I now wear a neon pink hard hat, I have never found that my gender has put me at a disadvantage.

Yes, Architecture is not for sissies, but remains a profession that allows for intense personal development and growth, regardless of gender. For the Architecture of tomorrow, the development of the feminine element is essential for the depth, variety and complexity of skills that will be required for the profession to survive. Young talent entering the profession wide eyed and hopeful must be given the tools to cope with the challenges.

The responsibility for this paradigm shift in mentoring young architects, especially women, starts at tertiary education level and continues throughout our working lives. It takes a community to raise a child but an entire professional body to make an architect.



Headquarters for Earthworks, Romead Business Park, Pinetown



Private Home, Simbithi Eco-Estate, Ballito



Romead Business Park, Pinetown



Romead Business Park, Pinetown

Sally Lewis

Stitch Studio

My passion for regeneration started in KwaZulu-Natal. As a student I spent a summer working for Rodney Harber, making models of an informal settlement. The purpose of the models was to show the community that their settlement could be upgraded while they continued to live there. For the models to be really useful the residents needed to be able to identify their own homes. That was where I learnt the value of thinking about strategy and detail at the same time and balancing community aspirations with the need for individual identity.

My vision now is to help create a new generation of streets for London. I want to remove the lines drawn between architecture and urban design. And to start thinking about housing and design in a new way that measures success not only by the number of homes delivered, but also by how many delightful streets have been created. At Stitch we embrace the whole experience, seamlessly integrated design and joined up thinking that embraces complexity and engages all involved.

My life is full – when I am not running the practice and trying to make great streets (I am the sole director in a team of 12), I try to spend as much time with my daughters as possible. This usually amounts to an hour or two in the evening after I get home from work. We have had nannies since my 10 year old was just 4 months old. We have no family support (they live in Durban and Stellenbosch) and our house is not big enough for live-in help. My girls are growing up thinking that having a working mum is cool, especially because I am making homes for people (easy for a kid to understand). Long may it last...



Goresbrook Village, Dagenham, London



South Acton Phase 3.1, Ealing, London



Model of Marlowe Road Masterplan, London

Lindsay Napier

Lindsay Napier Architect

My first experience of an architect's office at Fridjon and Fulford was not unlike a classroom with a headmaster checking your desks at the end of the week. There was a definite hierarchy and "old-school-tie" mentality in the old established practices, which was hard to break into. I soon discovered that there were other types of practices and joined a smaller one working on clinics and hospitals. This exposed me to the complex nature of the role of the architect; I came face to face with the conditions of rural hospitals and recognised the compassion and sacrifice of the nurses. I saw how we could assist to ease their daily workload with good design and was confronted with the difficulty in dealing with government departments to achieve this.

Juxtaposed with my early exposure to architecture was marriage and making a home. Architecture and finding an enjoyable working environment became my goal, with the aim of having my own practice should children one day arrive. Sally Adams' practice became my second home and a stepping stone into my own practice. I had admired her work since I read an article on "Women in architecture". Working with her was a real treat. She taught me balance in personal and working life and an appreciation for good design.

When children finally did arrive, working from home with young children was not as rosy as I had thought, and a separation of work and home was the next step. Parenting provided useful skills. The dual role of mother and architect is exhausting. A day may involve negotiating a R4 million tender in the morning and the price of an ice cream in the afternoon!

Jenny Whitehead

Hospital Development Manager
Western Cape Government



Jean Powell

Jean Powell was born in Kenya. She attended the Natal Technical College before studying in the UK. She completed a course in Decoration at the Bartlett School of Architecture, where she studied architectural courses like History of Architecture and Building Construction, as well as Chemistry of Painters' Materials. She also completed a design course at the Central School of Art and Craft where she was exposed to personalities such as Eduardo Paolozzi and Lucien Freud.

After graduation she returned to Nairobi and worked in a firm of architects led by a woman. She moved on to teach art at some schools in Kenya, before moving to KZN with her husband and two children.

She taught design, first at the Salisbury Island College, then the University Durban- Westville, as well as the School of Architecture, now UKZN. Her strengths were in drawing and design. She taught aspirant architects to draw human beings in Life Drawing classes, to apply a multitude of visual techniques and to understand buildings as three dimensional, sculptural forms that also fulfilled critical functional requirements. She had a significant impact on a large body of young minds who went into various design fields.

She worked with architects Derek Sherlock, Louis Ferreira da Silva, Brian Johnson, Roy Farren and Rodney Harber, undertaking commissions for furniture and doors. She will be best remembered for her many stunning vitreous enamel doors. As an artist she designed and executed her work in factories, often after hours and as a woman admired for her dedication by many night shift labourers.

Her works are found in many countries: Germany, UK, and Australia, but mostly in South Africa. They are often very strong visual images, often with a sense of humour, pop images re-interpreting industrial icons in totally unexpected ways, but always dynamic and visually pleasing.

Their home in Palmiet Drive is a work of art and architecture, where works of art, furniture, services, light and shade are completely integrated as only a woman could achieve.

Rob Brusse

Barbara Southworth

GAPP Architects and Urban Designers

woman + architect + boss + partner + mother

All of these? Doable? Desirable? Worth the cost? Here are my sentiments, nuanced by talking to women, architects, directors, mothers and others who have chosen to lead a practice over motherhood, some with partners, some without. There is another category of women, architect, boss, mother who run practices with their partners; I imagine their stories may be different?

woman was not a choice but I've never wished I was a man

architect was a clear and hard won choice – it's a calling, takes commitment, long hours, deep personal involvement – I love the work and I'm passionate about what I do

boss was also the consequence of a series of choices; led me to management roles at a young age and running a practice at 40, all the while aspiring to be an encouraging, vision-driven leader and mentor

partner has been a bumpy road with the casualties of my passion for architecture, working long hours and a few bad choices dotting my path to the present

All of these roles together (+ sister, daughter, cousin, aunt), all doable and even rewarding.

Add mother to the list of roles and the cracks start to show, lack of sleep, baby brain (it's real), guilt, anxiety and resentment pile up. Woman + architect + director of a practice + decent partner + attentive, available mother to a small child = guilt at not being around for my child, anxiety at not holding the practice together, strained relationships = insomnia, total lack of life/work balance and who knows the price that my daughter has paid. At times I scarcely know, let alone recognize the person I've become.

Now, as one of a 2 woman + mother + director of a large architecture and urban design practice, I've been tasked to formulate the company policy on maternity leave. We want to be a woman friendly practice and not force women to choose between motherhood and architecture.

Would I advise another woman to follow my path?

No. The cost is too high.

Woman + architect + boss + mother in academia or state employment may be doable. Woman + architect + boss + mother in private practice is not a choice I'd make again.

Shaan Steyn

From Ruben Reddy Architects

Good architecture is the perfect woman: She is imperfect, yet you would never notice. Actually, sometimes she is a total mess but that makes her even more enchanting. She has the ability to connect, to nurture, to engage and empower. She is contradictory. She can be daring and she can be demure, she can be proud and she can be modest. She is always complex, even when she seems simple. She is the goddess, the matriarch – in all her strength and presence. She can be no one other than her unique flawed self... No wonder all the men are obsessed with her.

Jackie Yang

Student University of KwaZulu-Natal

Those who discovered my interest in architecture typically responded with surprise, asking "why architecture?" stressing the challenges of entering a man's world. However, I was determined. At times, campus was challenging but amusing. It was the platform for expressing creativity and challenging design.

After graduation, I worked for Architects Collaborative and ACG Architects who both moulded me. A project that I was fortunate to work on at ACG Architects was the New Chemical Sciences Building at the University of the Western Cape. This was a specialized building and was both intense and complex to work on.



Amanda Lead

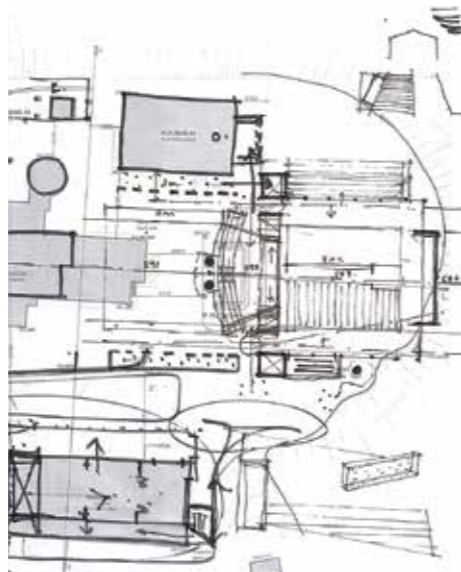
Amanda Lead Architects

Balance, simplicity and finding the 'middle way' ...

As a barefoot student in my first year, my most significant architectural project was "planes in space". I spent hours arranging the pieces of painted timber of specific thickness and dimension into a form that was balanced from all angles. I found it immensely satisfying. Barrie Biermann made me see simplicity as a design objective. He also taught me something else that has stayed with me. One afternoon I rushed through a tutorial and excused myself early to go and meet my boyfriend. As I did so Prof Biermann responded loudly for the whole class to hear: "Go! Life is more important than Architecture!"

My five years of work experience as junior Architect tipped the scales of my equilibrium completely. Sanity prevailed in simple living and regular escapes with Nick to 'berg, beach or bush' to top up.

When I started my own practice in 1998, I had a 10 month old baby and welcomed the chance to reinvent my working life. I took on work from diverse sources including contributing as Durban editor for *Elle Decoration*. When my son came along, the scales



Manor Gardens Primary School

tipped again and the three months I took off for my new little bundle weren't nearly enough. I battled with sleep deprivation and 'porridge brain' and for many years, was the main breadwinner.

Discovering Buddhism helped me enormously to find some stillness in my busy life.

"The key to finding a happy balance in modern life is simplicity" *Sogyal Rinpoche*.

Now I have a Zen studio in the back of an indigenous garden – connection to nature is a major theme in our work. I still draw by hand and make models. The talented people who have worked here and those who do now generally don't fit the mould of the formal working world and set their own working hours. We feel like a family. We take on some alterations for local, like-minded clients and believe good design is needed to enliven existing neighbourhoods. My teenage kids, both creative beings, seem to feed off the energy in the office at times and often pop in after school.

"Look ahead to the rest of your life and ask yourself what you want it to add up to" *Pema Chodron*.

Not business-minded, I make decisions from the heart. I struggle hugely with the contrast in the living conditions we are exposed to. A boarding house we are upgrading in Ntshongweni has a long through pit latrine for 100 girls to share. Resolving a bespoke bathroom for a house may consume a day. The schools and social projects we do are fraught with funding issues and yet some spend tens of millions on their houses (not our clients - I recently turned down a new house because the brief made me intensely uncomfortable and the people were far from like-minded)...

Next step – to tackle the funding world.



Manor Gardens Primary School

Photograph by Angela Buckland

Samantha Naik

From Boogertman Architects



The architectural profession is tough, but at the same time extremely rewarding if you are willing to make the sacrifice.

I started studies in medical science, followed by studies in architecture between DUT and UKZN, completing a four year Degree at UKZN. I worked for Vito Coppola who mentored me during my studies. My ambitious nature then resulted in a move to Johannesburg to work at LVM, then to Bentel working on their India portfolio and the Gautrain Marlboro station. I am currently at Boogertman where I feel privileged to be part of a company that continually encourages growth, innovative thinking and pushing boundaries.

My thought is that women are often too modest about their achievements and need to overcome self-imposed barriers in order to succeed in this industry. My mother has always been my greatest inspiration. She is a brilliant, street-savvy woman who broke all the glass ceilings in her generation and still continues to do so. Great strides have been made by women in architecture and it has been incredible to watch this transformation. I am a strong advocate for the empowerment of women.

Over the years I have developed many friendships and gathered many colleagues who continue to inspire and amaze me with their brilliance. My advice for anyone wanting to join the industry is to set goals, push yourself beyond your comfort zone, and remember that there's always help, you just need to ask for it.



129 Rivonia Rod, Sandton

Photograph by Angela Buckland

Aadila Kajee

From GM Khan Architects

When did my journey in architecture begin? Was it at age five, when I spent time building houses out of Lego? Or when as soon as I could draw, vandalising my mother's shopping lists with drawings of houses? Or maybe it was the lack of gender stereotypes in my life – my father in fashion and clothing and my sister in construction. Regardless of when it began, there is one thing I am certain of; I never had the thought that Architecture wasn't a career for a woman.

My family members were concerned. Will you have to go to site? I took on architecture with a spirit of optimism and maybe some ignorance. Sexism had always been something that happened to other people, e.g. women in media, but never me.

In my third year at university I experienced sexism within group work. You're called bossy when you take on leadership roles, being assertive, being annoyed with group members not pitching up or not pulling their weight. Instead of being productive and working on the task at hand, group work became the women in the group having to stand up to the men in the group to prove our capability.

Fast forward a few months, now out of university and in the working world, there are new trials to be faced. Although I am the only female architectural technologist in the practice, I was made to feel welcome. Sure, my first few site meetings made me feel like I was intruding into an All Boys Club, but now I'd like to think that I've somewhat been accepted into the fold.

I'd love to think that my brief encounters with sexism are behind me, but I'm sure this is not the case. I don't think that Architecture is not a career for women.

I am no longer ignorant to the issues which many face, the very issues which push away women from joining the profession. I've heard other women's stories of the workplace and I'm glad that I'm one of the lucky ones who gets to work in an environment where all opinions are valued regardless of gender. But at the same time I am saddened: shouldn't that which we consider to be lucky, be something that is the norm for all women?

Sushma Patel

Lecturer University of Pretoria

Councillor, South African Council for the Architectural Profession

I was born and raised in Durban, and exposed to the acute separation of race and class during the '70s and '80s. My early schooling and socialization took place within a city which had a profound effect on my ability to absorb the many facets of diversity. Durban provided the fertile ground – arcades, markets, mosques, trading, community, colour, vibrancy, beach – for my young spatial imaginings. Despite the physical separation of people, most with limited access to resources due to restrictive laws, the centre of the city represented opportunity and the hope of a better life. The urbanity of Durban presented a sense of the possibility of freedom.

I had made early connections with intersectionality; I understood that gender oppression, and other oppressions, were tied into the overall discrimination and domination agenda. In school, I would beat the "Indian" boys in technical drawing and woodwork. I felt enormous pressure to overachieve as a girl in these male-dominated fields, and sense of immense satisfaction when I did.

Now, I am frequently challenged by male contractors, bosses, colleagues and others when I am outspoken, straight-forward, articulate and assertive. It is a constant internal battle which, if left silenced and unspoken, begins to erode the integrity and dignity of a woman. I continue to be the architect, urbanist, SACAP Council Member, student, lecturer, partner and parent, as I believe that it is through my participation and voice that there is a greater prospect of instilling in others the hope of a just, an enriched and a diverse built environment and society.

Malcolm Campbell

President of the South African Council for the Architectural Profession, 2001-09

ACG Architects and Development Planners

Our architectural and urban design landscape is strongly influenced by the economic, social, cultural and gender backgrounds of the producers of architecture. Of all of these, it is around gender that a more acute understanding needs to be developed. Foremost would be consideration of the challenges facing women operating in a male dominated environment. Here the traditional cultural and societal roles ascribed to men and women when it comes to the business environment in which we operate, and particularly when it comes to domestic and family responsibilities, needs to be brought sharply into focus.

To my male colleagues, I appeal for a greater self-consciousness around how we create organisational and business environments where women are supported and encouraged to play greater leadership roles and greater commitment to ensuring more equitable roles with respect to family responsibilities. No, this must not be interpreted as getting women to assume a male persona, but rather entails coming to terms with the special attributes that women bring in terms of enriching architectural practice and making it more relevant to the needs of society.

I have been privileged to have experienced significant changes within my own practice since women practitioners have become the core of the leadership team. In focusing on the contribution of women architects, this publication initiative must be applauded and I trust that the message it conveys will resonate strongly.

Simone le Grange

Lecturer University of Cape Town

Women in Architecture SA Task Team

We are women. We are architects. We care about the environments we design, live in, and plan for. We are daughters, sisters, voters and thinkers. We are mothers, wives, partners. We are creators, urbanists, chefs, knitters, weavers, painters, photographers, sculptors, writers, poets, managers, educators, inspirers, historians, conservers, psychologists, philosophers, dreamers and providers. We each have the choice to determine when we are these things, which of these things take priority, how intensely we are some or all of these things. And we change. We transform. We adapt. We grow. We are flexible and nurturing. We are strong and principled. We can invent and reinvent ourselves as often and as much as we want. Nothing is predetermined or predicted. We are bound only by our own imaginations. We.We.

BUT

We are architects. All of us have studied and learnt through hard work and dedication. We believe we can contribute to our environments, our neighbourhoods, our cities and our country. We have so much to give. But many of us will not be able to give all we have. Many of us will not have the choice and chance to grow or transform. Many of us will have to choose. We will not be able to have it all. We will have to prioritize and sacrifice. Our choices will be limited by our circumstances. Our choices will be limited by our families, by our bodies, by our loves, by our fears, and by our histories.

The joys, delights, despair and tragedies of life are not equally shared by men and women. There is very little equality at all. There are categories and limitations put onto us by history. These categorizations predetermine our own limitations. Our class, gender, race, heritage, religion, politics, physical abilities, and attributes are all combined in different intensities to rank us in our daily lives as well as our very own minds. We carry the burden of history, we carry our mothers' and their mothers' pain. We are weighed down by their limitations and categorizations. We feel guilt for their sacrifice. And we are tired.

And yet... we imagine:

We imagine another way.



Angela Baker
Angela Baker Architects

It is people that interest me; different kinds, different forms, from different backgrounds, the well-shuffled gems of humanity that surprise us on our very doorstep.... and it is a belief that architecture is primarily in service of people. It is not a pristine, well-photographed object of admiration, but a work-soiled part of the restless and jumbled whole.

Urban Regeneration Thesis: UKZN 1993: A seminal year to have completed a thesis; trained through an establishment hungry for equality, and keenly aware of the grievances and impact of the past on our built landscapes. It was the time of Biermann, Claude, Joubert, Wang and Harber – skilled teachers. A time of townships burning – necklacing, bombs, Rubicons and referendums. Gazing over the precipice, we pulled ourselves back from the very edge – not yet even a nation, but already great! And our fresh young bunch was skilled, honed and ready, full of vigour for stitching together wounds, re-shaping and growing this nation. No greater place or time to begin a career – SA 1994.

Following the initial shock of discovering just how much a freshly graduated architect actually knows about building and keenly aware of how far “south” of Africa we really are, a friend and I set off in search of East African pre-colonial trading settlements. Kas Kazi/Kusi: the trade winds caressing the eastern coast – conveyors of trade and cultures for thousands of years. (Yes, us, Africa, history..!) From the isolation of Ilha de Moçambique, Kilwa’s ruins amidst the string of coral Mafia Islands, bustling Dar es Salaam (so much like home), to Lamu, the town of living history and Lalibella, Ethiopia’s rock hewn churches, all from the bumpy passenger seat of a formidable Hilux single cab. 28000kms on some of the worst roads on the planet, without even a puncture! An adventure, shaping an attitude towards our place as a country on the southern tip of this Africa.

Enter a keen interest in the sum of the parts, over the stand-alone object and imagine for a moment, development with job-creation, sustainability, social re-integration and community building as its key agendas – in contrast to profit driven motivation. Imagine Architecture in service of the 99%, as opposed to the 1%. Vast possibilities.

Twenty years on and the learning curve is steepening. Balancing life amidst the complexities of design and delivery was never going to be a simple task, but as a friend once commented, design talent seems to proliferate in Durban, and if ever there were a group of local Architects up to the challenge, this would be it! So, let us try not to lose focus of the real need, and in the words of the Kikuyu Proverb: *“Thutha ni mwari”*: The afterwards is wide.



Media Centre, Seaview Primary School



KwaMashu Station Traders Market



UKZN Architecture Final Year 1993



KwaMashu Station Traders' Market



KwaMashu Station Traders' Market



Computer and Media Centre, George Campbell Technical High School



Pocket Park Installation, Warwick Junction for UIA 2014

Riona Sewnarain

Transnet Projects KZN

“Keep it Simple”

I took a path that led me to a career employed as an architect at Transnet Capital Projects. Today, I work in an environment that demands the modernist ethos of “form follows function”. Our architectural team develops the built environment in the port and rail operational areas. The buildings are fit-for-purpose, practical and safe responses to the industrial work environment.

“Less is More”

Fundamental to this approach is the creation of cost effective, efficient designs that address operational requirements and ensure projects are delivered within time, budget and quality constraints. This said, I remain a modernist following my lecturers’ teachings and I know that I am exactly where I should be. Sometimes, when a client says, I want an iconic Passenger Terminal at the port entrance, we set our imaginations free... a little!



“TEAM : together everyone achieves more”

I have worked with and learnt from remarkable architects, architectural technologists, technicians, project managers and engineers. “Design is not just what it looks and feels like – Design is how it works”. Working in an engineering environment, engineers do the “unseen” and make our visions a reality. “Art without engineering is dreaming, engineering without art is calculating”. In a demanding workplace, being constructive, creative and “leading by example” is imperative.

“Take care of your body; it is the only place you have to live”

Four years ago, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. After excellent medical care, I now have the use of my hands again and

am able to lead a normal life. This chronic disease made me realize the importance of managing stress, eating healthily and “walking the stairs instead of using the lift”. Hanging up my superwoman costume was difficult. However, it liberated me to simplify, prioritize, say “no”, accept help, understand what is important in my life, and design with greater understanding.

“Family”

We may not have it all together, but together we have it all. My family and friends have been my safety net, and I feel blessed.



Durban Container Terminal

Challenges Facing Women in Architecture

Karuni Naidoo

The South African construction industry limits the participation of women professionals. Practices and leadership are predominantly white and male. Unless more women are able to enter and remain in the profession and issues of patriarchy and diversity are addressed, the sector will continue to exclude women, in particular black women.

Black architectural practices are few and remain marginalized in terms of access to work from both private and public sectors. Black women architects struggle to attract work to sustain their practices, limiting their full participation in the profession. They are insufficient in numbers, not visible as role models in practice, offices, academia and government or within our organisations. The industry is sexist, racist and discriminating. Many leave the profession, their voices are never heard and their success stories never told.

Historical challenges and the legacy of apartheid still limit access to the profession for the majority of the South African population. This is very likely due to problems in public education, specifically the lack of access to science and mathematics, stereotyping what girls and boys should do, as well as a lack of career guidance. Whilst learners are encouraged to enter professions in engineering and construction, architecture is not promoted as a choice and is a relatively new profession for those learners from previously disadvantaged communities. Whilst universities are taking in more women students, attrition is high. This could be due to low staff numbers at universities, insufficient resources to nurture and support women in their studies, unplanned pregnancies and the lack of family support.

Serious and unrealistic demands are placed on women to remain in the profession. They must juggle family responsibilities with running practices, being at work, on site and at meetings. The reality is that women receive little support both at home, where child care is not shared equally, and in the workplace, with many practices not providing structured maternity leave options, not providing support to women employees for child care, and not allowing flexibility of time for family responsibilities. The lack of a life/work balance leads many to eventually opt out of the profession.

Women-run architectural practices and partnerships are some of the best-managed and produce work of high quality. Despite known women’s creative and management skills, there remains a perception that women architects are not suited for employment in senior positions, or as associates, because of the time they may require for other roles in the home and in society.

Women are often compared and made to compete with male colleagues, who are more available to work long hours, thereby being more productive and requiring less time off. In these situations women have little choice but to work long hours and overtime. Despite these stresses, women continue to remain in the profession, with many being forced to leave employment and adopt more sustainable practice models and strategies. Many practice from home, obtain work through contract work and part-time work arrangements. All of these continue to be disregarded as “serious” architectural practice.

While many women excel at universities, upon completion they are not prepared for practice and work, and have little knowledge about the challenges ahead. Academia is not promoted as an attractive career option. Many will continue to remain afraid of “professional indemnity” and running their own practices. The few already in practice will further limit themselves in terms of their capabilities. Some will end up working for other architects and stay there despite limited options for promotion and ownership in these practices. Most women architects remain associates and managers for years. Few are offered (or do not demand) equity in these practices, even though they perform the work that equates to being a principal. Women can also remain numbers, used to make company profiles and marketing material look pretty, to boost BBBEE score-card ratings and to attract work and win tenders for practices.

These are the challenges, the “not-so-nice stuff”.

Whilst we remain aware of this, we also have a positive outlook.

Tejal M.Singh

**Head of Space Management
Facilities Management
City of Cape Town**

My journey post-academia began in 2001 when I realised how little I actually knew, and the real adventure in architecture began. I cannot say I regret one bit of this journey, each and every firm, mentor and project has been a building block in “architectural me”. I spent 10 years in the private sector and have since had 6 years’ experience in the public sector. In 2008 I became a mom, and started to see architecture through the eyes of a child. My creativity morphed into a more fun, fascinating and practical approach to space and structure, and my passion grew, seeing the built environment and space through my daughter’s eyes.

After completing a Master’s degree in Business Leadership I discovered a passion for business and this has led me to manage a division at the City of Cape Town called “Space Management” which to most may sound like I’m linked to aeronautics! In reality I manage the corporate space in all the buildings owned by the City and am Consultant Architect to my Directorate.

I love what I do and looking back at “the dots” that led me here, I believe I am in the right place for now. I have realised that one’s journey is more than what one can predict at any given point in time.

What I’ve learnt is simple:

Be patient.

Let your journey unfold as it must.

Take your creativity with you.

**Rani Naiker**

Architect

Looking back over 42 years, to when I started out as an architectural student at the University of Natal, now UKZN, I acknowledge having had NO idea of what I was letting myself into. From being reasonably confident at school, where most people recognized each other, I found myself as the ONLY Indian female on a campus where I knew nobody and nobody knew me. This was the least of my problems. I was completely unprepared for what was to come. I was being publically critted on work that may not have looked like the result of several sleep deprived days, but was in reality something that I had poured into what I thought was my considerable creative ideas. I had to find my own way around campus, completing the other 9 subjects which had to be slotted into little left-over slivers of time. Feeling overwhelmed was an understatement.

However, what my student life at both Natal, and later University of Cape Town prepared me for was to be pushed out of my comfort zone and to survive. I have reaped the benefits of pushing myself to the limit. I opened my mind to new experiences, learned that there is no one solution to any problem, and that often somebody else may have an answer better than yours. I may have taken my time to complete the course, but I did arrive at the end of it as the first female of colour to achieve a degree in Architecture. As we spent the greater part of our days and nights with fellow students, they have remained lifelong friends.

Times were economically difficult in the second half of the '80s and there was no job security. I joined Om Moodley in practice for ten years that saw in our new democracy with our involvement in SABTACO. I had my first glimpse into how networking played a part in procuring work, which is still not my strong point.

This led me to a position at the Department of Public Works in Pretoria. The reputation of the department was not great, to say the least, but I experienced the sense of accomplishment that comes from working on projects which made a very real contribution to the nation. Parallel to this was the steep learning curve of managing people, corporate governance, as well as pushing diplomatic skills to the limit while dealing with difficult and powerful officials. I served two terms on the new SACAP representing government.

I moved to the South African Reserve Bank, as Property Manager and thereafter Facilities Manager, where I have spent the last 10 years. I had to deal in more detail with every request for space, furniture, or building projects. I learned how to use my people skills to manage in a new environment.

I attribute my ability to meet these challenges with interest and enjoyment, to the decision all those years ago, to enter the world of 3- and 4-dimensional thinking that is architecture.

**Merylene Chitharai**

From East Coast Architects

I question my role as an architectural technologist, gravitating towards socially sustainable architecture, social responsibility and transformation.

**Joanne Lees**

Lees and Short Associated Architects

I wanted to study fine art or photography but my parents preferred a profession. A week before registration I applied to Architecture at Natal (UKZN today), and got in. I had never even seen a drawing board before.

I studied in a white Rhodesian school, began high school in a mixed-race girls' Zimbabwean school, and finished in an all-white / all-girls South African school, where an inspiring history teacher used to teach outside of the approved syllabus behind a closed classroom door. Early awareness of race-based politics influenced my sense of social justice.

By 3rd year I wasn't sure that I wanted to actually be an architect. Debate around a more relevant curriculum, and exposure to broader socio-political material, helped me see that architecture could be an agent for change. After two years out, working in London and travelling, I returned to 4th year. We zoomed out, and could study housing and urban design. I was finally hooked. We also had our first female teachers – Lone Poulsen and Jessie Birss.

I worked for Rodney Harber, a privilege I will always be grateful for, then set up practice on my own. In 1996 my husband and I set up Lees & Short Associated Architects. I was pregnant. We moved our office home, and work and domestic life merged; a difficult and not always equal juggling act.

Involvement in BEAM, ACCESS, CMDA, BESS, and SHIFT (built environment non-government organisations), started a trajectory that has been focused around housing, urban regeneration and sustainability. Winning the international Housing Generator Competition (1997) as part of an all-female team was a high point.

I am interested in trans-disciplinarity, and working at the edges. I design, write, research, teach, sew, curate, facilitate, represent the Institute, take photographs, and undertake process and conference designs. As part of another acronym organisation, FLOW (Fostering Local Well-being) I have been working on a local currency and youth development project. My architectural training and experience provided the diverse skill-set I needed for this work.

My partner anchors our core business, allowing me to explore. Our partnership is complementary, although our process often involves conflict while we integrate our different perspectives. This has somehow made the work of the practice stronger. It sometimes overflows into 'family time', but our eldest daughter is now studying architecture, so it can't be all bad. Unlike me she has seen it all and has chosen it anyway.

I work mostly with men, although I have incredible women colleagues and role models. I try not to suppress my feisty feminine. Process, emergence, mediation, intuition, and collaboration, are as valuable as outcome, expertise, arbitration, logic and ego. Balance is the key to beautiful, meaningful work – which is still my mission.



Hilltop Social Housing Project, Cato Manor



Chesterville Community Hall, Cato Manor



With the Kokstad FLOW Ambassadors 2015



Chesterville Community Hall, Cato Manor

Jane du Rand

Ceramic Mosaic Artist

**Lessons from Zaha Hadid**

Karuni Naidoo

The story of Zaha Hadid sharply highlights the journey and success of one woman architect in the profession. It has less to do with the country of her birth, her religion, her class, her culture, her dress, or her architectural style. It has very much to do with her gender and the profession in which she worked. I found her intriguing, that as a woman she did not acknowledge this.

She appeared not too comfortable talking about herself or her personal life. We learn from her staff that her practice was a nurturing space, especially for women. We learn that she never married or had children. How did a woman manage to even reach the heights that she did? What choices and sacrifices did she make and were they worth it? I am certain that not talking about the struggles that she had to overcome does not mean that there were none.

I am a feminist and I believe that architecture is a "playground of patriarchy" and a "boys club". This permeates the entire profession, and is visible in the culture of societies and institutes, rewarding and award-giving, RIBA Gold Medals, Pritzker laureates, titles, competitions, conference speakers, panels, juries, etc., to the UJA itself and its structures, our own professional organisations, practices, partnerships, clients, colleagues, architectural education, boardrooms, building sites, and our homes and families. An entrenched system of patriarchy supports male architects in their positions of power.

For those of us who are committed to transformation, let us use the death of Zaha Hadid to seriously reflect on how this patriarchy plays itself out in our profession, our careers and our lives. Let us be more aware. Research is confirming women's experiences as a group. We are becoming more empowered. The tide is turning.

As a female architect, Zaha Hadid was a role model to many women and she will continue to inspire future generations who will need to also stand up for themselves when under pressure and work around problems instead of compromising.

Zaha Hadid was fearless and her work brave and radical.



The Iraqi architect in her London office, circa 1985

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/photo-essays/2016-03-31/zaha-hadid-s-best-buildings-architect-dead-at-65>



Heydar Aliyev Center, Azerbaijan

<http://www.casouthdevelopment.com/design-inspiration-zaha-hadid/>

Sally Adams

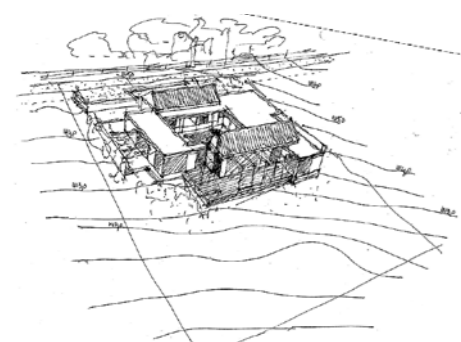
Sally Adams Architects



House Francis, Garlington Estate, Hilton



House Francis, Garlington Estate, Hilton



Preliminary sketch for House Francis, Garlington Estate, Hilton



Orchard House, Garlington Estate, Hilton, with Colleen Oosthuizen



The Annex, Gowrie Farm, Nottingham Road



Orchard House, Garlington Estate, Hilton, with Colleen Oosthuizen

Senzekile Mlambo

Student
Durban University of Technology



My Mother (Thabile Mlambo) and I at my graduation

I still remember it like it was yesterday, the smell of fresh ink on butcher paper assaulted my nose as I curiously scratched around my late father's office. He owned a construction company and frequently had long meetings with sharply dressed middle aged gentlemen, who always delivered these rolls of papers. At 7 years I did not really have an understanding of the profession, but these drawings fascinated me. The attention to detail, precision and quality of the drawings was unlike my amateur grade 1 class scribbles.

My father lost his company, and it became harder for him to maintain a standard of living for us that he had intended. As a result I attended Mariannridge Senior Secondary, a public school situated in Mariannhill, Pinetown. We did not have many facilities; no computer or science labs and we did not receive much career guidance. At matric, I had still not been exposed to a computer or the internet.

One afternoon as I paged through a free newspaper I stumbled across the familiar drawings that I had admired as a little girl. I read the article and was introduced to architecture, what the application requirements were, and which institutions offered the course. I applied straight away and wrote an entrance exam at Durban University of Technology (DUT). Unfortunately I was not accepted and opted to study Information Technology because computer literacy was required for the architecture course. I then re-applied the following year and was accepted.

Armed with an eager and curious mind I was determined to absorb all that I could from my lecturers. During the second year of study we were required to complete a six month term of experiential learning. Being in an office environment was quite daunting for an introvert like me but I was determined. After struggling to find placement, my Pastor introduced me to Mike Paterson. I was welcomed into a dynamic office life that allowed me to flourish as I delved into architecture. Four years later he is mentor, advisor and a father.

During my studies, I have taken part in a virtual studio collaboration between Koblenz University and DUT, attended a two week architecture workshop in Gdansk, Poland, and a tour of Frankfurt. In 2015, I became the first in my family to graduate from a university, and first to travel abroad.

I am looking forward to completing a Masters in Architecture at Koblenz University.

All of this has been possible for a township girl like me. The future looks bright and possibilities are endless.

My story is still being written...



On site

Janine Hicks

Outgoing Commissioner
Commission for Gender Equality KZN



GENDER EQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA – AND THE WORKPLACE: GAINS AND CHALLENGES

Since the advent of democracy, major strides have been made in ensuring gender equality for women in South Africa. As a starting point, we have recognition of gender equality embedded in our Constitution in the Bill of Rights, which calls for equality, equal protection and benefit before the law and non-discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, pregnancy and other such grounds. Post the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the South African government adopted the National Policy Framework on Gender Equality, which obliges the government to mainstream gender in all law, policy and service delivery programmes.

This means that government departments and municipalities have to recognize the different needs of women and men in relation to, for instance, access to land, participation in the economy, and safety and security, and develop interventions to address those gendered needs. It also establishes our national 'gender machinery', the state architecture for driving gender mainstreaming and ensuring gender equality. This includes the Department for Women in the Presidency, the Portfolio Committee on Women in Parliament, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) as an independent institution to monitor and protect gender equality in South Africa, and an active civil society, addressing the social and economic marginalization of South African women and seeking to hold the state accountable for the delivery on Constitutional rights.

Several anti-discriminatory laws have been passed to protect the rights of women in different sectors. These include amongst others:

The Employment Equity Act, to ensure equal opportunities in the workplace;

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act;

The establishment of Equality Courts in all Magistrates' Courts, to act against any forms of discrimination on any of the grounds prohibited by the Constitution;

The Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Offences Act, to act against gender based violence;

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act to protect property and inheritance rights of women in polygamous Marriages; and

The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act.

In addition, key regional and international protocols have been endorsed, such as:

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women

The Beijing Platform for Action;

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development;

The African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa...

All of which speak to women's rights and vulnerabilities and requires the state to take action against these.

We have seen a dramatic increase in women's representation in politics:

43% women in Parliament;

41% women in Cabinet;

37% women in local government;

Some improvement in the judiciary (women constituting 33% of judges, and 41% of magistrates, and two of our nine Judge presidents); and

More women in the workplace.

Nonetheless, despite these gains, the legacy of colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy remain particularly vivid for women, in that South African society and its institutions are fundamentally unequal, prejudiced and discriminatory against women.

Women are far more vulnerable to and deeply affected by poverty, unemployment and inequality, as a result of patriarchy which underpins women's subordination. Poverty levels are higher for women than men, and poor women are further below the poverty line than men, compounded by race, class and geographic location. We see institutionalised challenges in women's access to land and land ownership, with insufficient data available and measures to accelerate women's access to land, credit, business finance, technology, extension services and markets. Women-headed households have less access than men to public and private assets, such as property ownership, water-borne sewage, electricity for cooking, and water.

The notion of 50/50 women's representation, gender equality and transformation in the workplace is not taken seriously in the private sector, the judiciary or by all political parties. Institutional cultures are male dominated and remain untransformed – as a result, women in management or leadership positions are often isolated and without support networks, leading to attrition in numbers.

The Business Women's Association 2015 Women in Leadership Census advises us that while women comprise 51.2% of the population in South Africa, and 46.8% of the employed population:

Women constitute 40.5% of top management in state-owned enterprises (SOE), and 38.2% of senior management positions within the public service (women constitute 58% of public service overall – "getting in, but not ahead")

Women constitute 29.3% of Executive Manager positions (the slowest growth), and 21.9% of Directors of JSE-listed companies and SOEs, in mostly non-executive directorship positions (only 6.9% of executive directors)

Women constitute 11.6% of leadership of entities, comprising 9.2% of Chairpersons of Boards, and 2.4% of CEOs (decrease from 2010)

Gender wage gap persists:

Women earn 24% less than their male counterparts (now outlawed in the Employment Equity Act as unfair discrimination)

At all levels in the workplace, women remain significantly under-represented and excluded from key decision-making positions, with women's representation within the private sector remaining the lowest. At the current pace of transformation, South Africa will take 2-3 decades before gender parity is reached.

The levels of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual violence against women and girl children in particular, is a critical issue hindering women's advancement and development. In this sector, we see significant under-reporting of GBV, lack of funding for interventions, and duplication and inadequate coordination among stakeholders tasked with addressing prevention and response mechanisms. Overall, we see a lack of monitoring and evaluation of GBV interventions, inadequate access to justice and services for survivors of GBV, and impunity of offenders. The criminal justice system fails women due to inadequate training for police and justice officials, and secondary victimization by the police and in the courts. Violence against women is exacerbated by the culture of silence surrounding this phenomenon and by women's economic dependency on their abusers.

The cost of violence against women to the country economy, through the reduction of women's productivity and impact on public health costs, is estimated by the World Bank at 2% of our country's GDP. In addition, there are certain cultural and religious practices that undermine equality, violate constitutional rights and cause harm to women and girls. These include issues relating to forced and early child marriage, associated practices of abduction of girls for marriage (*ukuthwala*), virginity inspection (*ukuhlolwa*), allegations of witchcraft and assaults and killings of elderly women, and discriminatory practices associated with widowhood across diverse cultures. Many religious denominations interpret their religious scripts in a patriarchal way and undermine women's equality. There is a general neglect of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) issues, rural women, women with disabilities and sex workers, as well as violence against these communities.

While we have seen gains in terms of girls' access to education, with South Africa reaching parity in enrolment figures and attendance for girls and boys in primary education, there is concern at the drop-out rate of girls over the age of 15, influenced by teenage pregnancy and GBV at schools, high levels of GBV and sexual offences at institutions of higher learning and inadequate institutional response and awareness mechanisms. Of further concern is low levels of take-up by young girls of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at school, resulting in their under-representation in professional and technical sectors, fuelled further by the low levels of young women enrolling for higher levels of education (MA and Ph.D.). There is pervasive discrimination and prejudice in attitudes towards women in traditionally male dominated sectors such as mining, engineering, the built environment, agriculture, finance and technical sectors, which contributes to women's under-representation here.

In the health sector, women face economic, domestic, cultural and legal barriers to health care and sexual and reproductive health rights and services. It is estimated that 56% of people living in rural areas worldwide do not have access to essential healthcare services, and South Africa is no exception to this trend. Men's risk taking behaviour contributes to women's ill health, particularly in relation to their HIV infection rates. HIV/AIDS prevalence among the youth aged 15 to 24 indicates this is higher for females (8.1%) than for males (4%). Particular vulnerabilities of women with disabilities and those living with HIV and AIDS, need to be addressed, with instances such as forced sterilisation of HIV positive women and women with disabilities indicative of prejudice and discrimination at the hands of health care workers. These are some of the persistent challenges to gender equality, and outright violations of women's Constitutional rights, that the CGE is addressing through its complaints' management, monitoring and investigative hearings, research and submissions to Parliament, litigation, and public education and outreach, in pursuit of its mandate to promote, protect and ensure the attainment of gender equality in South Africa.

**ALL HUMAN BEINGS
ARE BORN
FREE AND EQUAL**

Janina Masojada

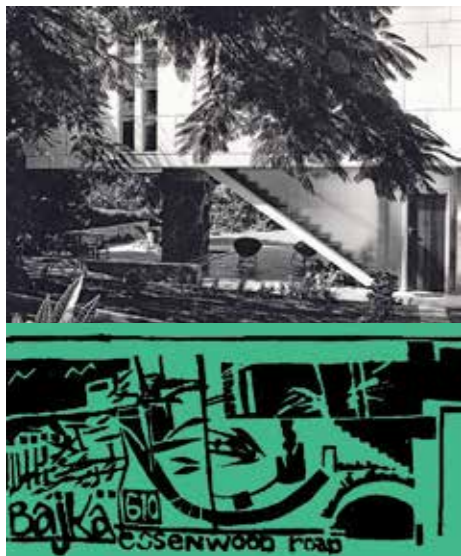
Architect



advantages + influences

personal professional the nation

I grew up on international modernism- My home followed Le Corbusian principles; there was a Mies chair in our lounge. I was raised on 'don't come with a problem, come with a solution', Architecture is all about problem solving.



House Masojada : Architect Hans Hallen

1985 Prac Year: Work and Travel.

Summer School Krakow, Poland, thrilled by the student activism and revolutionary fervor in the rise of Solidarity, the downfall of Communism. My sister lived in Brooklyn, NYC, so I had a place to go to, to maybe not come back from. I applied to Graduate school. International pressure to disinvest in South Africa was high – MIT celebrated diversity. South Africa was exotic + topical. I was offered a place to complete my studies.

1990 A very reluctant return to South Africa.

No corporate work, the established profession was a mess, desperate for scraps of work, taken hostage by local developers busy with middle income Post Modern schlock

The NIA [institute of architects] could not be more irrelevant.

Established [middle aged white male] professionals were all plotting departures to securer futures in other places.

1992-96

Alternative built-environment practitioner bodies ACCESS and BEAM, coordinated a new model of multi-disciplinary collaborative project delivery.

Women were the 'emerging' practitioners to be supported with opportunity and access to professional work. I benefitted, becoming immersed in aid and social development programmes.

This was an intense re-entry 'home'. Hands-on.

Children's homes, Crèches, Clinics, Multi-purpose Centres, Markets, Informal Trading Support Structures, Training Centres, Transport Nodes, Taxi Shelters.

There was a post democracy glory period of international funding for the re-dressing of Apartheid evils.... there was work to be done..... this was a brief period during which the old bureaucracy failed to restrict delivery, and the new was not yet established!



TREE Creche



Zamini Street Childrens' Shelter



Warwick Street Bridge

Photographs by Angela Buckland, Dennis Gilbert and Andrew Griffin

The contractors on these projects taught me. They were collaborative efforts. NGO client project delivery required construction + management training and job creation to be measurable. Construction periods, project cost and levels of personal and professional commitment were excessive, and building methods often compromised. But a more complex outcome was achieved. The agenda of infrastructure development redress empowered me. Optimism prevailed. Working in severely marginalized communities, participatory process of end-user project definition and prioritization of collective needs [most often driven by women taking leadership in their communities] extended my role as architect to facilitator, trainer, fund-raiser, and activist.

1996

There was a new generation of architects, young into their own practices.

design workshop: We worked independently and collaborated on projects as required. [Erik Orts Hansen, Andrew Makin and myself] Warwick Street Traditional Medicine Traders Market and Bridge [urban structure sculpture] A Regional Sports Stadium, Mpumalanga, The Olympic Bid Competition and others, including The New Constitutional Court Competition [with Paul Wygers]

1998-2004

We won the Constitutional Court competition. There were entries from over 50 countries. Andrew, Paul + I were a good combination. We were believers in everything the architectural brief encompassed: a call for recognition, celebration and representation of the accomplishment of the new inclusive democracy as enshrined by the Bill of Rights. Our lives were given over to that process. The honour, the prestige, the terror! passion, and focus.

My father was retired and came to help us manage our practice 'ramp-up' to deliver! The client, the Judges of the Court, engaged in our design development process towards a conceptual rigour. I loved this interaction. The seeking out of crafts-people and artists, designers and makers, the defining of a process for broad inclusion in the project an extension of previous inclusionary and collaborative processes. It was invigorating.



The Constitutional Court

I enjoyed a unique working synergy at design workshop in my partnership with Andrew Makin. Paper napkin doodles, diagrams and road-trips fuelled our practice. We have received a lot of acclaim for the work we did.

- The Constitutional Court is my life reward.
- Electric Ladyland /ITI office building in Kloof [the first and only time I told a developer to 'cut the @##\$] I see the foreman's face as he held the 2 storey ladder for my roof inspection 8 months pregnant.
- A range of private residences on unique locations
- Singita Lobombo [My arms supporting my pregnant belly as a line of men and I hiked at high speed through dense bush identifying potential siting opportunities, lion + hippo around, knowing I was in no shape to climb a tree or run fast]

2006 Sophia Gray Laureate



International Trend Institute, Kloof



MiniTown Node



House Masojada/Robertson

My greatest architectural pleasure has come from my architect and friend-of-architects community here in Durban. Around their kitchen tables, eating their food, dancing to their music, listening to and being in their conversations, considering our shared and conflicting 'agendas', and planning parties and paradigm shifts!

working on my own house completed 2011

2013 My children were 10 and 12.

'hard and tough and missing out' had slowly outweighed the joy... the meaningful sense of purpose held less meaning. Over-exposed, longing for [admin + deadline free] more tactile sensuous creative forces to re-assert. [I am still]

2010 2013 2016

WORLD CUP

Maudely 1918-2013

I never did manage 'to balance' [I don't really want balance.... I want extreme, I want immersion, I am obsessive, I am a worker! I want????]

Retired?! A 'paused' 'Woman in Architecture.'

PS: 'Housework' [etc] is not for sissies



Offices, 94 Florida Road



House, Plettenberg Bay



House Masojada/Robertson

family+friends an international community, many architects+creatives weekend family outings to construction sites

my development of a design sensibility

1963 FAMILY 1981 Architecture study 1988

MATIC UND CT MIT

SA STATE OF EMERGENCY

SOUTH AFRICA AN INTERNATIONAL ICON

ted tollman: planning + more planning rodney harber: place and technology barrie hiermann: light and form

working for engineers+architects: letreset, colouring-in of submission drwgs, model-making, filing, THE IMPORTANCE OF DATING EVERYTHING!

NO WOMEN TEACHERS 1981-M Arch 1988



1981 B.Arch UND 1st yr 50:50 men:women

Cindy Walters UK, Michal Cohen UK, Kate Otten, Cathy Mocke UK, Mandy Smith Switzerland, Jenny Castle UK, Rita Mankanjee UK, Angela Plekker, Erica Magalhaes, Me

hertzberger: architecture as enabling structure maurice smith: form poetry in architecture personal liberation!

Men that have supported me as a woman in the profession: Rodney Harber, Bobby Narainsamy [womens all-time favourite contractor] my father, my husband, Mpho Selepe.

As above for women, is ongoing. From Sally, Trish, Barbara, Monica as a school girl. All my women friends, especially Jenny, Nina, Sally, my mom and sisters have been generously proud of me, with a mutual respect and camaraderie. Role models inspire, build collective confidence, lead the way and extend personal insight into the range of alternative choices.

Even more so now, as a mid-career [paused] architect, I am looking around....where to.....

H.T.P. UMAP JMA DWS
MANDELA RELEASED DEMOCRATIC ELECTION
onsite / hands-on / making conceptual rigour the interrogation of pre-conception



Mpumalanga Stadium, KZN

1998 DWS + US AWARDED COVER dbn-jhb commute for court art+architecture designworkshop:sa

1999 2001 2002
married first child next child
office moved away from 'next door' to 94 Florida Rd

During which: 1999 [got married] 2001 [had a baby] 2002 [had another baby]

When my babies were still tiny they joined me on the dbn-jhb commute. My husband was often out the country, his business base East Africa. I bruised my heart leaving my children at 5am for the 6am dbn-jhb flight, baby monitors in their cots...the only thing in my 'briefcase' a breast-pump. This was unrelenting, hard over those years, the work a pleasure and my priority. Personal and family life displaced. All a bit of a blur!

We lived down the corridor from the office. I returned home with my newborn baby, and we worked through that night on a deadline for the following day, my baby lying at my feet.

Mandisa Daki

Qhakaza Africa Consulting



I was born and grew up in Bizana, Eastern Cape. I matriculated without having known or done any technical drawing or having heard of Architecture, which means it could not have been my career choice. Through a friend I got to know about Architecture, hidden to many with my background. I completed my studies in Architectural Technology at the ML Sultan Technikon (now Durban University of Technology) in 2001 and worked for CNN Architects and Sagnelli Architects.

I saw an opportunity in 2004 to establish my practice, Qhakaza Africa Consulting when I was approached by black communities, clients, homeowners who needed the services of a Professional Architectural Technologist. We provide architectural and project management services for homeowners, developers, corporate organisations and government. Though well versed in architecture, I struggled with business. I worked hard to grow myself into a businesswoman, not just a designer or architectural technologist. I had to learn about human resources, marketing, business administration and management.

I have won awards in 2008 for Best Business in eThekweni and for Best Woman Owned Enterprise in 2009. I am currently completing a book on business principles for starting-up. My challenges have been in not being granted opportunities, or appointed for projects that would yield a profit to make my business sustainable. It has been particularly difficult to get corporate clients, but we are positive. Through providing a good service, many doors are beginning to open.

I am the last daughter (of four) to a single mother – a teacher for 40 years and now a pensioner – and I appreciate all her efforts in bringing us up. Now I am a wife and a mother to four children. It has been challenging making time for the children during working hours. I do not work weekends. It is fulfilling to come home to kids who need you, helping them with homework and taking them to sports. I continue to make efforts to be a better person and a better mom.



House in Pinetown

Maria Vidal

Vidal Architects

I can fondly recall my childhood birthday delight in receiving my very first Lego set! Hours of playtime spent building intricate cityscapes and structures unveiled my passion for the built environment and ultimately architecture.

I thankfully got accepted to study Architecture at Natal University (UKZN today) in 1988, proudly walking into the First Year Studio and beginning my love-hate relationship with architecture. That year was the first equal male/female intake ratio. When I finally graduated in 1994, I was one of only 7 of the original 22 females.

I worked to gain experience during vacations and to supplement my bursary with additional pocket money. I found myself in an office making copious amounts of prints and plots, with limited time spent on the actual drawing board, executing simple, hand-drawn submission drawings, for low-cost housing developments.

On graduating in 1994, I secured employment with a disabled architect, where I gained extensive knowledge in disability in architecture. I was part of the team who prepared the current disability building codes and bylaws. I travelled extensively throughout KZN to execute projects to make all public buildings disabled compliant. As a single white female travelling alone, I sought the company of my mother, for security and companionship.

After graduating, I worked for a renowned practice where I was introduced to my passion, which is the design and implementation of boutique hotels. I worked alongside the principal architect, travelling extensively throughout Africa to complete exclusive 6/7 star luxury developments. Sadly, he emigrated to Australia, and in order to secure my employment, I entered into a partnership which was to continue for the next 7 years. Our practice flourished and I continued to work on my beloved boutique hotel projects. During this time, I also set up a department within the practice which executed work for all his new Australian projects.

I finally met and married the love of my life and within the next two years, gave birth to my two gorgeous boys. Motherhood brought on a whole new perspective into my life and I realized that my focus was slowly changing from 'driven-Architect', eating/sleeping/dreaming architecture 24 hours a day, to 'perfect-Mother', totally in love with her new babies.

It was at this time that I made the decision to bravely venture out on my own. Maria Vidal Architects cc was born 8 years ago and I have never looked back!

I am still a dedicated and committed architect and mother, who has in my opinion, successfully managed to bridge the gap between the two. My days are well balanced and equally divided between my project and client commitments and my family and Mom's taxi commitments. I thus embrace each day, with its new challenges and obstacles, while still loving both architecture and motherhood!



Pamushana Lodge, Zimbabwe



Pamushana Lodge, Zimbabwe



Singita Boulders Lodge, Phase 2, Sabi Sand



Pamushana Lodge, Zimbabwe



Singita Boulders Lodge, Phase 2, Sabi Sand

Lindsay Bush

Ambush Urbanism

This New Thing

Last year, I was approached by a US consultant, to design and facilitate co-creation workshops and deliver a programme of interventions for the UN Women Safe Cities Programme, aimed at reducing sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in public spaces in two of the poorest barangays in Metro Manila, Philippines.

Asked to reformat my cv and add more of the gender work I'd done, I found myself questioning my qualifications for this job. Tackling sexual violence in the densest city on earth, one plagued by shabu (meth), poverty and violence... degrees in Architecture and Urban Design and 15 years in the field seemed senseless here. But, I thought, I have all the skills required to adapt a methodology, orchestrate two full-day 120-strong bilingual workshops and synthesise the outputs into a suite of practical interventions to be carried out by the UN, government and community. It is, essentially, the divergent/convergent design process taught to me in Architecture School.

I thought back to my recent work in Cape Town – with Mothers Unite in their container childcare village; with the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) to convert an old library bus into a mobile service centre and crèche; for the UN Women on the safety of women and girls accessing public transport in gang-ridden Atlantis. It occurred to me that gender work, for a built environment designer, is essentially just that workmen and boys have the same requirements for safe, user-friendly buildings and public spaces as women and girls. Good spatial design is, arguably, universal, but as evidenced in the workshops, people of different genders experience public space differently. It is the human element – the one that built environment designers cannot control – that ultimately dictates whether a space or a building is safe or unsafe, used or unused. While good environments undeniably lead to better behaviours, a dysfunctional social infrastructure overlaid on a physical one can override it, degrade it. To address problems in the system, we need good design minds – 'city-fixers' – to apply themselves at the social level.

The tools required to co-design a programme to address sexual violence are ones that any good Architect should possess, male or female. It does, however, require additional qualities – empathy and humility – ones, I believe, more easily achieved by women. It's not Architecture. Is it Urbanism? Social Design? I'm comfortable not knowing.



Co-designing a Memory Centre for Khayelitsha, Cape Town



Co-designing a Memory Centre for Khayelitsha, Cape Town

Sexual Harassment

Amanda Lead

A STORY ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT ...

Finding a job wasn't that easy at the start of 1993 (I was 23 and recently graduated), so as I was perched up a ladder with a 4 pound hammer demolishing a wall in our bachelor flat, the phone rang and Paul Custers invited me for an interview.

I started at Hallen Custers Smith the next day as architect for the Innovation Centre of UKZN. Right from my first day, when Paul and I met Engineer Milek Masojada on site, it was a pressured, fast-track, deep-end project for me. I learned to draw on CAD, submit plans and acted as the middle 'man' between two very different partners.

Paul Sanders and his amazing sense of humour kept me sane, but only just. I developed migraines and sciatic spasms while I treaded water, madly issuing drawings to all the consultants and meeting tight deadlines.

The contract was awarded to one of the big players in Durban. Requests for information reeled through the fax machine and site meetings were cordial but tense affairs. I related well to the young foreman who was equally green. The Contract Manager was respectful and professional and the financial guy was, er... scary. But we got there in the end and the building was a great success, featured in the Architectural Review and received a Project Award from Architecture SA. At the roof wetting, the head of the contracting company appeared for the first time like a VIP, and Paul Custers gave a speech that credited all the right people, ending with huge congratulations to me for my role on the project. I was on cloud nine, but not for long.

Drinks were served and the head of the contracting company, flanked by his sidekicks who I knew from the site meetings, spotted me across the room and summoned me. "Hey pretty thing, why don't you come join us, in fact, get up on the table and take your clothes off"... I was utterly dumbstruck, as were the men who had worked with me on the project for over a year. I will never forget that demeaning, inappropriate, abusive sexual comment hitting home, and the incredibly uncomfortable feeling with which my colleagues looked at me thereafter.

No one present was able to say anything to him.

I have worked with numerous contractors, specialists and consultants over the years and have never had a similar experience again. There are of course those paternal types who think they need to "take you under their wing", or "give you a kiss"... harmless, but annoying and inappropriate all the same.

Khayakazi Matangana

From
Ruben Reddy Architects



Being a black woman Senior Architectural Technologist in this 'white male' dominated industry, and the slow pace of transformation, is a bit disheartening at times. I do hope for dialogue on how we can address the inequalities within the profession.

Poovashini Cunnoosami

Africo Architecture



Tertiary education does not prepare us for the reality of life. We were told and believed that architecture is everything: "you will sleep, you will breathe architecture", without realising that there will be a stage where this ends, and life begins.

After graduating from UKZN, I joined a highly demanding Durban based practice as a project architect on a number of projects where I gained valuable experiences.

In 2008, with the birth of our first child, I decided to take a year break from my career with the hope that it would ease my transition into motherhood. Little did I realise that this was going to be the start of my journey as a woman, a mother, a homemaker and an architect. I felt like I was thrown into the deep ocean without any preparation. My involvement at UKZN as a design facilitator played a role in restoring confidence in my career choice. In 2009 Africo Architecture was established. I was better equipped too for my second child. Pauses, such as travelling abroad, awaken and restore me.

I have accepted that whilst some of us thrive working for a busy office, and some may find great fulfillment in leading highly demanding practices, there is also unquestionably a "place" for those who want to lead a smaller practice or a home-based office with a view to having the flexibility for family life and other personal goals.

Architecture is part of my identity, but I will hold myself accountable to my core values and needing a healthy balance and connection between my roles. This is the foundation of my life and I have realized that as we go through the different seasons in life, we learn that there is authenticity, significance, and growth in each and every one.



Rathaus (City Hall), Rathausplatz, Vienna

Tracy Levinson

Lev Eco Architects



I completed my Architectural degree at UCT. Our class was 50% male to female, but the built environment is still male dominated.

Transitioning from my candidacy to starting my own practice in 2007 was fairly easy, as I was open to wanting to learn from the contractors, engineers and fellow architects. With the right attitude, most people are willing to help and teach when they can. I realised how little I knew and had mentors that I could call on for help and advice. University only gets you so far and there are huge gaps between what we learn and the reality of the job.

By being realistic with your time and not giving clients unrealistic timeframes you can complete projects well within their expectations. This makes for happy clients and happy family! Juggling family, health and work is tough, but with good planning, this is easily maintained.

To show the lifestyle one can have as an architect, here are some of my highlights:

Designed and built my own home and completed over 30 luxury homes.

An avid trail runner and have completed Ultra Trail marathons Finished the Durban 70.3 Ironman last year.

Travelled every year to amazing destinations for architectural inspiration, family time and a break all rolled into one.

Most importantly, married an amazing man and have started a family!



House Levinson, Simbithi Eco-Estate, Ballito



Aux-Sources 50km Ultra Trail Run 2015



House Broughton, Simbithi Eco-Estate, Ballito



House Venter, Simbithi Eco-Estate, Ballito



My husband, Rob Levinson and I, Paris 2015

Maria Cristina Giampietri

Architect

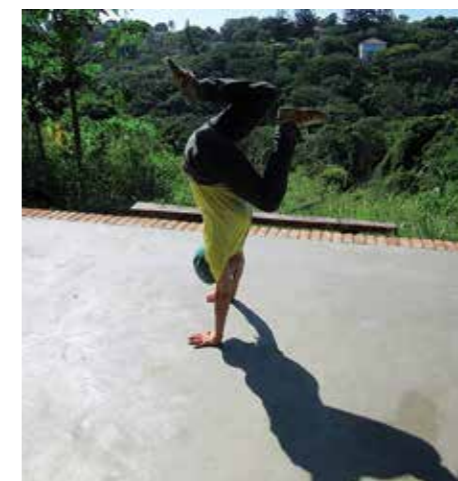


I was always drawing, making things, climbing, dreaming. Aged 10 I drew a house with a circular door, wondering: how would it work? Studying architecture I learnt to read the built and unbuilt world, with increasing fascination and despair. Construction, destruction, dereliction, reclamation. Completing a 6-year degree at UCT my mind was flying – yet soon the formal workplace weighed on me. I felt a creeping inadequacy.

A fledgling practice formed with newly graduated Andrew Makin revealed my unease: by comparison I had no technical experience, but gained much confidence to experiment through discursive collaboration. Scores of sketches testified to this process of self-construction. That year I fell pregnant with my daughter now 25. The political landscape impacted on my working life: as my stomach grew, my public life shrank, and so too my engagement with architectural work. My interracial relationship caused havoc in my private life. By the time my golden child was born, I was out of sight and had stopped work.

I never resumed practice but worked on a Housing Master's degree whilst freelancing, painting, writing, gig organising, nursing grandparents and making clothes. Teaching was a revelation. Building people is as essential as teaching about building. A most memorable project was constructing a habitable shelter settlement of waste materials. The resourcefulness and collective force of students showed the building site as being a great teacher. I was the only female lecturer when I quit DUT Architecture in 2012, chronically stressed, increasingly voiceless in a hierarchically obsessed and un-collegial staff landscape.

Life started over: a home destroyed by fire, a builder sacked, land rehabilitation. Three urgent family projects: township, suburbs, bush. Minimal budgets, recycling. I became part of a slow building process with a few workers, gaining confidence that had long eluded me. The physicality of work onsite builds the energy I need in Capoeira Angola, an Afro-Brazilian art I practice and teach. As we recover bushland by removing aliens and integrating rubble into foundations of useable structures, space has emerged where environmental lessons play out, along with Capoeira, music, birdsong, and the great sky.



Roz Harber

arch urban plan

The right ingredients

Visitors to the Harber's family home often rave about the meals made by Roz Harber. Roz's approach to architecture very much mirrors her approach to cooking. Watching Roz's work in architecture, urban design and planning, one can see three factors in play.

The first is one that pushes forward. A strong, solid force to be reckoned with; this determined factor of Roz, means that she will keep pushing and keep going under incredible circumstances and stress. The force that thrashes through and creates space for change.

The next is delightful creativity. Roz pulls together ideas and inspirations for an immense and eclectic library of sources. She draws on this library and her intuition to constantly find and solve problems, as well as to include unusual factors into project discussions and decisions.

The final is a highly tuned understanding of her fellow human. Roz knows and sees people, offering incredible insight into individual and collective behaviour and thinking.

In the design of the New Model High School in Ndumo, Roz thought of shifting the design of the study space so that each of the boarders could have a view out of the window, rather than blank walls. She completed an incredible urban design that incorporated the design of permaculture and rainwater harvesting for the rural village of Ndumo.

Those who experience Roz's cooking will describe her intuitive understanding of essential components of the meal, as well as her interesting flair for taste and combinations.

In this way, Roz embodies in both her personal and professional life, the key factors of architecture: a delicate balance of form and function which ultimately serves others.

Inger Harber

Serenal Nadar

From Ruben Reddy Architects



It's an age-old story – humble beginnings, limited finances and a childhood dream. A Technikon dropout, I joined a carport manufacturing company, but the world of construction and architecture still beckoned. My exposure to first-year Architectural Technology was noticed by my superior who recognised my passion and invited me into the world of draughting. Suddenly, my dream was back, and I grabbed hold of it firmly, never saying 'no' to a challenge! Searching, delving and obsessing about design and specification became an integral part of my self-development, shaping who I am today. My passion for the built environment pushed me to limits I never thought I would reach, while raising 3 beautiful children. One single carport 21 years ago has taken me on to residential estates, private hospitals, an International Airport and the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital. Is there a bigger challenge? I'm waiting...

Nomagugu Mancini

NSM Designs

Born and raised in Esikhawini in KZN, I was the first of 4 children. Most of my early schooling was done at Eshowe High, where I was first introduced to architecture by my technical drawing teacher.

Based on my good marks at school, my parents felt strongly that I should become a medical practitioner, a belief held by many black parents at the time. I was then influenced by my parents to apply for a BSc, with the intention to study medicine.

My passion, however, had always been to create things, and growing up I recall constantly being in trouble for cutting up my mother's clothes and creating new ones or drawing on walls and furniture, much to the horror of my parents. With the encouragement of close friends, I applied to study Architecture and was accepted.

I completed my studies in 2002 at UKZN, registered and worked with an established firm in KZN. Here, I developed special competency and interest in Health Care Facilities. Driven by an entrepreneurial



spirit and a desire to make a meaningful contribution within this field as a black woman architect, I founded NSM Designs

I have been fortunate to have been part of some high profile projects which have allowed my practice to be sustainable thus far. I am passionate about seeing a change in the way business is conducted within the architectural space, to ensure that more thriving black women-owned practices exist.

I am a mother of 2 boys, aged 13 and 8, and have been married for 15 years.

Challenges encountered as a black woman:

It is hard to get work as a black woman without partnerships.

A constant need to prove that I can complete work successfully.

In order to be fully heard and respected, one has to be more harsh and firm.

Balancing the responsibilities as a wife, mother and business woman is daunting.



Moses Mabhida Stadium, Durban, GMP International with iBhola Lethu Architects JV

Not much support for women in the profession.

We were not taught basic business principles to run a practice – running a practice is a whole new skill.

What I have learned:

Be willing to learn new things every day and be open to change at all times.

Accept the hard times as a learning curve, persevere and do not repeat mistakes.

Be willing to fight a good fight and accept losses.

Stand up for what I believe is right and be open to correction if I am wrong.

I am stronger than I give myself credit for.

Now and then I need to compliment myself on my achievements.

Debbie Whelan

Associate Professor, Durban University of Technology

Archaic Consulting

I grew up in a middle class household with two brothers. We lived in a semi-rural area, so I grew up surrounded by nature, and developed a love for horses, which has pretty much remained. I attended Thomas More School, then a small, left-of-centre Catholic school, and for that time unusual in that it was multi-racial. I excelled in art and English and battled through mathematics. I also developed an interest in plants which has continued until today.

I began studying architecture at the University of Natal (now UKZN) in 1986 and, like most architectural students of the time wanted to be Frank Lloyd Wright. I was recalcitrant, interested in many things beyond architecture which meant that I repeated years a number of times. This scenic journey was funded through working behind a bar and waitressing, and supplemented by studies in archaeology.

I also worked for the Built Environment Support Group which inculcated a respect for community work and allowed for the seeds to be sown for voluntary heritage projects that I currently carry out in Mpophomeni, and have previously carried out in Georgetown, Edendale.

On completing undergraduate degrees I started working for National Monuments Council, KwaZulu-Natal Region, now Amafa. This job was instrumental in exposing me to a wider context of the province and different aspects of the heritage field.

I started a M.Arch degree during this period, examining decorated homesteads in Msinga. In order to understand these buildings, I completed my BA in anthropology which was to lead me in a totally unexpected direction. Also vital in this period was a three month internship at Cornerstones, a heritage organisation which assisted communities in repairs to adobe churches in southern New Mexico. This literally was a watershed, commencing my relationship with ICOMOS and understanding buildings in a social context.

In 2002 I started lecturing in architecture at ML Sultan Technikon, now Durban University of Technology. I loved the work, inspired by the energy and diversity of the student body. I started a Ph.D.

in Social Anthropology directing my thoughts away from pure built environment issues, examining rather the more intangible qualities of buildings and semiotic transfer. The broadness of this research was supplemented by contract research work into land claims and heritage issues, developing a wide base of knowledge, particularly in social history and infrastructure development, laying foundations for my current research.

Last year I visited Nigeria on a Reactive Monitoring Mission for ICOMOS. This turned out to be another significant watershed, as it challenged my ideas on heritage and authority. This next phase of my generally unplanned life will most likely think about these lines of questioning and trying to understand how heritage can be repackaged through absence, rather than presence.



Michelle Jacobs

Technical Librarian Barrie Biermann Architecture Library UKZN

The role of a librarian or 'information scientist' within the architectural profession is of vital importance, albeit one in which 'work' is largely 'invisible' to users. The Barrie Biermann Architecture Library (BBAL) and the Technical Reference Library (TRL) have been major sources of information for both students and professionals. Much of the material in these libraries has been donated by members of the profession, and that legacy needs to be recognised, respected and preserved for future generations of historians, students and architects.

The TRL information resources include journal articles filed in boxes for easy access, technical and trade catalogues, various maps of Durban such as 1990s ortho-photos, 1932 aerial photos, 1963/64 photogrammetric maps, 1949 aerial photos, Durban

insurance plans of 1931 and Durban sewerage plans. Added to these are the Original Drawings collection, the UKZN drawings of campus buildings, the outstanding Street-Wilson collection and more recently Hans Hallen's drawings.

All these resources have set the BBAL and TRL apart from libraries at other institutions, thanks to the vision and generosity of the local architectural fraternity, past academics in the School of Architecture, and the guardianship of librarians such as Hazel Bond.

These information resources provide a tangible connection to our architectural past, documented proof of the temporal layers of our built heritage, many of them the last remaining paper and linen vestiges of these 'brick and mortar' layers. They are irreplaceable 'monuments' that need to be preserved at all costs and despite a continued programme of scanning, digital images are no substitute for the beauty of the paper and linen originals.

As custodian of this remarkable collection for the past 31 years, I have had the privilege of interacting with students, architects and historians in an exciting and positive way. This interaction has led to my own development as a historian and researcher.

Opportunities to work with world renowned architectural historians such as Prof. Brian Kearney and Prof. Rodney Harber

in producing "A Measure of the Past", can only be described as a privilege. With a new book coming out soon, co-authored with Prof. Brian Kearney, and a Ph.D. in the future, I hope that our built heritage can be recorded for a wider, interested and concerned audience.

While the recording and archiving of our architectural heritage is undoubtedly necessary, it is the preservation of these documents that will provide a challenge to future generations of 'information scientists', librarians and archivists. It is not just a question of what to keep, but rather one of who decides on their significance or architectural and historical value. With the continued destruction of our built heritage, the preservation of documents and drawings becomes ever more important.

Cindy Walters and Michal Cohen

Walters & Cohen Architects London



American School, London

Cindy Walters

Truth is having a partner who is a woman and who also has to balance work and family has been irreplaceable. I've always had a terrifically supportive husband who has been there for our kids when I was not; couldn't have done any of it without them.

When we set up Walters and Cohen in London in 1994, well-meaning friends told us we were too young, too foreign and too female and that failure was inevitable. More than 20 years later Michal and I run a successful practice, as well known for its ethos as for its consistently high quality of work. Walters and Cohen has always been at least 70% female, thus bucking national trends. We are often asked whether our work is different because the practice is led by women: of course not. We currently employ two people who have moved out of London due to escalating house prices and in pursuit of a better quality of life. At the time of winning the Woman Architect of the Year award we employed two people who worked a short week in order to balance the demands of work and child care. Both happened to be men. We are proud of the small part we are playing in the changing culture of architectural practice.



Towers Junior School

Michal Cohen

It's been more than 30 years since Cindy and I met at the University of Natal, and 22 years since we set up Walters & Cohen in London. We are proud to have won several design awards for our buildings. High quality architecture lasts, and it is a pleasure to see that the KZNSA Gallery, one of our very first projects, continues to be a popular venue in the community after 20 years. Our studio currently comprises 32 people from around the world, 21 of whom are female. Our employees work incredibly hard so we aim to provide a good work/life balance: a little flexibility allows people to deal with what life throws at them. Both Cindy and I are mothers and know how important time off is for new parents and those with young children. Enhanced maternity leave is offered to long-term members of staff, but they are also encouraged to return to us when they're ready.

In 2012 we were surprised and delighted to win the Architects' Journal's inaugural Woman Architect of the Year Award.



St Paul's School



Lairdland Primary School



Vajrasana Buddhist Retreat Centre, Suffolk



Vajrasana Buddhist Retreat Centre, Suffolk

Michelle Christine Quarmy

Ocean Architects

Early in my career I was fortunate to meet several strong female role models who shaped how I saw my future in architecture, showing me how I could use my gender and experience to mould the career I wanted.

I found gender discrimination within the profession, with women architects having to work harder to prove themselves, whilst not always being given the immediate respect of their male counterparts. Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE, Act 2003) isn't helping much either in women-owned practices. I find that on site it can be an advantage being the only female. Once you establish your competence, everyone knows your name and there is a level of professionalism that can usually defer any heated arguments.

Striking a balance between having a family and a successful architectural career has been my biggest challenge. I had naively believed this would be easy, but after having had twin girls recently, it is evident that not only do perceptions of you as an architect change, but your focus is split as well. One quickly realises how important it is to be part of both a strong team at work and a strong relationship at home. For me, the role of motherhood realigned my focus and highlighted the importance of flexibility.

I have been extremely fortunate to be involved in a wide range of large scale commercial projects that give me a lot of experience and exposure. In my own practice I was able to support and encourage fellow women in architecture. I have mentored female students, set up introductions to architecture for female scholars and worked on a daily basis with some great female architects. Most importantly, I want to influence children by creating structures that harmonise and positively influence the environment, and the communities in which they exist, as their perceptions of women will determine a different future. Through various opportunities I have been able to do incredibly rewarding pro bono work.

South African women need to realise the important roles they play in shaping futures. As an architect, I am privileged to leave a permanent mark within the environment. Like motherhood, it is a great responsibility but one I am endlessly proud to be part of.



Wentworth Emergency Medical Services

Adheema Davis

**Student
University of KwaZulu-Natal**

"I'm on top of things. Okay some of the things... sort of... maybe just not this dissertation. I'm trying."

Juggling certainty

Tucked into my corner of the studio, writing, highlighting, deleting and rewriting pieces of my dissertation I can't help but pick up the scent of saw dust wafting in from the workshop. It's now been five years since my father's passing and I find myself constantly reminded of him, the smell of saw dust has always reminded me of my dad, the builder – but more than that, it's the fact that I simply wouldn't be an architect without him.

My father never doubted that I would grow up to be an architect, as I paraded on site after playschool with rolls of crayon drawings tucked under my arm, assuredly calling out site instructions in preparation of my future.



Qalakahle Early Childhood Development Centre



SPAR Mount Edgecombe



Being an architecture student has its own challenges, sleep deprivation being the foremost. But compounding this is something so inherently a part of me, my femininity – the interrelatedness of my appearance and my contribution, my constant questioning or association of anything outside of architecture, to architecture being passed off as an insecurity, to the more formalist responses of male counterparts, and the balancing act required for me to be both determined and liked.

Now in my final year – with credit admittedly due to the negotiations that define me as a woman architect – I'm more acutely aware of these challenges and realise that the fault doesn't lie with me, but with attempting to fit the masculine mould.

The journey of being a woman architect is one that I decidedly will continue, reassured by my father's certainty, and reminded that the invisible, juggled and complex make-up of my identity is not a weakness but an absolute strength. Perhaps the process of my dissertation writing applies – a constant building through these negotiations towards understanding and transformation in both the architectural pedagogy and practice.

Chantal Pieterse

Architecture Fabrik

The Secrets of Women in Architecture

Shortly after the birth of our first child, I attended a meeting at a corporate office on Umhlanga Ridge. Having spent my early years of practice mostly meeting in converted heritage buildings in up and coming areas, I was not entirely in my comfort zone. Also, I had been on maternity leave for four months and was still breast feeding.

I entered a boardroom of men in suits a few minutes late. My lateness due to stress caused by my 4 month old daughter's refusal to feed, despite my urgent attempts. My 'double DD' medical status probably held me in good stead as first impressions go, despite the fact that I have feminist views on the matter.

Sometimes you have to use what you've got to your advantage.



Changing nappies for four months had allowed my brain to rest and had invigorated it for greater absorption of facts. I had prepared for the meeting, having read the 200 page document sent to me. It soon became clear that no one else in the room had had time or bothered to do so. I found the attention all on me for the second time. I could, with confidence, answer the questions being asked.

After a productive two hours, not only was I feeling anxious that my daughter would be screaming for milk, but the impending threat of leaking breasts forced me to abruptly and urgently excuse myself from that meeting, giving the impression that I had more important places to be. I did, but probably not in the way that those in the room expected. Working from 8-5pm (or 9-10pm) focused only on me and my work, was a concept that no longer applied to me.

The professional relationships I built with those I met that day have formed the basis for some work we now do, some 7 years later. There are a few lessons I learnt that have been the foundation of our successful practice.



Architecture Fabrik's offices, Westville

Appearances do count, and first impressions last.

Being prepared and knowing your stuff gets respect. Brain not brawn.

Time management becomes more sharpened when you have responsibilities outside of work. Use it.

Architecture is a tough profession. Don't underestimate that. Use your resources well.



Jennie Castle

Jennie Castle Architecture

I was fortunate to do my architectural training between 1982 and 1987. When Professor Barrie Biermann gave lectures in sepia coloured slides to music; when Professor Brian Kearney drew beautiful chalk drawings of historical buildings; when Professor Rodney Harber showed us how to "dicky bird" proof buildings with entertaining drawings during building technology lectures; when Professor Derek Wang taught the importance of orientation and building materials; when Professor Ted Tollman taught the discipline of good planning, to name just a few of the people who shaped the way I thought.

Today, I have had the great opportunity to put all I had learned from those days in training, and from life experiences, into a new house on a 3 acre site, for my family in Thomastown, County Kilkenny, Ireland. It has been a five year journey which involved, firstly, the restoration of a small derelict stone farmhouse and its two outbuildings into a studio for myself. The second phase was the design, detailing and supervising the build of a Passive House with a Building Energy rating of A1. The technologies involved a water well, a geothermal borehole as the heat source for underfloor heating, a heat recovery ventilation system, solar voltaic roof panels and insulated concrete block wall construction with triple glazing. Artwork has been incorporated within both the house and garden.



An Spéir - Passive House, Carrickmoure, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, Ireland

Kathi Holt-Damant

Nerø Holt
Brisbane



Elastic Urbanism

An infrastructural strategy for environmental development, urban consolidation and heterogeneity
Kathi Holt-Damant and Bruno Santos Castro with M. Damant

As an architect and urban designer I have had a long involvement in teaching, research and applied practice on four continents. Consequently, I am interested in how cultural ideas are translated into space through form and how these ideas are altered by different programmes, places or events. My practice is underpinned by doctoral research examining theoretical lines of influence around infinite space. Philosophy becomes action in the contemporary city through a host of non-traditional practice members and sites of experimentation, broadly intervening with ideas about the city through form, programme, place and events.

Each project begins with an idea, or philosophic construct, that aims to challenge current practice. Along with the idea, a unique collaboration is formed, with the objective of examining, expanding and stretching the realm of possibilities. The network of collaborators I collude with includes a diverse and complementary group extending across: artists, architects, scientists, dancers, choreographers, photographers, writers, theorists, psychologists, philosophers, health workers, universities, local and state government agencies.

Early research findings from my projects are taken into the design studio presenting students with an opportunity to examine and explore real world problems and engage with multiple stakeholders. Within each project, the scales, sites, spatial systems and interdependent relationships are treated as variables enabling an opportunity for multiple solutions (parametric urbanism) with and without the digital tools.

There is a dedication in drawing to discover, photographing to uncover, filming to reveal and designing to stimulate future possibilities – student as provocateur.

The ‘masterplan’ as an idea is dead, only strategic ideas and tactical interventions are desired... each one offering opportunities that enhance the quality of life for everyday living.

Back in the 1960s Buckminster Fuller laid down a challenge for a design science revolution to tackle the problems of the world, which today are largely urban problems:

“Make the world work for 100% of humanity in the shortest possible time, through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone.”

I believe this is the challenge we, as architects, designers and educators, all face; it requires open minds and deep partnerships to begin to address it – collaboration.

Nina Saunders

Acting Deputy Head: Architecture, City Architects, eThekweni Municipality

COMPLEXITY

Wanted to become a psychologist, lawyer, journalist in that order. Then I studied architecture – and at various times feel like a psychologist, lawyer, journalist . . .

CREATION

Drawn to the impossible, the unchartered, the unbuildable, the becoming. Projects where the intangible unfolds. My mother’s advice: Walk and the road will open.

THE ADAPTIVE ARCHITECT

Rodney Harber: Beacon across a constellation of choices: lecturer, practitioner, writer, traveller, advisor, two-time-KZNIA-president.

PATTERNS OF PLACE

Barrie Biermann left a deep impression, *Rooiwyn in Suid-Afrika* (1971, my birth year). Wine tastes of the land where the grape cultivar is grown. So should architecture.

CITIES and DESIRES

Love maps of new cities and the ‘cities’ within cities. Favourites so far: Durban - Warwick, Beirut - Achrafieh, Khartoum - Omdurman, Tokyo - Shibuya, Mumbai - Dharavi, New York - Meat Packing District in that order, for now.

SIGNS REPEATED LEST I FORGET

Some places reappear again and again in my life. First, the site of final year thesis, 1994: An Urban Info Centre on the now Herb Traders Bridge, Warwick. Second, the Inanda Route written up for the first Rough Guide edition on South Africa, 1998. Third, Port St John’s where I lived, 1979. All continually play on repeat.

ACTIVATION PROJECTS

Advocate for experimentation and projects tested in real-time at a scale of one:one, like the UIA 2014 urban activations, like parenthood. Learning-by-doing, and biggest successes through collective participation.

COLLABORATIONS

Greater than the sum of its parts: Like the UIA 2014 collaborations – networking across seas; like the SAIA Board navigating transformation; like the chutzpah of the KZNIA taking on the lion’s share!

LEADERSHIP

Vivienne Japha (1945-99). Trish Emmett; clear visions, clear will, gentle engagement. Explorations on divining a way which makes leadership a collective role . . .

THEY DEFINE US

Favourite Durban Buildings, the Ocean Terminal Building, Shembe stone circles, the Grey Street Art Deco collection, Issy Benjamin’s beachfront line-up: a sub-tropical modernist salute to the rising sun

CREDITS

To yoga, to coffee-fuelled conversations, to gentle critics, to harsh critics, to forerunners, to stragglers, to generous mentors, to maverick artists, to supportive bosses, to loving life-partners, to family, to sacred silences, to architecture-without-architects. Credit to all of these and more . . .



At the desk of the Deputy Head: Architecture



Inaugural address at KZNIA Presidential Inauguration May 2011

Photograph by Roy Reed



My Family



KZNIA Presidential Inauguration May 2011 with my family



Raewyn Hayhoe

Evolution Architects



Mother, Wife, Survivor, Architect, WOMAN.

“Our gender defines us ... let this not confine us!”

Mother

I’d always also wanted to be a mother. 13 years, 6 pregnancies, 4 miscarriages, a stillbirth, and finally a success; our perfect little girl whom we are so blessed and grateful for.

Wife & Survivor

At 28 weeks pregnant, I suffered a ruptured cerebral aneurysm. After the initial, miraculous, survival of the haemorrhage, emergency brain surgery. My little girl (in utero) and I recovered from this procedure. My wonderful husband stayed at my ICU bedside for two weeks, never leaving my side. Despite this ordeal, I am still an architect, a mother, a wife, and more.

Architect

An exposure to history of architecture at school set my course, and continued through university, travelling and experiencing buildings. Spaces and structures surround us and affect us deeply. Our appreciation of this is what sets architects apart from those who simply move through or occupy them. This is something I can never stop thinking about and learning from.

Practice

I realized my dream and started my own practice Archangels Architects, which was a successful partnership with another woman. Later, Evolution Architects was born, and was the next “evolutionary” step – trying to fulfill career aspirations and personal goals. The journey has been exciting, stressful, rewarding as well as extremely challenging at times. I have never given up.

Woman

I love being a mother, an architect and a wife. My team members were, and still are amazing. Through my incapacitation they kept the practice running strong until I was able to return.



Lifestyle Edgars Extension, Ballito



Lifestyle Edgars Extension, Ballito



Lifestyle Edgars Extension, Ballito



Network Configurations New Office Building

Ntokozi Zimu

From Nzuzo M Architecture & Project Management



I didn’t really have much knowledge about Architecture, even after having done Civil Technology for Matric. All I wanted was a career that involved technical drawing with an aspect of art. First year was completed well, but the “second year slump” as our Professor called it, caught me. I encountered my first failure. The expectations of design, creativity and originality were extremely high and being introduced to CAD was a whole new aspect.

Being in a male dominated field and falling pregnant whilst studying seemed like the worst fall I had to endure, but with continuous support from family, friends and lecturers I was able to rise above it. Studio crits, which were a continuous examination and build-up of work with the aim for the student to learn and do better, felt like a critique of me as a person.

Travelling to and from KwaDabeka daily, with practically no sleep due to long nights preparing for Friday presentations and continued responsibility of a mother and fiancé, were emotionally and physically draining.

2015 was another huge fall. My fiancé tragically passed on in a car accident. I was temporarily working in an architectural firm as an intern and the support I received was both comforting and uplifting. Through God’s grace I was able to return to varsity bruised but not broken. I didn’t design the best looking high-rise building, but it was enough to pull me through and give me a pass. I finally graduated with a BAS in April 2016 and currently work for Nzuzo M Architecture & Project Management in Pinetown where I interned. Although I have completed my degree, the learning continues. Perseverance, patience and prayer are the keys.

I give thanks to my parents who have continuously supported and believed in me.

An imperfect journey with a perfect destination reached.



Carina Cloete

designworkshop : sa



My submission is personal, about my love for making and experimenting.

And not standing back because I am a girl and scared of power tools, dust, dirty hands or a needle and thread!

I grew up in a home where building and/or fixing took precedent over store bought items.

This meant I had the benefit of a dad with every tool imaginable and a mom who would bravely take on Edgars and St Laurent with her sewing machine.

Both my sister and I participated, mostly willingly. This fueled an appreciation of how elements/parts fit together.

Timber planks, steel welds, sewing threads, all carefully considered to create a simple, beautiful, elegant, efficient whole.

Patience, perseverance, attention to detail, sequencing, debate and time management formed part of the learning.

All still very relevant in our industry where we grow towards being esteemed master builders and makers.

I enjoy making things with my own hands!

I tend to use my home and friends as excuse to play with, investigate and build on ideas.

Mostly my own; but occasionally testing others' ideas to understand materiality.

It builds confidence. It's way easier to convince a contractor that it CAN be done, when you have tried and tested it personally. Below is a collection of recent projects from home.

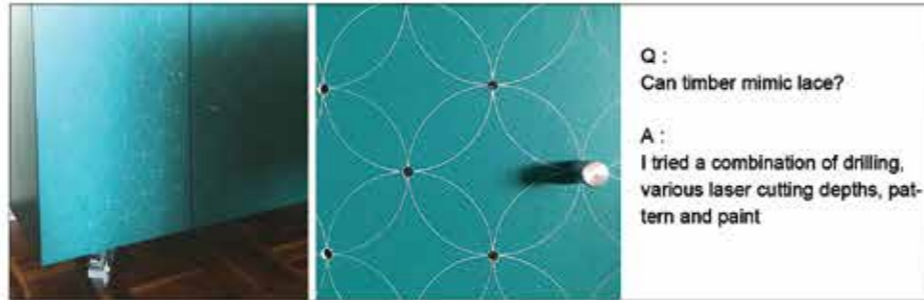
Personally handmade.

My equipment collection is growing at a steady pace...



Q :
Will a combination of glue and 45 deg cut timber edges all round eliminate the need for formal joints and crews?

A :
Yes, I regret not using a better quality timber for the 5 days worth of carpentry effort



Q :
Can timber mimic lace?

A :
I tried a combination of drilling, various laser cutting depths, pattern and paint



I committed to collate a book for a friend. I chose to learn how to stitch, glue, punch and bind it myself



Q :
Will green timber retain its shape and colour over time?

A :
Yes, cut from a tree in the garden, the colour and shape remained and made for an interesting joint detail for shelving



I have limited garden space and a love for cacti, so this is an attempt to add some colour to an open balcony

I attempt to knit a rug with 1,2m dowel sticks and throw rope - this is still ongoing



I appreciate my elna [sewing machine] as I often struggle to find what I need in the shops. Workware, fancy dress, tu-tus to run in or bunting to add to a friend's babyshower gifting

Jessie Birss (1926-2003)

Jessie was a private person who played her cards tightly against her chest. Although we were in partnership for a decade there is little I can write about her personal background.

An architect-planner by training she worked for the Holford Kantorowich consortium gathering background information for their commission to provide the City of Durban with a vision of the future during the early '70s (The 'Holford Report', Durban 1985).

Professor Croft then recruited her to teach at the School of Architecture as the first female staffer in Architecture at her alma mater. In retrospect she was risk averse, therefore much better suited to planning. When Croft wanted to withdraw from practice, he handed over his long-standing commission as planning consultant to the Tongaat Town Board to Jessie. She in turn recruited me into J M Birss: Planning Consultants.

These turned into stimulating years in applied practice. Accurate statistics were collected, e.g. number of workers/1000 sqm for different industries, botanical surveys, informal settlements and traffic surveys. Belvedere Township, done in association with Professor Michael Kahn, remains a model of the "then fashionable neighbourhood planning". Every meeting was recorded in writing and carefully filed. It is also notable that no "Group Area" boundary was ever marked on a map in Tongaat.

She was an exceptionally principled person. Once when the practice resorted to a slight overdraft she panicked and made it up from her own pocket. Consequently as we slid into delivery and architecture, she handed the practice over to me to enable her to concentrate on teaching the senior years. Architects are by nature risk takers which made her uneasy.

She had the same approach when teaching in the studio. The rules of the game were applied and everybody knew where they stood. Records were meticulous. This always acted as a sobering check against design recklessness. I recall a euphoric presentation of a high rise apartment building being brought down to earth with the question, "How would you deliver a grand piano to the twenty seventh floor?"

Rodney Harber

Jessie Birss served as proof-reader of this Journal, 1986-96, until she learnt that at spelling architects were no better than students.
Editor.

Kevin Bingham

Incumbent Vice-President, South African Institute of Architects

FGG Architects

This issue of the KZNIA Journal will be remembered long into the future as a special milestone in the transformation of our industry.

There will be those readers who believe that women should not be singled out; that all architects are equal, and that no recognition should be given to any grouping based on gender, race, or any other named delineation. This may be our vision, aim and hope, but sadly we still fall far short on equality, opportunity and in some instances, mind-set. Some prodding is still imperative!

This edition is no patronising gesture of goodwill. This text is proudly initiated by women, driven by women, and adds voice to the creativity of our women colleagues. Please give credence to the adjustment in volume.

There would be no need for a journal just highlighting the work of women, if women thought that they received equal recognition. There may also be no need for awards such as the Dame Jane Drew prize for Women in Architecture if there was a sense of a 'level playing field'. It is through outspoken voices in history that women received the vote; that women received an education and that our South African Constitution entrenched equal rights for all. I laud this edition of the Journal and am proud that our Institute gives women the voice they so justly deserve.



Some research group members from left: Ms Nompumelelo Khubeka, Ms Nandipha Makhaye, Ms Londiwe Sokhabase and Ms Nompilo Khanyile, with Professor Rozena Maart.

Race, Space and the City

Rozena Maart

Race, Space and the City is a new research group at the Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity (ccri), UKZN. The Director, Professor Rozena Maart, said this year with the focus on slain activist, former medical student at our University, Steve Biko and the Biko Education Project, that students have also engaged with the work of Biko as a means of addressing his analysis and drawing it into their understanding of land, space, and aesthetics.

Maart said the approach was not to simply treat these concepts as though they existed without people and without a history of oppression and subjugation. "Learning through their agency as learners, they can develop better approaches to establishing the many parameters of African scholarship" Maart noted.

"There is a belief that somehow the construction of race takes place outside of the construction of buildings, which is erroneous. Every building has a history, every building has a foundation, and that foundation reflects the history of the country, the demarcation of the city, the soil upon which it is built, the history of those who till the soil and the history of those who inhabit it" said Maart.

Race, Space and the City was first started in order to address research questions students brought to the Centre on land, race and space. Students reported an absence of discussions on race in a number of disciplines where design, aesthetics, land, the city, and space formed part of the curriculum yet where an analysis of race was either absent as a consequence of imposing this absence or dismissed when raised by students. "Somehow this is left outside of architectural textbooks and there are those who still conveniently teach architecture as though racialised living spaces were not the cornerstone of the policy of racial segregation, the aftermath of which we are still living through today" said Maart

Ndu Mngomezulu

Live Designs



Students in architecture and the built environment together with students in community development, peace and conflict studies, law, sociology and politics, all come together in the Race, Space and the City Research Group, where they exchange ideas and offer their input.

"South African colonial and apartheid history is reflected in the buildings and in all the spaces we come face to face with" said student, Ms Nompilo Khanyile. "I am so fortunate the ccri provides me with the opportunity, the freedom and academic materials to learn about the history that resulted in the socio-spatial milieu of the African built environment."

"I know now that when I graduate I will not become another ordinary architect displaced in South Africa, but I will be a uniquely African architect with global professional and academic appeal" said Khanyile.

"Attending seminars and engaging in general group discussions with students at the ccri have broadened my views on how crucial social issues should be addressed. In addition to that, I've been empowered to write and establish my knowledge beyond architecture" said another student, Ms Nompumelelo Kubheka. "The Biko and Black Consciousness seminar was an eye opener for me as a Black woman studying architecture in South Africa" said student, Ms Londiwe Sokhabase.

"I look forward to what these students can produce in the form of published journal articles and we are certainly working towards this process in a number of different ways" Maart remarked.

Reference: UKZN DabaOnline, 4th June 2014, Volume: 2, Issue: 2

TRAVEL DIARY

Afrikaburn - Tankwa Karoo National Park

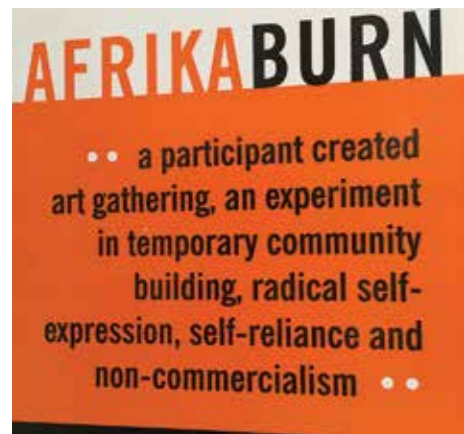
Janina Masojada



Landscape scaled sculpture: artist Kim Goodwin

Durban, Kokstad, Maclear, Ugie, Elliott, Molteno, Steynsrus, Middelburg, Graaf Reinet, Victoria West, Calvinia, Tankwa Karoo.

20-hour road trip. East coast to the west.



12 000 people settling for one week in a vast uninhabited desert, Afrikaburn is a radical OTHERWHERE experiment-experience, of a temporary community, in a formally laid out urban plan. Public activity is placed on the edges defining the desert scaled public open space in which multi-storey hand-made installations have been constructed, in-situ, LANDMARKS, destinations around which to dance or retreat.

Sunrise and sunset are time zones of glowing transition between daytime and the blackness of the night when every person and their bicycle is fairy-light lit-up, traversing the long distances between their tent-homes, communal activities, ritual and drama of massive 'burns', or solitude. Everything you need you bring in with you and you leave nothing behind.

You share and gift and don't pay-as-you-go.

There are no rubbish bins.

STRUCTURE, SHELTER, CELEBRATION, PING-PONG, POETRY, CINEMA, YOGA, SINGING, SHADING DESERT FOREST, FREEDOM TO BE, CREATIVE COMMITMENT, IMMEDIATE, AUTONOMY, SELF-RELIANCE, ACCEPTANCE, PUBLICNESS, URBANITY DRESS-UP, DRESS-DOWN, FANCY-DRESS, LOOSE IMAGINATION, ACCEPTANCE, EXPERIENCE, EXPRESSION, EXPERIMENT, RADICAL-NORMAL, SENSUOUS, VIBRANT, ESCAPIST, RELIEVING, REJUVENATING, HOPEFUL, AFFIRMING.



Detail of dome structure



Wishing tree with messages



Crowd watching in a 'burn safety perimeter'



T-rex, filled with burning coals at night, ready to roll in the dark



Sunset on inhabited inflatable dome



'The Clan', about to be set alight

Lyon - France

Amanda Lead

My Lyon adventures with my 'first to leave the nest', Chloë, were tinged with the sense that I would leave this beautiful place and she would stay on....

Partly because Lyon is a perfect city for a year out experience – a human scale; easy to orientate in due to two magnificent rivers that meet at the 'Confluence'; a city steeped in culture and history to explore (Lyon is older than Paris); a language to master; inspiring University and wonderful people to share a 'homestay' with (both Architects!), this sense was far more exciting than daunting.

Apart from Architectural delights typical of many European cities – Roman structures, Renaissance old town, refurbished Medieval silk traders workshops and some incredible contemporary design (Renzo Piano, Koop Himmelblau, Calatrava), there were some unexpected jewels – a 'giraffe house' in the main Park de la Tête D'or – a 'nature' inspired structure for the giraffes to keep warm in by Patricia Martineau, and a spectacular catenary bridge by Explorations Architecture.

Lyon is also the "gastronomique" capital of France with the most unbelievable markets and eateries



Park de la Tête d'Or – Giraffe House by Patricia Martineau



Schuman Bridge by Explorations Architecture



Musée des Confluences by KoopHimmelbau

Across southern Africa

Ursula Brunner

The relentless hum of the engine, the endless loop of classic road-trip tunes, the sound of tyres eating up long, dusty, dirt roads, is something that vividly remains with one long after the journey is complete... It seems like yesterday that five students banded together to buy an old Mercedes, and crammed into it day after day, over the course of a 3 week-long rally through Africa, that undoubtedly changed our lives forever. We wound our way through the fierce and unforgiving landscapes of the Fish River Canyon and the Namibian Desert, to the endless waters of Lake Kariba and further on to Lake Malawi, before making our way down along the shores of Mozambique and then back, homeward to South Africa.

Many of the African villages that we passed through were scenes of organized chaos. The plethora of people, livestock, bicycles and motor vehicles weaving around one another and then coming together was wonderfully disorienting. It was also apparent that the widespread use of vernacular building techniques and materials that varied widely from one region to the next was based on available natural materials and the different building practices of different groups. Building styles ranged from wattle and daub construction in Zambia to mud bricks as one approached Malawi.

This changed quite drastically on entering Mozambique, where the more tropical climate allowed locals to make use of woven palm leaves quite extensively. These many, seemingly fragile structures stood strong, in sharp contrast to the burnt out shells of Colonial villas scattered across the landscape of Mozambique.

As a student of architecture, based in an urban university, the focus of one's studies are often centred on Western or contemporary architecture, whereas vernacular architecture is confined to History of Architecture or some such parallel course - almost as if to say that these building practices and materials are somehow lost or irrelevant. However, seeing them in such abundance throughout southern Africa, brought to light how these practices are still very much alive and that the materials function appropriately in the climates in which they are used. It gives one food for thought in terms of the practice of Architecture in Africa.

All in all, a hugely enlightening experience and, as always with travel, many unexpected things were discovered along the way.



Our old Mercedes car



Mozambique



Namibia

Kerala, south-western India

Karuni Naidoo



Posters of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

It is not common for women to undertake a journey through Kerala by road in a hired car. My sister, Anusham, drove and I navigated, catching up with family stuff, our lives, and the state of the nation. I would discover that my maps had flaws, causing some navigational confusion which took us on unexpected but pleasant diversions.

Kerala is a progressive Indian state in terms of social welfare, education and quality of life. It has the highest literacy rate of 94%, with women achieving 92% - very likely due to support for the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and a matriarchal system which affords women a better status.



Streetscape Fort Kochi



Former Dutch East India Company (VOC) building, David Hall Art Gallery and Café

Fort Kochi, dating back to 1503, when it was established as a port for trade, has international heritage status. With Vasco da Gama Square as its significant public space, a mix of old houses built by the Portuguese, Dutch and British in each colonial period line the streets; the architecture and urban fabric exhibiting its imperialist history.

We stayed in a 500 year old house on Rose Street, close to the Vasco da Gama house and St Francis Church built in 1516, where his remains were buried. The original Dutch East India Company (VOC) building bears striking resemblance to Cape Dutch architecture – a moment of unexpected shared architectural history – the gables, stoep, windows, doors, floors and detailing. Gentrification is undertaken responsibly, allowing property owners to still live within family homes and the community, whilst enjoying the opportunities of tourism, through hotels, homestays, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, internet cafés and art galleries.



Tea Plantations, Munnar

We spent a few days at a homestay in Munnar, a hill station in the Western Ghats, set amidst the tall trees in a cardamom forest, overlooking a tea plantation. Munnar was established by the British as the commercial centre for tea. Workers, mostly migrant Tamil labour, live in compounds on farms, similar to my heritage of Indian indentured labour on sugar plantations in KwaZulu-Natal. Workers are educated, unionised and organised, and Che Guevara is a hero.

Driving on through tea plantations, pineapple groves, teak and rubber plantations, spice gardens and forests, we reached Thekkady to visit the Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. This protected reserve of lake and forests is acknowledged for its holistic management strategies which involve the participation of local communities in wildlife conservation.



Backwaters at Lake Vembanad

Reaching the shores of Lake Vembanad, we took boat trips through the backwaters, a network of brackish lagoons and lakes. Water is an integral part of everyday life here. We passed people's front gardens, little houses set atop embankments, each with boats and fishing nets hanging off palm trees. Rows of coconut, mango, jackfruit, cashew and banana trees separate the waterway from lush green paddy fields. People appear content with a simple lifestyle.

Kerala has an abundant forest wealth of medicinal herbs and plants, and Ayurveda is practiced with dedication. We visited the local Ayurvedic doctor who diagnosed and proclaimed that we be vegetarians, then sent us off with a prayer and traditional medicines...



Kashi Art Café, Fort Kochi

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