

Appendices

Appendix A: Kate Otten



Figure 13: Kate Otten (Basson, 2024:online)

Background

Year of Birth	Katherine Maree Otten (1964 -)	
Education	BArch (1987)	
Practice	Kate Otten Architects, established in 1989	
Awards		
Year	Award	
2015	Saint Gobain Architecture for Social Gain award	
2015	ArcVision Prize Honourable Mention	
2013	Mbokodo Award for Architecture and Creative Design	
2013	Sophia Gray Memorial Laureate	
Year	Project	Award
2023	Threads	GIFA Award of Excellence
2023	Threads	GIFA People’s choice award
2023	Origins Centre for exploration	GIFA Regional Commendation

2023	Faculty of Science: BioPhy Precinct Post Graduate Centre.	GIFA Award of Merit
2020	Wits Rural Facility, Bushbuckridge, Limpopo	UIA Friendly & Inclusive Spaces Awards
2019	Law on Keyes	GIFA Award of Merit
2018	House Schutte, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit
2016	Wits Rural Facility, Bushbuckridge, Limpopo	SAIA commendation
2011	House Omisore	GIFA Regional Commendation
2008	Matchboxology	SAIA Project Award
2005	Lulu Kati Kati	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2005	Gabriel's Garden Pavilion	GIFA Regional Commendation
2005	Gabriel's Garden Pavilion	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	GIFA Award of Merit
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	Plascon Prism Award
2002	Women's Gaol	SAIA commendation
2001	International House, Johannesburg	Architecture +Cityscape Award
1996	MATEP Art Therapy Centre, Soweto	Cityscape Architectural Review Award
1995	House Staude, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit

Table 1: Kate Otten Architects list of rewards

Interview Transcript

Rouxléne Oosthuizen: I read an article by Professor Lesley Lokko that you were born in Durban, raised in Joburg, and that you lived in 24 different homes before the age of 21. How did this transient lifestyle impact your sense of home and belonging?

Kate Otten: So, I mean, I think for me, and be it a boarding school, bedroom, or I've always had to make home wherever I am. And even if I'm in a hotel room, I will jiggle it around to be more suitable to me. So, I think it's a thing about making space or making home rather than it... Home is a very strong [concept] in this country. And, you know, being born in Durban, I can't honestly remember very well. But, you know, Johannesburg has been an extremely exciting, amazing place to live. It's hectic, it's wild, it's all sorts of things. But I think that that's a... the opportunity is amazing. And I think that's been a very important part of my architectural understanding.

RO: Then the article also mentions that you really like the landscape and wilderness of KZN, or just in general the landscape. What exactly about the wildness of the landscape do you like?

KO: Yes, not of KZN specifically. Well, I think it depends on which landscapes and what they, I mean, for me, the landscape of Johannesburg is equally a landscape, and it is a very powerful landscape. I visited the Karoo, but I don't want to live there. I do think that it has amazing attributes, it's just the big sky, the wild, and the lack of people. I think there's something that's quite amazing about that that is very moving. But equally, when I talk about landscape, I'm talking about various landscapes. It's not it's not specifically, you know, not topographical levels or natural landscape. I mean, you know, often landscape for me can be, you know, South Africa's political landscape, so landscape is something much broader than the horizon and the sun rising and setting. Although I will say it's fundamentally important to me. And that's one of the things that I absolutely love about being here [at Lulu Kati Kati] is that I see the morning horizon, I see the afternoon. I see the horizon from here. And there's, there's some sort of quiet feeling, I am kind of grounded by that or so for example, I like to sit north when I'm drawing because I know where I am, and I do that automatically, that for me, where direction is which, which way I'm facing, which way is up or whatever it might be, I intuitively know, and I suppose also I've kind of lived and worked in Joburg for a long time, so navigating around Johannesburg for me is easy. What is also wonderful, is that you kind of watch the things you know change, the places where you used to just catch a bus to, you don't anymore.

Kayla Potgieter: Were there any hobbies that you undertook that were influential in your choice to become an architect? And also added, are there any hobbies that you still enjoy, or that you want to try out that fascinate you or inspires you in your architecture?

KO: Hobbies for me is a very strange word because they, you know, many people talk about hobbies and then your job, but, yes, some fun. You know, my favourite hobby at the moment is pottery, but it's a much more serious. Yes, [it is a] much more committed thing than a hobby. I have sewed since I was six years old. You know, I made things that, I don't know any of that, but maybe all of it [led me to architecture]. You know, I did architecture because my sister said it was a good idea. Also because I had applied for architecture at KZN, and that's where my guitar teacher was. I was a classical guitarist, and that's what I wanted to do. But that's where I signed up for architecture, so to speak. I only really fell in love with architecture in my practical year. It was just something I was doing. It wasn't something that I had chosen or really knew about. It was a really, I suppose, lovely coincidence. I was going to stop architecture and get into music, so I got accepted to because I had studied guitar for metric. But then I was in love when it came to registration. It was much easier to do architecture, because I was staying with

that, than to move to a new degree, and then I could go quickly to spend time with the new romance. And so it went on and followed itself, but my practice year I did in Muhammad Myatt's office and that was amazing, from so many points of view. But I also think it was the year that I kind of thought, I can do this, I like this, and it was around making some mosques in Malawi out of sunbaked bricks, which was kind of what was the part that really did it for me. Also a profound interest in Islamic architecture, which dates back to first year of architecture, or an interest in trying to fight the Western canon and Islamic architecture is very well documented. Well, there are lots of documents. You can get books in the library. And, and so, that became an interest for me. And, I suppose a handmade thing, and Hassan Fathy was always fabulous. And that was something also that was very much part of working in Mohammed's office .

RO: Did he expose you a lot to the Islamic architecture as a different way of thinking?

KO: I went on a journey with them, with him and a group of Muslim men. We were they were building the mosques up in Malawi. And, you know, it was just it was a really eye opening experience. It was fantastic.

RO: How does the making process inform your design? Do you, for instance, think about way of making something and then the design comes, or do you like first design. And then think of a way to, to make it.

KO: I think it's simultaneous and kind of all in, I don't sit there consciously taking the one part apart and, you know, so it's an understanding of the whole. So, I mean, I think that the work is very much about the response to where the project is, who the people are, you know, what are the skills available. So, it's very much about where is it and what's happening and who is it for. And what does the building hope to achieve, what is it going to do? How's it going to change things?

RO: So, would you say in the design process, you first take time to define what the aim is of the building?

KO: No, but I mean, yes, of course you do. You want to know what's the brief, what you're doing. But I don't think that that is fixed. I think that it can be something that's fluid. You know, if you find in working through it that there's something amazing that might be sort of that you've left off or whatever, you should be able to add that it can't be that it's this finite thing. I think that until it's built or even as it's being built, I mean you do that less and less the bigger the building gets, but if an opportunity arises you must take it because it's not just that you can say, oh shit. would it be nice to do that? But if you can still do it. I remember that very clearly

in the building called House Staden. That was the early building of did in Melville. When we got up to the first floor level, I realised that there were incredible views to the southwest, which I've never seen. So then we put a whole window in there. I mean, what it wasn't on the drawings. It wasn't in the budget, but it became obvious that, we would have to adapt. There is this kind of fluidity and I think that is part of the nature of life, I mean, you can't be so fixed in your point. You need to be available and open and you know, what are the opportunities and what is the.

RO: In terms of the constructions for self, what have you learned throughout the years, by doing these constructions for self?

KO: We are sitting in one of those; ostensibly constructions for self a buildings that I have built either for myself or my family. It is a space where I can be much more experimental if I want to be. It's got its other side, which is that I'm paying. The budgets are unbelievably tight. And it's about being, inventive and innovative with very few, money ain't going to solve the problem. How do you do that with other things? You will find that there's a lot of recycled stuff, a lot of hard, ordinary, relatively cheap things used in ways that are not necessarily their standard way in order to achieve something new or something different than I thought about. So, I'm going to jump to Lulu Kati Kati, which is probably good to explain it while we're sitting in this. This poor Lulu Kati Kati got half built and then left in the rain, so it got very messed up, which is why it's not straight. It's not perfectly straight and it never will be, but I'm not sure that that is the point behind this building at all. I think there are things that I kind of investigate in different ways. So, for example, this building follows, or was sort of simultaneous with the Women's Jail. The Women's Jail has steel columns on which the concrete floors are suspended. And this here is a timber column from which timber floors are suspended. It's kind of like a domestic application of a similar kind of idea, where a building hangs off its structure as opposed to it isn't structured. You can see that here from the outside. Everything kind of hangs off it. What was the desire to do that? It was an experiment. I don't have the budget to do it with steel etc. But I love gum poles. They for me have an incredibly integrity. Integrity because their whole columns, it's a whole tree. You get trees this tall, here they are. The one, the builder chopped the top off. Please don't ask me why, but he did. There's always up this error that we will forever live with. I wanted it to be suspended and float between this rockface which goes all the way down, and this amazing tree, so it had to hang there.

The idea also was that usually when you have a view site, you see less [of the] view because of the trees, but now you can see the Melville Koppies, and you used to be able to see down the street as well, but all the trees have become huge. They were little spindly things when I

planted them. There's always this thing of having this huge glass and then you see the view. [But] for me, in many ways, this is about different views and about making views, so you'll also see that the north side has got more windows in the south side, because you want to get more light and sun in from the north than you do from the south. And then it's, it's got a system that it works. That is the structural system that holds the walls up. But then why did they have these things? I did talk about this idea of camouflage. If you look up at this elevations and all the windows open because they're open in all sorts of different directions, it reflects the trees and reflects the sky. It's fun. The bay window is busy getting fixed because bugs have gotten in there. This is the idea of a bay window and corrugated iron, which is historic Melville. But now this is my version of the same, and you see this, it's not one sheet of corrugated iron. It's made like this because that lines up with what happens inside. They all kind of speak to each other. And I suppose it could be that you use leftover bits, you don't have to have massive sheets, and then you cut and you waste. So, it's got all these kinds of reasons why it is as it is, you know, like this whole thing of the relationship between the site and the building. Also the balconies allow you to move in between the trees. And the balustrades, they all take pots for planting. And then was a Kapok tree, but it is gone now, but it made pink flowers, so this (the kitchen) is all pink.

RO: I think is very interesting to see how your building adapts to the site. and especially that fluidity that you talked about. It seems like it's still an ongoing process.

KO: Well, it's quite interesting because we've now come back 14 years later and it's busy getting painted. So those shelves are new. Upstairs the space was divided into two bedrooms. Our daughter stayed in the one, we stayed in the other, but it was never really a perfect divide. But we now have taken all of that out, so we've just got a big studio upstairs. Okay, well, not big enough for us because we like lots of space. And then, the kitchen was pink. There is also the integrity of the walls. And then there's these services of to the side. You get the kitchen, with bathrooms up there and then the bathroom downstairs. When it was built, I wasn't sure what it was going to be; an office, a house, a this or a that. And so it was space. I should have put the toilet on this level. And not two upstairs. But you know that was theoretically were going to live. It was quite sort of incomplete when we came to live here. And my explanation to my family was just imagine that were going camping. It's going to be comfortable in the certain way, but experimental in another. It was one of the most exciting years, I think, that we had living here. It was wonderful.

You can see so the floor is parquet that I've collected at the time. The paving at the entrance there, that's all leftover bits. I'm a terrible hoarder because I think that, you know, I see these

things as possibilities of making something fantastic. I drive everyone mad, because I hoard. But they're all amazing, interesting, they have opportunities, possibilities, you know? Well, we just haven't quite found the right moment for them, so, you know, fortunately, I now have a barn so I can put all sorts of things in there. I collect tiles.

So, you know, you ask about hobbies. so, I mean, there were lots of things that I've done in my life, and I kind of did them, excelled and then moved on the next. I was a cellist at one point. I was a fanatical horse rider, a gymnast, a ballerina, you do all these things in your life but, architecture was the one that stuck. I think what's amazing is that architecture also has this incredible ability to be larger than just... It's a way of life. It's not just limited to my day job. It isn't in my life, but it colours everything that I see or how I see.

RO: How did your travels to India influence you? More specifically, did it impact you in terms of the eastern versus the western canon?

KO: I was 19 years old, and I went to an ashram. That's what it was all about. And it was, wild. I mean, you know, 19 years old back then. So, and, also as a white South African, you couldn't get a visa to get to India and you, they wouldn't touch your passport and so I had a transit visa and, that's how you have travelled. It was amazing. It was completely mind opening. I mean, I've never travelled outside of South Africa. You have to sit on the plane, it was so long for me. I was a crying baby most of the way. It was it was incredible.

I don't think it is east versus west. I mean, for me, it's a thing of the of a bigger picture. You know, I live in Africa. I don't live East or West. I've never consciously thought that, it's just a bigger picture. I think that it is India or had to do with because I was wanting to go to the ashram that I was attending in Lenasia. So, you know, like the main ashram was in Shajapur, India. So that's there.

KP: To add on to that, did you travel to any other places that was influential to you, even if it's in South Africa?

KO: Totally, I mean, I've done a lot of traveling, but nearly as much as my friend Hugh Fraser. But I think traveling is an incredibly important part of opening your mind to other cultures and to other ways of living, etc.?

Shannon Govender: I want to ask you about House Rowe. So, this question I'm drawing assumptions so you can disagree. But it is mainly from papers and also your website. So, the design process for that was an organic response to the existing conditions, both needs have a practical action. Elements within later changed and were redesigned as we have been

speaking about earlier. And then the building progressed as new objects and both elements were formed. It needed to be connected. Can you elaborate on the emotional needs for the home design? If they were into it and if this was an intuitive approach?

KO: What's interesting is a House Rowe went in three parts. The first part was the studio. Then much later we the house and then at the end we did a cottage. Sean, Alice and I became very good friends. And what was amazing was that the Sean, who was a photographer, brought pictures of his village, Credo Mutwa in Soweto. And they were just these very, they were evocative photographs. They were not to say, make it look like this. So they were not these Pinterest images. There were these very beautiful, evocative pictures from Credo Mutwa. I had read stories of Credo Mutwa to my children's, so that was very exciting for me that he'd been there and that he brought these photographs. It was years later, actually, when I actually went to the house – it is not a house, it is like a whole place – The Rowe couple were very engaged with the process. So, they had a bunch of stuff like doors and windows and stuff that they had salvaged from some warehouses downtown that were getting smashed or whatever it was. They wanted to make a space that about the way they worked, that is the photographic studio and the kind of atmosphere they wanted to create. And the whole place eventually became their sort of compound, I suppose, where there was the house, and then you could walk across this lovely bridge to get to the studio. They knew many kind of artists, they would make the light fittings or Alice was doing a lot of the mosaic work, etc. So, there was this lovely, intuitive, organic process. And then there were things that happened, like, for example, there's that beautiful tower that sort of does that, and it has these rivulets. So, so what we did was that we over plastered it and then hosed so that, the plaster walls slumped and made those rivulets, or those bottles that are the twinkling lights on the staircase. The thing with the bottles is, if you put them horizontally they leak, so you have to put them slightly at an angle and you have to wrap them so that they remain in place while you do the rest. Going back to that thing about experimenting; it worked with Sean and Alice. It was very nice to be able to experiment. But I mean, Sean almost completely lost his shit if something did not work, but it worked out in the end. And then they were married there. Then she had a baby there. The. And la la la la. you know, so it was very much a way of life.

RO: I think it's interesting the extent to which you, involve the client with the process and that they are a part of the design.

KO: I think it's critical, because I think the client does not have the breadth of knowledge that we have of architecture. I think that you - and it's not an arrogant thing, it's a sharing thing –

take them on this journey, then they will engage with what is going to be theirs. It's not yours ultimately, it's theirs'.

KP: Do you actually use computer aided design approaches?

KO: We do have computers and that is ultimately how all our things get done. I sit at my drawing table and I draw, and then things will get set up [on the computer] and then I'll draw into them. I would sort of put some vague dimensions on so that I can get it set up. It is something that I have to be very aware of, as do everyone who works for me so that it doesn't get kind of lost in translation, because what a hand drawing or a line that you draw can do that a computer can't, is that it can be indecisive, it can also suggest something rather than that, you know, it can be and it can mutate a bit. If you draw it dark, it [visually] jumps [out], if you don't draw it dark, it doesn't jump. If you change pen colours, it does different things. I think that computers are very useful, but I don't think that they are. I'm still very doubtful about AI. I think that the secret is, it still remains in the, in the maker. I think that it's it is only as good as you are. It's only as good as you're able to let it be. To be honest, it has no clue. It's that simple. And the clues that it has are only because they've been imported. I don't know how you short circuit that or un-circuit that. It is a bit counter-intuitive, but it's fine if that's your route. I think I would want to draw over it, and be able to stretch it more, whatever that might be. We used to build a lot of physical models, but the problem of that is that quite often, you do it when the building is quite advanced. I think the secret would be to do it earlier and to do it rougher. It's also nice way [of working], you can photograph it and you can draw into the photographs. But no, I'm not a computer girl.

KP: How does communities influence your designs?

KO: I think it's very particular to a project, you know. I think it also has to do with the size of the project, where the project is and what it is. For example, for the WITS rural facility, we may have wanted to have been more experimental in how we did certain things, but those skills did not exist in the area. So it was also valuable to use things that the communities surrounding the facility were able to do, so their skills were able to be used in the making of the building. I think that it's taking those and then sort of pushing them a bit further beyond their comfort zone. But I don't think it was reinventing the wheel. I think there's a subtle thing in that. A long time ago in doing the, when doing the Art therapy Centre in Soweto, that was a very much a hands on thing. The Rowe house was a very hands on thing with the actual builders who on site; people who were skilled plasterers in a way trying to get them to un-skill themselves to achieve or to let them engage in a more relaxed process. Or for example, with the bricklaying at the

Art Therapy Centre. So, I have a picture of a kind of patterned but sort of fairly disorderly patterned, brickwork. We discussed this with the two bricklayers and then I said, could you do samples? And by the time I get back, it [the dome] was finished. And it was fabulous. And you can kind of see where one worked and where one didn't, when it moved from the one's work to the other, the decisions they made to make it all happen, which was wonderful. So yes. And I think those, when that happens, it's an amazing. I suppose because the people who are making the building then are completely engaged in it. But you do have to have a very clear - and I guess that's also where the constructions for self a more able to have those types of things. Whereas now, with the project for WITS we have to draw the pattern, and it can't be too complicated because they could do it wrong, it is too expensive etc.

RO: I read that you have a firmly held belief in the power of architecture to inspire strong emotions, to transform understanding and appreciation of space. How do you believe architecture can affect your emotions?

KO: Well, I think everyone is affected by the space that they are in and I mean, that's what's so wonderful about returning to this place (Lulu Kati Kati) for me. There is a sense of... on a hot day here, this is sort of cool and leafy atmosphere and there's this gentle breeze and you are sitting in the trees and there's something quite... I find this whole building; my soul sits very comfortably here. If you are up there, you can see out, there's this kind of expanse out that way. I noticed driving here today, I took the route that I used to take to our previous office. I used to feel a sense of dread going there. And now I don't have that when I drive here. I don't feel I shouldn't go to the office. It's lovely, I'll come on a weekend. I think that's a sort of much more felt thing. But I think it is also, to have somewhere that you can call home, it is an amazing thing. To know that you are safe and secure in that. Hassan Fathy always spoke about this thing of beauty and, that he felt that beauty was particularly important. That if the only thing that you have, is a home, that that should be beautiful. Aesthetics is not something that doesn't affect you.

RO: I'm glad you say that, because I think there's a lot of emphasis placed on functionality in architecture, but then there's sometimes a neglect of the emotional.

KO: For me, they are equally important.

SG: In the first phase, for Nandipha's studio, you acted as a building manager, collaborating with various small teams across people. Given your experience with this project and your ongoing interest in craft, how did you facilitate knowledge transfer between yourself as the architect and the skilled artisans during the construction process?

KO: So, you know what was interesting about the project is that Salma was the person who was the manager on the side. And so I think that it was the first project that she's done that I would come every so often, but I was not managing it. And I was not as hands on as much as I would ordinarily be. We worked with teams of craftspeople as opposed to one builder in charge. We needed to do it in accordance with a tight budget. The craft of building is often a lot more chunky than the craft of making a tapestry. We were building a warehouse. What we've done is built it [the frame] on the floor, the first one, and the engineer came to discuss. Then you can pick up the frame. Actually being on the site is incredibly important.

KP: Can we jump to the Threads project? On your online profile, it says that it tells the story of the of Johannesburg, but it specifically used the phrase *Laboratory of the Future*. You can speak towards like the whole experience of creating that. But what is your vision of what architecture should be in future South Africa?

KO: *Laboratory of the Future* was the theme of the whole exhibition. Lesley Lokko was the curated, so you can read up on that. Our project was called Dangerous Liaisons and then lady selected people to be in which part and whatever that might be. The whole exhibition was completely amazing. It was a curated exhibition; it was not like a building expo. It was more like an art exhibition, but it was way better because it was a whole story that was this *Laboratory of the Future*. It was very Afrocentric and global South. So, the piece that we did was Dangerous Liaisons you can read this though, but it's the ridge of Johannesburg. And if you look on Google Earth you will see when you put it on the satellite You will see this arc, where a creator formed from a meteorite. But what this piece is also talking about, is the idea that the discovery of gold was also the start of this dangerous liaison between great wealth and between poverty, between exploitation and the social landscapes that panned out. In in a way, it's a wonderful summary of my work so far with this practice. Because it's about craft, it's about women, it's about layers of landscape. It is a very three dimensional piece, it also has shadow as a kind of part of the story, which is all around the geology of the ground, and the tapestries, the weaving of the surface and then the beads, which was the idea of what is the night sky above, but that is also about the gold, and that it's not disappearing off to western shores. It's being claimed as an African resource, through the interpretation of how that's made.

So what was the point? What was my *Laboratory of the Future*? The whole idea was that it links back to laboratory of the future. It's not so literal, but it's this idea about connecting with craft, with making, with handmaking, so it engages with people and with humanity. What I'm saying is that if you leave out all the “touchy feely” stuff, you're going to lose it all. And that for

me is the future. It's not about the more away from ourselves we become. I think it's problematic and I think we need to come more into ourselves in the future.

RO: How would you describe your architectural philosophy?

KO: It's not one thing. I think it's a whole series of things. I like the word authenticity, but it is very boring. It is about thinking. Each project is specific to itself, and you need to delve into those layers and find out what they are and bring that to the surface. But I think it's so much more than that (authenticity), I don't think is one thing. You know, I think it's, I think that's the point. It's complex, and it's about detail. I don't know what my one philosophy is. I don't have one.

RO: For the Art Therapy Centre, how exactly did you engage with the client? So I now know the, the process with the builders, but what exactly was the process with the client, or the people that would use the centre?

KO: Oh, gosh. I mean, that's quite a long story. Maggie ran an art therapy centre from the gardens of a child welfare place. But that's a long story, because it's particular to each one, but yes, I worked very closely with her, but it took nine years before the money came through. But it was the most magical thing because the person who donated the funds never, never wanted to be named. We don't know who they are to this day.

RO: So, your architecture, when I take it in, it immediately sparks joy. It feels human. What project is your favourite. Or which project spark the most joy for you?

KO: That's such a difficult question. Do you know how many times I have been asked that question? It's usually the one that I'm currently working on, but, this house, this building, this organism... No, there isn't one particular one. But the ones that I do for me, I particularly like, but I love them all.

Appendix B: Braam de Villiers and André Eksteen



Figure 15: Andre Eksteen (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online)



Figure 14: Braam de Villiers (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online)

Background

Year of Birth	Braam de Villiers (1968—)		André Eksteen (1971—)
Education	B.Arch University of Pretoria (1995) M.Arch. University of Arizona (1999)		B.Arch University of Pretoria (1995)
Practice	Earthworld Architects, established in 2000		
Awards			
Year	Award		
2024	35 th Sophia Gray Laureates		
Year	Project	Award	
2021	Nando's Castle Gate	PIA Commendation for Architecture	
2021	INOAR	PIA Award for Architecture certificate	
2021	Embassy of Belgium	PIA Commendation for Architecture	
2020	Future Innovation Campus	IUPA 2020 Special Prize	
2019	Future Africa Campus	AfriSam-SAIA Sustainable Design Award - Sustainable Architecture Category A	
2019	House Duvenage	SAIA Limpopo Award for Architecture	
2019	House Coertse	GIFA Commendation	
2019	House Dreyer	PIA Award for Architecture	

Searching for Slowness: Towards an architecture of well-being

2019	Wallstreet PTA	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Conference Centre	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Housing	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Hub	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Research Commons	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Conference Centre	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Housing	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Hub	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Research Commons	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Melissa House	PIA Commendation
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Project	Construction Mag Best Projects - Winner – Architects
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	Construction Mag Best Projects - Special Mention – Sustainable
2018	I'CAT Environmental Solutions	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	House van Dyk	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	House Nieuwenhuys	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Project	SAIA - Commendation
2017	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	FSIA Award for Architecture
2017	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	CESA Aon Engineering Excellence Awards - Commendation
2017	House Nieuwenhuys	PIA Award for Architecture
2017	House van Dyk	PIA Award for Architecture
2017	I'CAT Environmental Solutions	PIA Category Award
2016	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	SAIA – Commendation
2016	House du Plessis	SAIA – Commendation
2016	Lucky Bread Company Mall of Africa	Retail Design Awards – Commendation
2015	I-Cat Eco Factory	AfriSam-SAIA Award for Sustainable Architecture + Innovation
2015	Tribeca Original	PIA Award Commendation
2015	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	PIA Award for Architecture
2015	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	PIA Category Winner – Commercial or Brand-Related Architecture
2015	House Mouton	PIA Award of Excellence
2015	House Du Plessis	PIA Award for Architecture
2014	Lucky Bread	Retail Design Awards – Best Restaurant Design
2014	House Gauche	PIA Award-Commendation
2013	House Gauche	PIA Award for Architecture
2013	Lucky Bread Company Brooklyn Shopping Centre	PIA Honourable Mention - Retail Design Awards – Best Restaurant Design 2013

2013	Lucky Bread	Honourable Mention for Architecture 2013
2012	N/A	Retail Design Awards – Best Retail Restaurant in South Africa
2011	House Zeeman	PIA Honourable Mention
2011	House Botha	PIA Honourable Mention
2009	Centenary Building	SAIA Merit Award in Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Award for Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Award of merit for Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Peer Awards

Table 2: Erathworld Architects list of rewards

Interview Transcript

Rouxléne Oosthuizen: Did you already know at school that you want to do architecture, was it something that you were interested in? How did you end up in architecture?

Braam de Villiers: Well, I ended up here by default. Andre was more focused, but no, I didn't know that at school. I actually went to the navy for two years. I decided after my time there that I'm going to do this.

RO: What made you decide to do architecture? Did you talk to anyone? Did anyone guide you in this direction?

BV: I went to the department of architecture at the University of Pretoria where I spoke with Roger and Schalk. They were the lecturers there at the time. I talked to them a lot before I decided to do this.

Kayla Potgieter: Were there any hobbies that influenced you to do architecture? Or are there any hobbies that currently influences your architecture?

BV: I played violin, so I did music. I think there is some correlation to architecture, in the sense of form, composition, precision. If you look at architecture and music, I think those are similarities in their processes, but maybe it is not that direct.

KP: Are there any other activities that influenced/s your architecture? For example, traveling or lecturing?

BV: On that, I think context is much wider. What is your social context? What is your environmental context? The nature around you? You must take it in, position yourself in your context. I think that's very important. I'm always busy with that act. I travel, I draw. I read; I listen. I listen to other people.

KP: Do you have any heroes in architecture, people you looked up early in your career, or people you still look up to?

BV: I have always had heroes, and it also constantly changes. When we were studying, I always say the four masters, but it was Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto. That was when we were studying... Walter Gropius. Andre studied the work of Kahn, I was also influenced by Kahn. We actually missed post-modernism. We looked at the new modernism. We were very influenced by people like Renzo Piano, Norman Foster, Richard Rodgers. Obviously, along with them come the Deconstructivists, like Zaha Hadid – but that was not a strong influence, however we were aware of it . But the new modernist influences were strong.

And then, locally, there was Uytenbogaart, Glenn Gallagher, Peter Rich, 'Ora Joubert - They gave us lectures, so they had a strong influence. And then Norman Eaton. He was a Pretorian regional modernist. I looked a lot at their work. And then, as I studied, the contemporary regional modernists such as Charles Garaya in India, Jeffrey Bauer in Sri Lanka...that pointed to a more contextual direction.

I think what was interesting was that we were the end of the post-modern era. And it was like... We started back in 1989. I think it was the end of post-modernism and people started looking elsewhere. And with Roger Fisher the environmental thinking started to emerge.

RO: Following up on that, you studied a master's degree in bioclimatic design if I am correct? Was it as a result of the focus on sustainability by Roger Fischer, or was it a personal interest?

BV: Look, Dieter Holm, who was head of the school at Tukkies, had a very strong influence on sustainability. He was probably the only one in South Africa who started talking very strongly about it. And it wasn't topical then. So, Dieter and Roger Fischer, were both systemic thinkers, so that started to influence me when I finally got a bursary to go to America. I decided to go to one of the environmental schools, there was the University of Arizona, New Mexico, Berkeley, all kinds of schools were there. Around the late 70s and 80s there were people thinking about sustainability, building in the desert, like Paulus Leary. Rick Joy was at my university campus...rammed earth. I was very strongly influenced by regionalism and contextualism. The desert climate has a very specific architecture. Will Bruder, Wendell Burnett, all of them were there. I was very strongly influenced by that.

Celine Nel: In terms of craft, where do you think this would fall in your philosophy as an architect, and is it relevant to your philosophy?

BV: I think what happened was when we studied at Tukkie's, it was a very strong school of the making of things, especially with Joe Kemp and Hans Wegelin. There was very much, you would design it and then the next question was, how will you make it? How will you put it together? There was a very strong emphasis on the building technology of things and the making of it. It was integral to the course, so design and construction weren't two-step, they were taught very much in the same studio and classroom, and that was good. I think there they instilled that, and they were very mean.

They would mark up a set of working drawings, and they would redline the drawings. They were very strict on the making of this. I think together with that, and then there was people that taught us like, 'Ora Joubert, whom had this very, let's call it a very African approach, looking at African technology and African filmmaking, as well as African building technology, for instance, working with poles and such. It was very much in the school, and it very much translated to what we were taught. I think at that time, if you live in a city where Norman Eaton has built, he was obviously very influenced by African pattern making in terms of his own architecture, you see that and you try to emulate that, or try to understand it, or try to copy it, if I can call it that. I think it was the very place, the region of Pretoria, and Pretoria regionalism definitely had a very strong influence, and modernist Pretoria, if I can call it that.

And people like Helmut Stauch also had a very strong influence because those buildings surrounded us... Philip Nell, the Aula. Those buildings were there and we looked at them and we wanted to be these modernists, if I can call it that. Not post-modernists, modernists.

CN: How does your design process generally start? In what manner of execution and what tools do you employ at the beginning of a process versus at the end of a process?

BV: I think the most important thing firstly is context, to really understand the context. Whether it's a residential project or an industrial project, any project, is that you first need to understand the context, and that starts with observing it. Meaning that you, just by looking at the environment around you, you can get a lot of clues.

Obviously, the climate that you are designing in, that's part of the context. And then the textures, and then the site, the site specifics. What's the potential of the site? So the first one is site, context and place. Also social, what's your approach socially, what you're going to do? Meaning, how can the building be the catalyst for social change? I think that's very important; it is always what we are thinking and doing.

But then next to it, right next to it sits the materiality of the of the building. What are we going to build it out of? Very important. From day one, are we going to use bricks? Are we going to use concrete? Because I think a lot of times the materiality is not it's only an afterthought, not necessarily the catalyst...again the making of the building. So, if you decide you're going to build in brick, what sort of brick technology are you going to employ? Or timber? If you decide in timber, are you going to build with plywood, or are you going to build with mass timber? Are you going to build with GLT? It's a very important decision. Because that definitely influences the aesthetics of the building. So, is the building going to be heavy, stereotomic, or is the building going to be tectonic? Is it going to be light? Is it going to float above the earth, or is it going to be grounded in the earth? That's all material decisions. I think you need to make it fairly early in the process. It definitely guides design.

RO: That was actually one of my questions, but you seem to have answered it. Does the making process inform design, or does the design inform the making process? But from what you just said, I think with you it's very much the making process, the materials and the technology, that informs the design.

BV: Yes, definitely. It can almost be the first, one of the main catalysts along with context, obviously. And then I guess concepts, but we do not necessarily work with abstract concepts. We have experimented with that in the office, with different people working here. Let's say you have this abstract notion that you're going to explore space and light, or explore how light enters the building. It's part of that but it's not the main generator of the concept. In that sense we're very traditional in our design thinking. I think the other thing that André is passionate about is sometimes just pure form. Just aesthetics. I think a lot of design can be generated through pure aesthetics, meaning that you look at it's like a piece of music. The form, the format, or the scale and then the rhythm.

Those kind of things that it's like for instance... I'm constantly looking at that little plastic building. There is a kind of wilful aesthetic approach, which is frowned upon these days. But I think it's super important to almost wilfully push the form in a specific direction. That you don't have to post-rationalise everything, say it needs to look like this. It needs to feel like this.

RO: I think I can relate to that. I'm looking at the work of Peter Zumthor in an international sense and he talks about the presence of a building. Some things just have an innate presence. They're not trying to say anything abstract, it is just the material, for example timber or brick. Each one is inherently different and so you choose one just because of what it is.

BV: Yes, Kahn used to say, what does the building want to be? Zumthor does that. He would say this whole bath must now be carved out of granite. We're going to just use granite and mortar and then he's going to stick to that pallet and he will wilfully push that thing in that direction. Or poles, that one museum of his. It's a skeleton and then it's got a skin over it. That's what it needs to be. Then he would just focus on that end goal.

KP: How did you end up doing all these crafted, mass produced elements with the timber, the CNC and the plywood. How did you get to this point? Because you said you were quite traditional, but I disagree.

BV: I think that's another very important thing about design we always refer to that quote of Einstein. Einstein said you can't change the system with the thinking that's created that system. That is very important. I think a lot of times in architecture people will just do the same thing over and over. It started off with André, who had a project - I think it was the African Wildlife Foundation project - which was first of all was in another context, but because the building was far away, we asked if we could manufacture the building in South Africa? Couldn't we manufacture components in South Africa? And there André drew this light plywood roof at that time and said we can make these elements, we can make them here, then we can put it on a ship and we can come build it in Kenya. The building was never built but I think that thinking started there. And then it progressed.

(André Eksteen joins)

So, for timber there was two projects. One, André did a portal frame structure house in Stellenbosch. It was a portal frame structure; it was actually a wood box that was built on an existing brick building. And soon thereafter I did a house in Mooikloof, House Dreyer, where I did the same thing, where the bottom was brick and the top was timber. So I think that's where the timber construction, the production of elements off-site and putting it together on-site, started.

André Eksteen: The first plywood we did was in the Centenary Building in 2008, the ceilings, the acoustic panels, the benches... and it was around that time that we had a project in Kenya that they built an IWF. That was the first time we had the idea to cut out puzzles pieces and then to put them together on the ground.

KP: So, my research is about what we can learn from traditional craftspeople, but also how we can make something new from it in the future. I also have a question about what you envision the future of architecture in South Africa, because it is changing a lot.

AE: But how do you think it is going to change?

KP: The reason why I am talking about indigenous knowledge, traditions and craftsmanship, is because my vision is that we are going to draw a lot more influence from there.

AE: But what is traditional? Is it ethnic, cultural, traditional?

KP: Yes, it is cultural and traditional, but any old ways of doing things.

AE: Yes, but you have to define the old ways before you start to formulate your argument. Because old ways are very vague. Because we only come from the European building tradition. When people talk about traditional buildings, do they refer to vernacular buildings? You have to keep that in mind. What we are very interested in, is for example, what is the most dominant building technology in South Africa? How are most of the buildings built in South Africa?

RO: Brick and mortar buildings.

AE: No, if you look at it from a quantitative point of view.

RO: Well, informal shacks.

AE: Now you can ask yourself, is it a modern vernacular? Because most people look at it with aversion. But is it not just a modern vernacular? Is it not just new materials, new ways of building?

BV: Yes, and the material is context driven, meaning that if a [underprivileged] person wants shelter, they are going to create their shelter on the most cost effective, not necessarily the most climatic materials, but they want to build something that they can build themselves, which is very important. What used to happen was that buildings were built for [underprivileged] people, but now [I think] they have to build themselves. Nobody is going to build for them.

AE: It is interesting enough, I want to argue that there is more ownership, more importance of building in that self-build culture, that informal culture, than there is in the formal building culture.

BV: André's thesis is specifically this. He did his thesis in a township, and he did exactly that. It was in a time when all these fancy theses were done about the fancy buildings in the city...

AE: Yes, it was time of the archer, all the buildings were curved.

BV: Yes, and André said, if you take gum poles, because he drove in the townships, and he saw people buy the gum poles and S-profile sheeting, load it on their truck, and they started building it themselves. There was no one to do it for them. So, André's whole philosophy was, how can use that primitive technology to build a settlement?

AE: I just took picture the other day, when I drove behind a bakkie with building materials. I sit and think to myself, you know, this is our local building practice, this is what we need to be aware of, this is what we need to be sensitive for. What we try to do at Earthworld, is to merge that strong western culture, with this emerging culture, or this emerging vernacular.

Amira Osmund said, it's not about the replacement of informal settlements, it's about the upgrading of informal settlements. There is a big difference between the two. Because it's impossible to sculpt a city, you know...

Laetitia Lambrecht: I think it has to do with enabling people. We easily talk theoretically about enabling people, but we hardly understand what it means, because, just as an example, look at all the houses that burn down in the Cape, how upset people get. Because it's not about, their possessions, their minimal possessions. It is about the fact that they built it, they formed a community. They lost not just their possessions, they have lost a part of their community, that which they built themselves from the minimal money they have earned from social grants. And that is where the notion of enabling people to gather building components over time comes from. It goes back to the argument of: how do we (architects) make architecture relevant again for people, to solve real, South African problems? And we (Earthworld Architects) begin to integrate this into our design process.

AE: I think there is nowadays a differentiation, between architecture and the architect. Nowadays everyone is an architect. You get an IT architect, and strategic architect. But architecture is the artifact, it is the thing that stands there. And I think the discourse, the conversation about architecture, revolves a lot around the product, about the thing that is standing there. And it's not enough about how you get there.

I think, how you get there, is what the architect occupies their time with. The architect doesn't have to produce architecture, he can produce systems, he can produce strategies, he can be innovative, he can mobilise entrepreneurship. You know, and I think that is where we, as architects, need to start positioning ourselves.

Because, it is a barren field, there is not a lot of people that play there. I think that architects are actually one of the few professions that can think comprehensively about systems. I think

this is where our practice (Earthworld Architects) plays. We have a lot of ideas, in this sense, that have not been implemented yet. The other important thing, to think about, is that in the process of design, and in the making, the building, there are many users involved. There are not just the final users, they aren't the only people who are important. The users are the people who build the building, and the people who walk past the buildings. So it is a much more comprehensive way to look at buildings, or at the process, or the action of building.

RO: Yes, that was actually, one of my questions. How do you consider the people that physically make the buildings in your design process?

AE: That generates the design.

BV: Yes, the craftsman, the craftsmanship. Like I said we start there, we look at the materiality of the building, but at the same time, let's say we are going to build with timber, we think about how we are going to actually going to build it while we are designing. It's not something that someone else will resolve, the builder won't resolve it. The architect, they must propose a resolution. He can say, these components have to be small enough that two people can carry it. That is a very integral part of the plywood system, it must be light enough that people can carry it around. There is a massive difference, between that and for example, a big CLT building that's assembled with a crane. Same material, but there is a vast difference in the manner of assembly.

AE: Another important thing, is that South Africa has a dwindling skills base, there are not that many craftspeople. Most of them have learned it themselves, so their knowledge is very limited and focused on a narrow scope of work. What's interesting when one is on the terrain, when one works with the with the people who make the buildings, is to see how different people, approach the same thing differently. I think it is important to have respect for the craftspeople who make the building. You must be open to learn from that person, and you also have to give that person some freedom in the design so that they can also make a contribution. Because, as soon as it's a very prescriptive thing - we, as architects tend to be very prescriptive, the contract documentation must be right, and there has to be a specification, and that leaves a lot less space for invention and personal development.

But it's only with isolated, small projects, that you can explore with this kind of theory. You won't be able to do it easily on a large, public building, because there's just too much red tape in that kind of environment. But there will also come a time when that red tape starts to change, and you can make a bigger impact, and the message can go out further.

Earlier today, I observed the people on site. There are two groups. Now, the one group, theoretically, has a lot of experience. The person is over 60 years old, and his assistant is also a senior. On the other side, are younger people and people with a lot of practical experience, but less formal training. The older man learned from his father, who was a trained cabinet maker. But what is interesting is how much better the uneducated person solves a problem, because they are not limited in their ways of thinking, which comes with training. It is a much more diverging process. As an architect you have to design for that divergent thinking. You have to leave crumbs outside of the hole, if you want the mouse to come out. This is something I previously never intended, but it is what I have discovered. Remember, your career as an architect is a journey of discovery. You are not supposed to know precisely where you are going. You are supposed to walk a road of discovery, to go on a voyage of discovery. Design is a process of discovery. You have to allow yourself to discover, not just this year, but for the rest of your career.

RO: That is something that stood out for me from your practice. Each project is unique and explores something in a different way.

AE: I think financial pressure causes a lot of firms to create standard and repetitive designs. But a lot of times the building blocks can stay the same, what matters is how you position those blocks.

RO: My research is specifically about architectural normative positions and establishing a normative position for myself. At the moment I am working with three aspects: context, poiesis and human experience.

AE: Those three categories you have, you need to set out what you want to achieve with each one, and what is the relationship between them. How does context influence poiesis, how does human experience influence poiesis?

RO: Yes, at the moment I have a diagram with 3 circles indicating each category, and I have done where they overlap, and then the middle. At the moment I only use the word place from Norbert Schultz, a meaningful place to describe my aim in architecture, but I am still looking for other terminology in the literature.

AE: It is interesting, I have to admit. Have you seen our manifesto on the website? That is a type of normative position that addresses a few things. But I think ultimately, architecture and the building of architecture, is about being meaningful. I think that is essential.

LL: Yes, creating meaningful things. I think that is also something that you specifically asked before, how does Earthworld approach design? I think one of the things that stands out to me and that has not been touched on yet, is the approach that every project is seen as a catalytic event. That means every project is an opportunity to change things. And what are those things? It is possibly the team, how you work, how the systems in the building work, how you are working in the context, in the social context of a community. So if you have such an approach to every project, to see it as something that can bring change, then you are ultimately making the potential impact bigger.

AE: It gets the wheels rolling. And where meaning comes in, is actually that as a catalytic event, the process and the building can become meaningful beyond its primary use, beyond just the client. A building has to be iconic to a certain extent. It has to be recognisable to a certain extent. There needs to be ownership from the community's side. That ownership can come from involvement, meaningful involvement, not just a few wheelbarrows full of dahha, but the feeling that you have actually contributed something significant, no matter how small, but it has to be identifiable.

I think that is what is interesting about the open building story, is the notion that you can walk by and say, I put that thing in there. And this is not a rule, but it is a way to think about it, about how I as the architect detail a building so that the components are identifiable after the construction, so that it is not superficially covered up. I think that is one thing about our work - you will never get something that is superficially covered up.

Even at Future Africa, the client was very unhappy with us, because we drew every service exposed. There are no ceilings, the ducts and electrical lines are visible where they are. It was wilfully designed that way. Architects typically work in zones, creating a large void in the ceiling that nobody uses.

BV: I don't know if you have looked into a ceiling void, if you open that ceiling up, then it is a dust chamber, full of services that have been thrown in. It is to me the most wasteful thing.

RO: And it is an issue every time you need to do maintenance on the services.

AE: But when it comes to the catalytic event, that is actually where regenerative architecture starts, I think. Or am I wrong? You are a bit more academic.

LL: It is sustainability. There is that book, *IntegralSustainability*, sustainability is much more than green technology. It is about the sustainability of the building itself. How it is made, how did it get there, was everything imported from overseas, or was it made locally?

AE: Meaningful architecture is sustainable in essence.

BV: Is the book *Integral Sustainability* part of your prescriptive reading? Chrisna (current head of the architecture department at UP) talks a lot about that. But there are four quadrants. The bottom quadrant is about me, and that is where meaning comes in, and aesthetics come in. I think a lot of times, when it comes to sustainability, people just look at performance. You can use so much electricity, use so much water, we have to optimise it. It is actually an engineering thing, but we have to do it as architects, but it is a quantitative process. But when it comes to quality, you as the architect, the designer of the buildings, how do you put meaning and aesthetics in the buildings? Proper aesthetics, not superficial things.

You talked about Pieter Zumthor's work, which is in essence about the material of the buildings, then you get a very specific aesthetic. I think you have to look at sustainability much broader than just numbers and quantities. And then the other quarter that is very important, is systems. How does systems fit in each other? How does nature fit in buildings? How does buildings fit in nature? That nature is very important. I think a lot of times, and you hear a lot about biophilia, it is a very important thing, because it means you actually have an affinity for nature. You know, there is also a building in Johannesburg, it has a four-star green rating. They look at performance. Performance is the most important thing. There are tick-boxes, but that building is not sustainable. It is not beautiful. There is nothing about nature. It is not even green around the building. So how can it be nature? So, the principle of sustainability, is about it has to be green. And then the other thing that everyone misses is the bottom quadrant. It is about us, people, social sustainability. How does the building influence the way people think, work, interact with each other? I mean, imagine you are sitting in that four-story building; you can't even open a window.

AE: You can talk about this endlessly. I think South Africa is dealing with unique problems; sustainability is not a luxury; it is a necessity. In Europe, sustainability is a luxury. But here, we simply have to be sustainable, every cent we spend has to benefit more people. I am not talking about altruism, but the bigger context has to benefit, rather than just the specific project. And I think that is important, especially for public money. If you explore one little thing that is innovating, maybe that can be the spark for someone else to start a business. It doesn't have to be the whole building, because that also costs a lot of money, and a lot of time. Just consider that. You don't have to buy everything that is imported from Europe. The other day, I had this guy phone me for some market research. He was a French guy, and he didn't want to tell me for which company it is. Eventually, when we came to the end, he wanted my name. I said, I am not going to give you my name until you tell me who you are doing this research for. "We

are doing it for Saint-Gobain". I said you tell Saint-Gobain, and I hope this is recorded, they are the least sustainable company in the world. By far. Because they globalise, they move energy intensive products all over the world, and they absolutely exclude any local knowledge, or any local tradition, or any local involvement.

BV: And again, that talks about systems. How are things interconnected? So that piece of plywood that is made in York Timber's factory has to come just 500 kilometres and we can build from it. It is much more sustainable than that gypsum board that comes all the way from China. It's crazy.

AE: It's crazy to think you use gypsum that is made in China. I hate gypsum.

CN: But everyone is using it, it's conventional, and it's cheap.

AE: And there are standard details and practices available.

CN: So, I just wanted to know whether you think it's appropriate to prototype in architectural design, in the South African context? Where in the design process do you specifically consider it?

BV: I think that if you want to use a different material, you need to have it in your process from the start. It's not something that you can halfway down the road, suddenly decide to change ships in that stream. So, in most cases when we design buildings, when we're in the concept phase of the building, we decide on the technology, and we also decide on the risk factor in terms of the project. That means if the project is small, like that (points to plastic block building nearby) and it is plastic blocks and it's your own, you can easily prototype there and you can experiment with that because the project is small. You can test. Part of prototyping is testing and when you prototype, you don't necessarily always know that you can be successful. So, there's a risk involved and you need to assess the risk. That's the first thing. You need to also then at that point, if you have a client, discuss the risk with your client. You need to allude to the fact that you going to try something new. We just completed the Plywood house. It's the first time that we've built a Plywood house for a client. And we built it ourselves. I couldn't go and show him another one. Normally you can go and show and say, I've done this. Here it is. You can look at it. In the time of Future Africa, it was the same, the dining hall, there was never a structure built like that before, although we have experimented with that before in smaller projects. But the thing is, you need to understand the risk. Because it's not just about prototyping. It's really about building the whole building with that technology.

Then there's a lot of research to be done about the specifics. You need to go and search on the internet. Then obviously the next thing is you need to go and find somebody that can do it for you. If you're not going to do it yourself, you have to know that there's a person around that will do that for you. And you have to start engaging with that person and sort out all the detailing already in sketch design, or what's called design development first. You need to know exactly how that thing is going to be put together. For instance, on the Future Africa housing, the housing was precast concrete. We had to go and find a pre-caster, and we had to negotiate with the pre-caster to make sure everything works. And we had to find his factory, we had to go to his factory and see how it's done. We had to check his capacity. All of those things. So there's a lot of research about the material. Both on a technical level and also on a level that it's going to be executed.

LL: when you want to prototype for something else, then you yourself have to first identify the risks. And then you come up with solutions how you're going to manage those risks. And then from there...So when that concern is raised by your client, you can actually say no. And it's also about talking to people outside of architecture. And outside of your discipline. And understanding what their concerns are. For example, if you're going to use timber, a lot of engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical, some wouldn't know what to do with it. So you have to also do that research. And then be able to say, oh, this is something that I found. Whether it's a timber construction from Canada or wherever. Rotho Blast for example, also from Italy. I mean, those resources are there. So to manage the risk, you first have to identify the risk. You have to find possible solutions before your client starts asking.

In the office now, we have sometimes speculated that architecture it will stay relevant if we pursue these things. If we approach projects like we do. However, the structural, civil, and also mechanical, electrical engineers eventually might be taken over by more digital formats. Most of Revit and ArchiCAD already has the building functions for MEP design, which stands for Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing And then there is the architectural engineering which is how they work overseas.

KP: What do you think the future of our architecture is?

LL: I think we are at a tipping point. I think on the one hand, things can change for the better, but if it doesn't, things will get much worse. I think some architects will get left behind. On the other hands, some architects work in AutoCAD, and they are still relevant, some work with the hand, but they are still relevant.

BV: Why is the word prototype so important to you? Because it was a very specific action. Let me put it this way, we don't prototype, we actually build it. What do you actually mean with prototyping?

CN: I defined prototyping as it's an iterative and experimental process that often makes use of tangible models. But obviously you can prototype in a digital realm as well. Model making tends to be representational, but I'm arguing that the architect needs to have a more haptic sense of understanding the fabrication process and the making process. So it's more about understanding the making process and having an influence on the final product. But I use prototyping because it's an action and it's a very deliberate whether conscious or unconscious but it's a very deliberate, iterative, experimental process where you should be conscious of the outcome.

BV: It's different than building a representational model. It's really understanding how to make that thing. Renzo Piano does it a lot. He has a workshop where they build these things on a scale one to five so that they can see how the thing comes together. So, I think it's a different design process. The outcome of the building can be quite different because you're doing these things. Actually, that's a prototype (points towards KoSpaza) . That's a full scale prototype. So we built that thing and everything that we understand about the Plywood House now came from this.

CN: I also see prototyping as a tool for creating a catalyst in the innovation process.

BV: You can use that as an example. It first started in the computer, we built a lot of prototypes in the computer and then we built these small prototypes lying around, the connection prototypes, then from that prototype we built the KoSpaza, it was the first building that we built. It is really about how these things come together, in the computer and eventually in a kind of full scale model.

CN: I'm trying to argue that when you are testing, something, like a certain connection detail, it can have an impact. The factors of appropriateness are economic, social, environmental and contextual, because if something is detailed in a certain way that influences how the labourer will combine it and build a structure, or it influences the amount of material. I think if you look at that process of testing more holistically, it can result in more responsive architecture and more appropriate architecture to the South African condition.

AE: I think there should be constant innovation and constant prototyping. Unfortunately, it's quite difficult to prototype on the fly. You need risk takers to start off with, you need to be willing

to take risks and you need to employ it in such a way that they don't know that you experimented.

CN: I kind of want to understand that process.

RO: I would think there's maybe two types of clients. There are the ones who demand that you be innovative; and there's the ones you need to hide it from.

AE: You need to be conservative to be inventive. I always say there must always be a sacrificial component in any design. And you must always hide what you like most - nobody must know about it. Because that's ego. Ego will kill what they assume you like. What they assume you're enthusiastic about. So, if you want to if you know you're doing something that hasn't been done, they shouldn't know about it. You should know you're putting the balls on the block. The most important thing is, what's the benefit of innovation? You should prove the benefit of innovating and that should then justify prototyping. But you can't just innovate for the sake of innovation. Innovation isn't a new idea, because people tend to think that ideas equal innovation. Innovation in today's days is quite often merely a reorganisation or changing the connections between the different role players or the different systems. Uber is still the best example. That's truly innovative, but it didn't innovate anything new. It just was innovative in the way it harnessed spare capacity. And we try to work like that. Harnessing spare capacity, rather than forcing something. Because quite often you get this idea. I think it is a difficult thing.

I can use Future Africa as an example. The idea of building with plywood layers, combining them and hand assembling them is one thing. But I believe that true innovation was basically just the discovery that it could be done with unskilled labour. That was the essential discovery, that was the essential innovative component. But it wasn't intentional, it was something that we discovered. And one must just leave... And once again, all these things we're talking about, having a good understanding of the vernacular of traditional craft, having a framework, a normative position in which you can position all these things that you witness, and then combining all of that into an innovative system. It's absolute system thinking. And that's the future of us as architects. We should be system thinkers. The traditional architect is dead.

BV: A traditional architect these days are merely drawing plans. They're draftsmen for a developer that knows what he wants to do.

LL: But that's also a question for my side, because what is a traditional architect? Because if you take the master builder...

AE: But the traditional architect is a master builder, but the modern architect is a professional consultant.

LL: Then let's rather than call it not traditional architect, but the modern architect.

AE: That article speaks about the disconnect between the architect as artist and the architect as professional consultant. That's where architects lost their foothold. Because now they've become basically pen pushers and administrative jockeys, rather than true craftsmen, rather than true builders. All of these things we're talking about.

BV: But what I think also is interesting now is that these CNC technologies and BIM and all of that actually gives us new tools. And if we can master those tools, we can be relevant in the profession again. But if we are merely building consultants, the client asks you what... Consultants are actually somebody that gives the client an opinion.

LL: There was recently a book published, or it was actually last year or the beginning of this year, by Thomas Heatherwick, *Humanise*. And I listened to a podcast by Simon Sinek where he talks about optimism. And he talks to Thomas Heatherwick and then he refers to the book. He says that if we look at any other discipline there's a lot of innovation. But if any one of the past would come back now, they would look at the cars that are being designed, and all the technology that's available, and they would think, wow, there's a lot of progress. And then they would look at the new buildings that are coming up. And then they would think, well, why is the architecture industry still lagging behind? Or why is there no progress? Progress; innovation is important. But how do we keep on going?

CN: I think the way that we can keep on going, is sometimes you don't need to always make something new, but you need to do something in a different way that is more appropriate.

Maybe what we are trying to kind of get at is that we sort of have all the tools that we need. It's not that we necessarily need to make a new tool. I think we just need to apply things more appropriately.

LL: No, definitely. I mean, this, to touch on Kayla's idea of bringing in traditional with modern, I visited a house in KwaZulu-Natal. And it had this polycarbonate sheeting, but a clear type. So that's even more, you know, and the humidity of the Durban. So, what he did is he approached a Zulu lady who was making baskets, weaving baskets. And she also made those prayer mats. He asked her, can you make me a three-meter long prayer mat? And she's like, she's very confused. But he said, I'll pay you, etc.. And he bought, I think, three or four from her. And he put them within the beams of the roof and the loft in between, he took a photo and

he showed it to this Zulu woman. And she was so impressed. And that is the thing that we as architects have an ability to have an effect on, a real impact on, by bringing in that traditional aspect that's there. South Africa is rich in that. There is that possibility. But how do we actually make it possible? How do we bring it to life? And then celebrating that and going back to the person who made it so that they understand, because initially she couldn't understand why would you need such a long prayer mat? And he ultimately just showed her, look, this is what I did with it. And that innovated her as well as a person, as that social component.

BV: But I think the one thing in that process is critical thinking. Because I think a lot of times, people just repeat the same action. People will put the same roof sheet down. But suddenly he looked at this object and he reappropriated it with critical thinking.

Appendix C: Ilze and Heinrich Wolff



Figure 16: Ilze and Heinrich Wolff (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Background

Year(s) of Birth	Ilze Wolff (1980-)	Heinrich Wolff
Education	B.Arch, University of Cape Town M.Phil. University of Cape Town (2004)	B.Arch, University of Pretoria (1991) B.Arch, University of Cape Town (1995)
Practice	Wolff Architects, Established in 2012	
Awards		
Year	Award	
2018	Milde McWilliams Memorial Laureates	
2011	Heinrich Wolff: Designer of the Future by the Wouter Mikmak Foundation	
2007	Heinrich Wolff: Daimler Chrysler Award for Architecture	
2005	Heinrich Wolff: Lubetkin Award	
Year	Project	Award
2020	Vredenburg Hospital	Afrisam SAIA Sustainable Design Award
2019	African Mobilities – This is not a Refugee Camp Exhibition	IFI Design Distinction Award – Humanitarian Category – Silver
2019	Chéré Botha School	CifA Award for Architecture
2019	Vredenburg Hospital	CifA Award for Architecture
2018	Unstitching Rex Trueform	CifA Award for Architecture
2016	N/A	Moirá Gemmill Prize for Emerging Architecture shortlist - Ilze Wolff

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2015	Unstitching Rex Trueform: the story of an African factory	L'erma di Bretschneider C International Prize for scholarly works in Modern and Contemporary Art
2015	Watershed	CIFA – Merit Award
2015	Watershed	SACSC – Retail Design and Development Award
2015	Watershed	SACSC – Gold Footprint Marketing Award
2015	Watershed	SAISC – Retail Category Award
2013	Watershed	SAPOA – Innovation Award
2012	Vredenburg Hospital	SAIA – Project Award
2010	House Wolff	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2009	House Wolff	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2009	Phillips Beach House	SAIA – Project Award
2009	House Phillips	SAIA – Regional Commendation
2008	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	Chicago Athenaeum – International Award
2008	Red Location Museum	SAIA – Award of Excellence
2008	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	Cityscapes – International Award for Community Buildings
2007	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	BAQ – South American Architecture Biennale (XVI) third prize in the SOCIAL HABITAT Category
2007	N/A	Daimler Chrysler Award for South African Architecture
2007	Usasazo Secondary School	Chicago Athenaeum – International Award
2007	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2007	24 Alfred Street	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2007	Red Location Museum	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2006	Phillipi Business Place	SAIA – Project Award
2006	Red Location Museum	RIBA International Award – London
2006	Red Location Museum	Lubetkin Prize from the RIBA for best building outside the EU for 2005 – 2006 – London
2006	Red Location Museum	Dedalo Menose Commendation – Vicenza
2005	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2005	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – Award of Merit
2005	House Toussaint	SISC Award – Winner of “Residential and functional architecture” category
2001	Red Location Museum	World Leadership Award (Architecture)

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1999	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – Project Award
1999	Lebaleng Anglican Church	SAIA – Project Award

Table 3: Wolff Architects list of rewards