



TONIC ARCHITECT

Words Lara Matthews
Photographs Xandre Kriel

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright stated that an architect cannot bury his mistakes – unlike a physician. We get the angle on architecture from some of its leading practitioners.



ARTHUR QUINTON

ARTHUR QUINTON DARRYL CROOME ARCHITECTS

When did you choose to become an architect? An instinctive choice – I have always been a dreamer and an artist.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Green Point Common (or what will be left of it) and the Parade.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? I have never considered this question before and I find it disturbing that I could not easily answer it. The truth is we have few urban spaces that are, in my opinion, worthy of falling in love with. Greenmarket Square should be without cars, St George's Mall succeeds to some degree, the Parade is awful, undeveloped and incorrectly utilised. Bree Street and Loader Street are lovely if you can ignore the City hospital. I think Melrose Arch in Joburg is great. We have a long way to go before we can compete with Europe's urban spaces.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Glass.

What is your favourite design style? Architecture should attempt to avoid style but rather embrace design. Style suggests imitation, not innovation.

Which other architects do you admire? Darryl Croome, Juan Bemicchi, Deon Morris, Diana Grobler – what a team!

Did you design your own home? Yes.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Georgian windows, triangular entrance roofs over Doric columns, and trimmed pom-pom trees in lavender borders.

Best building in SA? No such building. Even if you narrowed down the building to a category of, say, a house in Cape Town, in the Southern Suburbs, I would ask for a further category: What was the budget? And how does this building relate to the immediate environment? You follow? Form follows function. Function represents the brief.

www.aquacor.co.za



DERICK HENSTRA

DHK ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? It was a dream from the age of 14.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Some of our own schemes we would probably like to revisit – one is never entirely satisfied.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? The future Melrose Arch Piazza!

What is your favourite building material to work with? Don't have a favorite; each material is responsive to its intended application.

What is your favourite design style? Such a clichéd question! I would describe it as contemporary and attempt to make it timeless.

Which other architects do you admire? Too many to mention throughout the ages.

What features would your dream house include? The quality of natural light is the most important feature in any dream house.

Did you design your own home? Yes, I did.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Meaningless little plaster bands or decorative mouldings.

Best building in SA? I just cannot bring myself to commit to one particular building. There are many wonderfully designed buildings in SA.

Worst building in SA? I'm not prepared to create an enemy out there!

Best holiday you ever went on? Every holiday my family and I have been on has turned out better than the last. We really enjoy our holidays and try and do a memorable one every year.

www.dhk.co.za



DION MAX WALTERS

BOMAX

Why did you choose to become an architect? At school I realised my creativity and that I had an artistic skill that should be developed. While considering university I reviewed the architecture course and immediately realised that I had an affinity for it. I chose architecture because it is by far the most challenging form of art: to create form which requires utility is complex and rewarding; it is truly inspiring. I am very much a designing architect and consider architecture as an art. My first house project at university was carved out of a large block of Plaster of Paris – my house mate was not impressed... what a mess!

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Greenmarket Square. It needs order, volume and levels. Imagine a 3D folly suspended in the space overhead amongst the beautiful surrounding buildings. Cape Town needs to develop its public open spaces. We need more sculpted landmarks as signatures for the city. It's about tourism – we are presenting some proposals to the city for 2010.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? Nelson Mandela Square, Sandton City. I'm always proud to take visitors there; it is formal yet still maintains a relaxed-but-dynamic vibe...

What is your favourite design style? Site-responsive modern contemporary.

Which other architects do you admire? Santiago Calatrava, Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers and Frank Gehry.

What features would your dream house include? A view of a good pointbreak. Deep cantilevered eaves. Large volumes with double glazing. Off-shutter organic concrete form – with some 70s bushhammer texture.

www.bomax.co.za



GREG TRUEN

STEFAN ANTONI OLMESDAHL TRUEN ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? Architecture just seemed to be a natural fit – I always knew that I wanted to do something creative.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? The Company's Gardens in Cape Town is an exceptional space that is really under-resourced.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? The arcades around Grey Street in Durban.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Glass, natural stone (and space!)

What is your favourite design style? We spend a lot of time understanding connections between internal and external spaces and views, and creating modern buildings that allow these connections to happen seamlessly. I'm not sure that we have a favourite design style.

Which other architects do you admire? Oscar Niemeyer, Norman Foster and Zaha Hadid.

What features would your dream house include? A view!

Did you design your own home? No.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Cottage-pane windows!

Best building in SA? Cape Dutch buildings, Issy Benjamin's apartment buildings in Durban and the Standard Bank tower in downtown Johannesburg.

Worst building in SA? Not a specific building, but Tuscan-South African is a style that really should not have been created.

Best holiday you ever went on? Any holiday that involves swimming with my four-year-old daughter.

www.stefanantoni.co.za



JANE VISSER

VISSER THOMAS ARCHITECTS

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? The area around Cape Town Station, most shopping malls, Hermanus centre, many wineries and more...

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Jubilee Square in Simon's Town is full of life and interest with a connection to the sea, mountains and urban fabric, and a mix of building types around it.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Anything that can be used to make walls! Bricks, stone, rammed earth, straw bales even, concrete – 'wall' architecture is the context of the Cape.

What is your favourite design style? Style is a frill applied at the end; I prefer the architecture of a building to be a result of satisfying the clients' brief and exceeding their expectations; being culturally and site contextual, innovative and environmentally responsible. This mix of logic and poetry should result in the 'style'.

Which other architects do you admire? Some local, like Jack Barnett and Gawie Fagan, some contemporaries like the Miszewski and the Noero/Wolf partnership, some foreign, like Renzo Piano, David Chipperfield and Eduardo Souto Moura. Then there's also the incredible list of architects from history – I'll limit myself to Borromini, a master of the baroque. We learn from their work.

What features would your dream house include? A spacious kitchen/living room at the heart of the house with all else ancillary to this. An indulgent bedroom suite for the hotel-at-home experience, and a beautiful indigenous garden for living in.

Did you design your own home? Yes – with my husband. Its alterations and additions combine the best of modern and traditional architecture.

www.visserthomas.com



SEAN HAYDEN

KMH ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? Two things, really: I wasn't accepted to do nature conservation, and two years of military service in Phalaborwa.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? The Eastern Boulevard, which segregates the city, is a personal gripe. Re-routed underground it would offer amazing opportunities for parks and public buildings, not to mention a more meaningful connection to the bay.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? The Company's Gardens would have to be my choice: I often fell asleep there during lunch as a student!

What is your favourite building material to work with? Timber, as there are so many choices. It's one of the few materials which retains its natural appearance and comes in a multitude of varieties and colours.

What is your favourite design style? Early contemporary architecture. I really enjoy strong form and the expression of planes.

Which other architects do you admire? I enjoy the work of Nicholas Grimshaw as it is experimental, extremely functional and aesthetically intriguing.

What features would your dream house include? A boma always conjures strong memories of conversations with friends around a blazing fire. Did I include alcohol...?

Did you design your own home? No, but I have been doing renovations to my apartment for an epic amount of time. A lot of it started, and none of it finished – just not finding the time at the moment.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Anything Tuscan...

Best building in SA? The Arabella Sheraton, complemented by the CTICC, has to be my first choice: a truly exemplary piece of architecture.

www.kmh.co.za



LANDSEER COLLEEN

BPAS ARCHITECTURE

Why did you choose to become an architect? My first introduction to construction was by my dad, who later encouraged me to further my education by studying architecture at the Cape Technikon.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? To reflect on the past in context with the present, I would say Customs House on the Foreshore.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? Bird Street in Stellenbosch for its conservation and marriage of past and present. Willowbridge Shopping Centre in Tygervalley for the indoor/outdoor floor.

Which other architects do you admire? During my study years I was influenced by Michal Graves and later the work of Ken Tate in America, but recently I'm fascinated with the innovative architecture of the Australians.

What features would your dream house include? It's difficult to include all elements in one house and be content with that. I will always be looking for something new and different. Our new home is designed with strategic views over the conservation area; with interleading rooms joined by bridges. All our living areas have an 'in/out' feel to them, leading to open areas.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Each architectural feature (good or bad) ever used had its purposes in context with the architecture of that period. A lecturer once said to me that when a mistake has been made, it's best not to hide it – rather enhance it. Architectural materials and elements resurface from time to time. Take the plinth facebrick detail of the early 60s and 70s. Today we use a similar facebrick to dress wall façades. The same can be said of slate and rock cladding.

www.bpas.co.za



MARK THOMAS

VISSER THOMAS ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? I did art at school and we had an architectural component that tweaked my interest. This was followed by a visit to the 'archie' studio: the Rolling Stones were playing full blast and there was a creative electricity in that studio that really excited me, and still does.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? The Foreshore – with an enormous demolition budget (which includes putting the freeway underground, like in NYC), and then making the connection between the harbour and the city.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? The Sea Point Promenade: a run along there and a swim at the beach at Saunders Rocks is difficult to beat.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Wood, stone and thick brick walls.

Which other architects do you admire? Mike Munnik, Jack Barnett, Mike Sutton, Luis Barragan, Renzo Piano, Richard Rogers, James Sterling, Louis Kahn, Gawie, Henk, Stefan, Heinrich, Paolo, Anya, Maciek, Pedro, Bert... Architecture is hard, and those that stick to it and aim high have my great admiration.

What features would your dream house include? I often dream of a classic, stripped barn, filled with light – elegant and simple (kitchen, workshop and a fire central to the ground floor).

Did you design your own home? No; waiting for the barn.

Best building in SA? There's a house on the coast of Hermanus by Mike Sutton which is truly superb: cavernous carved spaces with slide-away doors opening onto rugged rocks...

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Mock-stone cladding, Loffelstein retaining blocks, show beams...

Worst building in SA? Too many to mention.

www.visserthomas.com



PHILIP OLMESDAHL

STEFAN ANTONI OLMESDAHL TRUEN ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? I was always fascinated by buildings and building sites. During high school I realised it was the only career that would suit me.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? V&A Waterfront.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? None spring to mind.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Glass.

What is your favourite design style? I certainly don't follow a specific style. I enjoy a very different response than a Manhattan apartment. Every building should tell its own story. This is more important than style.

Which other architects do you admire? Craig Ellwood for his exquisite minimalist purity and structural elegance; Peter Zumthor for his beautifully crafted and poetic buildings; Renzo Piano for his intuitive use of natural light; Norman Foster for pioneering the high-tech vision and still today producing innovative buildings – and my wife Julia, who I met while working with Norman Foster in his London studio.

What features would your dream house include? Plenty of natural light, transparency and water.

Did you design your own home? Yes, I completely gutted and refurbished my London apartment, which I sold two years ago before moving back to South Africa.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Tinted glass and fake stone cladding.

www.stefanantoni.co.za



JED KRITZINGER

BLUEPRINT WORX

Why did you choose to become an architect? LEGO! I spent hours as a kid transforming our living-room floor into magical cities. I guess I never shrugged off this desire to create, and managed to turn what I did with those blocks into a career.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? I would like to reinstate the historic link between Port Elizabeth's CBD and its harbour by demolishing the 1960s elevated highway that forever divides the two.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? Genadendal Church Square.

What is your favourite building material to work with? Concrete, glass and timber.

What is your favourite design style? I believe style is very much dependent on context. A Karoo farmhouse, for example, elicits a very different response than a Manhattan apartment. Every building should tell its own story. This is more important than style.

Which other architects do you admire? Craig Ellwood for his exquisite minimalist purity and structural elegance; Peter Zumthor for his beautifully crafted and poetic buildings; Renzo Piano for his intuitive use of natural light; Norman Foster for pioneering the high-tech vision and still today producing innovative buildings – and my wife Julia, who I met while working with Norman Foster in his London studio.

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[ARCHITECT PROFILES]



STEFAN ANTONI

STEFAN ANTONI OLMESDAHL
TRUEN ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? It was decided by my father that I was to study engineering or business science, but when the moment came to make the life-defining decision, I remembered the experiences that had moved me as a kid. One very tangible moment was in a huge cathedral under construction in Gdansk, Poland. It was mid-winter, thick snow; we were playing on the grand stairs of the cathedral when I decided to have a peep inside, and was met by an amazing shaft of light made tangible by the crispness of the snowy air. There was something mystical and magical about it, even spiritual... this was not just 'a building.'

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Either the Grand Parade, or the station and it's garden, to make a really great public space for Cape Town.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? I don't think we have a good tradition of making great spaces.

Which other architects do you admire? There are so many phenomenal designers in the world today. The heavyweights like Norman Foster, Tadao Ando, Jean Nouvel and Rem Koolhaas are brilliant, to the poets like Kengo Kuma, Rick Joy and our own Gawie Fagan... and all the excellent architects in Spain, and Oscar Niemeyer, who is still creative at 100!

What features would your dream house include? A spa with a natural mountain waterfall.

Did you design your own home? Yes – and it's one of the most difficult things to do... the client's a nightmare!

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Themed styles, of course – but not to be replaced by bland contemporary mediocrity.

www.stefanantoni.co.za



STEVE LONG

FREESPACE ARCHITECTS

Why did you choose to become an architect? I was inspired by the idea that, as an architect, I would be able to transform people's dreams and aspirations into the reality of built form.

Which public space or building in SA would you like to redesign? Century City.

Which is your favourite urban space in SA? The V&A Waterfront: it's vibrant, cosmopolitan and the location is breathtakingly beautiful.

What is your favourite building material to work with? It varies depending on the type of space being created.

What is your favourite design style? The interpretation of now. I do not believe in following a style; it undermines one's individuality and originality.

Which other architects do you admire? John Pawson, Tadao Ando, Coop Himmelblau and Zaha Hadid.

What features would your dream house include? Light, views, warmth, comfort, a seamless flow of space between inside and out, timeless beauty and harmony with the environment.

Did you design your own home? It's still in my head.

What architectural features would you like to see the back of? Superficial ornamentation.

Best building in SA? It's not the best but one of my favorites in Cape Town is the SABC building in Sea Point.

Worst building in SA? The Cullinan Hotel.

Best holiday you ever went on? New York as a student.

www.fsarchitects.co.za

We often associate civilisations with their architectural achievements. Structures such as the pyramids of Egypt and the Roman Colosseum are cultural symbols.

No wonder, then, that architecture is a controversial topic. Just attend any dinner party in Camps Bay, mention the names of a few contemporary architects, and see what happens... Nowadays, politics and religion have *nothing* on architecture as an instant bone of contention.

On the simplest level, architecture has been defined as the art and the science of designing buildings and structures. A wider definition would also include the practices of urban design and even landscape architecture.

These days, architecture is becoming increasingly

multi-disciplinary, usually requiring a team of specialist professionals. Another significant development is the growing emphasis on sustainability. Architects are increasingly required to integrate sustainable principles in their projects – and architectural values are, hopefully, moving closer to human values.

At its best, architecture combines form and function, aesthetics and proportion. Defenders laud it as one of the highest of arts, akin to painting or sculpting. Philip Johnson, himself an architect, infamously likened it to the oldest profession, saying: 'We can turn down projects the way they can turn down some clients, but we've both got to say yes to someone if we want to stay in business,' and claimed in the *New York Times* that 'architecture is the art of how to waste space.'

You decide. 🚫



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