



Photographs Alfred Lor
Make-up Infidels

South African architects respond to the pressing
need for building a sustainable environment

FAR-SIGHTED



HANNES BOUWER

BOUWER ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? I always enjoyed creating and building, taking things apart and seeing how they work. I enjoy the order and discipline of the architectural profession, visualising in three dimensions, technical drawings on white paper and the excitement when the concept, ideas and many hours of design are transformed into a physical structure with a personality of its own. Most of all I am inspired and get great satisfaction when seeing the enjoyment other people get when interacting with the buildings we design and build.

What kind of projects do you specialise in? We are involved in a wide range of projects, including hotels, mixed-use developments, retirement villages, upmarket dwellings, low- and middle-income residential developments, and a winelands stud farm.

Name other architects you admire or who inspire you. Richard Meier for his use of articulated geometric forms. Santiago Calatrava for his celebration of structure. Both architects have produced amazing sculptural buildings.

Do you incorporate green design? Absolutely. We are fortunate that all our current clients, especially Amdec, support us in this, as green design systems and elements often mean higher initial costs. Of course, it also starts with simple things, like paper recycling in the office.

What is the biggest challenge facing architects? Architects have to be at the forefront of innovation in the building industry to produce architecture that succeeds in reconciling the often contradictory limits of site, the environment, budget and aesthetic ambition. The realities of rising construction costs and the need for sustainable design in the face of diminishing natural resources should never become an excuse for average design and buildings without flair, it should rather become the inspiration.

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? A durable, self-sustaining building, either commercial or a family home, which provides all its own energy needs.

Awards won? 2008 CMA Award For Excellence – Fisherman's Village, Muizenberg & 2007 Sapoa Awards For Innovative Excellence In Property Development – Tiger Lake Building featured as a finalist in the Retail category.



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MOKENA MAKEKA

MAKEKA DESIGN LABORATORY

What inspired you to become an architect? When I understood the power that an architect wields. Few professions allow you to change the world. What better way to do it than by making the spaces people inhabit beautiful and inspiring?

What kind of projects do you specialise in? Well, I have done several public buildings and one could call that a speciality, but I believe my speciality is not limited to a type of building. I specialise in well thought out, unique, responsible and inspiring architecture. This can be applied to anything: a house, an office, even a museum.

Name other architects you admire or who inspire you. It would be Herzog & de Meuron. None of their designs are ever the same and they are all beautiful.

Do you incorporate green design? I think it's fundamental to do so. I try to advise and educate my clients that green is the way to go. Architecture must not only excite the senses and inspire the spirit, but also it must be sustainable.

What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)? I must admit I enjoy concrete for the effect that it gives a building. I also like the way lexan sheeting impacts a building, particularly public buildings.

What is the biggest challenge facing SA architects? It would have to be establishing in the eyes of the world what South African architecture is. This requires architects to be true to their craft and design for the love of design while maintaining their professional integrity and, of course, limiting their egos. Clients also have a big part to play. They must be brave and be willing to trust an architect, the same way one would trust a doctor – implicitly.

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? I dream of the day (I'm sure it will come) when I get to design a Museum of Modern Contemporary Art here in South Africa.

What awards have you won? CIFA Award of Excellence 2007; selected as one of two architects in Africa by Herzog & de Meuron to design in Ordos, China, for the Ordos 100.



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THINUS VAN DEN BERG

THINUS VAN DEN BERG ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? A combination of things: my father's study, the pencils, traditional decorated Sotho houses, the opportunity to be creative for the enjoyment of others – and LEGO.

What South African project would you have liked to have designed? The Grootte Kerk, Cape Town. It's a fascinating building with a great history, and most impressive . . . So many architects, so many ideas . . .

Which is your favourite urban space in South Africa? Central Cape Town, Long street, with its diversity of cultures in art, food, 'chill zones' and constant evolution of old buildings as they get refurbished.

What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)? Concrete, wood and glass.

Name other architects you admire or who inspire you. Local: Piet van Heerden for his art taste and business skills. Europe: Johan Otto von Spreckelsen. And I have to list Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as the emerging architecture of international architects – there is a lot happening, designers have bigger, and more, opportunity's to express themselves with new materials being invented daily.

Did you design your own home, and if so, how would you describe it? Not yet. To date, I've been a renovator.

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? One that would give me exposure to all aspects of construction, architecture and design. The selection of materials available, the brief from the client, the budget, the time frame and the workforce at hand are all elements that shape a building – it's only in Utopia where all these factors won't put constraints on a building. And a hospice or centre for the treatment of patients with HIV/AIDS that actually gets built.

What is your favourite design style? Minimalist, modern – simplicity, openness, form and function are qualities that continue to appeal.



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GARY VAN HEERDEN

BOMAX ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? Film sets – particularly futuristic sets on movies such as *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, *Star Wars* etc.

What kind of projects do you specialise in? Bespoke commercial.

Which other architects do you admire or inspire you? SANAA; Rick Joy Architects; Peter Zumthor.

Do you incorporate green design? We feel very strongly about incorporating sustainable elements into our projects.

Which is your favourite building internationally and in SA? Thermal Baths, Vals, Switzerland, and Red Location Museum, Port Elizabeth.

What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)? Any natural material, such as Cor-Ten, concrete, masonry, rammed earth, glass, etc., that ages well and transforms during its life but doesn't need to be repainted.

What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA? Besides the environmental catastrophe approaching, where architects will play a major role, I believe architecture can help South Africa resolve the breakdown of its society. People have increasingly enclosed lives in this country; few people with access to transport walk between enclosed zones of activity, never encountering each other in any real way. Architects can encourage a more open lifestyle through the arrangement of private and public spaces into new spatial organisations, using gardens and courtyards, as well as buildings themselves to create safe but vibrant communities. By bringing people into more immediate and constant contact with their real environment, we will be able to encourage a more responsible attitude. To do this while maintaining high standards of design is the challenge for architects now.

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? Any building typology creates its own challenges and opportunities.

Awards won? European Hotel and Design Awards 2004; Best European Hotel and Innovation Award for the Zetter Hotel, London (whilst working with Chetwoods, London).



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PAOLO VIOTTI

VIVID ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? My love for sketching and doodling during boring classes at school, along with one late night visit to UCT Archi school where I witnessed this extraordinary, alternative, creative energy and cool music emanating from the studios. Alas – there was no deep and meaningful reason at the time.

What kind of work do you specialise in? We are a commercial practice that focuses predominantly on retail, offices and hotels, preferably as components of mixed-use developments. A one-off private home commission is always tempting if the client is passionate about good design and architecture, with a budget to suit.

Name other architects you admire or who inspire you. I love the work and consistent design innovation/ingenuity and relevance of Renzo Piano. I have recently discovered the incredible work of Brazilian architect Marcio Kogan, whose house designs are mind-blowing in their design simplicity, proportions and spatial quality.

Do you incorporate green elements in your designs? Wherever, whenever possible. It is not really an option not to. All architects have a responsibility to design and build appropriately. The Green Building Council of South Africa's rating tool and certification process has become a very user-friendly way to rate a building's environmental performance. We are currently busy with two office buildings that hopefully will achieve certification – in the corporate world it is fast becoming a prerequisite for our larger clients in terms of their overall corporate marketing strategy and profile. It's a fundamental aspect of the conceptual design process.

Have you won any awards? Individually, the Corobrik National Student of the Year for design in my final year of study at UCT. As Vivid Architects, we recently were awarded the Award of Excellence by the South African Institute of Architects for Willowbridge Shopping Centre, and a SAPOA Award for Innovative Design for Design Quarter in Fourways, Gauteng.



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DION MAX WALTERS

BOMAX ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? The ability to manipulate form and space to provide inspired living environments is a fantastic art. As a young art student I identified architecture as a superior art form and embraced it wholeheartedly.

What kind of work do you specialise in? Upmarket, residential, commercial and retail. We have specialists in each field. We especially love doing good houses.

Name other architects you admire or who inspire you. Rem Koolhaas, Santiago Calatrava, Morphosis, Neil Denari and others. Inspiration is important to us – in the office we crit. and inspire each other to create great-looking buildings.

Do you incorporate green design? It's considered in all our projects, although often it's not easy to implement. Green design requires insight into passive design techniques and access to new technologies. We are striving to be a forerunner in green architecture and are ready for the new SANS 204 legislature that will soon come into effect and that will require buildings to be green-star rated.

Which is your favourite building in SA? The Convention Tower (Fabian) is looking great and really assists the look of the Convention Centre.

And internationally? Lloyds Bank headquarters, London (Rogers) – for when it was built as much as for how it was built.

What is the medium you most enjoy working in (your favourite building material)? The marriage between concrete and steel allows larger sheets of glass, so all three are favourites and are always considered together.

What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA? Current economics and politics are having a marked effect on getting projects off the ground – projects are getting shelved. We need to do what we can to make projects work; that means playing a wider role in bringing together business parties and providing more malleable design solutions. And then there is green . . .

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? A seemingly invisible building nestled in a spectacle of nature – overlooking a great point break of course.



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HEIDI ZÖLLNER

ZÖLLNER ARCHITECTS

What inspired you to become an architect? I grew up with a father who was a serial DIY-er. My earliest memories are of the smell of sawdust and the fun of trying to stabilise my toddler legs against a ladder. My job was to pass on the required tool to my dad while he was busy paving, tiling, repairing the washing machine, painting the ceiling, etc. As a child I was forever designing go-carts, tree houses, dolls' clothes and blanket houses. Architecture was the only field of study that appealed to me and I have never regretted my choice of career.

Name other architects do you admire or inspire you. Eileen Gray has always inspired me for her design versatility and attention to detail. My current favourite architect is Francine Houben, who is the founder and director of the Dutch architectural company Mecanoo, for her quest to make buildings that are beautiful to the senses.

Do you incorporate green elements in your designs? We are extremely privileged to share office facilities with Sandra Rippon, who is a qualified architect and runs an environmental management consultancy called Balance Design. Sandra has done extensive research into building materials and their green rating, and through interacting with her, our knowledge of what 'green design' means and how we can incorporate it into our commercial projects has grown dramatically over the past year. And to answer the question: yes, we do. No matter how small the intervention, be it the specification of paint or the sourcing of sustainable timber, it all helps to contribute to a healthier environment.

Which is your favourite building internationally and in SA? Constitution Hill in Johannesburg is the current local favourite, [internationally] The Jewish Museum in Berlin by David Liebeskind, as well as all the magnificent bridges by Santiago Calatrava.

What is the biggest challenge facing architects in SA? Firmly holding on to our sense of humour!

If you had to design your dream building, what would it be? A houseboat for my family. Far, far away from building legislation and foundations.

Have you won any awards? I remember crossing the finish line first when we had to do sprints in primary school . . .



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The Architect shoot was kindly hosted by Créma Design, Green Point, Cape Town.