



SA ARCHITECTURE AS IMAGE AND TEXT – A CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF PUBLICATIONS IN 2003

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Architectural Africana is not well served by publishers. The crop of the year 2003 must be seen in this light.

Winds of change blew through the magazine publishers. Piet de Beer, who has been editor of *Architecture SA* (as part of the now defunct Warrman's stable) since 1989, later *SA Architecture* (as part of the Primedia stable), has been (temporarily?) given sabbatical to convalesce and his duties are now performed by Julian Cooke. The magazine also appears under the banner of *Architecture South Africa* (in the stable of Picasso Headline). *Leading Architecture* – the independent break-away – have abandoned the experimentation introduced by Madelaine Page by having guest editors drawn from academia and following themes of their choosing, and on her resignation have elected to become just another trade magazine. Fortunately *Urban Green File*, under the editorship of Carol Knoll, still remains a source of current, cutting edge, critical and independent commentary. In the presence of more likely competitors, this magazine has received the second consecutive PICA award for best trade magazine in the architectural category.

The *Digest of South African Architecture 2003*, the South African Institute of Architects' showcase of current projects – this issue themed *Emerging identities – a review of work completed in 2002* – reached a new standard of critical excellence under the editorial team of Robert de Jager, Sally Hugo Hammond, Iain Low and Llewellyn van Wyk. Iain Low's essay *Space and Transformation: architecture and identity* is an intelligent and provocative contextualisation of architecture as a national and global concern. Many of the projects published preempted the Awards of Merit of the Institute, but certainly begs the question of "What became of the rest?" Of the projects featured, many more were deserving of con-

sideration. But what is demonstrated is that a toughness of mind and sureness of purpose is present in the best of the projects executed in the first decade of South African democracy.

A new sponsor *Total Cad Academy*, the publishing arm of the *Total Solution Centre*, has appeared on the scene and produced two further pamphlet-type publications, after they launched with *Building Culture/Construit Cultura* of Jose Forjaz in April 2001. This patronage allows for an important niche to be filled – that of the lengthy occasional paper. *Selected BDG. The work of Building Design Group Architects 1968-1977*, extracted from Paul Sanders Master's dissertation makes available the work of an important group of architects from the time when the architectural profession was divided and fringe architects under siege from their colleagues in particular and the political dispensation in general. The follow up, *Viva Pancho* is a hagiography of those who admire him and his work. His children Lonka and Pedro Guedes edit it. Still it is a useful first entry to a phenomenal individual. Both these publications underscore the importance of recent heritage.

DOCOMOMO (Documentation and conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the modern movement) launched a new-look version of their journal under the newly filled Chair of DOCOMOMO, Maristella Casciato. The relatively obscure, but often seminal works on the continent of Africa benefit from the theme of the issue *Modern Heritage in Africa*. Hannah le Roux (of the University of the Witwatersrand) is guest editor. The essay *The modern movement architecture of four South African cities* is a broad overview of the persons, events and artifacts that characterise the Modern Movement in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. Its conclusion highlights the lack of concerted effort, direc-

tion and allocation of resources to the protection of this fine heritage.

As a one-man conscience for the entire South African architectural corps, Alan Lipman has raged and coaxed as architectural reviewer to the *Sunday Independent* newspaper since 1992. UNISA Press, having entered the foray of publications on architecture with *Architecture of the Transvaal* (1998), have gained courage and followed this up with two further efforts, the latest being *Architecture on my mind: critical readings in design*. A selection of Lipman's writings are collected into an anthology, arranged under themes much of the authors making, and perhaps some rather whimsical. The layout matches the writing – crisp and no nonsense. An absence of an index and the inexplicable decision not to source the original articles are severe technical flaws.

Issues related to urban matters were well served by three publications, only one of which I have personally seen. The second edition of *Texture and Memory. The urbanism of District Six* makes available, what was once a hugely expensive publication, now at an affordable price. It can be purchased at the District Six Museum. This underscores the dearth of material available to the visitor at those tourist attractions of architectural interest. A visit to the bookshop at The Apartheid Museum is a sad experience. There is a vast gap in the market that might be filled by enterprising – and possibly charitable – writers and publishers.

The enterprises of the designers and planners of the University of the Witwatersrand are served by *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the postapartheid city*. It has been well received by reviewers although the target audience may be considered to be a narrow one.

In this videotic age it is easily forgotten that the experiencing of buildings is synaesthetic. A book that satisfies something of the re-discovering the synaesthetic art of architecture is *Architecture*. It gives one a strong sense of the tactile qualities of what you see, thanks to a well-chosen selection of imagery artfully assembled and presented. It is going to add to the headaches of designers having to satisfy the cornucopic desires of scrapbook-wielding clients. It is a quick read, visually satisfying and will put the designer one step ahead of the next client to cross the office threshold.

And then there is this issue of *Image and Text* ...

Details of publications cited

Digest of South African Architecture. 2003. 143 pages. Price R20.00

DOCOMOMO No 28. 2003. March. 98 pages. ISSN 1380-3204. Available to members or inquiries at www.docomomo.com

Guedes, L & Guedes P. 2003. *Viva Pancho*. Total Cad Academy. 32 pages. Inquiries at www.archicad.co.za

Lipman, A. 2003. *Architecture on my mind: critical readings in design*. Unisa Press. ISBN 1-86888-241-1. Price R180.00.

Mangu, X, Tomlinson, R and Beauregard, R (Editors). 2003. *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City*. Routledge. 305 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 0415935598. Price: R353.95

Matthews, P. 2003. *Architecture*. Visual Books. 133 pages. ISBN: 0-620-29166-4

Pistorius, P (Editor). Bezzoli, M, Marks, R & Kruger, M (Compilers). 2002 [1997]. *Texture and Memory: The urbanism of District Six*. Second Edition. Cape Technikon. 127 pages. ISBN: 0-620-29311-X. Price: R170.00

Sanders, P. 2003. *Selected BDG. The work of Building Design Group Architects 1968-1977*. Total Cad Academy. 48 pages. Inquiries at www.archicad.co.za