

## **Press release: ILASA Awards of Excellence**

Staged every alternate year, the Awards of Excellence of the Institute for Landscape Architecture in South Africa (ILASA) celebrates the work of the profession; giving specific recognition to work that has gone beyond the professional standard expected of landscape architects at any stage.

This year, ILASA is delighted to have received 29 submissions across five categories:

- Excellence in Design, completed projects
- Excellence in Design - projects under construction
- Excellence in Design - project proposals
- Excellence in Environmental Planning
- Publications, Media and Research.

So high was the standard of entries in 2009 that an unprecedented 13 projects have received awards. These are:

### ***Excellence in Design, completed projects:***

Cape Town foreshore pedestrianisation projects  
Freedom Park intermediate phase  
House Engelbrecht  
Liliesleaf  
New Kings and Majestic Residences  
Schonenberg Estate  
St Andrews Square  
Thesen Islands

### ***Excellence in Design, projects under construction:***

Khayelitsha Harare Precinct 3  
Serengeti Golf & Wildlife Estate

### ***Excellence in Design, project proposals:***

Corniche Bay Resort, Mauritius

### ***Excellence in Environmental Planning:***

Cotswold Downs Estate

### ***Excellence in Publications, Media & Research:***

Landscape contracting in SA

### ***Presidential Award:***

With each staging of its Awards of Excellence, ILASA bestows the honour of its Presidential Award on one outstanding submission. This year, the Presidential Award goes to Thesen Islands by CMAI.

## **INFORMATION ON EACH AWARD RECIPIENT FOLLOWS:**

### **Cape Town Foreshore pedestrianisation by Earthworks Landscape Architects**

Initiated by the City of Cape Town, the Foreshore pedestrianisation project responds to the changing pedestrian movement patterns in line with the development of the nearby Cape Town International Convention Centre and redevelopment of Cape Town Station.

Until recently, this dreary and windswept area provided very few places for pedestrians to linger while vagrants frequented the area. However three projects have instigated change: the centre islands on Hertzog Boulevard and Heerengracht, Jetty Square and Pier Place.

On Hertzog Boulevard, the landscape architects have introduced a '*gracht*' to prevent unsafe crossing of the islands between the traffic lights. Water in this *gracht* is extracted from the sub-surface stormwater system where spring water flows from Table Mountain down to the ocean. The *gracht* is lined with *Acacia xanthophloea* trees in order to provide an "African link".

At Jetty Square, pedestrians are prompted to pause for a moment of reflection and awareness. The square highlights the natural and historic attributes that were completely obliterated by the development of the Foreshore. Ghost-like skeletal shark figures, by artist Ralph Borland, float through the space above. The sharks refer to the ocean that was reclaimed for development and of the dangers of human domination over nature.

At Pier Place, the dark, cold and wind-blown square has been transformed by white cobbles that bring light to the space under the *Ficus microcarpa* trees. Pier Place is populated by sculptures telling the story of ordinary people living and working in the area.

For its revitalisation of public squares, the **Cape Town Foreshore pedestrianisation project by Earthworks Landscape Architects** receives an Award of Excellence. This project, according to the adjudication panel, has made a significant contribution to the aesthetic and experiential quality of the Foreshore.

**Contact Adam van Niewenhuizen at 021 683 2511**

### **Freedom Park intermediate phase by NLA Bagale GREENinc Momo Joint Venture**

Reconciliation, nation building, freedom of people and humanity are the four pillars in the structure of Freedom Park. The development of the park is a natural outcome of South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission mandated by Nelson Mandela during his presidency.

The landscape design recognises the spiritual origins of the park and manifests these symbolically in the physical form. Freedom Park is a "garden of remembrance" – a natural indigenous garden telling the story of South Africa's progress to freedom. It is intended as a natural symbol for reparation, a symbol of healing, a symbol of cleansing and a place where the souls of those who lost their lives in the quest for freedom can rest. It is also a place of pilgrimage, renewal and hope for all South Africans and humankind.

The park presents a narrative – a "journey to freedom" informed by traditional African culture and indigenous knowledge systems.

Situated on a bio-diverse quartzite ridge, care has been taken to conserve much of the hill in its natural state. The landscape is designed as a natural, symbolic garden with many different spaces and places forming the setting for the five narrative elements. Apart from conserving the site's vegetation, plants known for their traditional and medicinal values have been added. More than 250 indigenous species are used in the planting palette.

Through rehabilitation and conservation, the landscape intervention heals the original scars of the site and, symbolically, of history. As the new planting grows, the architectural elements of Freedom Park will appear to emerge from the hill and become one with it – like much of historic African interventions such as Great Zimbabwe and Thulamela.

For the creative integration of the cultural and natural landscapes, the **Freedom Park intermediate phase by NLA Bagale GREENinc Momo Joint Venture** receives an Award of Excellence. The adjudication panel has observed that careful integration of architectural elements with the landscape results in a sequence of spatial experiences with significant heritage and cultural meaning for visitors. Attention to detail and material selection are also commendable.

**Contact Graham Young of NBGM at 012 4202580**

### **House Engelbrecht by Erika van den Berg Landscape Architect**

Situated on a 9 000 m<sup>2</sup> site in Cornwall Hill Residential Estate, Centurion, House Engelbrecht is set in dry Highveld grassland, including an 80 m-long ridge. Forming part of the Carletonville Dolomite Grassland, the establishment of a home and garden depended on careful water run-off management to avoid the formation of sinkholes.

An off-ridge position has been selected for the house to ensure the protection of the ridge with its intact natural vegetation. The design responds to the dolomite in the area by retaining as much of the near-pristine natural vegetation as possible; landscaping only where building work made it necessary while creating an effective water run-off system. This includes an inclined sand bed below the upper lawns and a pebbled-edge/retaining-wall combination with weep holes. Water is transferred from there into a channel of natural stone embedded in concrete. Run-off from the natural ridge is also directed into this channel.

The variety of indigenous species is extraordinary and the versatility is illustrated by using particular species, deliberately repetitively, in different ways.

For demonstrating how indigenous vegetation can be used to establish a highly-formalised garden, juxtaposed against the natural Highveld landscape, **House Engelbrecht by Erika van den Berg Landscape Architect** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Erika van den Berg at 011 678 0946**

### **Liliesleaf by GREENinc**

Because of its historic significance in terms of the Rivonia Trial, the challenge for the design team at Liliesleaf was to create a place that celebrated the events that took place there rather than the structure itself. It had to be a place of dignity and memory.

The designers' solution was to reveal the layers of history by stripping away the careless and ignorant additions and modifications effected at Liliesleaf over the years. The scars of these modifications would be the only visible evidence of their existence and the landscape would be the healer and moderator. The landscape would be a place for movement and rest, engagement with content and a retreat for reflection and memory. New buildings would be designed as foils, containers of knowledge and definers of place. They would move over and under the landscape, and become part of the landscape.

For its elegant but unobtrusive intervention in a historically-significant landscape, **Liliesleaf by GREENinc** receives an Award of Excellence. The adjudication panel has found that this project demonstrates the ideal of integrating architecture and landscape architecture into a whole that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

**Contact Anton Comrie of GREENinc on 011 3273687**

### **New Kings and Majestic residences, Kalk Bay, by OVP Associates**

In Kalk Bay, several historic buildings have been refurbished and turned into a residential village. The project has included the creation of seven traditional row houses in the "middedorp" and 14 semi-detached townhouses. Significant emphasis has been placed on the creation of public spaces.

The landscape design has played a key role in the establishment of the village character. Design interventions included stone cladding on boundary walls, roof terraces, a "green" wall covered in climbers to soften the parking garage, and planters to separate private and public space. The project has demanded careful attention to detailed design, especially in terms of the roof terraces, which have required timber planters outside the handrails, steel lattice screens and timber handrails on steel balustrades – similar to those of the original Majestic Hotel.

For its skilful design of the spaces between buildings, as well as handling level changes dictated by

the sloping site, the **New Kings and Majestic residences project by OVP Associates** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Johan van Papendorp of OVP Associates at 021 462 1262**

### **Schonenberg Estate by KALA**

Involved in Schonenberg Estate from its inception, landscape architects have played a prominent role in its planning and design. The result is the successful retention of the site's agricultural "memory" and the establishment of a pedestrian-friendly environment. The development of the entire estate is centred on a private open-space system. At its centre is the seasonal wetland. Two dams are used for water storage and, in turn, irrigation. A series of precast-concrete channels along vehicular routes feeds the water throughout the estate – in line with its agricultural memory. Ultimately, all the estate's stormwater drains into a detention system at the lowest point of the site.

Stormwater-detention ponds are landscaped to double up as recreation areas, including timber bridges, gabion terraces and seating. Islands create variety in habitat while indigenous, seasonal wetland vegetation is planted throughout.

Hard-landscaping elements add to the sense of place. These include custom-designed bollard lights and post-top lights along the entrance avenue, as well as a system of road signage attached to walls. The low *werf* wall, reminiscent of the walls found on Cape farms, is used to define and protect open spaces.

For its well-executed design theme with a historic, agricultural emphasis; making use of the *werf* wall and stormwater management as form-determining elements while ensuring the availability of retained water for irrigation, **Schonenberg Estate by KALA** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Megan Anderson at 021 671 3987**

### **St Andrews Square by OVP Associates**

In 2003, excavations for a new building in Prestwich Street, Green Point revealed the existence of unmarked graves of more than 2 000 people, who had been buried outside Cape Town's formal cemeteries. An investigation indicated that the graves dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and belonged to the city's "poor".

As these people might have contributed in various, unrecognised ways to the development of Cape Town, a ministerial instruction called for the construction of an ossuary, visitors' centre and memorial garden. The City of Cape Town, in consultation with the South African Heritage Resources Agency, identified St Andrews Square as the most appropriate site.

The ossuary building was designed by Lucien le Grange Architects while OVP Associates was tasked with landscaping the public space. The square houses the ossuary complex and is the first phase of a proposed pedestrian link between the city and the V&A Waterfront.

The project comprises three phases:

- a diagonal walkway and a new public-ablution facility; boasting a planted roof
- a memorial garden between the ossuary and Phase 1, including the widening of the pavement; allowing for new trees. Here historic tram lines for horse-drawn carriages have also been restored
- thirdly, a link between the first and second phases includes an avenue of trees and lawn alongside the diagonal pathway

For its commendable transformation of a road island, situated amid busy streets, into a visual and functional node, **St Andrews Square by OVP Associates** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Johan van Papendorp of OvP Associates at 021 462 1262**

### **Thesen Islands by CMAI**

A once polluting timber-processing plant has been turned into the ecologically-sensitive Thesen Islands development. In 1992, Dr Chris Mulder proposed a complete redevelopment of the polluted island; taking cognisance of concern for the environmental impacts and noise pollution associated with the timber plant.

A multi-disciplinary team took four years to complete the initial planning phase. Because of complexities relating to rezoning and the ecological sensitivity of the estuary, another four years passed before the project was approved by the authorities albeit with 100 strict conditions. The design is based on “new urbanism”; aiming to create a liveable village that reduces dependence on cars and provides public amenities or spaces to promote community interactivity. The best attribute of Thesen Islands is its cohesive system of open spaces. A network of tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly streets link amenities, such as the commercial centre, with the mooring facilities and sports fields.

Some of the site-specific factors that helped shape the design:

- Salt marsh areas were avoided during construction and, where unavoidable, the marshes were lifted and tended temporarily in a nursery before being transplanted.
- The 90 ha island was divided into 19 smaller islands and the earth cut from the canals was used to raise the level of the land for protection against floods.
- Contaminated land was rehabilitated. As much as 300 m<sup>3</sup> of soil was removed to a toxic waste-disposal site and 1 ha of ground, contaminated to a depth of 3 m, was capped with a layer of sodium bentonite and covered with 2 m of topsoil as well as a layer of tarmac to accommodate a parking area and tennis courts.
- The stormwater system was carefully-planned as no run-off was allowed to flow into the lagoon. All run-off was, therefore, directed into swales. It is then allowed to infiltrate the ground.

The result of this visionary initiative is that the biodiversity of the island has been significantly enhanced. In fact, 22 ha of new aquatic habitat has been added to the lagoon. The canal embankments provide habitat for marine organisms, including the Knysna sea horse while the 13 ha of parkland is home to thriving birdlife; enjoying the naturalistic planting and man-made nesting boxes in the wetland area.

For the transformation of an industrial timber-treatment facility, situated in a river estuary, into a residential and commercial development while improving the ecological health of the sensitive site, **Thesen Islands** by CMAI receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Dr Chris Mulder of CMAI at 044 382 6732**

### **Khayelitsha Harare Precinct 3 by KALA**

An entire network of playgrounds, squares and pedestrian walkways is being developed in Khayelitsha as part of the Violent Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) initiative – a partnership between the German Development Bank and the City of Cape Town.

The task to design a landscape language for the entire route has been assigned to KALA. This design relies on the safety principles of the VPUU, which entails passive surveillance by means of

- community centres with a caretaker’s flat on the upper floor;
- well-lit and paved routes; and
- community activities, such as play courts, sports fields and places of trade.

The first redeveloped public space in the network is Harare Precinct 3 – a once-derelict space that functions as a stormwater-detention “pond” for 1:100-year floods but also an open-space that is criss-crossed by many people.

KALA's design intervention accommodates the stormwater-detention requirement and provides a place of play and thoroughfare at the same time. It includes a half-size soccer field, a lawn "kickabout" and a children's playground.

For its well-thought-out design that skilfully accommodates the stormwater and recreational needs of the community while improving surveillance at the same time, **Khayelitsha Harare Precinct 3 by KALA** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Tarna Klitzner at 021 689 1729**

### **Serengeti Golf & Wildlife Estate by Insite Landscape Architects**

In 2004, Insite was invited to participate in a competition and thus secured the contract for the landscape design of Serengeti Golf & Wildlife Estate. The brief called for the development of a master plan in conjunction with ADA Urban Design.

In the resultant design, 280 ha out of a total of 780 ha was set aside for conservation. The design focused on the creation of a natural, indigenous landscape; resembling the character of the Serengeti. The naturally-occurring Highveld grassland landscape of the area was, therefore, recreated and enhanced by planting indigenous grasses and bulbs.

*Eucalyptus* trees were removed, chipped and mulched to make compost while only *Acacia* trees were chosen as replacements. In turn, the existing wetlands on site were rehabilitated to enhance wildlife habitat dramatically.

For the well-presented sequence of focus points that leads the viewer through the estate and provides residents with a constantly-changing and seasonally-adaptive visual experience, **Serengeti Golf & Wildlife Estate by Insite Landscape Architects** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Fritz Coetzee of Insite at 012 667 2913**

### **Corniche Bay Resort Landscape Architecture Framework by Newtown Landscape Architects + GREENInc Landscape Architecture Joint Venture**

Following the preparation of a master plan for the Mauritian resort of Corniche Bay by Foster + Partners of London in conjunction with Arup, South African landscape architects, Newtown Landscape Architects and GREENInc, were appointed to the project two years later. After critically evaluating the master plan, the landscape architects conceptualised a new landscape-design approach. They questioned the concept of a lush, tropical environment promoted by the master plan, as well as the proposed low-level crossings of drainage lines. These aspects, they argued, would be in conflict with the project's aim of setting a benchmark for sustainable hotel development on the island.

As less than 2% of the island's vegetation is indigenous, rehabilitation of this scarred landscape is the central concept of the design. An on-site nursery, dedicated to the cultivation of indigenous plants, is part of the proposal. Other proposed interventions entail the strategic and phased rehabilitation of the site and utilisation of drainage lines as "green fingers" to connect the hillside with the ocean.

For its novel and creative approach to the landscape design of a resort that is based on scientific analysis of the site, its opportunities and constraints, the **Cornish Bay Resort Landscape Architecture Framework by Newtown Landscape Architects + GREENInc Landscape Architecture Joint Venture** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Graham Young of NLA + GREENInc JV at 012 420 2580**

### **Cotswold Downs by Uys & White Landscape Architects, FutureWorks and Nicci Diederichs**

An innovative approach to environmental planning sets Cotswold Downs apart from many other golfing developments. In terms of planning, the environmental impact assessment has informed the identification and protection of open spaces throughout the estate. So much so that the open-space system has underpinned the design fabric of the entire estate rather than being treated as an add-on feature.

As a result, the developer has recognised the wetlands, forests and grasslands of the estate as spaces that provide free ecosystem “goods and services” rather than a loss of land for development. These goods and services include soil stability, waste assimilation, waste dilution, flood attenuation, disease control, water supply, natural heritage, recreational amenity and marketing icons.

Through careful environmental planning, habitats within the estate have been maintained and enhanced. Through the goods and services they supply, costly hard-engineering alternatives have been avoided.

For the successful identification, planning and rehabilitation of a degraded ecosystem **Cotswold Downs by Uys & White Landscape Architects, FutureWorks and Nicci Diederichs** receives an Award of Excellence.

**Contact Lucas Uys at 032 947 2401**

### **Landscape contracting in South Africa by Piet Vosloo of KWP Landscape Architects**

*Landscape contracting in South Africa* represents extensive research work undertaken by Dr Piet Vosloo of KWP Landscape Architects. It has been published as a six-part series – five parts in the magazine *Landscape SA* and the last section as part of Vosloo’s PhD thesis at the University of Pretoria.

The series of articles has investigated the landscape construction and maintenance contracting system in South Africa with the goal to identify those contractual issues that are unique and pertinent to landscape contracting.

In his PhD thesis, Vosloo proposes an addendum to the Joint Building Contracts Committee (JBCC) Nominated/Selected Subcontract Agreement, namely Specific Conditions of Subcontract for Landscape and Related Works. Vosloo is currently engaged with the JBCC with a view to having the proposed addendum ratified and accepted for use by the JBCC.

For his findings that address the shortcomings of the JBCC contract in terms of landscape contracting, **Professor Piet Vosloo of KWP Landscape Architects** receives an Award of Excellence.

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