

On the incompleteness of mutation: Introduction to Pretoria Regionalism

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Abstract: This article aims to make the European professional audience acquainted with the architecture of an important southern African city. Additionally, the author hopes to familiarise this audience with the cultural nuances and character of this city, while trying to maintain distance as a native of the city. South Africa is famous for its significant natural and wildlife treasures. Internationally the history of this country's politics and developing democracy are also well known. From famous political leaders overcoming the harsh and hateful *Apartheid* laws to more world-renowned medical practitioners performing ground-breaking medical procedures: the impact of South African global contributions cannot be overlooked. However, there is significant oversight in the appreciation of the architecture and analyses of the urban conditions in the country. Pretoria is the administrative capital of the Republic of South Africa and contains a substantial *oeuvre* of built works that is testament to the numerous international and local cultural influences. Thus, it was deemed necessary to present the architectural and artistic responses from the modernist period (late 1920s – 1970s). The Pretoria Regionalist style, sometimes styled as the Third Vernacular, is a contextually inspired, and unique Transvaal-esque mutation of the machined and purist aesthetic of the Modernist Movement (1920s – 1960s). This architectural oeuvre is presented within the historical context of the founding and evolution of South Africa. Hence, eight contextually appropriate and architecturally significant edifices representing the modernist architecture of the early 20th century are broadly discussed.

Keywords: South Africa, Pretoria Regionalism, vernacular architecture, modernist architecture

FROM KERKPLAATS TO CAPITAL CITY

Pretoria's urban design layout, as a physically planned manifestation of the *urbs quadrata*, is an observation that can be made about the conception of the city, and it also happens to be the title of an article written by Gerrit Jordaan in the Architecture SA journal (Jordaan, 1989). The *Voortrekkers*, farmers and pioneers who were mainly the descendants of landless Dutch immigrants that left the Cape Colony and travelled deeper inland in the country, in a series of *treks* between the period 1830 – 1840 to escape British rule, established Pretoria-Philadelphia (1855). This rural city was initially a *kerkplaats*, a church yard and marketplace where farmers from the surrounding areas could sell their produce, trade goods and attend church. Jordaan continues this allegory of the *urbs quadrata* by examining the visual and physical manifestation created by the grid-like urban plan that is embraced and contained by the mountain region. He explains the concept of placemaking in Pretoria to be considered along strong cultural, contextual, and universal aspects. Jordaan continues this observation through the following analogy: The intersectional point of Paul Kruger Street and Church Street, with the centrally placed church building surrounded by the "mandala" of universal aspects is a motif that is seen repeat-

ed in the design of the later Church Square and the general consideration for the urban planned expansion of the city. (Jordaan, 1989) Thus, as the city expanded, so did the melange of architectural styles and periods. This phenomenon creates a unique visual timeline of the lifecycle of the city. Residential neighbourhoods were designated and then planned – beginning to break away from the strict *cardo-decumanus* grid planning. More recently, the city expanded even further – haphazardly and without proper and contextually appropriate urban planning – and for a great part of its life cycle, it expanded because of deliberate politically-oriented planning. Today the city is incomplete and decentralised – the economical centre, which was also once the historical centre of the city, has moved to the new eastern suburbs for safety reasons. This urban and social mutation counteracts most attempts at rectifying the situation. For ease of reference and to contextualise this introductory statement, it is essential to provide an abridged visual explanation of the history of South Africa and the conditions that led to the establishment of the capital city, Pretoria.

When Pretoria was established in 1855, the city was merely a datum point, or a congregational space – even though it had always been the intention of the *Voortrekkers* to establish a new

However, to keep the introduction and analyses relevant – the proposed focus is on the most significant areas synonymous with the unique regional modernist movements in Pretoria. Hence this article will focus on buildings in the areas surrounding Church Square (the historical centre of Pretoria), as well as an additional contextualised and select few buildings that are significant to the development of the regionalist vernacular. It is important to note that the modernist movement in Pretoria was heavily influenced by the establishment of the Bauhaus in Europe, the predominantly European education of the South African architects, as well as the influences from Brazil in the Post-War era. Many of the South African architects under discussion travelled to Europe during the interwar years (1920s – mid 1930s) to study under Le Corbusier or Walter Gropius and take part in the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM). To that end, the proposed buildings for this article are as follows:

- i. The Netherlands Bank Building (Nedbank), Church Street, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1946 – 1953
- ii. *Vleisraad Gebou* (Meat Board Building), Hamilton Street, Pretoria; Helmut Stauch, 1952
- iii. Polley's Arcade, Wachthuis Building, Church Square, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1959
- iv. Round House, Eastwood Street, Pretoria; May von Langenau, 1961
- v. *Kleintheater* (Little Theatre) and The Serpentine Wall, UNISA Pretoria campus, Skinner Street, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1961
- vi. Transvaal Provincial Administration Building, Church Square, Pretoria; Meiring Naudé, van Dyk Architects, 1962
- vii. House Jooste. Aries Street, Pretoria; Karl J. Jooste, 1965
- viii. UNISA Pretoria campus, Muckleneuk, Pretoria; Brian Sandrock Architects, 1970s

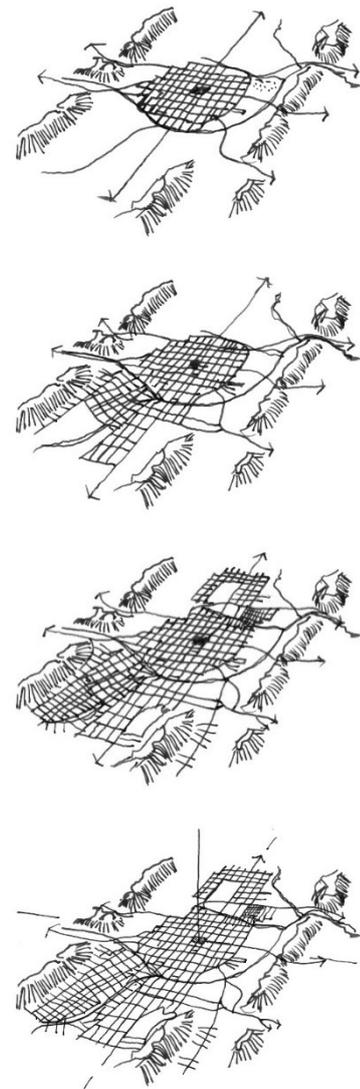
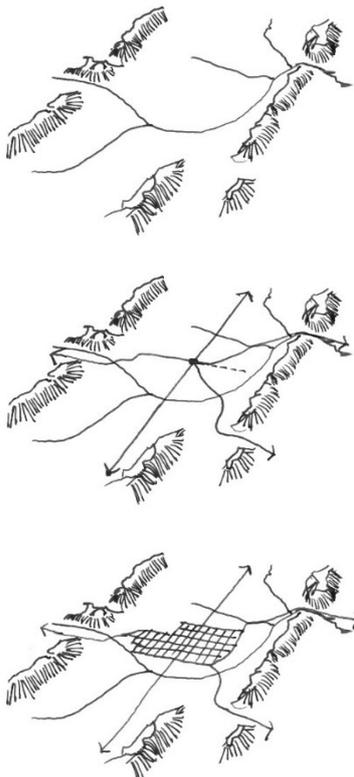


Fig. 3. Diagrammatic expression of the planning principles of Pretoria. (Source: Jordaan, 1989)

THE THIRD VERNACULAR

The academic circles of South African architects consider the brief regional inspired Modernist Movement (1920s – 1960s) to be the Third Vernacular. At this point, it is necessary to clarify the use of the term vernacular in the context of this article: a place specific architecture created by (traditionally) employing locally available materials and a strong contextually responsive driven solution to the extant site conditions. This definition and understanding of the expression vernacular is accepted as the primary definition, as analysed and put into writing by Roger C. Fisher, thus taken from the architectural compendium, *Architecture of the Transvaal*. (Fisher, 1998)

South African architectural writers hold that the indigenous peoples' architecture is the zero vernacular. This does not disregard, nor does it downplay the value and significance of the indigenous architectural knowledge. It provides a reference point for the development of the subsequent regionalist architecture that evolved later. Professor Gerald Steyn considers that the term *Africanist* architecture, is used to describe something that is from, and of Africa, and thus acknowledges that place and builders. Their skills, and thus by extension, architectural technologies are thus rooted in vernacular traditions and contextualisation. (Steyn, 2014)

The architectural responses first introduced by the Dutch colonists at the Cape Colony are termed the first vernacular (1652 – 1890s). This style is characterised by being climate responsive and region based. Robust materials and strategic planning created optimal living spaces for highveld living. (Fisher, 1998) Subsequently, as the *kerkplaats* expanded and became more formalised this vernacular mutated the principles of neo-classicism into a style that is generally considered to be indicative of the Transvaal Style. The use of local materials and climatic restrictions is what makes this style so unique. Dutch architect Sytze Wopkes Wierda (1839 -1911) was responsible for the architectural and urban identity of the newly founded *Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek* established in 1852 (New South African Republic – generally abbreviated to ZAR, was the name given to the three independent Boer Republics that were established after the Great Trek, namely: the Orange Free State, the Natal Republic and the Transvaal Republic). His projects include the *Raadsaal* (1890) (city hall), the Palace of Justice (commissioned mid 1890s), as well as the establishment of the first formal Public Works Department (1877).

The second vernacular is accepted to include the Georgian, the Victorian (1837 – 1901) and later the Edwardian architectural styles (1901 – 1914) imported by the British during their occupation of the Transvaal. Again, the architectural principles characteristic of this period remain prevalent but are transformed through the use of local materials and the local knowledge of craftsmen. The buildings were mostly constructed from prefabricated materials, such as corrugated sheet metal panels and timber or iron columns. (Fisher, 1998) Because of the distinct lack of heavy industrialisation in the Transvaal Republic, timber and stone were usually typical replacements for structural elements, however, the stylistic and built architectural principles remained mostly true to the original. This period (1890 – 1914) saw the greatest planned and structured urban densification of the city centre.

Naturally, as the population of Pretoria grew with more European immigrants moving to the Transvaal Republic, building styles imported from Europe would influence designs and take up their place in the city. In the historical city centre, the area around Church Square especially became more formalised and densified. Neighbourhoods would be designated and planned in the spirit of their relevant architectural styles. It is worth noting that unlike Johannesburg, and by extension most other colonial

cities at that time, Pretoria was not built as a result of industrialisation and resource exploitation. For most of its formative years, the greatest number of its surroundings were farms. It was an important nexus for trade and the seat of power for the Boer Republics and later, after the two Boer Wars (a term modern academics have now dubbed the South African War) the administrative capital of the British South African colony.

During the mid-1920s, and around the same time as the Bauhaus School was established (est. 1919) under Walter Gropius, a new group of young South African architects emerged. Chief among them were Gordon Leith (1886 – 1965), Rex Distin Martienssen (1905 – 1942), Norman Musgrave Eaton (1902 – 1966), and Karl Jooste (1925 – 1975). While accepting the tenets of the new modernist movement, the architecture that evolved from this was more place specific. Thus, the Pretoria Regionalist style came into existence. The buildings followed the functionalist layout of planning, the purist aesthetic and honesty of the new building materials – but the style exempted itself from being part of the so-called proposed international style because of its concise use of local crafts and materials and climatic design considerations. In summary, every region of South Africa would evidently produce modernist style buildings that would be the same in spirit, but the variations would be tangible. A quick example of this may be considered: Norman Eaton designed a number of Nedbank branches throughout the Transvaal (modern day Gauteng and North-West provinces) and the Natal province (now known as Kwa-Zulu Natal). Although the branches shared similar planning and design methodologies, an almost familiar “look and feel”, the Natal branch designs were visibly different because of the tropical climatic design responses that the region necessitated. Some notable differences included an over-exaggeration of the *brise soleil* roof canopies and greater attention to the articulation and positioning of breeze-blocks.

After the Second World War, the primary influence on the Pretoria Regionalist style came from an unexpected trans-Atlantic source – namely, Brazil. Norman Eaton, during his travels to Brazil, religiously kept a diary of all his experiences and inspirational encounters with the works of Oscar Niemeyer and the artist Roberto Burle Marx. The Brazilian Modernist movement, which had visibly deviated from the rigid International Style, favoured the use of more organic forms, and had found a foothold with the Pretoria architects of the time. (Pienaar, 2017)



Fig. 4. Church Square today, photograph taken from the balcony of the Palace of Justice. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRETORIA REGIONALISM

Roger C. Fisher characterised the core principles of the Third Vernacular, even though each climatic region would have different requirements. A Pretoria Modernist building would display:

- an acknowledgement of the prevailing climatic constraints that influence the requisite shading and sun-controlled devices,
- each region would employ the work of local craftsmanship, thus “sacrificing” the crisp, clean lines of the “machine aesthetic”

that would dominate the European and north American movements,

- the use of traditional materials, thus encouraging an innovation of what was locally available to mimic the industrially produced materials,
- and most importantly, the architect (and by extension the design) should display a sensitivity to the existing topographic conditions of the site, or region.

It was generally understood among the early architects that this architecture creates buildings that are “earth-bound” and not necessarily freed from the ground with *pilotis* or columns, as was the general stylistic response.

It is the opinion of the author that, in many ways, the Third Vernacular was a further development of the neo-classical Transvaal Style, in its use of site-specific materials and advanced brick-work techniques.

The aspects which characterise Pretoria Regionalism are identified in chapter six, The Third Vernacular, of the compendium, *Architecture of the Transvaal*, and listed below (Fisher, 1998):

- traditional plan forms,
- rustic brick (either raw, exposed bricks, or whitewashed),
- low-pitched iron roofs,
- deep shaded eaves and verandahs,
- sun-shy windows,
- sensitivity to landscape and natural land features,
- an architecture responsive to climatic constraints.

To contextualise the characteristics of this architectural language, an appraisal of the building materials is necessary. Pretoria, not unlike Johannesburg and Bloemfontein, has a strong tradition of building with bricks. For example – the red clay fired bricks and large sandstone blocks used in the Raadsaal (Wierda, 1890) and Palace of Justice (Wierda, completed early 1900s), as well as the original *Nederlandse Bankgebouw* (de Zwaan, 1896) that frame Church Square evoke an almost pseudo-European character, but this aesthetic is only achieved by using locally available materials. Civic buildings, schools and in some instances a handful of churches were built using this material scheme. Even today it is still an impressive display of master craftsmanship. An observation about the external factors that may have influenced the Pretoria Regionalist *motif*: Norman Eaton (1902 – 1966) had a penchant for the arts, poetry, and idealism in his architectural work – it is well documented through personal journals and letters that Eaton had a close inner-circle of friends and acquaintances who were mainly artists.

Eaton, as well as his mentor, Gordon Leith (1886 – 1965), were born, raised, and educated in Pretoria. Fisher offers insight in his article about Norman Eaton and the influences that guided the architect’s design thinking. Fisher suggests that Pretorians have a unique sense of place, or *genius loci*, because of their migrant farmer stock ancestors. This can explain their strong connection to the landscape through both their history and their enterprise. (Fisher, 1997) He summarises this speculative interjection with the conclusion: Eaton and his contemporaries –

both artists and architects alike – would have been confronted with the most powerful and impressionable forces of local circumstances that mould the creative mind – the African landscape. (Fisher, 1997) The architectural language developed by Eaton and his contemporaries was not only cultural and socially oriented – the natural world would inspire and influence their works. The author would like to suggest here that a golden thread may be drawn between the various vernaculars: regardless of cultural heritage, the landscape is what most particularly inspires the creative mind.



Fig. 5. Interior of the Palace of Justice in Pretoria. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED BUILT PROJECTS

This portion of the article will condense and in broad strokes analyse the projects by some of the proponents of the Pretoria Regionalist style. These projects were selected for their unique architectural responses to the regionalist doctrine and best reflect this modernist movement. To elaborate: the selected built projects are so listed to create a chronological and physical timeline of the development of the Pretoria Regionalist style. Each of the projects serves as an example with the following attributes:

- a built, physical structure with its greatest part still existent and unaltered,
- a unique response to the regionalism of Pretoria, and the site,
- the architectural product best provides detailed characteristics of the Third Vernacular.

The Netherlands Bank Building (Nedbank), Helen Joseph Street, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1946 – 1953

The building that, in the author’s opinion, best expresses the tenets of the Pretoria Regionalist style. Pretoria’s built character

has always been exemplified by the use of bricks in construction. The Nedbank group was expanding in South Africa at the time, and their offices on Church Square were no longer sufficient. Eaton proposed an office block further down Church Street, constructed entirely out of brick. The six-storey building made use of the typical Modernist proportioning systems – but the architect requested specially manufactured bricks to construct the delicately patterned façade. The ground level entry is clad in local marble, reminiscent of a robust public ground level finish. This off-white pattern creates a striking visual contrast between the delicate and patterned bricks of the upper levels, and the ground level public interfaces. On the south-eastern corner, at the street level, the architect introduced a publicly available drinking fountain – that is still in use. What sets this building apart from its contemporaries is the architect's insistence on the use of traditional southern African patterns and themes throughout the detail work. The door handles are exquisitely shaped in brass to resemble traditional Benin figurines. The open-air area on the roof of the building features a free-standing brick winding wall that contrasts with the rigid overall geometry of the building mass.



Fig. 6.1. The Nedbank building in context. The facade showcases the deep set and sun shy window motifs. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 6.2. Brass door handle in the shape of a Benin Head figurine. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

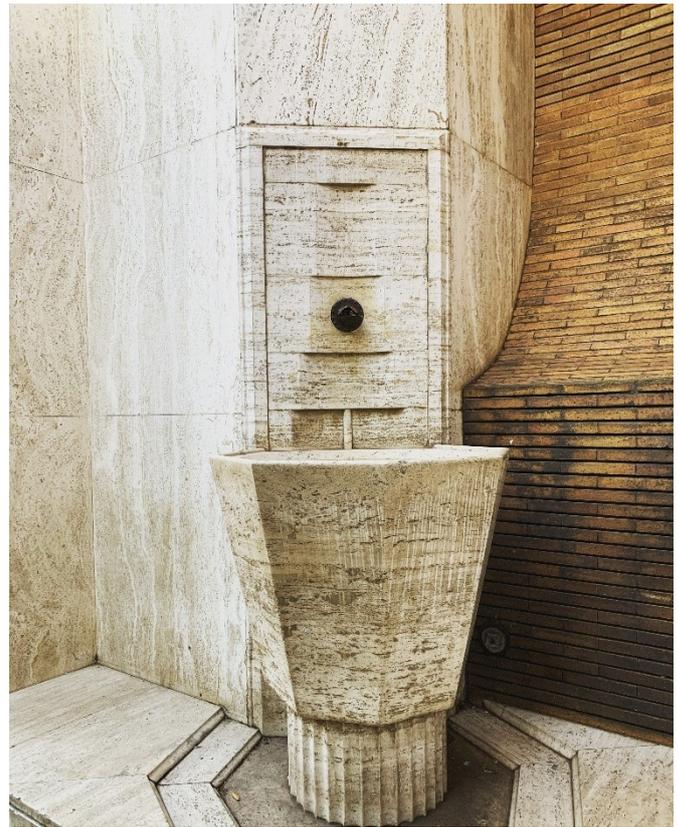


Fig. 6.3. The external fountain at pedestrian level, humanizing the architecture. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

Vleisraad Gebou (Meat Board Building), Hamilton Street, Pretoria; Helmut Stauch, 1952

This building, designed by German-born architect Helmut Stauch (1910 – 1970), is widely accepted as the first intentional introduction of the Brazilian Modernist movement into the city. The climatic design responses of Brazil could be sufficiently appropriated into the regionalist restrictions in Pretoria. The Meat Board building was, in some ways, an attempt at replicating the building of the Ministry of Health and Education in Brazil. Stauch appreciated the use of solar shading devices and the freeing up of the ground floor plan. The façade most accurately reflects the comparison between the two buildings. (Pienaar, 2017) Stauch synthesised a response to the “Brazilian design” by raising the office building from the ground, and he supported it on round concrete *pilotis* and extended the *brise soleil*. The roof featured a curvilinear roof garden and covered the spandrels (the eastern and western thick façades) with blue mosaic tiles. As was typical of the architect, the elongated rectangular building was religiously facing north.

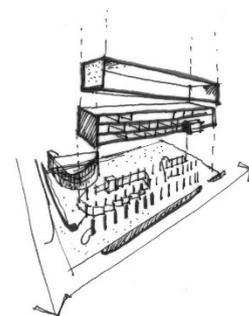


Fig. 7.1. The structural composition of the building, displaying the external concrete envelope, the internal floors, and the open ground plane. (Source: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 7.2. Street level interface and solar shading devices. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

Polley's Arcade, Wachthuis Building, Church Square, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1959

Pretoria's city blocks – because of the initial urban grid layout from the 1850s – are massive. The average urban block measures approximately 600m x 900m. Because of this, many buildings, especially those from the Art Deco period onwards, were built to form arcades that run through at various intervals, providing ease of access for pedestrians. However, largely due to the rapid motorisation of urban centres, these arcades started to disappear. Polley's Arcade is a thoroughfare at ground level that links Pretorius and Francis Baard Street underneath the *Wachthuis*, Police Headquarters (also designed by Eaton). What is significant about this arcade, however, are the finishes that were employed, as well as their symbolic application. Off-cuts from granite tombstones were appropriated and used to create the robust floor that is now synonymous with the arcade.



Fig. 8.1. The old Police Headquarters, the Wachthuis, a more machined and precise material finish. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

It is worth mentioning that similarly to Le Corbusier's later work, Eaton preferred to make art an integral part of his architecture. Evidence of this can be traced to his life-long friendship with Alexis Preller (1911 – 1975), a South African artist who made extensive use of African and modernist themes in his work. The use of textures and colour in this instance was not purely for decorative purposes, but may have had deeper symbolic uses – another unique recurring theme in Pretoria Regionalism. The resulting "urban carpet" displayed strong African

symbolism and patterns. It was the intention of the architect that the arcade should represent and reintroduce the social space of a hotel (named Polly's Hotel) that had once occupied the site. Marguerite Pienaar argues that Eaton used this patterned and symbolism-laden design *motif* to give new meaning to surfaces. (Pienaar, 2017)



Fig. 8.2. Arcade and Central atrium space. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

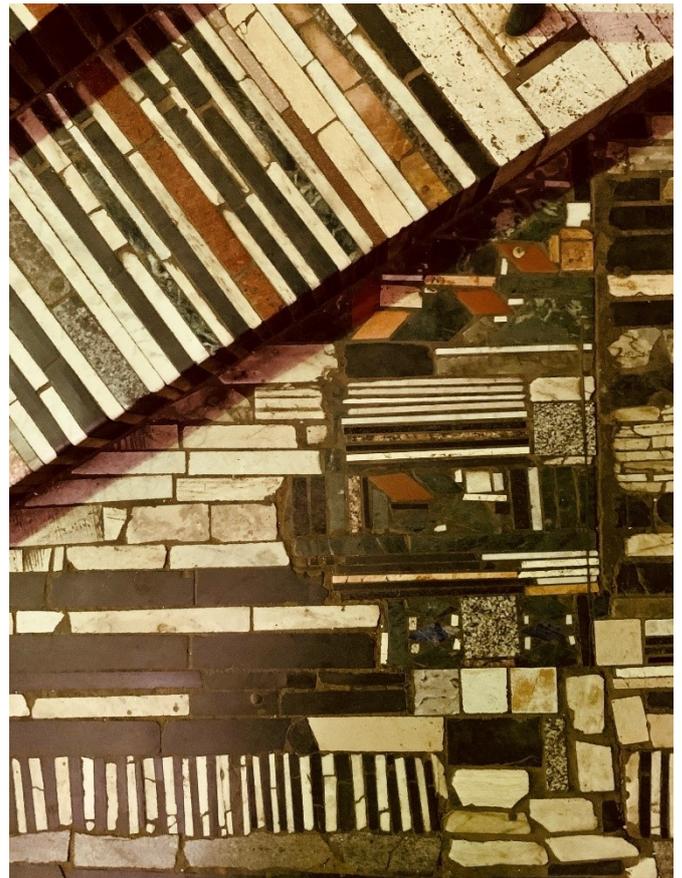


Fig. 8.3. Floor pattern detail. Offcuts from granite tombstones were meticulously laid in patterns. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 8.4. Stair detail. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

Round House, Eastwood Street, Pretoria; May von Langenau, 1961



Fig. 9.1. The Round House exterior detail, the asbestos and steel facade is put on display. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

The Round House was a house specifically designed for an artist and her family by the German architect May von Langenau. Inspired by the earlier work of Le Corbusier, and that of Mies van der Rohe, this project best reflects the more pure and machined Modernist architectural principles. The modest scale structure is one of the first residential buildings in Pretoria that featured a cantilevered structure. The machined steel and asbestos finishes counteract with the more natural and earth-coloured paving and rock formations on the site. At the time of its construction, engineers would regularly visit the site to study the engineering principles that were employed. The form-giving of this house is unique in its execution – as its round shape is more reminiscent of traditional *rondavels* (traditional African round huts) and sits perched on *Meintjieskop*, offering an uninterrupted panoramic view of the northern suburbs of Pretoria. Internally, the central, circular staircase acts as the main structural core from which the slabs are suspended.



Fig. 9.2. The Round House exterior detail, the pilotis raise the building from the ground and create an open but covered verandah. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 9.3. Interior of the house, the terrazzo floor finish was done in situ. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

Kleinteater (Little Theatre) and the Serpentine Wall, UNISA Pretoria campus, Nana Sita Street, Pretoria; Norman Eaton, 1961

The Little Theatre is just that – a small scale theatre specifically designed for smaller audiences and stage productions. The project was originally commissioned in 1941, but due to budget

issues and external influences, it was only completed and opened in 1961. Internally, some of the architectural detailing is reminiscent of the Art Deco period – and some detailing of the built-in fittings is somewhat ornate – contrary to what the modernist tendencies advocated for in buildings. The deep set and sun-shy windows create a cavernous interior, perfect for stage productions. Also significant to this project is the inclusion of the Serpentine Wall, a free-standing brick wall that made use of exquisite patterns achieved through different bricklaying techniques. The winding and undulating wall separates the public areas outside the theatre building and creates a more private area for audiences to congregate before and after performances. This *motif* emphasizes the imaginative spaces, thus reinforcing the concept of the wonder of the theatre. Again, the prominent use of brick and locally available crafts is given centre stage in the architectural execution.

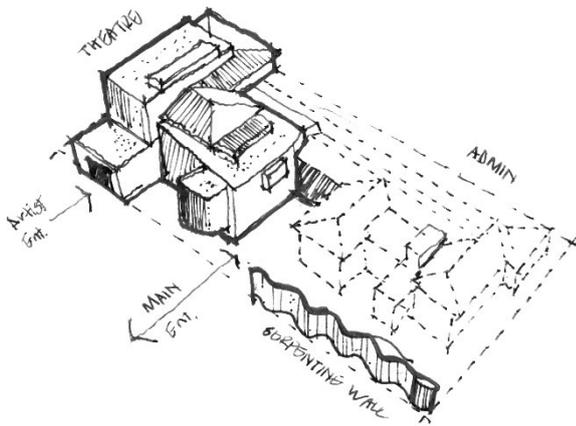


Fig. 10.1. The Little Theatre as a whole: the actual theatre is highlighted, and the ancillary programme is presented in dotted lines. (Source: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

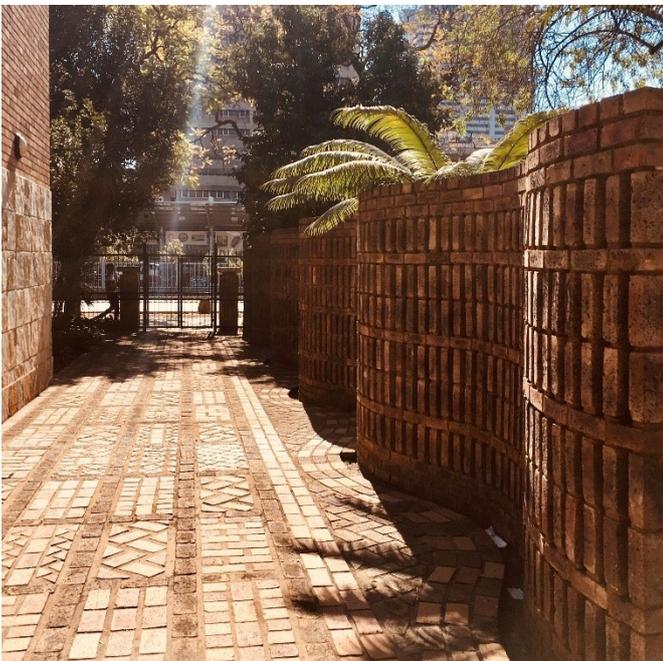


Fig. 10.2. The Serpentine Wall – a decorative wall that had a dual purpose as both screening wall and display of brickwork craftsmanship. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 10.3. Interior of the theatre – the deep red mimics the use of earthy colours reminiscent of the zeitgeist. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 10.4. Interior of the auditorium: the deep maroon coloured interior creates an intimate setting. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

Transvaal Provincial Administration Building (TPA), Church Square, Pretoria; Meiring Naudé, van Dyk Architects, 1962

The TPA building is the best example of the more developed Brazilian Modernist style in Pretoria (Goodwin, Smith, 1943). It was an intentionally politically motivated project – the purpose was to establish a political and architectural identity of the Apartheid regime. The built edifice takes up its position right to the rear of Church Square. Although the building is tall, it is articulated in such a way that the mass of the building façade “steps back” from the street edge, the ground plane is thus completely freed up and the floor surface treated in patterned finishes, similarly to the influences of the Brazilian Movement. Consequently, this project ushered in an era of high-rise construction in the capital city. The TPA building best exemplifies an adaptation of the Modernist Movement to the Pretoria context and its ultimate application on an urban scale. Although the TPA is an immensely scaled building, the finely detailed and articulated façades in steel and glass contrast almost harmoniously with the alternating and patterned brick finishes. There are courtyards hidden throughout the complex, most of which are articulated in robust concrete surfaces and feature more organically shaped gardens.



Fig. 11.1. The Western Facade of Church Square: the TPA in context with various other style periods. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 11.2. The Brazilian-inspired solar shading devices. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 11.3. Detail of enclosures and walls at pedestrian level. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

House Jooste, Aries Street, Pretoria; Karl J. Jooste, 1965

House Jooste best represents the adaptation of Le Corbusier's *Modular* and its application in a Pretoria residential home. It was designed and built for the architect and his family and the influence of Le Corbusier is undeniable. The typical *béton brut* and red brick infills surface characteristics are softened by the terraced gardens on the site. Karl Jooste (1925 – 1975) and his contemporaries moved away from the purist interpretations of the Modernist Movement and designed the structures to be more contextually inspired. (Swart, Proust, 2019) The house is a testament to Le Corbusier's early principles of Modernist design, as exemplified by the strong concrete planar surfaces and exposed structure. However, the vaulted ceilings of exposed red facebrick are more reminiscent of his later works, such as the Villa Sarabhai (1955). In respect of referencing the Pretoria Regionalist style – it should be noted that the use of exposed red facebrick surfaces and off-shutter concrete finishes reflects the locally available construction knowledge. In contrast to the Villa Savoye (1931), the concrete surfaces are not smooth and finished, but textured from the timber formwork – the wooden grain gives a feeling of roughness, a feature absent from the “machined precision” purist themes.



Fig. 12.1. Entrance bridge to the house. The ceremonial approach motif employed by Karl Jooste. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

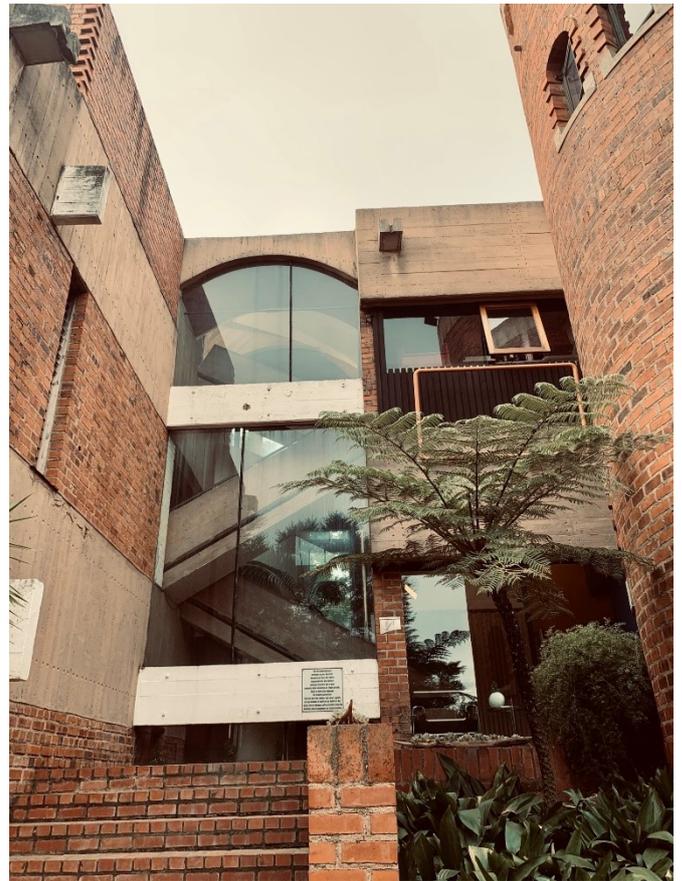


Fig. 12.3. The main circulation core of the house. (Photo: Author, 2022)



Fig. 12.2. The southern facade, a circular tower that counteracts the strong planar elements of the house. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 12.4. Concrete details and finishes, meticulously crafted to assist in proper drainage. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

UNISA Pretoria campus, Muckleneuk, Pretoria; Brian Sandrock Architects, 1970s



Fig. 13.1. UNISA campus as seen from the opposite hill fort. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 13.2. The imposing masses and linear treatment of the facades. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

The UNISA campus in Pretoria is a massive scale university complex. It occupies the site of the famous Kirkness brickyards and gracefully responds to the physical context. Buildings are staggered at varying heights and offer impressive panoramic views over the Fountains valley intersection down below, the modern-day gateway into the city. During the decades-long construction of the campus, all the building products were left exposed to the elements, to ensure that after the buildings are completed, the final building envelope would present a uniformly discoloured finish. To convey a message of progress and ad-

vanced learning, several engineering feats are displayed – from a massive cantilever to impressive earthworks – thus creating a memorable silhouette and iconic form. More importantly, the influences characteristic of Pretoria Regionalism are featured prominently. The exposed concrete surfaces at pedestrian level are robust, rough-hewn exposed local stones as the coarse aggregate. The deep set eaves of external walkways shade the office windows and create spaces for users to pause and survey the landscape.



Fig. 13.3. The sculptural and refined massing of the buildings; also note the deep eaves and covered walkways. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 13.4. Detail of the tectonic and surface treatment, a more refined approach to the Pretoria Regionalist style. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)



Fig. 13.5. View of the valley and main highway into the city. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

CONCLUSION

These curated projects not only evoke the sense of identity unique to Pretoria in the African landscape, but also demonstrate a sensitivity and understanding of the architectural response that dominated the Pretoria Regionalist scene. The examples suggest a union between architecture and art, local and implied natural heritage and the search for an identity that converges into an architectural response. Prof. 'Ora Joubert, a seminal figure in the new Pretoria school of architecture, considers the architectural heritage of South Africa to be one of assimilation and adaptation and imbued with a love of the land. The aim of the regionalist styles and traditions, she argues, is that they are premised on the appropriate responses to context, climate, and circumstance. (Joubert, 2009)



Fig. 14. A public space in Pretoria: Sammy Marks square, here a framed view showcasing the various architectural styles that make up the urban context. (Photo: Cornelius van der Westhuizen, 2022)

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