

Anton van Wouw's sculptures on buildings in Pretoria

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It is not widely known that South Africa's most important pioneer sculptor, Anton van Wouw (1862-1945), received his initial training as an architectural sculptor. At an early stage in his career he worked for a concrete casting factory in Delft, where he learnt the art of concrete-modelling and casting, but the turning point in his early career was his friendship with the Belgian architect, Vieillevoye, from whom he learnt to know and appreciate the different styles of architecture. Van Wouw's father, who was working in South Africa, wanted Anton to become involved in the booming building trade of the time in the Transvaal Republic. Anton came to Pretoria on 1 January 1890 and soon attracted the attention of Pretoria's pioneer master-builder, John J. Kirkness, who at that time was building the Raadsaal on Church Square and needed an architectural sculptor to create the old Republican coat of arms for the pediment over the entrance to his building. This was Van Wouw's first important architectural commission in Pretoria. In the years to come, after the Raadsaal commission, he was to create architectural sculpture for at least eight prominent buildings in the capital city. They include the Old National Bank and Mint (1893), the Old Standard Bank building (1894), the Reserved Investments Building (1904), and the Main Post Office building (1909), all on Church Square, the Union Buildings (1910) on Meintjeskop, the old Technical College building (1928) in Church Street and the Abattoir building in Schoeman Street.

Key words: architectural sculpture, Anton van Wouw, Sytze Wiera, Herbert Baker, Frank Emley, M.C.A. Meischke, John Kirkness, Theophile Schaerer, Gordon Leith.

Anton van Wouw se beeldhouwerk aan geboue in Pretoria

Dit is nie alombekend dat Suid-Afrika se belangrikste pionierbeeldhouer, Anton van Wouw (1862-1945), aanvanklik as argitektoniese beeldhouer opgelei is nie. Op 'n vroeë stadium in sy loopbaan het hy vir 'n fabriek in Delft, wat beton gietwerk gedoen het, gewerk en daar het hy die kuns van betonmodellering en -gietry aangeleer, maar die draaipunt in sy vroeë loopbaan was sy vriendskap met die Belgiese argitek, Vieillevoye, by wie hy geleer het om die verskillende argitektuurstyle te ken en te waardeer. Van Wouw se vader, wat toe in Suid-Afrika gewerk het, wou hê dat Anton betrokke moes raak by die bloeiende boubedryf van die tyd in die Transvaalse Republiek. Anton het op 1 Januarie 1890 na Pretoria gekom en gou die aandag getrek van Pretoria se pioniermeesterbouer, John J. Kirkness, wat op daardie stadium besig was met die bouwerk aan die Raadsaal op Kerkplein en 'n argitektoniese beeldhouer nodig gehad het om die ou Republikeinse staatswapen vir die pediment oor die ingang na die gebou te maak. Dit was Van Wouw se eerste belangrike argitektoniese opdrag in Pretoria. In die jare na die Raadsaalopdrag het Van Wouw argitektoniese beeldhouwerk vir minstens agt prominente geboue in die hoofstad geskep. Dit sluit in die Ou Nasionale Bank- en Muntgebou (1893), die Ou Standard Bankgebou (1894), die Reserved Investment-gebou (1904) en die Hoof Poskantoorgebou (1909), almal op Kerkplein, die Uniegebou (1910) op Meintjeskop, die ou Tegnieise Kollegegebou (1928) in Kerkstraat en die ou Slagpale in Schoemanstraat.

Stelutewoorde: argitektoniese beeldhoukuns, Anton van Wouw, Sytze Wiera, Herbert Baker, Frank Emley, M.C.A. Meischke, John Kirkness, Theophile Schaerer, Gordon Leith.

With the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand after 1886, there followed a boom in the building industry in the Transvaal Republic, especially in Johannesburg, but also in the capital city, Pretoria. Prominent architects from Holland and England established themselves in both cities, before and after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)¹. Apart from these architects, there were also numerous building-contractors who were attracted to these booming towns for architectural work². It was within this milieu that the young sculptor, Anton van Wouw (1862-1945), would forge a niche for himself in early Pretoria.

It is, however, not widely known that this young man, who was to become South Africa's most important pioneer sculptor, received his initial training as an architectural sculptor. At the age of twelve he learnt to make plaster architectural decorations in the studio of the Belgian sculptor, Joseph Graven (1836-1877). Shortly afterwards his uncle, Anton Beckerman, from whom he not only inherited his name, but also his artistic tastes, found him employment with a firm of architectural plasterers named Vreeswijk Brothers in Rotterdam (Duffey, A.E. 2008:7). A while later he worked for a concrete casting factory in Delft, where he learnt the art of concrete-modelling and casting. The turning point in his early career, however, was his friendship with

the Belgian architect, Vieillevoye, from whom he learnt to know and appreciate the different styles of architecture.

As Van Wouw had received his sculptural training in the realist academic style of the late 19th century in Holland, with the emphasis on eclecticism and truth to nature, his architectural work always reflected the viewpoint of the academic realist. Part of his mental equipment was a knowledge of perspective and the principles of architecture, which allowed him to visualize his sculptural decorations on buildings in relation to the surrounding space. In this regard, when confronted with a proposed site for a sculpture on a building, he was required to calculate accurately the size and proportions of the sculpture needed and how it would compliment the building. This included important academic considerations such as the scale demanded when sculpture was set on the exterior façade of a building, the tipping forward of figures placed high on facades to ensure correct proportions when viewed from below, the position of the sun as it shines on the sculptural decoration as it determines the accentuation of high lights and shadow values in the work and the harmonizing of the style of decoration with the type of building to which it was to be applied. As a well-trained realist sculptor, Van Wouw knew that when his initial models for architectural work were enlarged, certain details had to be suppressed, lines of composition had to be strengthened and simplified and surface texture of the modeling had to be treated to assume the correct value and contribute to the general effect of scale. When viewed in the light of these aspects, Van Wouw's architectural work on buildings in Pretoria was far superior to the mass-produced prefabricated sculpture by monumental masons such as Crankshaw Bros. of Newcastle, R. Crane & Sonen of Cape Town and Transvaal Monumental Works of Johannesburg, who supplied much of the architectural sculpture for late-nineteenth and early- twentieth century buildings in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

The great increase in permanent building projects in early Johannesburg inspired Anton's father, Ludolf van Wouw (1832-1907), who was employed in the Transvaal Republican government under Dr W.J. Leyds, to encourage his young son to come to South Africa. He wanted Anton to become involved in the booming building trade of the time in the Transvaal Republic. Six months after Anton came to Pretoria on 1 January 1890, he advertised his services as an ornamental sculptor in a local newspaper. This led to him doing stucco decoration in the living room of the new house of the wealthy Pretoria businessman, Mr. E.F. Bourke.

Old Raadsaal Building, Church Square (1888-1892)

The work that Van Wouw did for Mr. Bourke attracted the attention of Pretoria's pioneer master-builder, John Kirkness (1857-1939), who at that time was the building contractor for the Raadsaal on Church Square³ and needed an architectural sculptor to create the old Republican coat of arms for the pediment on the second floor over the entrance to his building (Rex, H.M. 1955:7). This was Van Wouw's first important architectural commission in Pretoria and he worked throughout 1891 with a team of stonemasons in the basement of the new building on this coat of arms⁴. The original drawings in the National Archive give no specifications as to how the coat of arms was to look and one must assume that Van Wouw was given a free hand with the design. This view is supported by a reference in a local newspaper of the time, which states: "Het schild van het Rykswapen is ovaalvormig en geheel volgens eigen schepping gecomponeerd en is verdeeld in 3 deelen...". (The shield of the coat of arms is oval in shape and totally the artist's own design and it is divided into 3 parts) (*De Volkstem*, 9/2/1891). Wierda did, however, provide a rough draught of his ideas, on which Van Wouw had to improve. The design showed the shield of the coat of arms on a scrolled cartouche surrounded by six radiating flags and surmounted by a large eagle with spread wings. Both sides of the tympanum flanking

the coat of arms were filled with laurel leaves and below it was the motto “Eendragt maakt magt” (Unity is Strength) in Roman letters.

Historically and symbolically the pediment on the façade of this building is very important as it was to be the first public building in the Transvaal Republic to bear the Z.A.R. coat of arms⁵. From the important space it occupied on Church Square, it was essential within 19th century ideology, that this building should advertise its prominence as the seat of government of the Kruger Republic to every visitor to the square. As Van Wouw’s earliest monumental architectural work in South Africa, the sculpture reflects his inexperience as an architectural sculptor. Although the design fits well into the large triangle of the pediment, its conception is poor because too great a portion of the area is merely filled with uninteresting laurel leaves. However, from existing photographs of the original coat of arms, one realizes that Van Wouw was artistically and technically well prepared for such work, as elements such as proportions, scale and adaptation of his sculptural style to the fierce South African sunlight are well integrated. The sandstone for the building as well as for the frieze came from the farm Waterval near Pyramid north of Pretoria (Punt, W. 1951: 11). Although the architect of the building, Sytze Wierda⁶, accused Van Wouw of overcharging for his work and requested that no further government commissions be entrusted to him, this architectural commission was not the last that Van Wouw made for architects of buildings in Pretoria⁷.

Sadly Van Wouw’s coat of arms did not survive. Exactly a year after the British occupied Pretoria in June 1900, the Executive Council of the Transvaal requested Van Wouw to alter the old Republican coat of arms into the British coat of arms and he refused, because the Boers had not yet capitulated (Rex, H.M. 1955: 13). The Council then found someone else to do the work and Van Wouw’s original sculpture was destroyed in the process of changing it into the Royal coat of arms⁸. Only the beak and head of the large eagle which surmounted the Republican coat of arms still survives today in the collection of the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria.

An old photograph which dates from about 1895 in the Art Archive of the University of Pretoria shows Van Wouw in his studio working on the clay model of an elaborate balcony. It seems to be for one or other theatre, but until now no building could be traced in which it was used. It is most probable that this balcony was for the Old Opera House in Pretorius Street in Pretoria, which was designed by the firm F. G. McIntosh & Moffat in 1896, but unfortunately no references to the balconies of the interior of this theatre could be traced for comparison.

It was undoubtedly John Kirkness, who towards the end of 1891 introduced Van Wouw to his fellow Scotsman and architect, Frank Emley (1861-1938), who in September 1891 had won the competition for the design of the National Bank and Mint Building to be erected on the western side of Church Square (Coetzee, N.A. 1984: 41). The building was designed in the Italian Renaissance style and as in the case of the Old Raadsaal, the building contractor was John J. Kirkness (Pretoriana 72: 228).

National Bank and Mint Building, Church Square (1893)

In September 1891 Frank Emley won the open competition to build the new National Bank and Mint Building for the Kruger Government on Church Square. Frank designed the building in the Italian Renaissance style with a profusion of capitals, pediments, pilasters, round arches and ornamental friezes. Although no published evidence exists that Van Wouw made the designs for these architectural decorations, an old photograph of Van Wouw and Frans Oerder working in Van Wouw’s studio in 1895, shows some of these designs hanging on the wall behind Oerder.

These decorations consisted of decorative capitals and friezes for the facade of the building. In a report of mid February 1893 the following is said about these decorations:

De Rechtervleugel van het gebouw der Nationale Bank nadert, wat het uiterlijk betreft, langzamerhand zijne voltooiing. De steenhouders zijn bezig om het fries, dat een zacht gebogen vorm krijgt, in elkaar te metselen..... Scheen het onderste van het bankgebouw ietwat log en zwaar, de gebeitelde kapiteelen en versierselen der hoogere gedeelten maken dit ruimschoots goed, en wettigen de verwachting dat het gebouw der Nationale Bank een zieraad voor Pretoria Kerkplein zal worden". (The right wing of the building of the National Bank, gradually with regard to the external part, is nearing completion. The stone masons are busy plastering together the frieze, which will have a slightly curved form. Although the lower part of the bank building seems slightly clumsy and heavy, the carved capitals and decorations of the upper section makes it abundantly better and proves the expectation that the building of the National Bank will become an ornament for Pretoria's Church Square) (*De Volksstem*, 15/2/1893).

The decorations which Van Wouw made for the façade of this building are effective as they serve to break the monotony of the long façade. The friezes are well adapted to the direct sunlight falling on them, because the sun sharpens the high lightes and intensifies the shadow values in these reliefs. Fortunately this building has survived and today is an excellent example of Van Wouw's early architectural sculpture.

Van Wouw's collaboration with Frank Emley led to further commissions, after Frank went into partnership with Frank Scott and moved to Johannesburg in 1893. Two important commissions in Johannesburg was the design of the house "Hohenheim" for Lionel Phillips in Parktown, for which Van Wouw made fanlights and the first Chamber of Mines Building of 1894 in Johannesburg, for which Van Wouw made a variety of sculptural embellishments such as friezes, sculptural panels and fanlights. Some of these sculptural decorations are clearly visible behind the sculptor in the old photograph showing him and Oerder in his studio in 1895. Also visible on this photograph is one of the putti from the pediments above the upper floor windows of the Old Standard Bank Building, which stood on Church Square until it was demolished in the 1950's.

Old Standard Bank Building, Church Square (1894/95)

The firm Emley & Scott's designs for the Old Standard Bank Building on the northern side of Church Square were in the Parisian manner. The main facade consisted of three sections: two outer wings with balconied windows flanking a grand central portion which had three arcaded balconies with handsome surrounds and pediments. The rusticated ground floor had an arched and pedimented doorway flanked by three large windows on each side. For the pediments above all the upper windows and the one above the doorway, Van Wouw made high-relief winged putti and on the surrounds above the arches were bass-relief panels. These decorations served merely as filling and did little to improve the façade of the building. In the already mentioned old photograph of Van Wouw's studio, taken in 1895, plaster castings of these architectural elements can be seen on the wall behind the sculptor. This building was unfortunately demolished in the 1950's, but seven of these putti have survived and are at present in the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria. From these surviving pieces one can clearly see that Van Wouw understood the requirements for architectural sculpture as fine detail is suppressed, lines of composition are strengthened and simplified and surface texture of the modeling has the correct value. From the position that the viewer was to see these decorations they looked correct and aesthetically pleasing.

From the end of 1896 until October 1899 Van Wouw was involved with the creation of the Kruger monument in Rome and when he returned to South Africa in 1899, the Anglo-Boer War had broken out and all building work in the Transvaal Republic ceased. Soon after the Anglo-Boer War Van Wouw started commuting by train between Pretoria and Johannesburg, where he

renewed his acquaintance with the architect Frank Emley and managed to procure sculptural commissions for architectural mouldings and decorative fanlights for at least five well-known buildings in Johannesburg.

In 1904 Van Wouw made the acquaintance of the Italian stone cutter and sculptor, Charles Marega in Johannesburg and in 1905 they went into partnership to cope with all the architectural commissions which were coming their way (Longlands 1905:871 & 1291). By the middle of 1906 Van Wouw moved to Johannesburg, where he obtained lodgings with the Swiss architect, Theophile Shaerer (1874-1948), who owned a house at 111 Sivewright Avenue in Doornfontein. When Frans Soff (1867-1936) invited Van Wouw to participate in the design for the Reserved Investment Building in Pretoria in 1904, Charles Marega was also included in the deal.

Reserved Investment Building on Church Square (1904)

The colourful building on the western side of Church Square originally was known as the Reserved Investment Building, but after Mr. R.W. Harcourt established his Cafe Riché Lounge Bar on the ground floor, it acquired the name Cafe Riché Building, and so it is known to this day. The building was designed by the Dutch architect and friend of Anton van Wouw, Francois Soff in 1904 and erected in 1905. In style and scale it had to fit in with the eclecticism of the existing buildings. The building is a typical example of the so-called architectural sculpture of the Art Nouveau period and reminiscent of the work of Dr H.P. Berlage in Amsterdam at the same time, in which the collaboration between architect and sculptor heralded a totally new direction in architecture. Very prominent on the corner facade of the building and integral to its design is a large bas-relief panel showing the figure of Mercury with a moneybag in his raised right hand and his caduceus in his left hand and the word “Commerce” in an oval beneath his feet. This relief panel was the work of Anton van Wouw (Duffey, A.E. 1981: 10). On the top of the corner gable there is a stylized owl, which was made by Charles Marega under the supervision of Anton van Wouw. A marquette for the Mercury relief panel is at present in the Van Wouw House Museum in Brooklyn. When one compares the rendering of the marquette with the large scale relief panel, then one realizes that Van Wouw clearly understood the demands of monumental realistic sculpture and this is where his work is far superior to that of mass produced prefabricated decoration. This building is one of the very few early buildings remaining in Pretoria which has architectural sculpture by Anton van Wouw and is proof that close collaboration between artist and architect can do much for the aesthetic appearance of a building.

Early in 1909 Lionel Phillips, President of the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg, commissioned the architect Herbert Baker (1862- 1946)⁹ to design a house for him on the lines of an Italian villa on Parktown Ridge. Phillips’ wife, Florence, insisted that everything possible about the house should be of local design and manufacture (Gutsche 1966:238). This allowed for the sculptural work to be done by Van Wouw, whom Florence greatly admired. The house became known as Villa Arcadia and Baker commissioned Van Wouw to make clay models for the decorative fanlights and door furniture¹⁰. They were then carved in teak by John Harcus (Barry & Law 1985:134). This co-operation with Baker was a very fruitful one for Anton van Wouw, because it would lead to more architectural sculpture at a later date. When the designs of the architects for the building of the new Post Office on Church Square in Pretoria were judged in January 1909, Herbert Baker was one of the judges (*Transvaal Leader* 5/2/1909).

Third General Post Office Building on Church Square (1909)

Initially the Colonial Government decided on an open competition for the design of the building and by the beginning of 1909 as many as 130 designs had been submitted (*Rand Daily Mail*

30/1/1909). Herbert Baker, W. Reid and W.F. Stucky were appointed as adjudicators. Although the first prize went to A.J. Stewart of the firm Howden and Stewart, eventually only his idea of a loggia on the second floor was used. After much confusion the façade of the third prize winner, J.F. Mackenzie of the firm Cooke & Mackenzie was grafted onto the ground plan of J. S. Cleland of the firm Tully, Waters & Cleland (*Annual Report 1908/9*). William Nottingham was the building contractor and the reconstituted Public Works Department under J.S. Cleland supervised the final erection of the building. Cleland was “one of the ‘Baker boys’ of the ‘Baker school’ ” as he shared Baker’s interest in appropriate (and South African) furnishings for government buildings (Fisher, R.C. 2006: 73). Since Baker knew Van Wouw’s worth as an architectural sculptor, he arranged with Cleland that Van Wouw receive the commission to create the clock-face at the main entrance to the new building.

Within the semi-circle above the main entrance door to the Post Office Van Wouw designed a large high-relief clock-face showing the clock centrally placed on a scrolled cartouche with an awakening nude female figure of glad-eyed Day on the left and a slumbering bearded nude male figure of drowsy Night on the right. The influence of Michelangelo’s figures of Day and Night for the Medici tombs is unmistakable in these figures for the clock-face. The setting, which any sculptural decoration on a building occupies, is very important as it not only accentuates the purpose of the sculpture, but also of the building as a whole. In the case of this building the clock-face was placed above the eastern entrance door to proclaim it as the main door. Van Wouw’s clock-face, however, is totally hidden from outside view and is lost within the very limited space in which it was placed. Consequently when one approaches the building from Church Square’s side one has no idea where the main entrance to the building is and the hidden clock-face does absolutely nothing to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the building.

Van Wouw’s close collaboration with Herbert Baker in 1908/09, as well as his continued friendship with his old pupil, Gordon Leith (1886-1965), who was living in the same house as Van Wouw in Doornfontein at that time, was decisive in Van Wouw’s obtaining commissions for architectural sculpture for the newly proposed Union Buildings in Pretoria. At about this time (1908) Leith had a fall-out with the Public Works Department over the Law Courts in Johannesburg and Baker took him into service to assist in the preparation of detail drawings for the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

The Union Buildings, Meintjeskop, Pretoria 1909-1913

The Union Buildings is one of the most important landmarks of Pretoria and certainly one of South Africa’s finest buildings. It is without doubt the masterpiece of Herbert Baker’s architecture. When he chose the site for the building, Baker was given a free hand, so he had to decide between Muckleneuk Hill and Meintjeskop. Although Meintjeskop looked south, which meant that the façade of his building would always be in the shade as opposed to the sunny façade which the north facing Muckleneuk Hill would offer, the more imposing location of Meintjeskop settled the matter (Engelbrecht, S.P. 1955: 164). In the face of all opposition Baker chose this disused quarry between two flat shelves on Meintjeskop to form an amphitheatre with its concave bow fronted with twin columns to form the link between two identical administrative buildings. Baker saw this as a symbolic unifying of the two halves of a divided nation after the Anglo-Boer War. It appears that the buildings were first envisaged as offices for the Transvaal Government only, but when the possibility of the union of the four colonies became a practical reality, early in 1909, the programme was amended to allow them to become the seat of the new Union Government (Radford, D. 1988: 62). Baker himself gives the day that the Union Buildings project was first mentioned to him as 2 June 1909 and the date on which official consent was given to his design as 24 November 1909 (Letter 10/1/1911, P.W.D. 13/5267).

He, however, drew a discrete veil over the precise date of his appointment, because he was aware that the Transvaal Cabinet had no legal right to commit the forthcoming Union to such expenditure. In his book *Architecture & Personalities* Baker notes that it was the professional way in which he handled the contract for the Pretoria Railway Station that made him the natural choice for the design of the contemplated Union Buildings (Baker, H. 1944: 57). In this matter Dr F.V. Engelenburg also played an important role (Fisher, R. 2006: 71).

According to the earliest drawings of the Union Buildings by Baker dated 25 June 1909¹¹, the division of the building into two blocks flanking a semicircular colonnade was part of the design from the beginning. In these early drawings the two wings are shown as two stretched versions of the Pretoria Railway Station, but with ends terminating in porticoes. The two towers are absent. In slightly later drawings the fussiness in the wings are cleaned up and simplified and two towers, reminiscent of those of the William and Mary Wings of the Royal Hospital at Greenwich by Sir Christopher Wren, were added. In 1913 the new building is accurately described in *The Builder* as follows:

The buildings, so picturesque and dignified are eminently adapted to a Southern climate their dominating feature being the long, red, low roof, with wide projecting eaves, extending 900 ft. without a break (*The Builder* 3/10/1913:345).

Anton van Wouw's former pupil, Gordon Leith, was playing a major part in interpreting Baker's ideas in detailed drawings for many of the important elements of the buildings at that time (Kruger & Beyers (ed) 1977: 507). Since Leith was seeing Van Wouw regularly in 1909/1910, he must certainly also have played a part in channeling architectural sculpture commissions his way. Another acquaintance of Van Wouw in the building, who most probably was responsible for him obtaining commissions to do sculpture for the Union Buildings, was the master-builder M.C.A. Meischke. He was closely involved in the Union Buildings project. The building contracts for the building were divided between Meischke and Prentice & Mackie - Meischke doing the two wings and Prentice & Mackie the central block and the colonnades. Meischke knew what Van Wouw could do, because shortly before (1906) they had worked together in Johannesburg for the architect, Theophile Schaerer.

The true artistic value of the Union Buildings is found in its decoration. Throughout the buildings there is no unnecessary ornamentation. Arches at strategic points have carved keystones which differ from floor to floor. The beautiful pinky-white sandstone used for facings and sculpture comes from Balmoral Quarries north of Pretoria and contributes to the overall unified effect (*The Builder* 1913: 345). It is especially in the two large inner courtyards that the sculptural effects are most pronounced. On the upper floors there are sculptured cartouches with the coats of arms of the four colonies which formed the Union, supported by full size human figures. On the lower levels the keystones show angel heads, Pan heads and owls. Most of the capitals of the pillars were delicately hand carved according to the models by Benjamin Smith (Rencken, C.R.E. 1989:19). Some of the festoons were designed by the English sculptor, Alfred Broadbent, while many of the heraldic shields, leonine-head keystones and lion fountain heads and other sculptural elements were made by Anton van Wouw¹². The lion heads which Van Wouw made for the fountains at the Union Buildings are exact copies of the ones he did for Meischke and the Swiss architect, Theophile Schaerer on the main entrance to the five-storey Neo-Baroque Transvaalsche Bank en Handels Vereeniging Building in Johannesburg in 1906 (Duffey, A.E. 2008:34). All this carved work points to precise planning and good craftsmanship, such as one would only find in the work of well-seasoned architectural sculptors such as Anton van Wouw. Although the sculptural work that Van Wouw did at the Union Buildings was never listed, one can clearly see his hand in many of the sculptural figures, faces and animal heads on keystones, as well as in the designs of some of the fanlights above the main entrance doors.

Pretoria Technical College, Church Street 1928

This building was designed by Gordon Leith. He won the competition for the design of the building in 1926 and the contract for its erection was signed on 28 April 1928. Leith contracted his old friend, Anton van Wouw, to do the architectural sculpture work for the new building. This consisted of sculptural reliefs for the balconies on the façade and festoons above the arches. On the two rectangular balconies below the windows flanking the main entrance is a high relief panel with a cartouche bearing the letters TC and TK (Technical College and Tegniese Kollege) flanked by putti whose lower bodies evolve into intricate floral scrolls. The putti are repeated on the sides of the balconies and on the corners are flaming torches. Because these sculptural decorations are very obvious on the façade of the building, they definitely contribute to its aesthetic appeal. When viewed from the street level these balconies and festoons with their sculptural reliefs blend into the overall symmetry of the façade of the building. Since the building faces south, the façade is almost always without sunlight and here one notices how Van Wouw aptly has made the reliefs and lettering deeper and more accentuated so as to prevent the pattern and lettering from becoming unreadable. Van Wouw knew that the higher up on a building a relief is set, the deeper must be the undercuts.

Old Pretoria Abattoir Building, Schoeman Street West

Although no records could be traced concerning Van Wouw's involvement with the making of the bovine head on the central pediment of the façade of this building, numerous older residents of Pretoria have indicated that he was the sculptor. In its accurate realism this head conforms to Anton van Wouw's style of architectural sculpture and was most probably produced during the early 1930's.

Conclusion

In considering the many sculptural works which Anton van Wouw created for buildings in Pretoria and Johannesburg, it becomes all the more regrettable that Mrs Van Wouw destroyed all the sculptor's documents after his death in 1945. This would have given us exact information about all the buildings for which he had made sculptural work. Van Wouw rarely made drawings for his architectural work and very few maquettes have survived. As he was often sub-contracted by building-contractors to produce architectural sculpture, many of the contracts or building plans do not mention his name as the creator of the decorations of a building. Our knowledge comes mainly from newspaper articles on the buildings and from notes made by the architects or building contractors.

From the foregoing discussion of Van Wouw's architectural sculpture one realizes the merits of the work of a well-trained sculptor above mass-produced pre-fabricated decoration, so often utilized by late-nineteenth century architects for their buildings. The contracted experienced sculptor understands how issues of style, scale, proportion, lighting and activation of the surrounding space can compliment the architecture of the building and give it added aesthetic value. It even becomes more obvious when sculptor and architect works in close collaboration from the planning stages of a building, as was the case with Van Wouw and Soff with their Reserved Investment Building on Church Square. The decoration then becomes an integral part of the building and architecture becomes an art. Van Wouw was a prolific designer of architectural sculpture and the few surviving buildings bearing his work show his skill as an excellent craftsman and should be protected at all costs. By preserving the remaining examples

of his architectural sculpture future generations will not only have the privilege to admire the skill with which this sculptor adapted his sculptural work to the style of the building for which it was made, but also to see how he took into consideration important factors such as lighting, angle from which it is viewed, texture and simplification of detail of the sculpture and size and proportion of the sculpture in relation to the building and its surrounding space.

Notes

1. Apart from the State architect, Sytze Wopkes Wierda (1839-1911), there were other important architects with offices in Pretoria, such as Klaas van Rijse jr., Willem J. de Zwaan & Frans Soff, Vixseboxse & D.E. Wentink, the Wijers Bros., John Ellis, J.W. Leslie Simmons & Tom Clark, Ford & Co., Emley & Scott, Moffat & McIntosh and Herbert Baker & Associates. A search through *Longland's Pretoria Directory for 1899* identified 17 architects practicing in the city. They were J.D. Anderson, F.A. Bodde, C.A. Bomlach, Carter & McIntosh, Granger Fleming & John Ellis, J. Gisseleire, J. Th. Huysse, J.C. Kraan, V. van Lissa, James Mackey, Klaas van Rijse, J.W. Leslie Simmons, E.B. Wijers, W.J. de Zwaan and S. Wierda. See State Library 1979. *Longland's Pretoria Directory for 1899* Pretoria:State Library Reprint, p. 182.
2. Building-contractors, who often sub-contracted a variety of craftsmen, included John Johnston Kirkness, John Munro, Charles Clark, the Te Groen Bros., M.C.A. Meischke, Herbst & Hocking, W.H. Millar & Son, B. & F. Wheeler, W.R. Dey and many more. In *Longland's Pretoria Directory for 1899* no less than 34 building contractors are listed. See Longland's 1979: 185.
3. This building in the Italian Renaissance style was designed by Sytze Wierda in collaboration with Klaas van Rijse junior, during 1887-88 and was built by the Scotsman, John J. Kirkness. When it was completed in January 1892 it cost £138,000. See Picton-Seymour, D. 1977. *Victorian Buildings in South Africa* Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, p.276.
4. In *De Volksstem* of 2 February 1891 the following is said with regard to Van Wouw working in the basement of the building: "In een dezer vertrekken is de heer Van Wouw bezig met vaardige hand het Wapen der Republiek te boetseeren....".
5. Towards the end of 1891 an identical coat of arms, also by Van Wouw, was placed over the entrance of the Old Fort in Johannesburg, also designed by Sytze Wierda. See Telford, A.A. 1969. *Johannesburg. Some sketches of the Golden metropolis* Cape Town: Books of Africa (Pty) Ltd., p. 89).
6. A pencil drawing of Sytze Wierda by Anton van Wouw from this period exists. (See Pretoriana 72:220.)
7. In an article in *De Volksstem* of 9 February 1891, the writer mirrors Van Wouw's own wishes for the future, when he writes: "De heer Van Wouw heeft? met het eerste stuk arbeid, dat hy verrichtte, reeds de aandacht van kunstkeners weten te trekken. Wij? hopen dat onze boumeesters en niet het minst het groote publiek zyne gaven zullen waardeeren en dat nog meenig werk van zyn hand onze woningen zal verfraaien".
8. In 1954 the Provincial Administrator, Dr Willem Nicol, decided to have the old Z.A.R. coat of arms in the gable of the old Raadsaal restored and the architect Hansie Botha was instructed to remove the British coat of arms. He eventually commissioned the sculptor Willem de Sanderez Hendriks to make an exact replica of Van Wouw's coat of arms. It is the one that can now still be seen on the building. See *Pretoria News* 8.9.1954.
9. In 1902 Herbert Baker opened up an office in Johannesburg, after Lord Milner, the new Governor of the Transvaal, had invited him there so that he might "aid and introduce there a better and more permanent order of architecture".
10. This was not the first time that Van Wouw did architectural sculpture for Herbert Baker. When John Dale Lace commissioned Baker to design a house for him in the Arts and Crafts style in Parktown, which later became known as "Northlands", it was Van Wouw who did the designs for the fanlights (See Duffey, A.E. 2002. "Anton van Wouw en vroeë Johannesburg" *South African Journal of Art History* 17 : 28).
11. This early drawing is at present in the Africana Library in Johannesburg and was presented to the library by General J.C. Smuts' son in 1951.
12. M.L. du Toit (1933:27) confirms that Van Wouw made these heads, when he lists among Van Wouw's work "...Leeukoppe vir die Uniegebou" (leonine heads for the Union Buildings).

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