



## CHAPTER 5



# DESIGN INFLUENCE

## 5.1 Pretoria Mode



After a visit to House Jooste (designed by the architect Karl Jooste in 1967) an interest was formed in the influence that modernism (Brazilian Modernism in particular) had on the architecture of Pretoria. Aesthetic similarities between the proposed design of the dissertation and the Brazilian Modern principles have resulted in a brief study of its relevance in Pretoria and the particular works of Norman Eaton.

According to Gus Gerneke in *The Architecture of the Transvaal*, the similarities in climatic conditions of South Africa to South America gave rise to a more profound following of the Brazilian Movement, as the apparent impracticality (flat roofs were difficult to waterproof in the Transvaal thunderstorms, large windows were inappropriate without overhangs in the Highveld sun) of the austere International style became obvious. Brazilian Modernism became acceptable to patrons and the general public alike.



Fig. 5.1 Brick detail of the Little Theatre



This trend started with a talented bunch of young students at the Witwatersrand School of Architecture. Refusing to conform to the conventional principles they were taught, they strived to put the Transvaal on the international architectural map.

One of the breakthroughs of this Transvaal Group was their publication of *zero hour* on 1 April 1933. This publication affirmed the presence of Modernism in the Transvaal.

## **NORMAN EATON**

One of the pioneering Pretoria architects of the 1940's and 1950's was Norman Eaton. His designs followed noticeably the elements of the International Style - rounded edges, strip and corner windows and elements like staircases clearly articulated – but with a more regionalist approach. He preferred eaved roofs and protective cantilevers over openings, while using natural materials and traditional craftsmanship.

## **The Ministry of Transport Building, Pretoria**

Norman Eaton was commissioned in 1944 to design the Ministry of Transport Building. This immense complex in Pretoria would have housed more than a thousand workers, with facilities like recreation halls for 400 people, a restaurant and a roof garden with a swimming pool. It was during this time that Eaton went to the Americas in order to study new developments in office block design.

The design of the Ministry of Transport Building was to be the first Modern Civic building in South Africa and also the first which was directly influenced by the new Brazilian architecture, owing much to the Rio de Janeiro Ministry of Health and Education.

Evident in the juxtaposition of the wings, the façades with fins on a grid and adjustable *brise soleil*, sculptured lift towers and the introduction of dry “moveable” partition walls providing flexible office space.



## Pretoria Netherlands Bank

Designed in 1953 the Netherlands bank was a summary of the Brazilian notions used in the Ministry of Transport building. Vertical hardwood louvers were used on the western façade of the building as solar shading towards the harsh afternoon sun. On his travels to Brazil, Eaton met

with Roberto Burle Marx (acclaimed Brazilian landscape architect) who inspired him to make use of a roof garden. Eaton also took exemplary care in his projects to have exterior space compliment the building.

Fig. 5.2 Netherlands Bank, Pretoria



Also the Pretoria Wachthuis (police administration building) owes much to the Brazilian Influence - the use of an arcade paved in marble mosaic murals that are linked by a sweeping double stairway to the upper level, the introduction of *brise soleil* on the façade and elegant steel helical stairs in the double volumes of the ground level shops.

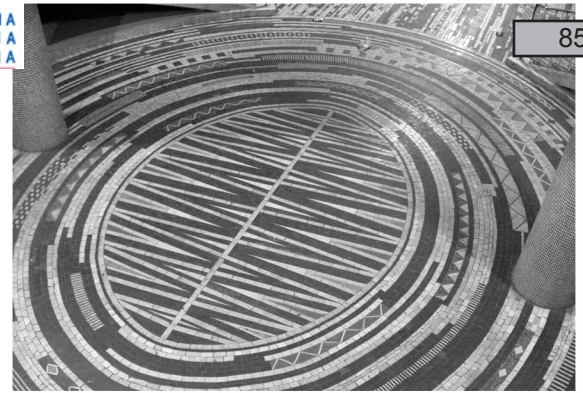


Fig. 5.4 Mosaic floor detail in Polley's Arcade

Fig. 5.3 The Wachthuis







The reason why the Brazilian influence was so dominant in Pretoria, is explained by Gerneke (1998:215):

“Afrikaners, on gaining political power, espoused the avant-garde to proclaim their achievements. This was most evident in ecclesiastical buildings; while English churches were generally safely traditional in the fifties, Afrikaans congregations championed daring buildings, often with crude results. Most likely the young Pretoria architects simply rejected the traditionalists. What is more, the Transvaal Group had broken fallow land a decade earlier, rating a seedbed for new design, which later led to a Transvaal mutation of the Modern Movement via an affinity with the bold Brazilian school.”

With the commissioning of other civic buildings (Meat Board Building by Helmut Stauch and the Transvaal Provincial Administration Building by Meiring and Naudé with Moerdyk and Watson) the popularity of the Brazilian influence grew. New buildings on the University of Pretoria’s campus were by now an evident manifestation of the Brazil-Pretoria architectural axis, flaunting *brise soleil*, pilotis and glazed tiles.

Fig 5.5 Horizontal Brise Soleil of the Transvaal Provincial Administration Building



# House Jooste 1967

Karl Jooste



Fig. 5.6

# Little Theatre 1940

Norman Eaton

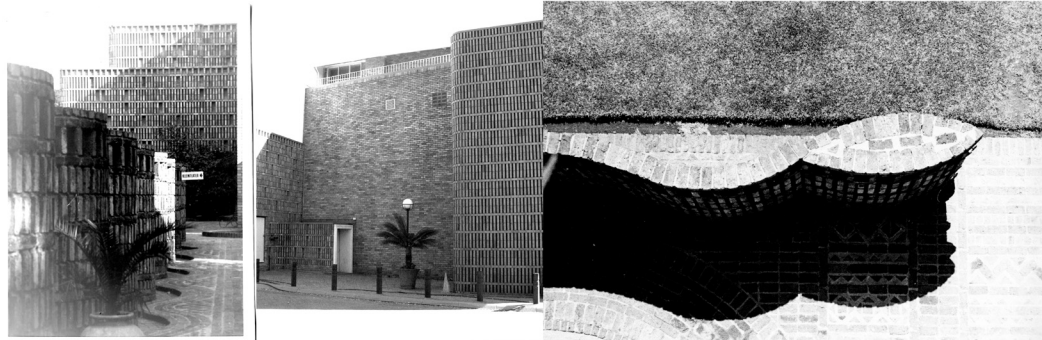


Fig. 5.7

# Barclays Bank

Norman Eaton



Fig. 5.8

# Polley's Arcade

Norman Eaton



Fig. 5.9





## Netherlands Bank

1953

Norman Eaton

Fig. 5.10

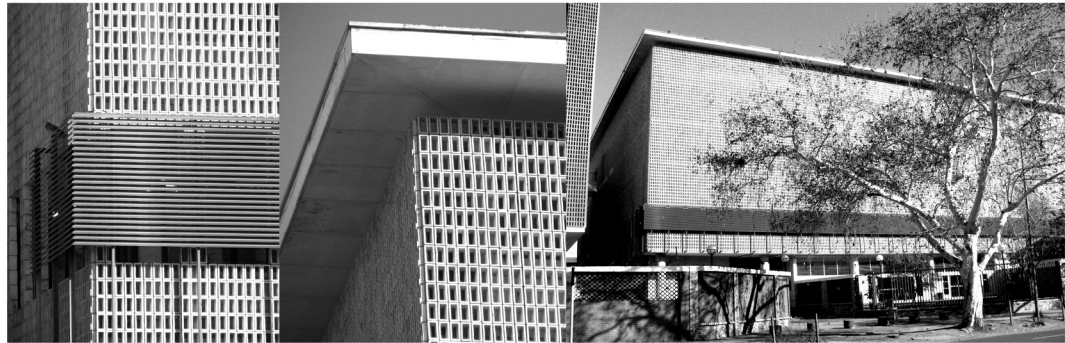


## Pretoria Technical College - Eastern Block

1967

Eaton & Louw

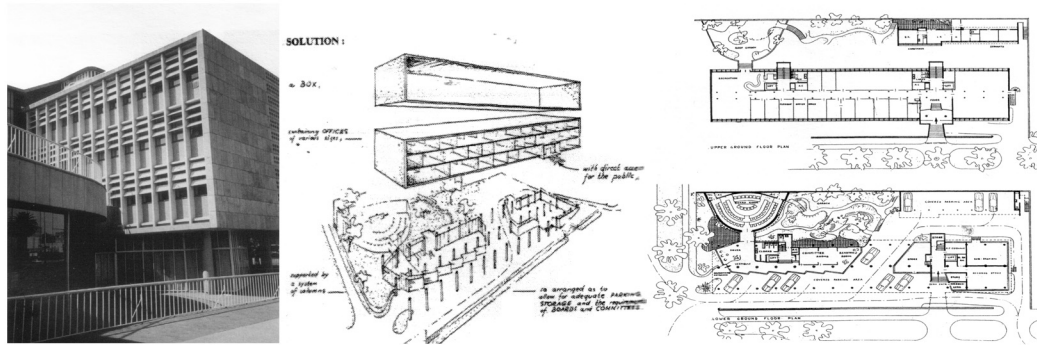
Fig. 5.11



## Meat Board Building 1950

Hellmut Stauch

Fig. 5.12



## Transvaal Provincial Administration Building

1962

Meiring & Naude, Moerdyk & Watson

Fig. 5.13







Fig. 5.14