CHAPTER VII - PRETORIA 1952 TO 1968

Competitions: 1952 to 1969

1952, 1953 and 1954 were good years for competitions and these Stauch found rewarding. The tension, excitement and long hours of hard work coupled with the celebrations at the end of it helped to create team spirit and a great sense of involvement.(1) (figs. 56 to 58)

His first success in 1952 was in a competition for architects registered with the SWA Institute for the design of the Windhoek Library, Archives and Museum. For Stauch, this had an ripple effect on his practice; he had for purposes of participating in this competition, and later to handle the erection of the complex, established an office in Windhoek and further commissions helped to keep this office well occupied.(2)

The second of these competitions was one for low-cost native housing. The plans which Stauch submitted were modular in plan and easily expandable. Stauch was awarded a first and a second place and two honourable mentions.(3) (fig. 59)

During 1954 the "Star Housing Competition" gave him a further opportunity to compete; he took third place on the S-oriented site in this.(4) (fig. 60)

Later, he was to take a second place in the Virginia housing competition (mid 1959) (figs. 61 and 62), a third place in the Pinelands/Bishop Lavis competition (mid 1963) and joint first place overall, with a second on detail design in the Johannesburg Civic Centre competition (mid 1961).(5)

A submission to the Small Homes Bureau of the Institute of South African Architects (1957) was also successful although it is not known to what extent this design was used.(6)

Although he continued to take an interest in competitions, Stauch began to find that the pressure of work inhibited his participation. He drew documents for at least six other local and two international competitions between 1955 and 1968, but made only four unsuccessful submissions - for projects in Welkom (1955), Kimberley (1957), Kiel (1968) and Vereeniging Civic Centre (1969).

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1. Sternagel, W.H.E., Director, Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.
2. Stauch Vorster archives
3. Ibid
4. SAAR, April 1955, p 43
5. Stauch Vorster archieves
6. Letter from Institute of South African Architects (1957.07.02)

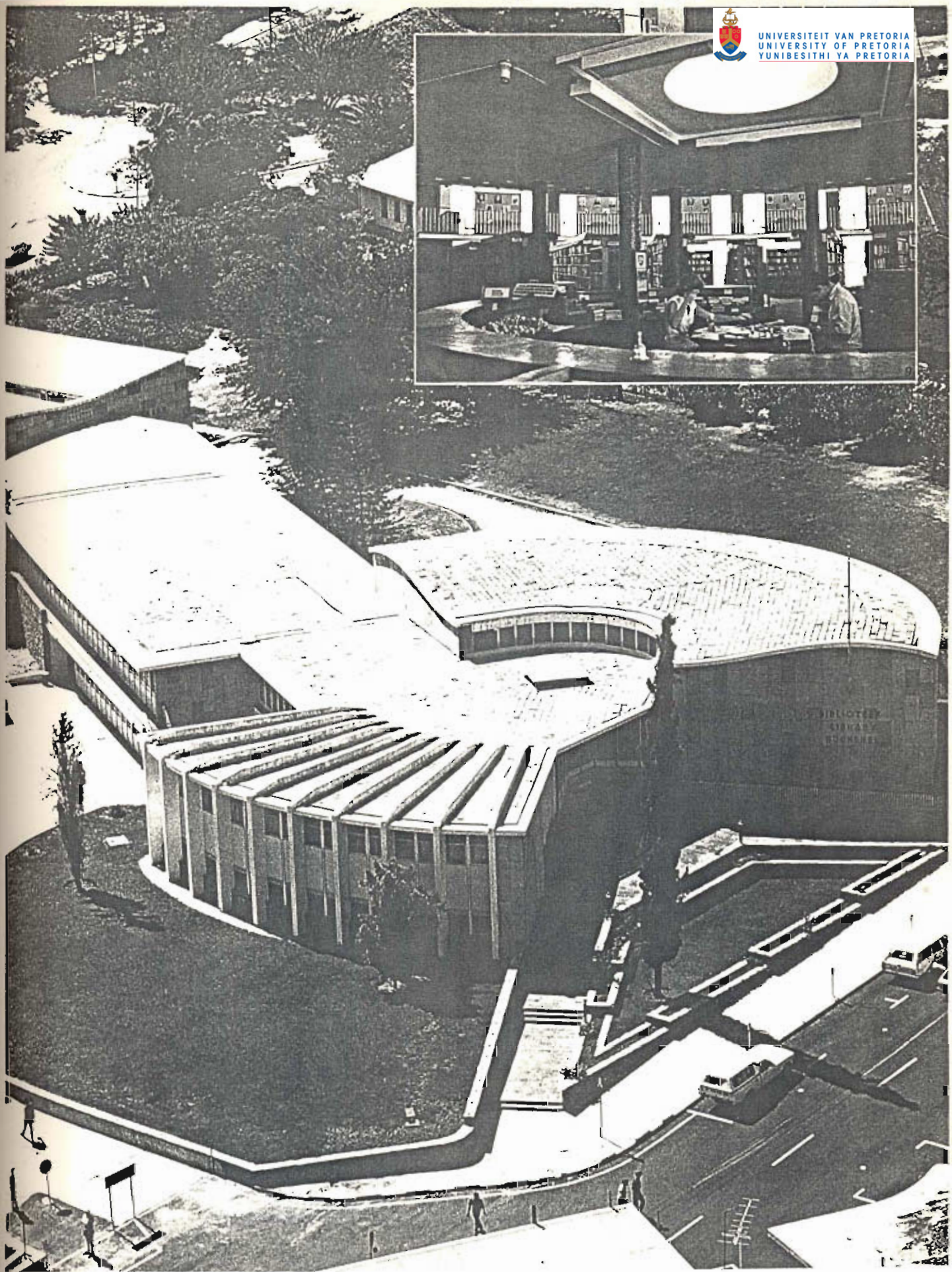


FIG. 56 Windhoek Library, Archives and Museum. Aerial view showing clearly the articulated form of the building, typical of Stauch

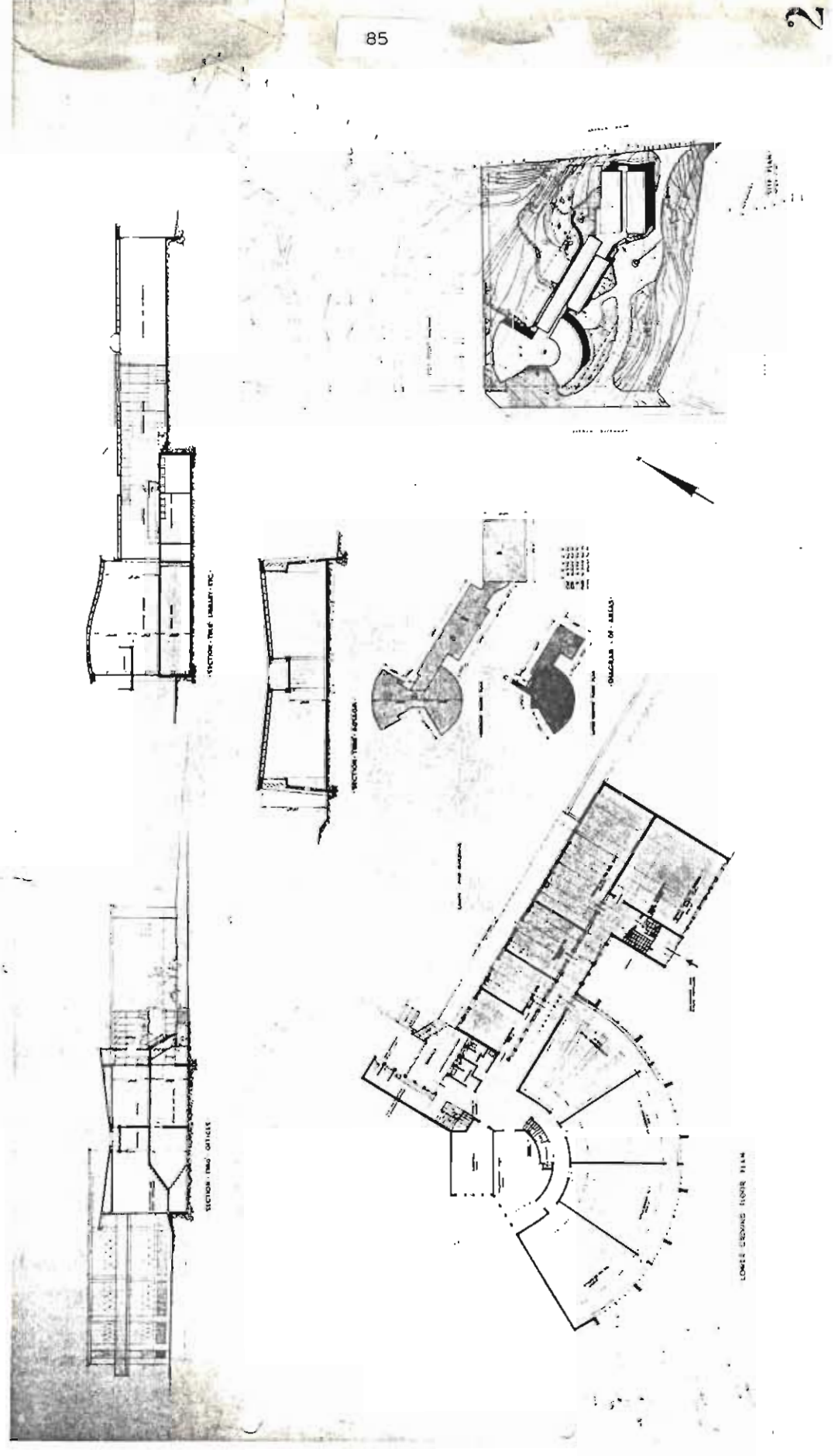


FIG. 57 Windhoek Library, Archives and Museum; site plan, plan, section.

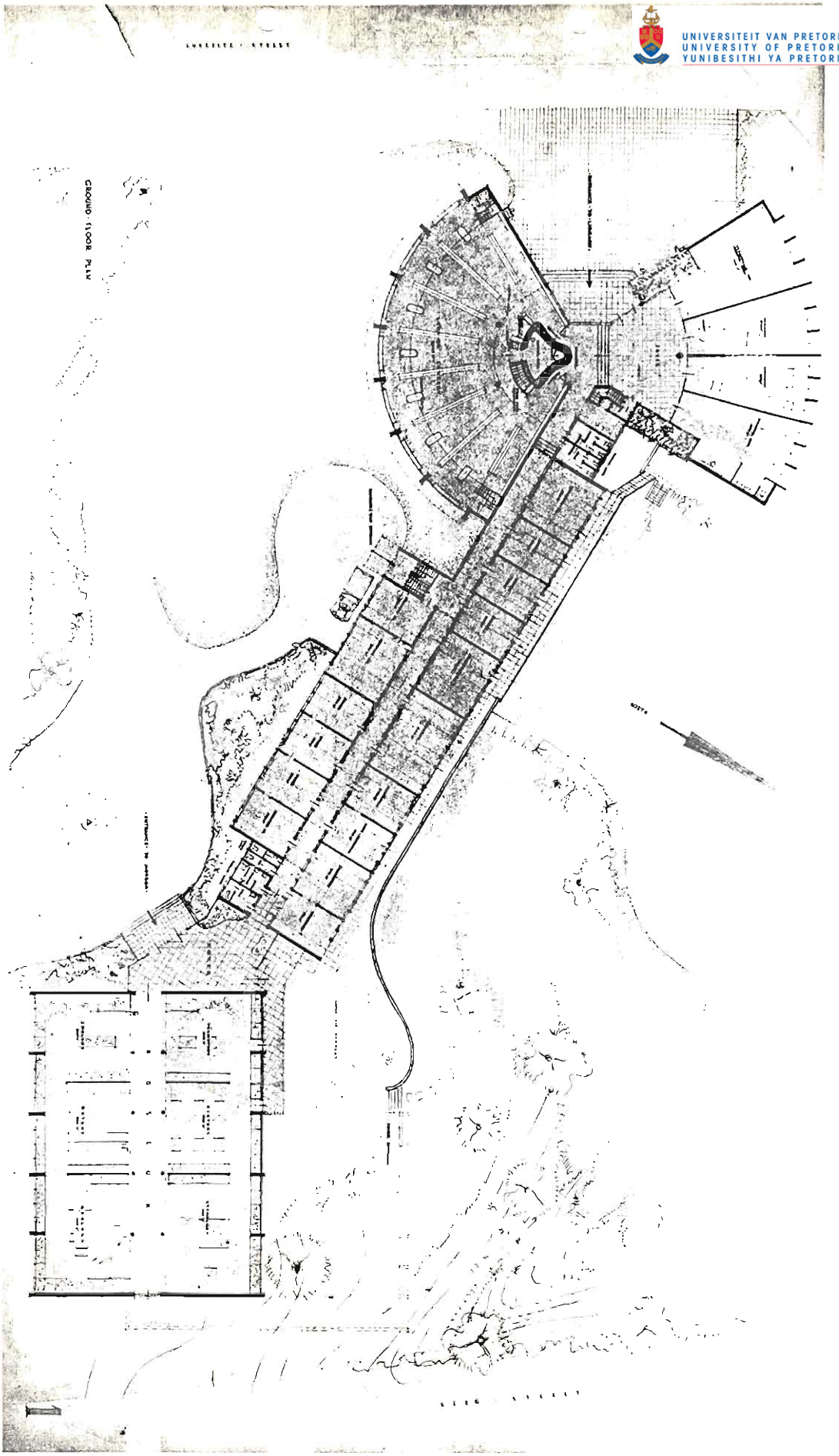


FIG. 58 Windhoek Library, Archives and Museum; plan.

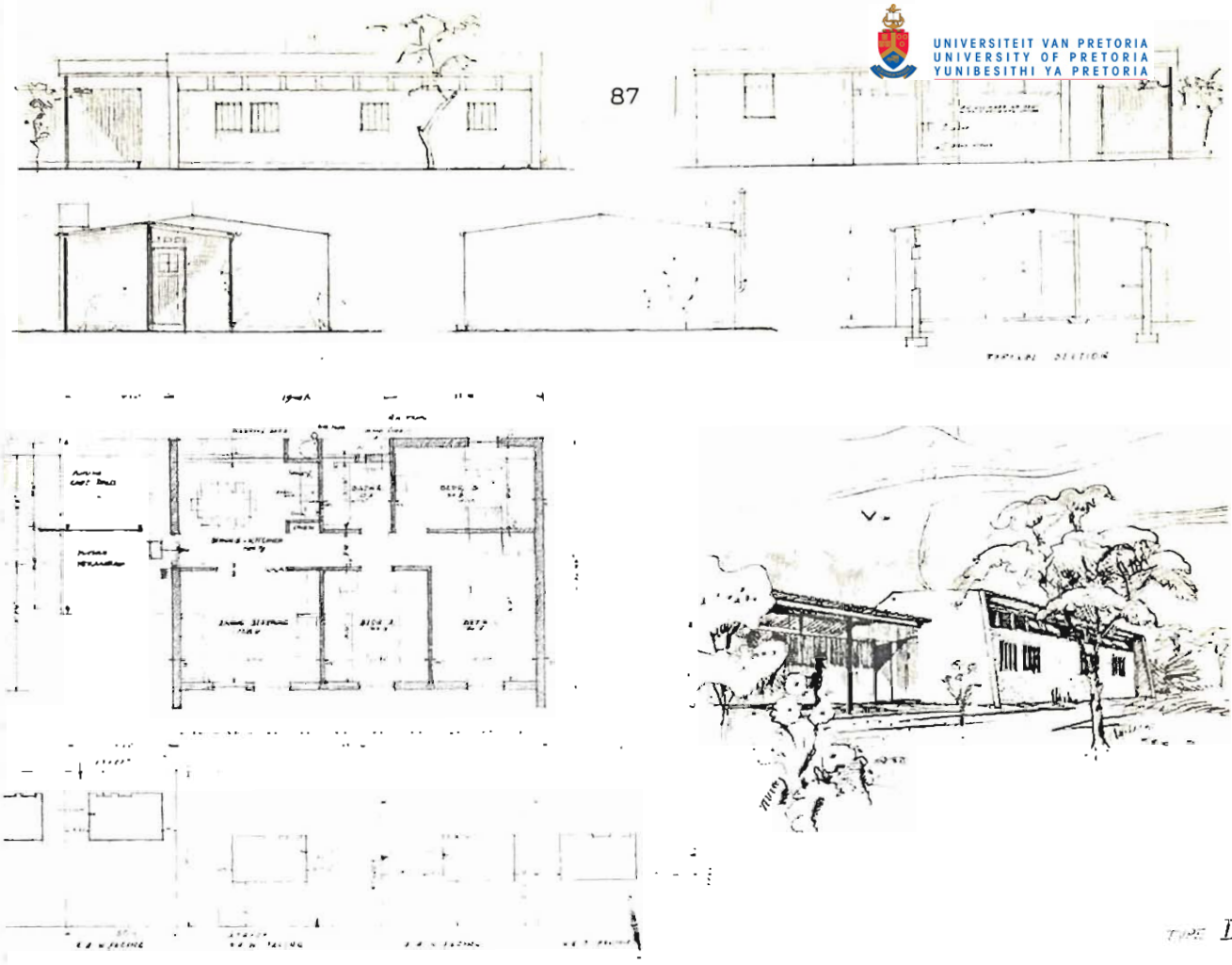
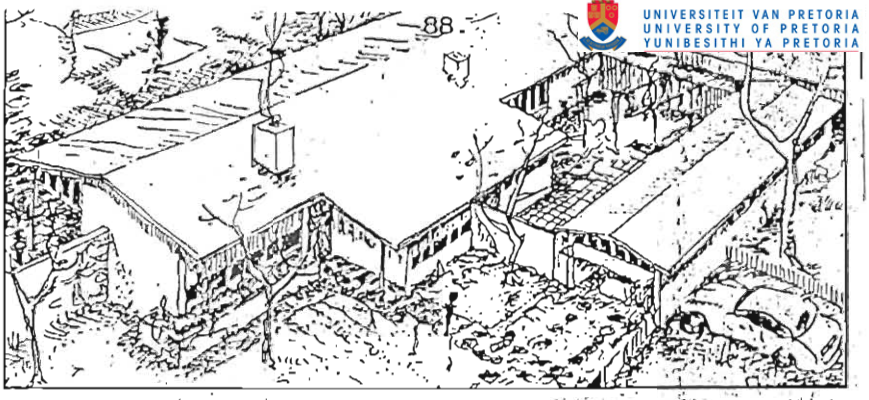
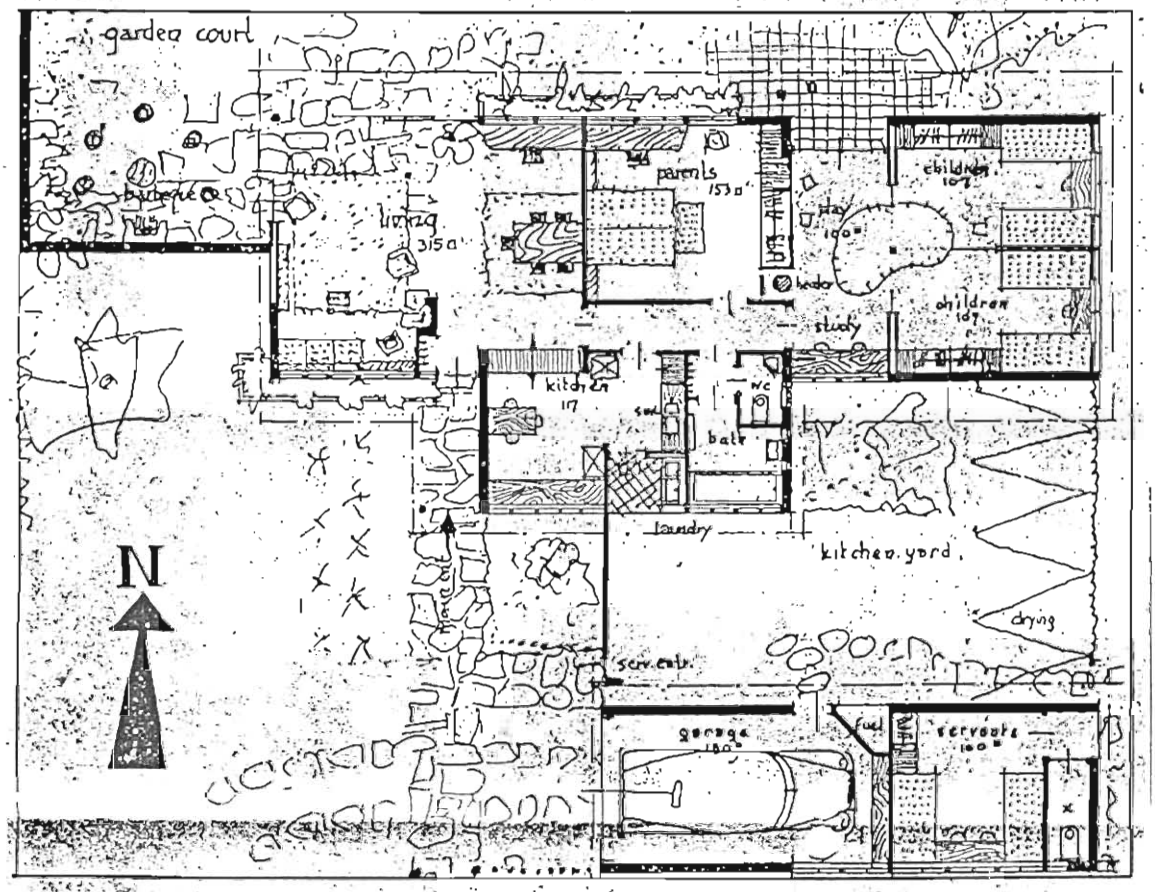


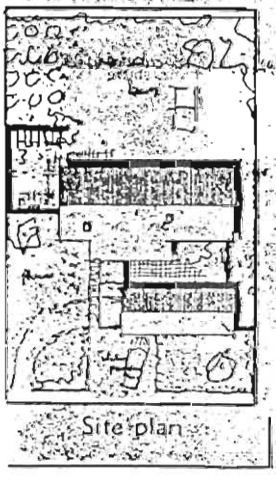
FIG. 59 Native Housing Competition : two of the prize-winning entries.

Star Model House No. 10





Garden Court and Barbecue



THE accompanying design, one of the 16 selected for publication from the 207 entries received in The Star Model House competition, was submitted by Mr. H. W. E. Stauch, M.I.A., of Pretoria.

In his report, Mr. Stauch says that an important feature of the design is the garden court (with barbecue) that adjoins the living area of the house. The court is open to the north-east, and the wall on the western boundary of the property protects it from the late western sun. The same wall reflects the morning sun and tends to keep the garden court warm throughout the day.

A feature of the interior of the house is the extension of the children's bedrooms into a utility area for play and study.

A heating stove (shown on the plan) heats this area as well as the bedrooms. The warm air into the main bedroom can be controlled by adjustable louvres.

PLUMBING

The plumbing is centralized—sinks, laundry, bath and lavatories are in close proximity. Provision is made for an electric geyser, but, if preferred, a slow combustion stove can be installed without trouble.

The walls are of stock bricks with fireface and are finished externally in colour wash. In the living rooms the walls are bagged and colour washed; in the bathroom and kitchen they are plastered and painted.

Floors to the entrance and living and utility areas may be of slate, tiles, bricks on edge or woodblocks. In the bedrooms the floors are of woodblocks. The bathroom and kitchen floors are mastipave with grano skirtings.

The estimated cost of the house is £2,663. This includes £25 for slate paving, £20 for the barbeque and £17 for split pole fence.

FIG. 60 Star Model House Competition : the prize-winning entry.

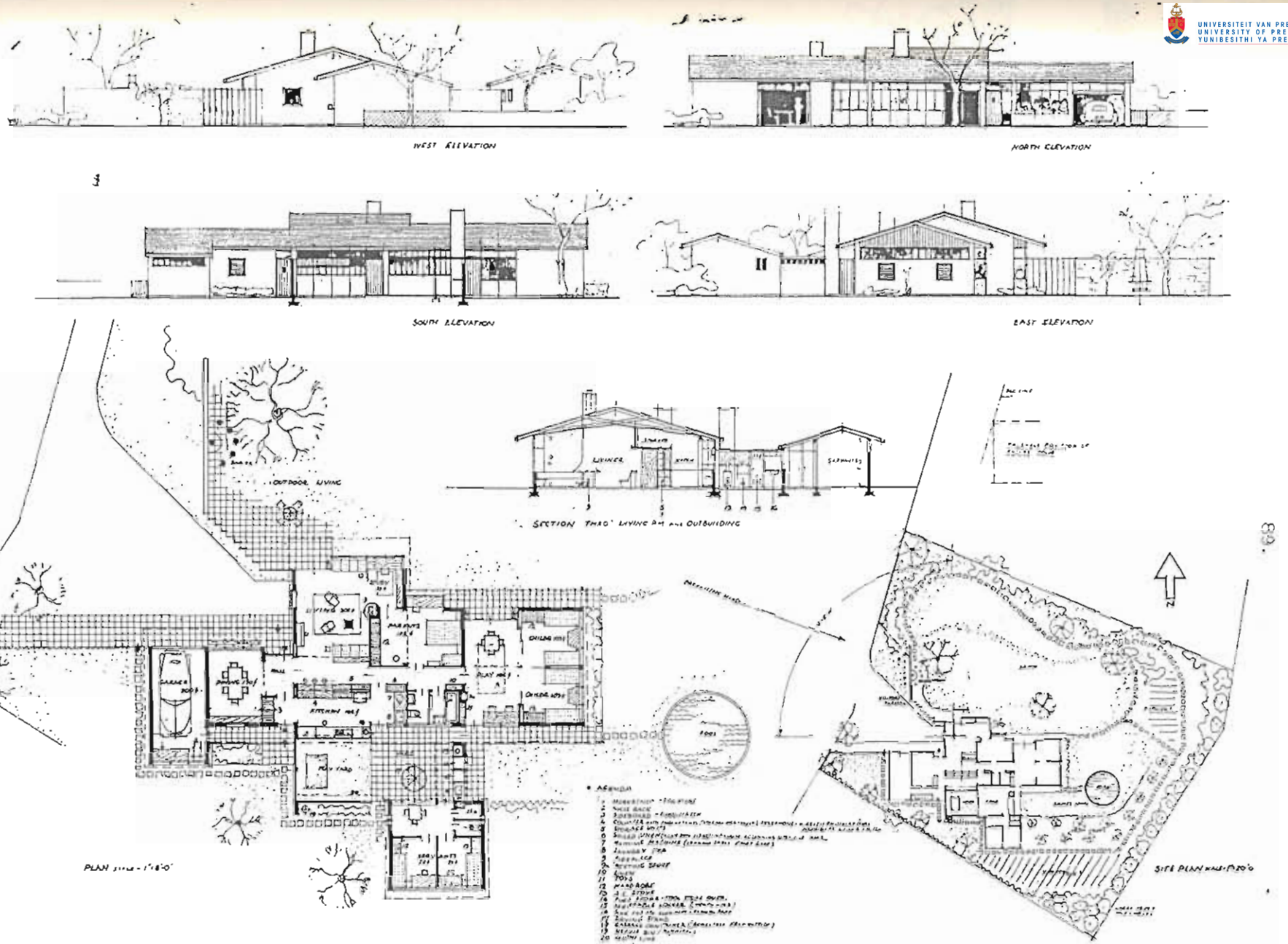
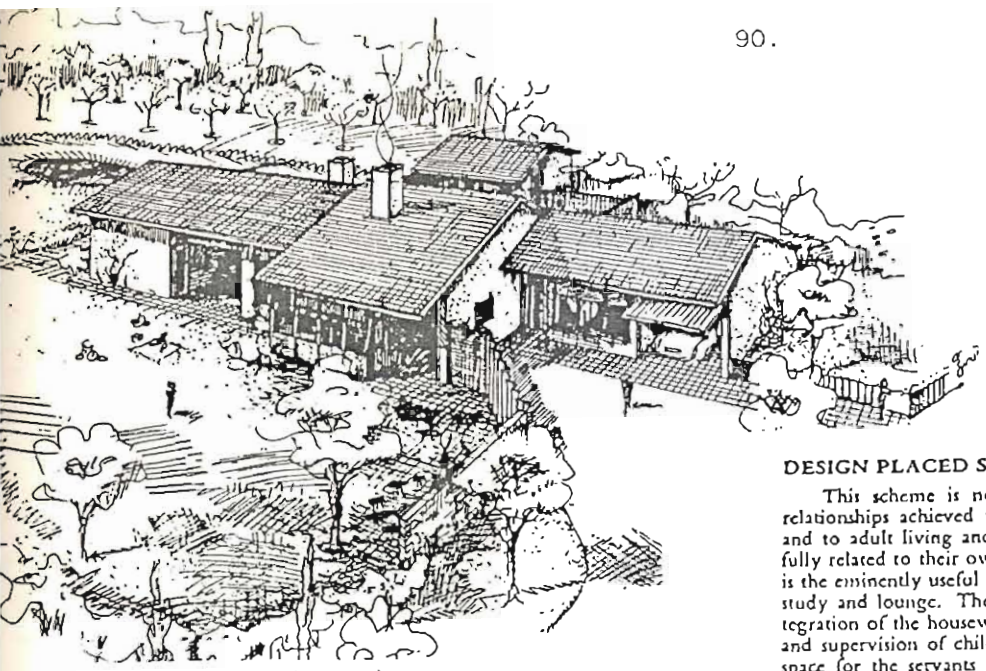


FIG. 61 The Virginia House Competition : The second-prize-winning entry.

S.A. ARCHITECTURAL RECORD, NOVEMBER, 1959

DESIGN PLACED SECOND, NO. 80.

H. W. E. STAUCH AND PARTNERS, PRETORIA



DESIGN PLACED
SECOND, H. W. E. STAUCH
AND PARTNERS, PRETORIA.

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE

DESIGN PLACED SECOND NO. 80.

This scheme is noteworthy for the extremely successful internal relationships achieved within both the zones allocated to the children, and to adult living and entertainment. Both zones are in turn successfully related to their own outdoor spaces. A particularly pleasing feature is the eminently useful if unusual relationship between parents' bedroom, study and lounge. The planning of the kitchen permits a complete integration of the housewife's activities with all functions of living, dining and supervision of children. The introduction of a north-facing dining space for the servants is an interesting innovation. The pedestrian approach past the garage opening and dining room windows is a disadvantage. The provision of visitors' parking and the access to the garage need further consideration to clarify and ease the vehicular access to and egress from the garage and to avoid confusion with visiting cars. The triangular spaces on the southern boundary are wasteful and awkward to develop. The subdivision of the main house into three volumes mitigates against a unified architectural character in a scheme of this somewhat limited estent. The scheme however derives considerable charm from its informality and careful modulation on a basic window unit.

AUTHORS' REPORT

GENERAL

House and outbuildings form a homogeneous architectural whole, built of materials available and manufactured in South Africa. Sitting for maximum benefit of North and East facing and to obtain distance of view. Screen wall with the barbeque shields the outdoor living area from the prevailing North-West wind and a louvred screen can be adjusted according to weather. The living room projection screens the children's section and play area from the prevailing wind. The house is placed well back on the site so that a spacious garden can be developed with maximum privacy.

To facilitate reception of strangers, the points of entry must be concentrated in one section. Visitors enter into the hall, and deliveries are made opposite this position at the servery. There is no need for strangers to enter the enclosed court which serves solely domestic purposes.

The view to North and West is unobstructed from living area and dining room as well as outdoor living area, which cannot be obstructed by future development on the adjoining site either.

PLAN

Hall—as the point of entry, can be shut off in bad weather to act as wind trap. Living area, dining room and kitchen area are directly linked with the hall.

Living Area—serves recreation and entertaining for adults. It is linked with study which is divisible for privacy. For large scale entertaining the living room and study combine with hall and dining room and further with the outdoor living space to form a spacious entertainment area. The fireplace is centrally situated to serve living room, study and also parents bedroom if required. Possibility of incorporation of the *parents bedroom*, which can also double as workroom, into the adult living space by link to study.

The counter between living room and kitchen allows the housewife to participate in conversation and to overlook living area in servantless times. Telephone and wireless are located here for operation from either side.

Dining Room—Separate unit to facilitate the family having meals together. Broad link with living area over Hall. It can be used as guest room or reception room when strangers are not desired in the living area.

Children's Section—Two bedrooms can be linked with one another and with the playroom by sliding partitions to form a large activity area. Various degrees of privacy can be ontained by adjusting these partitions.

Windows to Bedrooms: broad clerestoreys for general light and ventilations, burglarproofed spotwindows for outlook.

Broad link of Playroom with North lawn; door to outside play area on South.

Roof overhang forms covered link with the service yard and with connecting door open, the games lawn can be overlooked from the kitchen.

Service Section—From the kitchen and its adjuncts any part of the house is readily accessible. Delivery entry through servery. Laundry accessible from bedrooms and next to soiled linen cupboard. Yard doubles as enclosed children's play area under direct supervision.

Servant's Rooms—are directly connected with the service area and have a North facing glassed-in verandah as sitting room.

Garden Layout—Outdoor living space adjoins the Living-area. Heavy planting protects this space against the West winds, as well as screen wall.

Games lawn with swimming pool in convenient relationship to play room and also under supervision from the kitchen. Uninterrupted Lawn to North and East Flower garden, fruit trees and vegetables in convenient proximity to the kitchen. Circular "van Meertan" type pool can be cheaply constructed at a later stage, and if raised, vegetables garden and fruit trees can be irrigated.

FIG. 62 The Virginia House Competition; perspective. This is one of the best examples of Stauch's style of presentation.

In preparing for this last competition he experimented with the use of a team, allowing each person to "go and do his own little bit, his own sketches and his own models and tabling them all and then synthesizing the inputs, which was contrary to Hellmut's way of working. He would have led what everybody was doing and would have worked it up into something that would finally have the stamp of Stauch. This Civic Centre 'thing' became a committee solution. His staff's insistence on discussing, defending, substantiating and explaining why, just tired Hellmut and he turned his back on it. He was involved in it as leader of the practice but not as a design man at all. He merely seemed to accept it and to allow it to go out under his name."(7) The results of this approach were disappointing to all the partners in the firm, including Stauch; the costs were high in terms of time, money and effort and this was to be the last competition attempted during his lifetime.(8)

7.2 Further Expansion: 1952 - 1960

During this period Stauch's sphere of influence had extended considerably. In Pietersburg he was involved with the design of the Civic Centre and in Windhoek with Carl List House - buildings different in form but having very similar detailing, especially related to sun control. His firm control in these two schemes was apparent.(9) In addition to these, he designed noteworthy houses in Pretoria for Marquard de Villiers (1953), in Pietersburg for D. Deetlefs (1957) and J.A. Botes (1959), apart from his involvement with virtually all the work on the boards at the time. His staff was again increasing and larger premises were needed. During 1960 drawings were commenced for a building in Park Street where his offices would be housed in combination with a block of flats, under the the name of Atalanta,(10) and the move was made as soon as the building was complete.

7.3 The opening of two more offices

In Johannesburg, the old Commercial Exchange building was being demolished to make way for the new Netherlands Bank Head Office (fig. 63) and the opening of another office in Johannesburg to provide the required

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7. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview
8. Stauch Vorster records
9. Stauch Vorster records
10. Ibid

MODEL OF COMPLETE PROJECT. RIGHT HAND PART COMPLETED IN DECEMBER, 1962. LEFT HAND SIDE SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION 15th MARCH, 1963 (BASEMENTS, GROUND FLOOR AND MEZZANINE, FINAL COMPLETION DECEMBER, 1963.

FIRST SIGNS OF DEMOLITION, CORNER MAIN AND HARRISON STREETS, SITE OF LEGAL AND GENERAL INSURANCE CO. LTD., DEC. 1959.

This Album, containing photographs of what has met the eye from the start until near completion of Phase One of the new premises for the Head Office and the Fox-Simmonds-Main Streets Branch in Johannesburg of the Netherlands Bank of South Africa Limited, is presented to

HELMUTH W.E. STAUCH,

Architect, in memory of the fine collaboration with his firm during the period of the conception and execution of this Project, and with best wishes for its finalisation.
Johannesburg, January, 1962.

F. H. Crous

Chairman and General Manager.

FIG. 63 Netherlands Bank Johannesburg. Letter of appreciation from the client, photograph showing demolition of old building, and photograph of model of completed project.

level of client service was inevitable. In 1965, the commission for the rebuilding of the old Queens Hotel in Sea Point under the proviso that an office was opened in Cape Town, was to expand the office yet further.(11)

In 1958 Robin Vorster had joined the firm which now, as it grew, needed management skills in addition to the available design skills. The need for management arose not only from the volume of work but also from Stauch's tendency to disregard the cost of the constant design changes made during the entire course of the building process, making profitability an affair of chance. In retrospect, and analysing the project records between 1950 and 1970, this probably led to a far greater volume of work than would have been the case without Vorster's active involvement.(12)

The scope and character of the firm were affected by this growth; Stauch worked on the "great man" principle and a pyramid structure, and expected to be intimately in touch with every project on every board. As the office expanded, this became less feasible and the number of buildings with which he was involved reduced accordingly, a circumstance which he did not happily accept.(13) Eventually, the large "pyramid" with Stauch at its head, was supplemented by smaller "pyramids" dealing with the overflow of work beyond his direct control. For some years he had tended to allow others to deal with those projects in which he was less interested(14) and in the same way he now concentrated on those buildings which appealed to him most. Some of these buildings can be more easily identified than others and it is worth examining them.

7.4 Various buildings: 1960 to 1968

In Pietersburg, Stauch designed the Saambou office building (1960) on a narrow East-facing site with a stepped facade and sun-control by means of "eyebrow" slabs on the North and East.

He was closely involved with a few of the more interesting (or occasionally larger) houses, such as those for H. Slabbert, Dendron (1961), C.J.H. Kruger, Bethal (1962), Hildenhagen, Johannesburg (1963), M. Schiess, Pretoria (1963), S. Jansen, Nelspruit (1963), J.P. Lamb, Johannesburg (1964), J.P. Coetzee, Northcliff (1965), Dunston cottage (1966), various house plan types for "Garden and Home" (1968), the Land

11. Ibid
12. Stauch Vorster records
13. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.
14. Wepener, F.J., Ex-partner of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview

and Agricultural Bank, Pietersburg (1958) and B. Rech, Duiwelskloof (195-) as well as the more interesting commissions such as Pietersburg Information Bureau (1968). At this time he was still in touch with most projects on the drawing boards and would discuss these, modifying, commenting, or occasionally even discarding them entirely and starting again. But the structure of the firm was changing, almost imperceptibly, to accommodate a wider spread of designers.

Stauch gave the President Hotel in Johannesburg (1963) a great deal of attention and interest related to the building's mass, finishing and public spaces but he was less interested in the interior decoration, leaving that to the American interior designer, Tom Lee, with whom he clashed in opinion. His attitude towards interior and exterior decoration is clearly defined in an interview with T J R Scholtz who said "... the one thing he would never do was make patterns for the sake of making patterns. The only time he moved in that direction was when he afforded sculptural artists the opportunity to help adorn his buildings and was the only time he would consider art-for-art's-sake or pattern-for-pattern sake whatever. He would give these artists a pretty free rein but in a very controlled section of his work - i.e. he would say 'there is a wall or there is a space, or there is an element with which you can go and do your thing'.[15]

Bosman Building and Walter Mansions, (1962) were built on neighbouring sites in Johannesburg.

Zethushof, (1964), a block of flats in Pretoria, was one of the tallest residential blocks Stauch had produced, yet not intimidating as many high-rise flats can be. Size and scale were not problems to Stauch, although he preferred smaller-scaled buildings,[16] but his concept sketches were based on the individual within the building having maximum privacy. (fig. 64 and 65).

Since he was so actively involved with sailing, it was understandable that he was frequently also involved with the built environment of sailing clubs. This included the first club-houses of the Transvaal Yacht Club (1956) and Mountain Yacht Club (1960), both on difficult, steeply sloping, poorly orientated sites; both still in constant use, enlarged by occasionally insensitive additions, but in each case retaining a great deal of character and charm.

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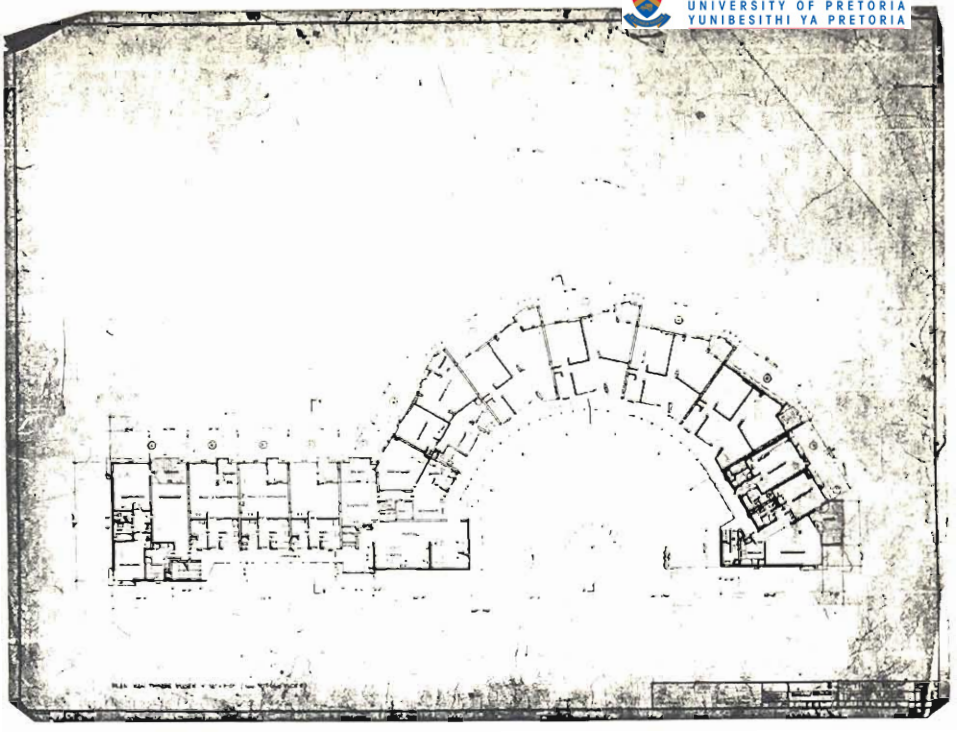
15. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.

16. Ibid

FIG. 64 Zethushof : perspective



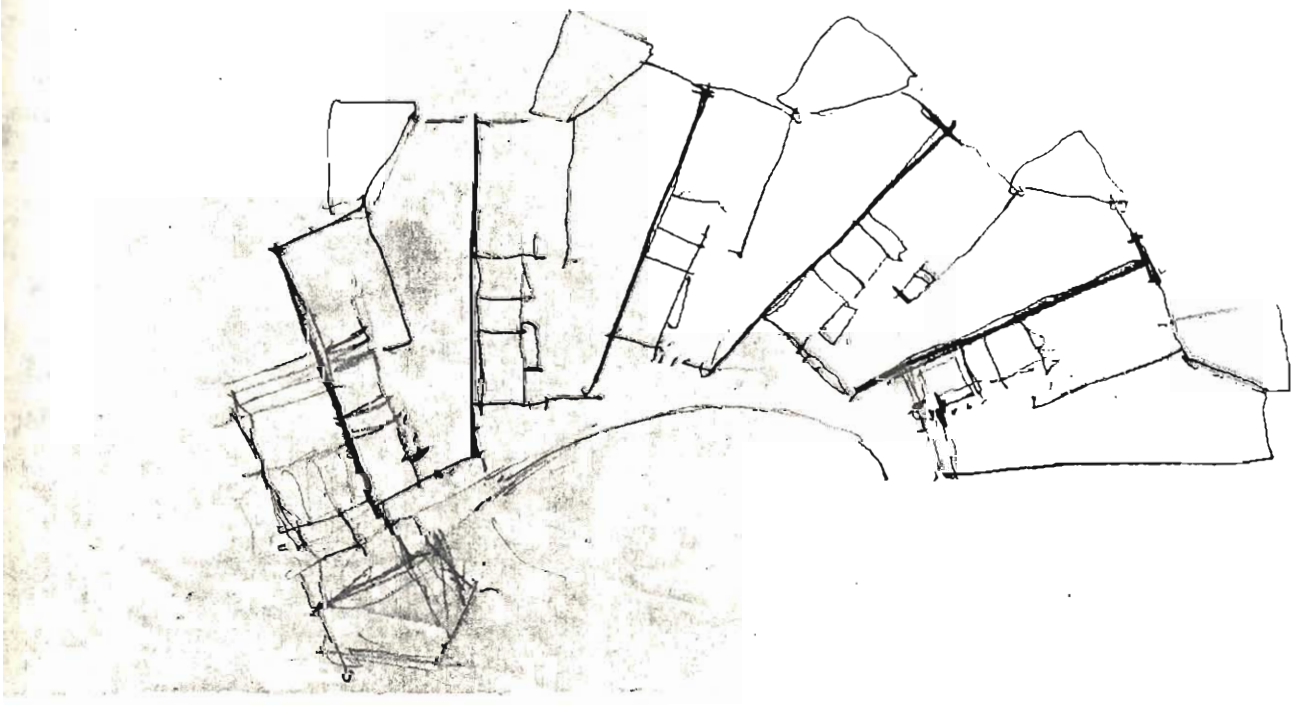


FIG. 65 Zethushof, Pretoria. Stauch's design sketch shows the main theme of the building - the outward-turning format for maximum privacy of each unit.

The Mealie Board building, (1964) too had his close and full involvement, as did the President Hotel, Sea Point, (1964). But now he received a commission which appealed to him more deeply than many others, to design for Bruynzeel, prefabricated, aluminium-sheathed timber housing, on the "Lockwood" system (1965). These were in their nature modular, with standard detailing and an industrial approach. So enthusiastic did he become that the amount of care and effort he put into the project absorbed him to the point where communication with the client was neglected and the project ended. Of this project T J R Scholtz said "If you asked him to do something, he did not subject himself to your approval - you asked him to do it and he would do it and he expected you to subject yourself to his approval - it did not work the other way around."(17)

7.5 Change in emphasis: 1968 to 1970

The firm as a result of its growth now predominantly handled large buildings, including the mammoth Durban Station (1968), but even here Stauch remained conscious of the reassurance of the people who experienced the building, bringing them into a larger space but relating them to a scale that they understood.(18)

17. Ibid

18. Ibid

CHAPTER VIII - THE FINAL YEARS

Towards the end of 1968, a commission to design a Tourist Centre for the National Natal Parks Board led Stauch to design a flowing, thatch-roofed building complex which he enjoyed so much that he did all the sketches himself. Unfortunately the Parks Board did not proceed with this project.(1) (fig. 66)

He had an enthusiasm for smaller projects, challenging sites and unusual concepts.

For Basil Shearer he designed an underwater hotel for a site on the Tzaneen Dam.(2)

In Majorca, on holiday with Judge H.J. Berker, he drove Berker's parents-in-law to their steep and tricky site, and that evening at dinner he sketched on a serviette with a soft pencil design for their home, which would eventually be built there exactly according to that sketch.(3)

He designed a series of thatch-roofed-cottages intended primarily for holiday homes, with unusually compact layouts and soft roof lines. There is no record of these having been built although there was much interest in them.(4)

He travelled whenever the opportunity arose, with interest and enthusiasm. On one of these visits, in 1969 he visited Göreme and sketched the cave dwellings there. (fig. 67)

He designed, built and sailed boats wherever and whenever he had or could create the opportunity.

However, expansion of the firm inevitably led to Stauch being out of touch with many of the projects, and this he did not enjoy. He tended to absent himself from the office more frequently and showed signs of greater nervous tension. He appeared to be not up to the challenge of the bigger practice.(5) At a year-end party, traditionally held at Hakahana, he turned to some of his partners and said with deep feeling "My God, do I really have to feed all those people and their families?"

As has been mentioned, he lived his life intensely and passionately on all levels and he wanted to stay young forever, and resisted the ageing

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1. Stauch Vorster records
2. Ibid
3. Berker, Judge H.J., Friend of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview..
4. Stauch Vorster records
5. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.

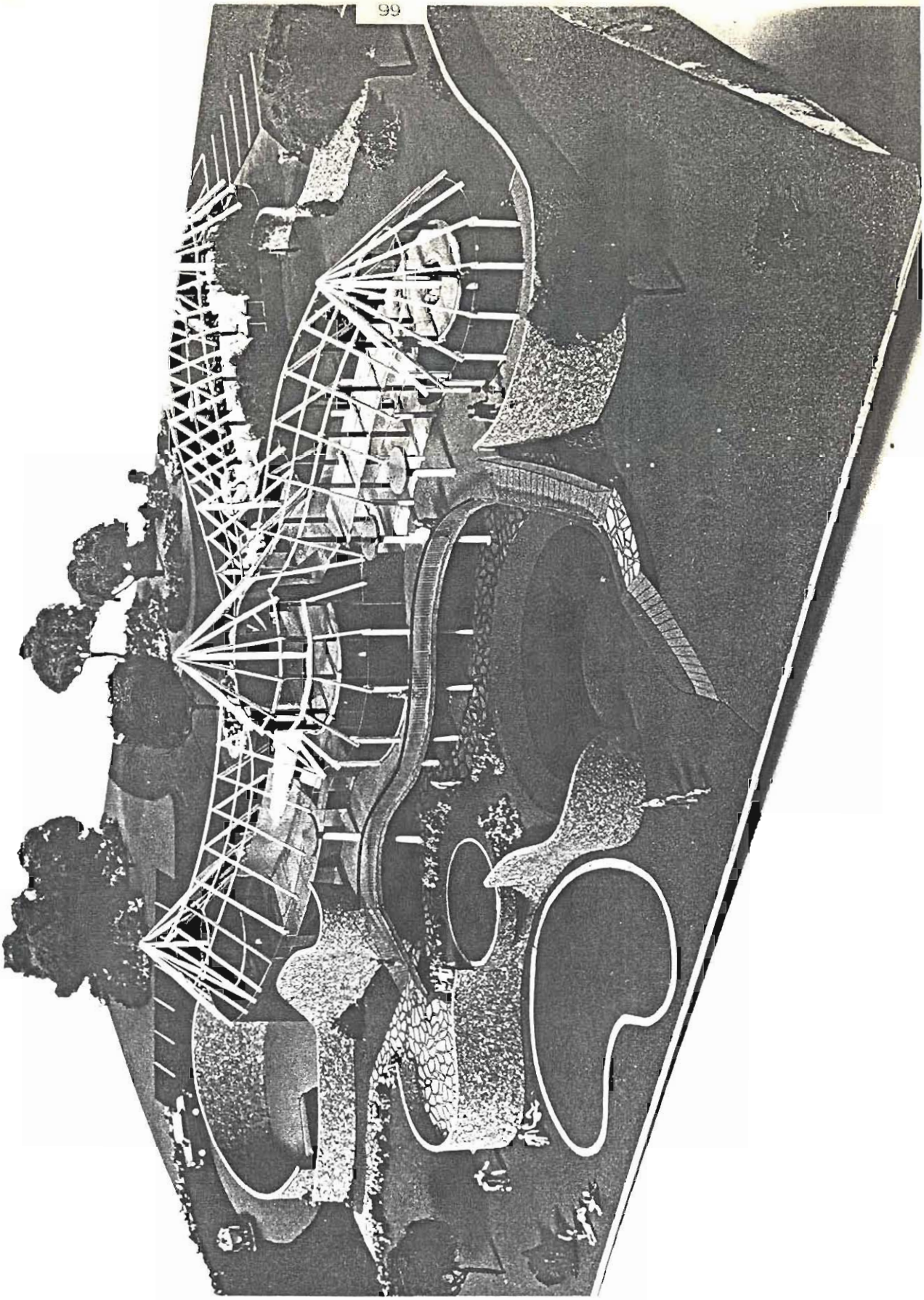

FIG. 66 False Bay Reception Centre : photograph of model with roof removed.

FIG. 67 Stauch's sketch of cave dwellings at Göreme

process, ignoring the possibility that he might one day be old himself.(6) But the truism that "nothing can make your body as ill as your mind can" may well have been applicable. In the last few years he was beset by ill-health and accidents. In one of these, at Saldanha, his legs were seriously lacerated by the propellor of an outboard motor - but even then, incapacitated in hospital, he insisted that his wife Carmen should race his boat and complete the series on his behalf.(7) He developed jaundice when he was sailing in Lourenco Marques but even though on the point of collapse insisted on continuing to take part in the regatta; and after the regatta he did not rest, for he wanted to go to the championships in Bavaria.(8)

He continued to drive himself in this way right up to the end, when, after a weeks sailing in the "505" class of dinghy and after taking third place, on July 19th 1970 at Lourenco Marques, he failed to appear for the prize-giving. His body had finally burned itself out, and South Africa had lost one of its finest architects.

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6. Henkel, Mrs Margot, Friend of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview

7. Berker, Judge H.J., of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview; News clippings in Stauch Vorster records (1968)

8. Berker, Judge H.J., Friend of H.W.E. Stauch, 1984 - interview.

CHAPTER IX - ARCHITECTURAL APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY

.1 Background

Hellmut Stauch wrote very little concerning his philosophy or approach. Some of the writings were in his early and formative years while the enthusiasm for expanding his ideas were still strong and his need to carve a niche for himself dominant.(1) During development periods in the middle years he would take a new idea and propound it enthusiatically but this was seldom committed to writing.(2) The most comprehensive statement made of his philosophy in writing was in a paper prepared for an in-house seminar for his partners in 1969.(3)

At the end of the first world war when he was 8 years old, he was developing strongly as an individual. In spite of his wealthy and privileged background, he had been affected by the war. August had been called up and served for a time in Germany, his family visiting him whenever possible (Levinson, 1983). There were shortages and problems; the world was in turmoil. In 1923 inflation was reducing the fortunes of those in Germany and Central Europe. People were losing their assets; insurance was worth nothing at all. Security in any form was non-existent. Both material and spiritual values were affected and this was particularly noticeable in the creative world of art.(4)

For Stauch anything of the past had to be rejected and this made both the Bauhaus and the Itten Schule immensely important for they had based their approach entirely, so they believed, on commonsense without falling back on tradition. Gropius had stated that the new growth should spring not from the branch of the tree but from its roots (Wingler, 1969). Stauch later found it amusing that since everything conventional had to be rejected, even the roof of a house, a primary element, was taboo. A house consisted of a cube which was opened up where light and air was required or where one had to enter it. No roof was visible and the ideal form seemed something which had the same finish all around; walls, roof, the lot. Embellishment or ornamentation were also taboo as was anything curved or not strictly rectangular. The planes were even

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1. Personal deduction from his early publications, their trend and content (see Addendum listing these).

2. Student comment, interviews with his employees and partners, personal experience.

3. Stauch Vorster archives.

4. H.W.E. Stauch paper : Stauch Vorster Seminar 1969.

surfaces with pure basic colours or, preferably, black and white. To show even the brick texture was considered very daring and not very acceptable. Unfortunately this idealistic example did not last as the buildings weathered dramatically.(5) Stauch had also joined this band-wagon, as can be seen in some of his earlier and student sketches.

9.2 Forbat's Influence

His time with Forbat had increased his sensitivity to materials and buildings, a commonsense approach to living, the provision of living spaces, and an ordered standardized industrial approach.

One of the projects on which he worked as Forbat's assistant was a riding school "Reithalle der Deutschen Reitschulle" near Berlin, a building where timber was used in the form of innovative arched trusses with delicate steel tension members (Bauwelt, Heft. 47, 1931). Another project was a block of flats at Spandau, Haselhorst, an unimaginative but beautifully proportioned series of blocks of flats with careful interior planning which had clearly received a lot of attention in the investigation period, perhaps from Stauch, for the layouts showed the same touch as in much of his subsequent work (Die Baugilde, Heft. 24, 1930.12.25).

Although Forbat's influence may have been strong, Stauch's later work generally had a lighter touch than Forbat's.

9.3 Peters Bau

When Stauch joined Peters Bau in the role of consultant on housing, he developed an appropriate philosophy of "core housing". Those who could, in the strained financial climate of that time, afford to construct anything at all could be assisted by this approach. It utilized an industrial system, was based on a two-directional module of 1 050mm and its plan forms were a great deal more acceptable and liveable than those of many industrialised buildings in production today. The pamphlet which he produced for this firm clearly shows his influence (Das Ideale Eigenheim, Stauch, 193-).

Early work in South West Africa

In 1929 following his visit to SWA where he was commissioned to design farm buildings for the S.W.A. Farming and Trading Co., his designs

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5. Ibid

and recommendations were published in an (unidentified) German magazine (Neues Bauen in den Kolonien von Architekt Hellmut Stauch, 1935), a reprint of which is in the Stauch Vorster archives. These show his concern for the same issues as those with which he was dealing in Germany, together wih great interest in climatic conditions and their control. The assumptions made at the time were in fact faulty for he decided that effective sun-control would be achieved by facing the buildings East to provide cool afternoon living while "controlling" the sun on the western side by means of a large living verandah, as can be seen from the plans in the reprint referred to. Later, he abandoned this approach and concluded that such control would be most effective on a North-facing building.(6) His development of this, influenced later very strongly by Oscar Niemeyer, was to have a far-reaching effect on South African architectural sun control.(7) Later forms of sun-control were developed, from a light fretwork of aluminium members fixed across the face of the building on light, brightly coloured grommets on concrete shade slabs and fitted with adjustable horizontal shade louvres, to a heavier form of fixed concrete louvre. (fig. 68). Today, these energy-saving sun-control measures are once more appropriate, and there is probably much to be learned from Stauch's approach.

Early years in South Africa

In 1940 Stauch was about to build his own house and saw the opportunity to put into practise those principles, beliefs and systems which had developed out of his training and circumstances. The primary properties which he stated should be expected from the ideal house and its furniture were according to his own statement: usefulness; suitability; adaptibility; movability; universality; value for money; beauty and possibility of enlarging and completing (South African Architectural Record, February, 1941, "Stauch : The Development of Standardised Building Elements").

He sought the attainment of universal values by means of using elementary forms and modes geared to current economic conditions. He felt

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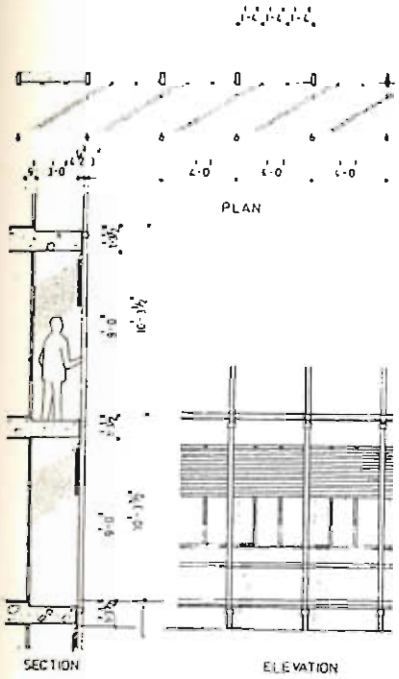
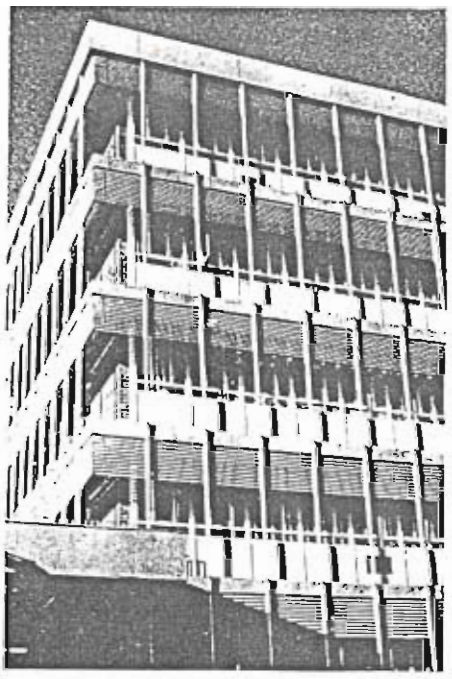
6. Compare Marchie Mansions.

7. The sun control louvres on the Meat Board building were apparently the first used in South Africa and had to be purpose-made (Stauch Vorster archives and F J Wepener) The manufacture of standard sun control brise soleils and louvres was in response to subsequent demand.





1. 1964. Carl List House.
A typical example of Stauch's earlier approach to facing an office building facade with a simple, elegant, and economical sun screen. He insisted that floor slabs be cantilevered outwards to serve as sun shades over windows and walkways for window cleaners. Yet, to retain his vertical "steel window aesthetic" in the sun screen the RHS aluminium louvre supports are fixed to run continuously in front of the slab edges to correspond with a module of structural MS mullions set into the window wall. Thin horizontal aluminium louvres are fixed to the inside of these supports so as not to break the vertical treatment. Here, the screening is very much an applied metal filligree, elegant and practical in itself but not integrated effectively with the concrete structure. The overall aesthetics of the facade are not very satisfying: one soon tires of the excessive hardware, which is too light and sparse to achieve a vertical effect in a frontal view. There is a duality between the verticality of the screen and the horizontality of the slab edges. These two elements do not integrate visually to form a neutral screen as in Corb's "South American Joe".

4. 1970. J.B.S. Building.
This building is seen only as a street facade. It is a logical development of the firm's changing approach to the external sun screen. Denser shading was required than in the other buildings because of aspects facing East and West. The structural columns (precast) have been moved out to serve as additional shading elements. The available column depth made it possible to fix more effective horizontal louvre trays; adjustable vertical louvres, which would have provided better sun control were not used because of the desire to move away from applied hardware towards a more dignified and long-lasting urban facade. Precast terrazzo face panels thicken the slab edges to produce a definite horizontal effect. The proportional scaling down in thickness of the assembled components is successful. The proportions of the resultant voids are equally harmonious. By contrast, the applied metal sun screen of the Carl List House facade seems weak, unsure and not at all suitable as an urban facade.

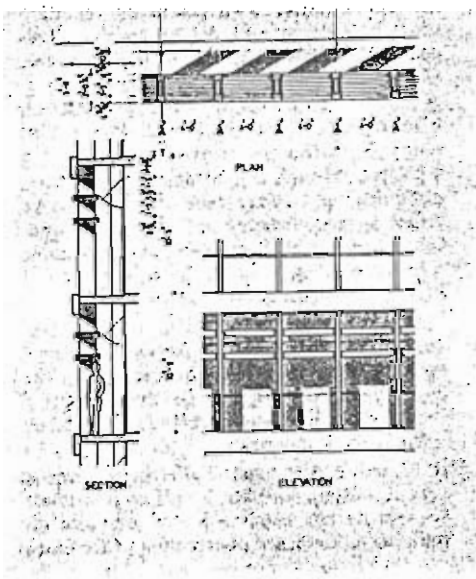


FIG. 68 Sun-control systems. Similar in character, these varied from light to heavy, as shown in these two examples from an article entitled "Facade Aesthetics and the South American Joe" by S M Selfet, in Plan 12 (1972 pp 24 and 25)

that this elementary form would satisfy the craving for harmony and beauty which is common to every human being and that mechanical mass-production could provide this beauty as easily and more economically than could hand-made items. He felt strongly the moral that "a common form ties rich and poor together and quality is no longer the privilege of the wealthy".(8)

As far as the house itself was concerned, he especially held to the concept of a changeable dwelling fitted to current usage. He stated that "Every shape of usage develops into a final perfect shape and this should be the basis for all further development". Home and furniture, he felt, should be able to grow with the income and those things already acquired should not lose any of their value if they matched new acquisitions in form and finish.(9) Furniture was frequently built-in, carefully designed for harmony and compact living, with the aim of releasing as much free space as possible and not allowing a cluttered room space. He refused to be involved with pretentious interior design.(10) This Spartan philosophy influenced even the detailing of his buildings, each element of which had its rational and simply stated place.

9.6 Influence of other architects

While he was working for Forbat, who was a straight-forward purist. Forbat collaborated with Marcel Breuer on several projects, so giving Stauch the opportunity of working in this interesting circumstance with Breuer. It was to him surprising, in view of his own training, that Breuer would decide on a solution because of its form, the shadow which it cast, the perspective and the impact it gave rather than how practical it was.(11) But he must have been influenced by this, for it was similar to his own later approach.

Oscar Niemeyer whom he visited in Brazil struck him as being very similar to Marcel Breuer. Gaudi's buildings he found fascinating. Of Niemeyer he said "He is a very gifted, brilliant artist for whom expression and form is almost everything. We were in Rio de Janeiro in 1948 when this book "Brazil Builds" had just been published and we

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8. Ibid

9. Ibid

10. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.

11. Unless otherwise identified, the main source of information of section 9.6 is H.W.E. Stauch's paper, delivered at the Stauch Vorster Seminar of 1969.

especially went to look at the various jobs mentioned in this book and when we went to the addresses we could hardly find the buildings because, what in the photograph was a beautiful white, sharp, clean job, now had streaks of grey, rust and brown over it and cracks and creepers were growing and corrugated iron lean-to roofs were attached in front to shade the facade, etc., and this is just one extreme case but there were quite a number of these. We then met Oscar Niemeyer and asked him about his views. He said that it is not very important how buildings looked after ten years, it is important what impact they make initially. A good example is that famous church with a shell roof, covered in mosaic, looking very beautiful in Belo Horizonte and this church is built next to an old wooden structure. When it was completed it was found that it leaked madly and that the congregation could not use this church for services, they had to use the old wooden church for that purpose but the new one was so world famous that it attracted a lot of visitors. When I asked Niemeyer how he would construct this church and do it, now that he has learnt this lesson, he looked at me blankly and said 'Of course, I would do exactly the same'".

"He showed us a very exciting looking printing works, with a most intriguing array of louvres, small, big, all colours of the rainbow - some spaces left without. I thought that a most intricate plan and internal function demanded this variegation, but looking at the plan I found that there were seven quite identical floors housing printing machinery - even the portion without louvres. When I asked him for the reasoning behind the louvre system, his answer was 'Doesn't it look nicer this way?' And visiting in his office, we found that upon opening the front door a terrific draught blew drawings and documents off all 50 boards. But he declared that he'd rather have that than small cubicled offices where he can't talk to his assistants."

Of Gaudi he said "As an old Bauhaus disciple I should be horrified at these seemingly random shapes and forms, but if one allows artistic license, one has to admit that there can be some value in the "more than minimum". Gaudi sculpts everything, pillars, balcony rails, chimney pots and lavatory ventpipes. We must ask our conscience how far to go."

Hannes Meyer, Gropius's successor at the Bauhaus was much admired by Stauch but he appears to have observed the sterility which can arise from Meyer's approach. He said "Hannes Meyer was a Communist and his approach was very straight, honest and logical - that if you build a block of flats, for instance, each flat must be exactly like the other and there

must be no flats slightly better or slightly worse than any of the others. So, if you designed a block of flats consisting of a row of flats on each floor, you were not permitted to take advantage of the fact that the end flats had an additional exposure to the sides and therefore could be improved by additional light and ventilation. But no - the end had to be a blank wall and you were not even allowed to gain the little space which the access passage, for instance, can give you.

In 1952 when Stauch was sailing in the Olympics he met Alvar Aalto, a congenial and warm hearted person. Stauch's comment on his architecture is revealing. "To me the buildings he builds are always terribly ugly looking and yet they have a character which is undeniably fascinating. His detailing is superb, as is his usage of materials and I suppose if you get used to his philosophy you might even learn to like the looks of the buildings. He has an odd sense of beauty but he is a very methodical man with a brilliant gift for planning. He lives and works in a house in the heart of Helsinki and has peacocks walking in the garden - sometimes also on the drawing boards".

Stauch found the most exciting project to be the German Pavilion at the Montreal Expo 1957, by Frei Otto. ".... this building was based on the concept of a huge tent with supports at various heights which just covered the whole exhibition area which itself was quite strictly plain and constructed in steel frame and timber, etc. This structure, I might say, is one of the most beautiful things I have seen yet. It was beautifully detailed and the effect of light and space inside this volume was quite fantastic. The new Stadium for the Olympics in 1972 in Munich is based on the same principle, designed by Benisch, and promises to be a most exciting job."

"This building is entirely free form yet it is disciplined because it is based on the structural requirements of cables and tension and skin stretched over this and therefore, although the concept is based on the imagination of the designer and the construction allows for free forms, all forms seem logical and disciplined."

Safdi's "Habitat" he found almost equally as exciting. "The Habitat of pre-fabricated boxes in reinforced concrete, piled on top of one another in many variations so that, I think, with about five or six basic boxes about twenty different types of flats can be created, from bachelor flats to six-bedroom units. By the juxtaposition of these boxes terraces are formed. The whole building looks most exciting with the play of light and shadow and very sculptural forms, and its beautiful finish. It is highly uneconomical (rents from £120 to £400) due to overdimensioning of

structure. Since all boxes are prefabricated uniformly, they are all constructed to carry the full load of seven floors. Surely it would be more economical (and flexible) to erect a carrying framework and insert the living units into this as long ago suggested by Corbusier. You could even think of trading in your old "drawer" unit for a new one."

9.7 The Quality of Stauch's design and his influence

Throughout his life it is apparent that Stauch was open to new concepts, new influences and imaginative answers. He was not an architect who would have stagnated in any way. New trends appeared to set off a "fire-works display" for him and he frequently designed projects without either site or commission. His projects varied from strictly rectangular, logical, rational building to a fluent, thatched, gently curving, almost emotionally planned structure.(12) Buildings he found equally easy to handle whether they were large or small. Scale did not overwhelm him. He dealt with space with polished assurance.(13) His domestic work exhibited a light and sensitive interpretation of standardised components, reminiscent of the philosophy of Neutrá (South African Architectural Record, September, 1965, p 45). And, throughout his projects, his mastery of form, scale and light and shade could be observed in every one of the projects he designed or with which he was closely associated.

His contribution to South Africa's architecture was incalculable, and his untimely death was a loss not only to his friends, associates and family, but also to those who would have been influenced by the ever-developing work and constructive criticism of this truly great architect.

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12. Stauch Vorster archives.

13. Scholtz, T.J.R., Director Stauch Vorster, 1984 - interview.