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Searching for Slowness: Towards an architecture of well-being

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Abstract

This study explores the development of my personal normative position in relation to architectural theory and practice, termed “Slow architecture”. Rooted in the principles of Slow Food, a Slow approach to architecture will be contextualised within global architectural theory and within local architectural practice. Slow architecture emphasises a deliberate, thoughtful approach to design and construction. It advocates for a mindful engagement with the environment, community, and materials, fostering a deeper connection between place and people. By integrating theoretical perspectives with practical applications, this study aims to propose Slow architecture as a viable and impactful approach in contemporary architectural discourse.

Keywords

Slow architecture, Arts and Crafts, Phenomenology, Critical Regionalism, normative position, Kate Otten, Braam de Villiers and Andre Eksteen, Ilze and Heinrich Wolff.

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Declaration of originality

“I declare that the mini-dissertation, Searching for Slowness: Towards an architecture of well-being, which has been submitted in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the module of DIT 801, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for any degree at the University of Pretoria or any other tertiary institution. I declare that I obtained the applicable research ethics approval in order to conduct the research that has been described in this dissertation. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria’s ethics code for researchers and have followed the policy guidelines for responsible research”.

Signature: ……

Date: ……30 SEPTEMBER 2024……

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Concepts

Building Technology

As per Wu, Wei & Peng (2019:1), *building technology* in this document refers to the following three elements:

1. Building materials (The material components that physically make-up architecture)
2. Construction techniques (The process of how materials are assembled)
3. Structural systems (The configuration of load-bearing elements)

Context

Context is used here an umbrella term to describe both tangible and intangible aspects, it entails environmental (built and natural), historical, social, economic, cultural and political systems in which architecture is situated.

Poiēsis

Typically refers to the act of making, but in this document, it encompasses broader aspects of making, including techne (the physical and mental knowledge and skills related to making) and poetics.

Experience

Refers to the embodied spatial experience of places.

Well-being

Health is “a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1948:online). Well-being concerns quality of life, and is determined by social, economic and environmental conditions (WHO, 2021:online).

Background

Architectural theory is a synergy of ideologies, or *normative positions*, of individual architects or schools of architectural thought (Lang, 1988:601). An architectural normative position describes and explains the position that an architect has taken on what constitutes “good architecture”, on the attitudes architects ought to take, and on how architecture should be practiced (Lang, 1988:602). Architectural normative positions are inherently value-laden and based on deontological declarations. The focus of normative theory is on the architect and their intentions rather than on how their work is experienced (Lang, 1988:603), however when applied to practice, the normative position could be observed in the architecture that results (Lang, 1988:602).

Lang (1988:610-626) argues that normative positions consist of attitudes towards societal culture, nature, people, architecture, the design process and technology. Such attitudes represent a belief about how a particular phenomenon works and a value toward it. He mentions that attitudes can partially reinforce each other, but that they can also be in conflict and are thus unstable (Lang, 1988:610). Furthermore, Peter Rowe (1987: 116) states that a normative position outlines a problem and does an assessment of the status quo, whereafter a counterproposal and rationale is proposed. My normative position will be unpacked by synthesising Lang’s and Rowe’s elements of a normative position.

The problem and assessment of the status quo will be presented, followed by a counter argument that consists of various attitudes. I have found that my design process is informed by three key considerations - context, poiēsis and experience. These aspects were derived from reflecting on my personal approach to design, which has been influenced by my education, experience and intuition up to now. The three considerations relate (fig.1) to the various aspects listed by Lang (1988:610-626) (culture, nature, people, architecture, the design process and technology). My normative position will be discussed by articulating my attitude towards each consideration.

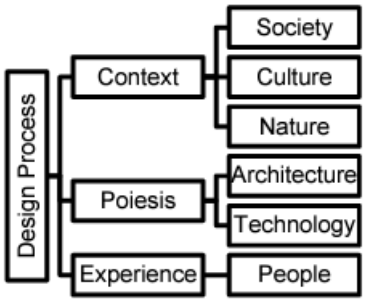

Figure 1: The relation between Lang's considerations and my own considerations in the design process (Author, 2024).

Initial normative position

Research problem and assessment of the status quo

Well-being is generally correlated with living a meaningful, fulfilling life (Mayson, 2024). This does not imply a life free from challenges, but rather a state of balance between a person's resource pool and the challenges they face (Dodge et al. in SACN, 2022:86). Well-being concerns quality of life and there are various ways of understanding and measuring well-being in contemporary research and practice.

In a consumerist world, GDP and materialistic possessions are commonly assumed to correlate with well-being. Although this is the case for societies characterised by massive deprivation, it is true only up to a certain point (Mayson, 2021:18). Even though the average income per capita has increased exponentially in the global North since the 1970s, there has not been a correlated increase in well-being. Instead, there has been an increase in inequalities, which have had a negative impact on well-being across a diversity of contexts and demographics, including the wealthy (Mayson, 2021:18). There is also growing consensus that GDP-growth and profit-centered economic and development models have led to the surpassing of 'planetary boundaries' (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014:12), resulting in biodiversity loss, climate change and negative impacts on collective well-being for current and future generations (Mayson, 2021:18).

In his proposal for *Human-Scaled Development*, Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef (1989:19) argues that well-being is determined by the possibilities people have to adequately satisfy their fundamental human needs. Max-Neef identified fundamental human needs that are universal and constant across cultures and historical periods and categorised them in a comprehensive framework, the Fundamental Human Needs matrix. The respective needs are for subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity and freedom. According to Max-Neef, these needs are distinct from the conventional economic focus on material wealth and instead emphasise a holistic view of human development and satisfaction. His perspective shifts the emphasis from economic wealth to a broader, more inclusive view of development that considers environmental, emotional, social, intellectual, and cultural dimensions. Max-Neef already advocated for eco-humanist development in 1989, placing emphasis on the well-being of people and the planet. It seems the world is only catching on now. New economic models for development have recently begun to surface, such as *post-growth, de-growth*, *Beyond GDP* (Mayson, 2021:19-20) and well-being economies (Fioramonti et al., 2022), which pursues human and ecological wellbeing instead of material

growth. Well-being is not just dependent on economic conditions, but also on social and environmental conditions (WHO, 2021:online).

Well-being and Place

There is an established correlation between well-being and place, as place influences our social, economic and environmental conditions, and thereby our ability to satisfy our fundamental human needs. “Well-being and place are intricately interconnected. Our economic and educational opportunities, our social and political relationships, our environment, and our imaginative cognitive and creative worlds are all profoundly impacted by where we live and who we live alongside” (Bambra in Mayson, 2021:38). Place influences social behaviour and can encourage or discourage social interactions by stimulating or limiting opportunities for people to meet, interact, and form social bonds (Gehl, 2011:13). For example, long, monotonous corridors in apartment complexes or poorly lit communal areas can create a sense of insecurity and discomfort, deterring people from using public spaces (Gehl, 2011). Place can also provide shelter, create a sense of belonging, express identity and offer a sense of freedom. Place can thus inhibit or facilitate our ability to satisfy our fundamental human needs and thus plays a key role in the promotion of well-being.

Decontextualised and dehumanised architecture

Global state

Architecture has become profit- instead of people- and place-driven. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a focus on productivity. It evolved into the tenets of utility and efficiency of the Modern Movement, which are still eminent in today’s consumerist driven world. This worldview is focused on serving the individual, and value and truth are only determined by visible and quantifiable evidence (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014:23-24). In this worldview, only things that can be measured counts and well-being is determined by the ability to consume. This worldview has disconnected people from each other and from place. By submitting to calculative thinking, architects have become creators of objectified experiences, and people participating in the experiences are reduced to mere “users” (Auret, 2015:117). Such post-industrial architecture only values efficiency and emphasises society’s nihilistic propensities (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:7). Post-modern, neo-vernacular and revivalist architectural movements also seem shallow: real vernacular buildings are responsive to local materials, climate and culture – they mean something – merely replicating vernacular forms without “links-to-meaning” intact, is just plagiarism (Day, 2004:40). The ‘Bilbao Effect’ and current ‘Green design', with its emphasis on ‘efficiencies’, ‘number-crunching’ and “accounting games” (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014:17) are no different (Auret, 2015:117). Such architecture might be

efficient, but it is ultimately unfulfilling, no matter how sustainable or formally dazzling it might be (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:8). Many buildings today are designed according to profit margins at the expense of the well-being of people and the planet (Day, 2004:13). The focus is typically on short-term gains rather than long-term viability. Cheap construction methods and materials might reduce initial costs but often at the cost of the environment and culture (Day, 2004:3) All these approaches focus more on style and profit, rather than appropriateness (Day, 2004:13). “Architecture has such profound effects on the human being, on place, on human consciousness, and ultimately on the world, it is far too important to be shaped by short-lived fashion appeal” – Day (2004:13).

The Modern architectural movement was specifically grounded in *well-being;* it was a revolt against the dark and damp spaces of the Industrial Revolution, with its emphasis on the health benefits of ventilation, lighting, a connection to nature and the promising efficiencies of new technology. Despite its emancipatory nature and advancing the development of technology, thereby improving human well-being, the Modern Movement also had its limits and negative consequences. The Modern Movement, specifically the International Style, severed its roots from its historical, social, cultural and environmental contexts by creating standardised and interchangeable architecture that could be placed anywhere in the world (Jordaan, 2015:1), but belonged to nowhere (Day, 2004:13). Canadian cultural geographer Edward Relph (in Jordaan, 2015:4) calls this phenomenon *placelessness,* or American cultural analyst Howard Kunstler describes it as a 'geography of nowhere' (Jordaan, 2015:4). Buildings became freestanding objects and inwardly focussed (Trancik, 1986:9). An international architecture was championed across the globe, regardless of differences in climate, culture or tradition (Day, 2004:13). Climatically inappropriate buildings (and therewith their occupants) became dependent on artificial and mechanical means of lighting and ventilation, relying extensively on energy intensive measures to make buildings habitable. It must be kept in mind that not all modernist architecture was decontextualised, such as Brazilian Modernism. However, the disregard towards the sensitivities of the context of the International Style has left an enduring legacy, negatively impacting the environment and cultures.

Architecture has become not only has decontextualised, but dehumanised as well. Many places today are regarded as “awkward, intimidating, unpleasant and dysfunctional” (Seamon in Jordaan, 2015:2). Cooke (2013:5) argues that architects need to re-learn “simple human things” that were devalued in the development of Western philosophy since the Enlightenment. These things were mainly the “non-rational parts of existence, difficult to define but essential to the good life, such as identity, community, homeliness, ritual, touch and mystery.” The emphasis on abstract and conceptual modes of thinking in architectural education has

educated architects to design spaces that are detached from tangible experiences (Till in Jordaan, 2015). Jordaan (2015:145-146) writes that place influences the combined physiological and psychological states of human bodies, thereby directly impacting on human well-being. Mallgrave (2015:17-18) also states that the quality of our environments powerfully impacts our mental and biological development (and therefore well-being). The fundamental premise here is that well-being is connected to the human experience of space. Indifference towards the human experience has created places that inhibit human needs and are detrimental to well-being.

Ever since the Renaissance, there has been an emphasis on visual imagery in architecture, and consequently a neglect of other sensory experiences like taste, touch and spatial experience (Jordaan, 2015:156). Sight was the dominant sense in the writings of the Modernists. Declarations by Le Corbusier (in Pallasmaa, 2012:30) – such as: 'I exist in life only if I can see' and 'architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light', unquestionably describe a sceneographic architecture. Louw (2014:162) writes that sight as the dominant sense is still perpetuated by the media today. Norberg-Schulz refers to this as "the poverty of stimuli" (1979:189-190), stating that it could lead to disorientation, emotional insecurity, passivity and reduced intellectual capacity. Pallasmaa (2012:20-22) argues that this ocular-centric paradigm in architecture has led to weak, inhumane contemporary architecture and cities, and exemplifies a negligence of the body and the senses: an "imbalance of our sensory system". He feels that it has led to growing experiences of alienation, detachment and solitude in the technological world today, and these experiences ironically often occur in the technologically most advanced settings, such as hospitals and airports. "Modernist design at large has housed the intellect and the eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless" (Pallasmaa, 2012:22).It can be said that this form of architecture is conceived for the pleasure of the eyes more than the well-being of its inhabitants (Grey, in Jordaan, 2015:59).

Local state

Conversations about well-being in South Africa revolve around the perpetual inequality and substandard living conditions that are a lived reality for many South Africans (SACN, 2022:85). Place is a significant factor in determining people's wellbeing and the glaring reality is that most South Africans face daily challenges as a result of where they live (SACN, 2022:v). With South Africa's historically distorted spatial legacy, quality of life is still frequently hampered by urban spatial planning, where apartheid policies relocated non-white South Africans away from central city locations. Such spatial challenges comprise undefined urban hierarchies due to the

homogenous residential zoning, long distances between public amenities and economic opportunities and a lack of social amenities (van der Walt and du Trevou, 2022:88).

Since the founding of the democratic government, public spaces have been conceived of as 'healing devices', ways to redress the modernist legacy associated with apartheid spatiality. These spaces aim to be images of freedom, to create a 'post-apartheid identity' (Jordaan, 2015:6). These places are however usually artificial environments that are controlled and regulated: Jordaan (2015:6) states that Nelson Mandela Square is "a nostalgic and superficial reproduction of the medieval European city square"; in Freedom Park, one requires a guide throughout in order to understand the significance of design elements; the Apartheid Museum and the Hector Peterson Museum are also environments with strict security rules, not to even mention the admission fees. These spaces are exclusive and do not act as "healing devices", because they are superficial symbols that merely convey images of freedom, but do not create truly democratic public space.

Even after apartheid, decontextualised and dehumanised approaches continue to proliferate in South Africa. Designs are to a large extent determined by engineering guidelines and standardised building regulations; and such designs often have poor spatial and environmental qualities (Louw,2014:162). This is especially the case for social housing, where it is often "delivered" in masses according to profit margins and outdated planning and zoning regulations (Louw, 2014:156). Mass housing often views people as statistics (Day, 2004:17), and so they are excluded from the design and construction process. In his book, *The placemaker's guide to building community*, Nabeel Hamdi (2010) illustrates the disastrous consequences when a project is not designed in accordance with people's needs: A standard, modernist (European) solution was directly applied to a third-world social housing scheme, without understanding the context and the people. No regard was given to the local community, resources and culture (Hamdi, 2010:26). Fathy (1973: xi) speaks of similar developments where tenants "foul their nests", because they lack a sense of territorial identification or belonging. Such buildings rapidly dilapidate, not only reducing their economic value, but also contributing to distressing crime statistics and an evident sense of "lethargy and sullen anger" and "underdevelopment" (Fathy, 1973:xi).

Such decontextualised and dehumanised approaches also occur in the design of many South African community centres, which are often state-driven, technocratic ventures with prescribed guidelines (van der Walt and du Trevou, 2022:89). It creates generic community facilities that are somehow imagined to offer equal and fair support to every member of a community, without considering the variation in local needs or social dynamics (Walt and Trevou, 2022:90). Such

an approach produces community centres with undefined, unprogrammed spaces with the idea that they can accommodate several activities. The community centre is regarded as "a homogenous technical challenge for a homogenous social demographic of people", which "is damaging and criminally myopic in its lack of imagination, creativity or recognition of the situation" (Bennett, 2018 in van der Walt and Trevou, 2022:90). Such imposed and socially exclusive processes negatively impact individual and collective health, as it creates a feeling of disempowerment, which is statistically linked to illness (Day, 2004:x).

Conclusion

The decontextualised and dehumanised approach to architecture has created spaces that are inconducive to well-being. In the consumerist and financially driven world, time means money, and so buildings are designed, built and used with less consideration to people and place as to reduce cost, resulting in superficial, standardised spaces that people accept because it is the only option they can imagine (Day, 2004:2-3). Architecture is treated as a mere commodity, having severe negative effects on personal, social, cultural, economic and environmental levels. The less appropriate buildings are climatically, culturally and in material-resource terms, the more their energy, social and financial costs - links with ill health, alienation, crime and climate change are now well known (Day, 2004:13).

Counter proposal and rationale

The previous section introduced the problem of a profit-driven and consumerist world, which has seeped into architecture, negatively impacting the well-being of people and the planet. The link between well-being and place was also demonstrated.

Slow movements

My normative position entails a *Slow* approach to architecture. Slow does not necessarily mean slower production, but instead a more thoughtful approach that considers the consequences of choices (Louw, 2014:158). The word *Slow* refers to a balanced way of living and is concerned with the quality of life and things (Heinonen et al., 2006:94). Slow Movements are among many global trends concerned with health and well-being. Slow Movements include the Slow Food, Slow Design, Slow Living, Slow Housing and Slow Cities Movements (Beverland (2011), Heinonen et al. (2006) and Louw (2014)).

Slow movements critique the current consumerist driven world where quantity is preferred over quality and decisions are made without regard for their long-term impacts on the well-being of the environment, economy and society. Gasparin et al. (2020:552) cites the work of multiple researches to demonstrate that the current models of production, distribution and

consumption are fueled by a culture of overconsumption which depletes natural resources, contributing to climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the degradation of natural resources, ethical disputes, increased impoverishment in underprivileged populations, waste management dilemmas, inefficient and excessive energy usage and increased vulnerability for many developing countries in which globalised products are manufactured.

Slow Food was the first Slow movement and it originated in the 1980s in Italy, with Carlo Petrini as its main founder (Beverland, 2011:36). The Slow Food movement critiques the globalised practices of mass-produced food, such as the sourcing of food from unknown origins, homogenised taste and the use of genetically modified organisms, pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers, and copious amounts of additives. The movement's manifesto (2013) fosters the values of Good, Clean and Fair: Good relates not only to food's sensory qualities, but also to the quality of materials and production; Clean refers to the environment, biodiversity, sustainable farming, health, processing and consumption; and Fair entails social justice, the right to food, better labour conditions, cultural diversity, tradition, reward and a more balanced global economy. Architecture has frequently adopted ideas from philosophy, social, and art movements, and as Louw (2014, citing Ceppi, 2019:136) explains, the Slow Food movement presents another such opportunity, offering new approaches to development models with the emphasis on quality and well-being.

A parallel could be drawn between fast-food and the current state of architecture, where globalised and profit driven approaches lead to decontextualisation and dehumanisation. What would a Slow approach to architecture entail? And how would it promote well-being? By drawing on the attitudes of Slow Food, the following section will describe attitudes of a Slow architectural approach. It will also describe how this approach could promote well-being.

Attitudes towards context

Context refers to both tangible and intangible aspects of the environment, including buildings, topography, ecology, history, economy, culture and politics. The following attitudes (fig.2) from Slow Food towards context can be applied to architecture:

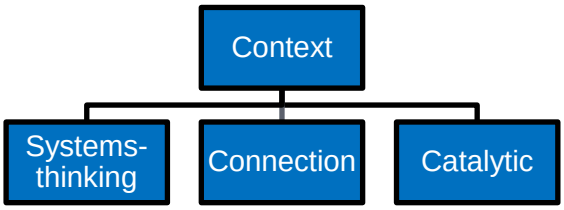

Figure 2: Slow attitudes to context. (Author, 2024).

Slow Food regards context as a living system and acknowledges the interrelated role of food as a part of the environment, economy and society. The movement is not just about the enjoyment of high-quality, healthy food, it is just as much about the connection between food, people and place (Louw, 2014:153). Slow architecture would also regard its context as a living, interrelated system into which it must be integrated. While this conceptualisation has been reflected recently in the realm of sustainable architectural discourse (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014), mainstream practice is yet to reflect it. There is a notion that systems can be measured and therefore sustainability managed, leading numerous rating and assessment schemes for buildings that reward points according to criteria, rather than integrated design. Such "sustainable" buildings are frequently designed to be optimal within themselves, but they do not consider their broader social, economic or environmental context (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014:17).

The Slow Food is itself directly connected to its context, as ingredients are sourced locally and seasonally. By encouraging the consumption of locally grown and produced foods, Slow Food reduces the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transportation. Slow Food contributes to the economic vitality of local communities by supporting local farmers, artisans, and small-scale food producers. This support helps maintain diverse and resilient local economies, countering the homogenising effects of large-scale industrial food production (Honore, 2004:210). Slow architecture would similarly create a direct link to its context. This could entail making use of locally sourced and manufactured materials as to create architecture that is intrinsically connected to its place through its materiality, whilst also reducing the impact on the environment. Slow architecture would also seek out and support local craftspeople in the making of places as to contribute to the local economy.

Slow Food is not only concerned about the connection to the context, but also about the well-being of the context. The movement emphasises the use of care when doing things and demonstrates a thoughtful attitude towards context. Slow Food is actively aware of its environmental, economic and societal impacts (Louw, 2014:156), which are the three conditions impacting well-being, as well as the triple bottom lines of sustainability as outlined by the UN (2015:online). Slow architecture would take the time necessary to understand the context and its systemic workings as to identify the root of a problem and the best place to intervene, rather than merely treating the symptoms. Slow architecture would aim to not only be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, but to actively improve the well-being of the context. This attitude is reflected in literature on regenerative architecture, where the aim is to not only to minimise damage, or to maintain the status quo, but to act as a catalyst for positive change in the larger context (Hes and Du Plessis, 2014:11). Slow Food actively

works through campaigns to protect and enhance the context. The movement supports sustainable farming practices, advocating for measures even beyond organic practices. Slow Food works to preserve of local practices and the skills entailed in the making of food, to protect species, to conserve biodiversity, and to provide food education to the broader public about food origins, production methods, and the environmental and health impacts of food choices (Tam in Louw, 2014: 155). This educational aspect helps people understand the broader context of their food, fostering informed decisions that align with the values of sustainability and cultural preservation (Miele and Murdoch, 2002:322). Slow Food supports ecological farming methods that are often more sustainable than industrial agriculture practices (Kummer, 2003:82). Slow architecture would also have a pro-active attitude. Architects would act as systems advocates and influencers, educating clients, stakeholders or developers on the impact they would have on the context and guiding them towards architecture that promotes not only individual, but systemic well-being.

Through systems-thinking, Slow architecture is mindful of the broader social, environmental, and economic context, emphasising the importance of local culture, sustainability, and community in the global food system. This ensures a connection between architecture, traditions, people, a specific place and a specific time.

Attitudes towards poiēsis

The Greek verb *poiēsis* means “to make”. Similar to Slow Food, Slow architecture regards making (*poiēsis*) as both an art and craft, not just a means to execution. In terms of art, architecture is concerned with the poetics of what is made. Etymologically, *poiēsis* gave rise to the word "poetics", so poetics is clearly linked to how something is made (Antoniades in Auret, 2015:97). In terms of craft, architecture deals with the process of making. Marble (2010:39) writes that if craft requires a skilful and direct working-relationship with materials, then architects have long been disconnected from it, as they rely on builders and fabricators to produce their designs. Marble (2010:39) and Loh, Burry & Wagenfeld (2016:189) however counter-argue that craft does not necessitate direct, physical making, but that it is rather concerned with an understanding of the making process. *Techne* refers to this mental and physical knowledge or skill of making, where a person understands the nature of materials and has a comprehension of the tools and techniques used to manipulate materials (Barker, 2013:2, Cordes-Spence & Beach ,2010:181, Stein, 2011:52, Loh, Burry & Wagenfeld, 2016:195 and Balık & Allmer, 2017:38-39). Stein (2011:52) refers to this *techne* as “material sensibility”. Through *techne*, architects can indeed be connected to *craft.* Thus, Slow architecture interprets poiēsis not only as the act of making, but poetic and *techne*- inspired *making*.

Food is not only eaten – it is produced, sourced, processed, transported, prepared, consumed and finally discarded (Louw, 2014:156) Analogously, architecture is not only lived in; it is part of a making process. Building materials are typically sourced from the environment in an exploitative manner, extensively processed, transported (even across oceans), assembled by hand, machine or both, occupied, and finally demolished (Louw, 2014:156). The Slow Food movement places great emphasis on the quality, environmental, ethical and poetic attributes of the making processes related to the food (Louw, 2014:156), thereby promoting well-being across social, environmental and economic levels. The *poiēsis* of architecture is directly coupled with *building technology* (building materials, construction techniques and structural systems). Slow architecture would demand that *building technology* contribute to the well-being of the social, economic and environmental context, the people physically making the architecture and those who finally inhabit it. The following attitudes (fig.3) from Slow Food towards *poiēsis* can be applied to architecture:

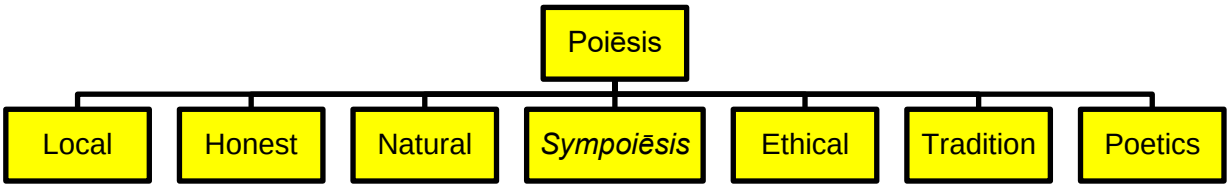

Figure 3: Slow attitudes towards poiēsis (Author, 2024).

Slow Food is typically grown organically, because it reduces the use of pesticides, which is healthier for the consumer and it has a smaller effect on the environment. Slow Food is sourced locally to support local economies and to reduce lengthy transport routes. The ingredients are traceable and diners can know exactly where their food came from (Petrini, 2007, p. 23), linking the food and people to a specific place. Slow Food is minimally processed to retain the authenticity of the ingredients and to reduce unhealthy additives and energy use. In parallel, Slow architecture would source local and sustainable materials, opting for natural, renewable or reclaimed materials, which reduces transportation and energy costs (Louw, 2014:156). Slow architecture would also use minimally processed materials that are kept close to their natural state, which retains the material's inherent connection to place and makes them easier to recycle (Louw, 2014:156).

Natural materials also have poetically imperfect qualities, which can be related to *wabi sabi*. - Japanese concept that sees beauty in things that are imperfect and impermanent. It accepts the natural cycle of life, including its inevitable decay. Slow architecture would purposefully allow materials to age naturally over time without maintenance, like weathered timber or

naturally oxidising steel. The purposeful patina, weathering or decay poetically shows evidence of the transience of life (Louw, 2014:158). The use of reclaimed materials also has a poetic dimension, as these materials can be rich in meaning. Reclaimed materials can be layered with history and culture; they are also given a new life and purpose rather than being discarded. Allowing people to poetically experience a sense of place and time through building materials not only aids orientation, but creates a deeper connection to their inner selves and their place in the world. Natural and aging materials not only benefit the well-being of the environment, but also of people, as it promotes mindfulness.

In Slow Food, the objective is to celebrate each ingredient. This means avoiding artificial flavourings and overly complex seasonings that can mask the natural taste of the food. The food's presentation is simple yet elegant, focusing on the inherent nature of each ingredient and how they complement each other, accentuating their natural colours, shapes, and textures. The food is thoughtfully positioned to enhance its appeal without being dependant on extravagant garnishes (Kummer, 2003:43). This creates dishes that are not only flavourful but also honest representations of their components (Petrini, 2007:27). "Beauty is not the opposite of the ugly, but of the false" (Fromm in Rodrigues, 2013:online). Slow architecture would also value the honest expression of materials and structures. Materials would be used according to their inherent structural nature – in the words of Louis Kahn (190-1974), "what does the brick want to be?" (Kahn in Lewis, 2021:8). Slow architecture would expose structural elements rather than concealing them. Joints and connections would be clearly articulated. Structural, load-bearing elements, such as beams, columns and trusses would be legible. Through honest expression, Slow architecture would allow for greater understanding of the structure and would establish a sense of integrity and trust, creating a deeper connection between people and the architecture.

Slow Food is tastefully and traditionally prepared to preserve and promote local food traditions and culinary practices, which reinforces the cultural well-being of communities (Petrini, 2007: 34). The movement celebrates the craftsmanship involved in food preparation, urging chefs and home cooks to take pride in preparing dishes (Kummer, 2003:54). Similarly, Slow architecture would value the role of craftspeople, those physically making the architecture. Slow architecture would consider *poiēsis* not as an individual act by the architect, but as *sympoiēsis*, which means collective *poiēsis (*poetic and *techne*- inspired *making)*. Craftsmanship could embed architecture with meaning, enhance a material's inherent beauty and reveal the hand of the maker.

Slow Food supports ethical sourcing and fair-trade practices that ensure farmers and producers are adequately compensated. This facilitates the creation of sustainable livelihoods, reducing the pressure to overexploit natural resources (Petrini, 2007, p. 37). Slow architecture would also conceive of construction techniques as opportunities to enhance the well-being of the craftspeople. Slow architecture would not only preserve traditional craftsmanship, but also facilitate skill-building and knowledge-transfer during the making process. This could entail purposefully choosing labour-intensive construction techniques to create as many employment opportunities as possible. Construction techniques suited to unskilled labour could be chosen specifically to facilitate participatory construction, which would enhance a sense of ownership and it could also upskill labour in the process. Slow architecture could also purposefully design for continuous renewal and maintenance, providing not only an income for craftspeople, but also a meaningful social ritual (Louw, 2017:93) .

The plating of Slow Food dishes often reflects the cultural and regional context from which they originate. Traditional plating techniques, serving vessels, and presentation styles are used to honour the culinary heritage. This might involve using specific types of plates, bowls, or utensils that are traditional to a particular region, thereby enhancing the cultural experience of the meal (Kummer, 2003:47). Slow architecture would also respect its regional and cultural heritage through *poiēsis*. Slow architecture would not only preserve, but enhance traditional construction methods to ensure they remain relevant. This could entail the incorporation of traditional craft (such as weaving, pottery, basketry) into architectural design, allowing craftspeople to develop and apply their skills beyond their original position. Slow architecture could also use traditional materials in innovative ways, or reinterpret traditional construction techniques with new materials, thereby not only honouring the heritage, but also revitalising it to ensure ongoing sustainability.

Slow architecture would thus use the making process as a way to embed social responsibility, economic opportunity, tradition and education into architecture, elevating in from merely making to *poiēsis*. Embedding architecture with such capital means that *poiēsis* is not just a a way of “ticking the right boxes”. It is rather a way to sustainably preserve heritage and to uplift craftspeople by establishing sustainable sources of income. Slow architecture would thus leverage construction techniques as a means to improve the social and economic conditions of craftspeople, fostering culture and thereby supporting well-being.

Slow architecture goes beyond mere construction, it is concerned with the beauty and poetic qualities of structure. The way structures are formed can convey deeper meanings and evoke emotional responses. For instance, stereotomic structures (such as stone, brick and concrete

construction) could be associated with mass, gravity, stability and substance, whereas tectonic structures (such as steel or wood frame construction) could be coupled with lightness and transparency. If designed correctly, these opposites could poetically evoke these meanings, they could even echo the two cosmological counterparts to which they aspire - the earth and the sky (Auret, 2010:127). But not all structures achieve poetic qualities. No matter how correct structures might be in terms of function and syntax, they may not hold poetry (Eisenman in Perez-Gomez, 2014:25). Slow architecture would place importance on the beauty to be found in *poiēsis.* Such beauty is "life-affirming, a gift of meaning central to our psychosomatic health, to a sense of attunement with our environment" (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:9). Beauty and poetic qualities are significant for well-being, as they add richness, depth and meaning to life, transcending mere survival.

Attitudes towards experience

The following attitudes (fig.4) from Slow Food towards experience can be applied to architecture:

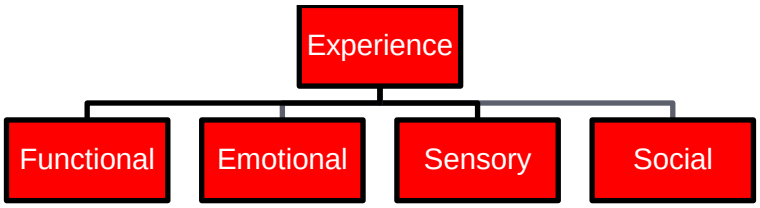

Figure 4: Slow attitudes towards experience (Author, 2024).

Slow Food, is about both physical and emotional nourishment (Louw, 2014:166). In addition to all the functional necessities, Slow Food is about the pure enjoyment and sensory delight of the experience. Sloterdijk (in Fisher, 2011:145) argues that architecture and food could both be "practices of the self-care, forms of life-support and hence explications of modern *being* in the world". Like Slow Food, *Slow* architecture would consider both utility and pleasure. " The utilitarian gives answers, but the poetic creates wonder, and architecture involves the inclusion of these two, often competing, qualities" (Brit Andresen Louw, 2014:158). Slow architecture would integrate both functionality and wonder to make places that work well not only pragmatically but also "evoke life, sustenance, pleasure, and wonderment (Seamon in Jordaan, 2015:155)".

Slow architecture would consider both the rational, utilitarian aspects of places, but also the poetic, emotive aspects of places (Jordaan, 2015:153). Although modern architects have in general excluded the emotional dimension, some acknowledged its significance, such as Le Corbusier, who wrote in Vers une Architecture (1923:19), "The purpose of architecture is to

move us. Architectural emotion exists when the work rings within us in tune with a universe whose laws we obey, recognise and respect". Swiss architect Peter Zumthor (in Jordaan, 2015:156) stresses the significance of feelings in architectural design, stating that “the strength of a good design lies in ourselves and in our ability to perceive the world with both emotion and reason.” Zumthor accepts that architectural design is to a degree based on function and systems of order, but he emphasises that architecture is felt (Jordaan, 2015:156). Architecture impacts psychological experiences through the sensuality of mood, affect and atmosphere (Jordaan, 2015:145-146). It can arouse a sense of belonging, home, protection, curiosity and intimacy, which are all satisfiers of fundamental human needs, thus directly impacting well-being. The important proposition is that “our inner worlds are connected with our outer worlds (Jordaan, 2015:145-146)”, and so our outer worlds can directly impact our well-being.

Both food and architecture face the challenge of standardisation and increased ornamentalisation. Both are portrayed by high-quality visual imagery, so much so that its material essence and other sensory experiences like taste, touch and human experience become secondary (Louw 2014:166). Slow Food places a high value on the beauty of food, not only in terms of its visual presentation, but also in its flavours, aromas, and the cultural stories. Slow Food is prepared and flavoured to create complex sensual compounds. Like food, architecture is experienced through the interaction between the bodily senses and world (Jordaan, 2015:156). This does not mean the sense of vision is to be negated, but rather that it must be integrated with the other senses. O'Neill (in Jordaan, 2015:158) emphasises the importance of recognising that senses are continuously interacting, and so architects should conceptually integrate them. Jordaan (2015:187) states that all places arouse experiences, so the question is not whether experiences are aroused, but rather what the quality of the experiences is. Slow architecture would therefore be concerned with how it is experienced through the senses in terms of bodily involvement, light, color, smell, temperature, climate and sound (Jordaan, 2015:145-146). This does not imply maximalist design or an overstimulation of the senses, but rather a concern about the quality of sensual experiences to create a sense of well-being.

Slow Food recognises that food is not merely sustenance, but a key component of social interaction, cultural expression, and community cohesion. Slow Food encourages people to take time to prepare and enjoy meals, fostering a deeper connection to their food and the people they share it with (Leitch, 2003:448). Slow architecture would acknowledge that places (similar to food) influence social aspects of life, and so places should be designed to foster inclusivity and a sense of belonging. Slow architecture would consider how a project could positively engage with the larger social context, whether that be through participatory design

and construction processes (Louw, 2014:157), challenging private programms to have a public aspect , the design of interfaces between public and private space that are more sympathetic to the public, features that enhance safety and security of the larger context, incorporating local cultural elements and traditions into architectural design (Rapoport, 1982:71) or the design of flexible and adaptable spaces that can accommodate various activities and changing needs over time to ensure long-term usability and relevance (Duffy, 1992:51).

Conclusion

The process of designing and constructing a *Slow* building could be compared to ordering a meal in a Slow Food restaurant (Louw, 2014: 159): The chef (architect) would still operate within a very tight timeframe – the 'slowness' comes in the thoughtfulness and systemic thinking related to the growing, production and selection of the ingredients (poiēsis), and in taking the time to fully experience the meal (architecture).

Research methodology

Research paradigm and aim

The objective of normative theory is to understand the various positions architects have taken, the reasons for their stance, their intentions and the beliefs on which it is based, their material and design principles and why they have selected them, and the design process used (Lang, 1988:603).

The aim of this study is to develop my personal normative position and to situate it within architectural theory. It aims to reinforce my normative position through recording, analysing and understanding similar design philosophies of local award-winning architects. Selected artefacts designed by these local architects will also be analysed to determine the correspondence between design philosophy and built artefact. In this sense, the study falls within the pragmatic paradigm, since it aims to pragmatically comprehend matters, by understanding the relations between theory and practice (Patton, 2005: 153). Through documenting the normative positions of selected local architects, this study also aims to contribute to the discourse on South African design approaches.

This study aims to contribute to the understanding of global, as well as local design approaches. It aims to provide architectural practitioners with a framework to inform the positions they wish to take, because the implications of the normative positions are clearer (Lang, 1988, 604).

Research Question

How can the design philosophies of local architects be situated, contextualised and analysed within broader (global) architectural design philosophies and theories, so as to inform and develop my subjective normative position?

Sub-questions

1. What are the informants of my subjective normative position, and how do they relate to architectural discourse?
2. What are the design philosophies of Kate Otten, André Eksteen, Braam de Villiers, Heinrich Wolff and Ilze Wolff?
3. How can their design philosophies be situated in terms of general architectural theory and design principles?
4. How does their design philosophies relate to my own normative position?

Data collection

This study will use a mixed method approach and will consist of qualitative and quantitative data. Data will be collected across local and global scales as follows:

Architectural theory (general / global context)

To situate my normative position within general architectural theory, data will be collected through a desktop literature review. Online databases will be searched to source architectural literature that contain key terms that align with the three considerations of my normative position, that is context, poiēsis and Experience.

Interviews and case studies (local context)

Lang (1998:605) states that there are two fundamental sources for ascertaining the normative positions of individual architects or schools of architectural thought: their verbal statements (or writings) and their buildings. For this reason, literature on interviews with selected architects that potentially align with my normative position, and case studies on their buildings, will be conducted. The interviews will be semi-structured and will investigate the architects' personal design approaches, the theory and philosophies in which they are grounded, and how they are applied in their architecture by referring to selected artefacts. The interviews will be theme orientated, focusing on the principles of my own normative position, as to understand whether the architects align with them. The primary data from the interviews will be supplemented with secondary data from literature on the architects.

As my normative position is concerned with human experience, it is important not only to refer to sources such as drawings, photographs, and literature related to the architect and artefact, but also to experience and interpret the places in person. Site visits will be made and documented as part of case studies. This is because experience entails all the senses: vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell (Jordaan, 2015:24). Case studies will be supplemented with secondary data acquired through desktop reviews.

Data Analysis

Architectural Theory

Different arguments in architectural theory will be compared to identify architectural movements with similar values to that of my normative position were identified. The literature will be deconstructed in terms of three key points (context, poiēsis and experience) presented in my initial normative position, as to clearly illustrate the relations between the broader theory and my own normative approach.

Interviews and case studies

The normative positions of the selected practitioners will be analysed by comparing their attitudes on the three key points around which my normative position revolves (context, poiēsis, experience). The data obtained from the interviews will be analysed by coding relevant information from the interview transcripts according to the three key points (see appendices). Published articles and the selected architects' professional websites will be used as supplementary data. From the data, the attitudes and consequent normative positions of the selected practitioners will be presented individually, whereafter their philosophies will be compared to my own attitudes and normative position, and finally their ideologies will be situated within architectural theory.

The selected case studies will be interpretatively analysed with regards to the themes of my normative position. The cases will be analysed through description, intuition and experience. The relationship between normative positions and their application in practice will also be analysed by comparing the design philosophies (intentions) and the outcomes (the architecture).

Conclusions will be drawn from the interviews and case studies with the aim of providing holistic, detailed, and otherwise undisclosed information. Through this process of theoretically situating and comparatively analysing the work of other architects, I can establish a revised, better developed normative position for myself, whilst capturing, and increasing the record of the philosophies, theories, attitudes and approaches to design of local architects.

Limitations, delineation and assumptions

The qualitative aspects of the study are not expected to produce unquestionably accurate results or answers, but rather to provide a comprehensive understanding of the presented problem (the impact of architecture on well-being) and to pose a possible solution in the form of a design approach.

Data Analysis: Architectural Theory

The Arts and Crafts movement, Critical Regionalism and Phenomenology are three architectural movements that have demonstrated similar attitudes to my Slow Architectural approach in terms of context, *poiēsis* and experience.

Arts and Crafts (1880-1920)

The Arts and Crafts is a conservative preservation movement of the early 20th century, which criticised the negative impact of industrial revolution (Fischer, 2011:142). The Arts and Crafts movement advocated for a return to handmade, well-crafted objects as a response to mass production's perceived degradation of quality and human connection (Rossi, 2017:online). Whether knowingly or not, the more recent global emergence of an “architecture of care”[1] is reiteration of the values of the Arts and Crafts movement, as it bears remarkable relations with key Arts and Crafts concerns for moral values of honesty, truth and simplicity and a general drive towards sustainability (Coetzer, 2017:1). A re-reading and reconsideration of the Arts and Crafts is thus a necessary undertaking (Coetzer, 2017:1).

A.W.N. Pugin (1812-1852) was a forerunner of the movement, who published *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture,* in which he declared rules for design and his ideals for architecture. W. Morris (1834-1896), alongside J. Ruskin (1819-1900), was a central figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. His writings, particularly *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882) and *News from Nowhere* (1890), further developed the movement's philosophical underpinnings. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), Ruskin outlines seven principles or "lamps" that he believes are essential for good architectural design. These works can all be read as their normative positions, and serves as valuable sources for understanding the attitudes of the movement.

Attitudes towards context

The Arts and Crafts Movement reflected a profound sensitivity to its economic, social, and environmental contexts, particularly in light of industrialisation. Both Slow architecture and Arts and Crafts conceptualise architecture as part of a larger living system. Pugin wrote that the best architectural education would comprise of the study of history, liturgy, vernacular building traditions and natural resources (Lewis, 2021:128). For him, architecture had a moral purpose to shape society (Lewis, 2021:7, 128). Pugin asserted that architects should not only

[1] *Architecture of Care* refers to socially conscious architecture. It is concerned with humanitarian crises, such as issues of sustainability and migration (Aravena Mori and Iacobelli, 2016, Bell and Wakeford, 2008, Sinclair and Stohr, 2006).

understand the technical aspects of buildings, particularly as it relates to various local conditions, but also the social and cultural contexts of their designs. He felt it was essential that architects understand that cultural factors influence the way people interact with architecture (Lewis, 2021:128). Morris considered architecture intimately intertwined with life, especially social conditions (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:120). Ruskin saw architecture not only as part of his current context, but also as a part of the future. He was concerned about creating truly meaningful architecture. “Therefore, when we build, let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for” (Ruskin, 2000:243). This attitude could well be a precursor for sustainability.

As with Slow architecture, so Arts and Crafts was concerned about the well-being of the larger context, especially with regards to the social, economic and environmental impacts of industrialisation. The Arts and Crafts was a remarkable socialist movement, showing concern about the well-being of people and the planet. Morris condemned the degradation of the worker and the defilement of nature (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:126-127). He held the capitalistic system responsible for the destruction of true wealth, that is well-being (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:129). He felt that in the mad pursuit of riches, the noble meaning of wealth was forgotten. He insisted that the costs of production may be lowered economically, but not for society or nature (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:131). Morris concluded from his study of social and industrial conditions that life was profit-driven (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:185) and that commerce served only as an end in itself, and not as a means (Clutton-Brock, 2007:209). He found this problematic and argued that the system must change, or else civilisation would be destroyed instead (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:152).

Connection to context was of high significance to the Arts and Crafts Movement, as Pugin, Ruskin and Morris were all regionalists. This echoes Slow architecture’s attitude of connection to context. The movement emphasised a strong connection to nature the integration of buildings with their natural landscapes. Pugin had a respect for nature and valued local scenery and weather (Lewis, 2021:79). He thought that architecture should enhance the picturesque nature of the landscape. Morris too preferred architecture that developed from its landscape, “like a real growth of the soil” (cited in Davey, 1995:30). The movement advocated for the use of local materials (Davey, 1995:22), which not only supported local economies, but also ensured that buildings were materially connected to their natural surroundings (Lewis, 2021:30).

Slow architecture as well as Arts and Crafts respect local and vernacular building traditions. Pugin publicised “fidelity to place” (Davey 1995:16) and strongly objected against so-called

modern or foreign styles. Pugin was dubious of the universalising aspects of Classicism (Lewis, 2021:31). He hoped to not only escape the internationalised trend, but to also revive local architecture (Davey, 1995:17). Pugin believed that local building traditions should be respected (Lewis, 2021:30).This attitude of respecting and building upon regional architectural traditions, creates a sense of continuity and cultural identity, positively contributing to the well-being of the social and cultural context.

Attitudes towards poiēsis

Ruskin made a clear distinction between building and architecture. For him, architecture was not merely concerned about construction. No, he (2000:28) considered architecture an art that elevates the edifices erected by humanity, as to contribute to humanity's "mental health, power and pleasure". Morris also argued that architecture was more than mere "ornamental building" or "ephemeral prettiness" and that architecture was an expression of people's value of life, whilst positively contributing to the value of their life (Morris, 2000:4). It is thus evident that, similar to Slow architecture, Arts and Crafts considered architecture as an act of *poiēsis* and thought that it could thereby contribute to well-being.

Slow architecture as well as Arts and Crafts demand the use of local materials. Pugin believed that materials should be locally sourced. He recognised that using local materials would make a building a complement its context, whilst also counteracting the monotony that followed the national distribution of building materials via the railways (Lewis, 2021:30).

Both Slow architecture and Arts and Crafts value honesty in the use of materials, construction methods and structural systems. Pugin held that structural systems should be authentic to the nature of its materials (Lewis, 2021:30). He stated that masonry construction demanded arches, as it is the superior load-bearing structure achievable with brick or stone (Lewis, 2021:8). Ruskin (2000:61-62) advocated for materials to maintain their natural appearance – one material should not imitate another. If a building is built from stone, the stone should be visible and not hidden or disguised by other materials. Structures should not be deceitful, what appears to be loadbearing should actually carry weight (Ruskin, 2000:64).

Slow architecture as well as Arts and Crafts promote the visible expression of structural elements. Drawing from the structural legibility of Gothic architecture, Pugin argued that structural members should be exposed, so that the structural logic of a building can be read (Lewis, 2021:5-6). Pugin however believed in the use of ornament. At the same time, he maintained that ornament must not conceal a building's structure; it should rather be an enrichment of the structure itself (Lewis, 2021:8). Ruskin (2000:63) praised the visible

articulation of joints and individual components (such as stones or bricks). He argued that joints are part of the structural integrity of a building and should be celebrated, not concealed.

Arts and Crafts immensely valued the role of craftspeople, those who carry out designs. Among the other arts, Ruskin particularly valued architecture, because it was produced by cooperation with others (Clutton-Brock, 2007:7). Pugin had strong relationships with craftspeople and was also a partner in a leading craft production company (Louw, 2014:165). Morris conceptualised craft as more than work, it was meaningful labour, done with care and skill, and it was essential to human happiness and social well-being (Clutton-Brock, 2007:206). Ruskin (2000:82-83) believed that the use of machines contributed to the dehumanisation of labour, reducing craftspeople to mere operators of machines rather than skilled artisans who take pride in their work. Ruskin viewed any production by the machine as dishonest. He believed that machine work could not replicate the personal touch of the maker (Ruskin, 2000:82-83). He argued that craftspeople embedded architecture with poetry, because a hand crafted object acts as record of "thoughts, trials, and heartbreaks— of recoveries and the joyfulness of success". Ruskin valued the time and care that was taken craftspeople – the focus was not solely on efficiency. On the other hand, Pugin (in Lewis, 2021:131), along with American Arts and Crafts architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) believed that the machine made labour more physically tolerable for craftspeople, that it could produce with less waste and that it could produce more economically, making it possible for both the rich and the poor to enjoy beautifully crafted objects (Davey, 1995:210). No matter the support or disregard for the machine, the main premise is that Arts and Crafts practitioners were mindful of their impact on the larger system, which can be linked to the attitudes of Slow architecture.

Arts and Crafts proponents regarded beauty as essential for a life of well-being. Morris was convinced that "man needs both to create beauty and to live under the influences of beauty. To live amid ugliness is to debase both nature and the worker" and that beauty "is a positive necessity of worthy life for all" (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:121). Similar to Slow architecture, the movement regarded natural imperfections as beautiful. Pugin appreciated the way the weathering of natural materials aesthetically joined architecture with its landscape (Lewis, 2021:79). Ruskin stressed the need for beauty and well-being in the lives of people (Davey, 1995:34). Ruskin saw beauty in nature and imperfection (he called it 'savageness'). He regarded imperfection as beautiful for the fact that it showed evidence of the maker (Davey, 1995:18-19).

Attitudes towards experience

The Arts and Crafts movement located the solution for the insensitivities of capitalism in the embodied experiences of people (Meneley in Louw, 2014:156). The movement proposed that the strenuous lives of the working class could be alleviated if they were in aesthetically pleasing environments when they returned from their hard day's work. As such, Arts and Crafts valued not only the functional and pragmatic, but also the emotional aspects of architecture, which is similar to the attitude of Slow architecture. Pugin believed that one of architecture's core functions is to affect the emotions (Lewis, 2021:5-6). Pugin purposefully designed buildings to provoke feelings, such as a sense of mystery, drama, anticipation, exploration and discovery (Lewis, 2021:14, 65, 82). Ruskin (in Auret 2015:97) wrote that the architect "must be a poet, one who can think strongly, feel strongly and see truly". Ruskin (2000:103-104) believed that architecture should be 'powerful' in the sense that it should possess expressive and impactful qualities. His attitude highlights the ability of architecture to inspire, influence emotions, and create a sense of awe or significance. 'Powerful' architecture goes beyond mere functionality to evoke a strong emotional response and make a lasting impression.

The movement showed regard for the impact of the sensual aspects of architecture on well-being. Morris argued that architecture, as an art, should entice people emotionally and intellectually by means of the senses, thereby giving true pleasure and happiness in life (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:106). He wrote that the noble purpose of architecture is "feeding the minds and souls of all people, of training their intellects, of exciting their emotions, and of pleasing their senses" (Hehnholtz-Phelan, 1927:109-110)

Conclusion

The Arts and Crafts movement was deeply concerned with well-being, focusing on how design and architecture could enhance the quality of life. The Art and Crafts Movement clearly demonstrates attitudes of Slow architecture towards context. The movement not only believed in creating a connection between architecture and to the context, but was also viewed context as a system, being concerned about social, environmental and economic impacts of industrialisation. The Art and Crafts Movement also evidently displays attitudes of Slow architecture concerning *poiēsis*. The movement valued honesty in construction

Phenomenology

Phenomenology in architecture can be described as a discourse and a process (Jordaan, 2015:23). Architectural phenomenological discourse has mostly been influenced by the writings of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. The 1950s saw the start of the phenomenological investigation into the notion of *place*. Various architects, such as Norberg-

Schulz, Pallasmaa & Perez-Gomez started to draw on phenomenology to motivate their normative positions[2] of creation of meaningful and significant spaces. These architects have sought to use the phenomenological concept of *place* as a solution, and have prioritised meaning, significance and the experience of everyday environments (Jordaan,2015:2). Jordaan (2015:33) explains that *place* is space with *meaning*. *Place*-making is still of relevance to architects as the issues of homogeneity, standardisation, and universalisation persist (Jordaan, 2015:23).

Attitudes towards context

Most phenomenologists would claim that phenomenology revolves around lived experience, around being. Auret (2015:115) explains that *being* entails people's "concerned participation in the life-world". People are concerned about the being their own existence within a larger context. The notion of context is described in different ways in phenomenological discourse. A first is the notion of *lifeworld*, which situates individual experiences within collective experiences and entails the social, historical, cultural, economic, political and environmental aspects of daily life. Husserl (in Jordaan, 2015:39-40) argued that there is not a singular *lifeworld*, but a collective of coinciding worlds, starting with the self and extending to other worlds beyond, such as other cultures. A second idea is that context is the background against which things are perceived. Jordaan (2015:49) explains that every experience occurs in social and spatial settings, wherein a variety of meanings, feelings, emotions, and thoughts participate. She refers to Marleau-Ponty and Husserl to illustrate that objects are not experienced in isolation, but "always against a background, within a surrounding world, related to other objects, bodies and persons". Norberg-Schulz, (1979:5) writes that existential space comprises the relationship between man and his environment. From a phenomenological perspective, *place* cannot be divorced from its context (Jordaan, 2015:50). It is thus clear that phenomenology emphasises the connection between architecture to context, which is a similar attitude to Slow architecture.

Phenomenology shows some conceptualisation of context as a living, interrelated system. Pallasmaa (2012:37) states that if architecture is to have an emancipating or healing role (such as promoting well-being), it should reflect on how it is connected to the cultural and mental reality of its time. He continues by cautioning architects to be aware of how current cultural,

[2] See Norberg-Schulz (1979), *Genius Loci: Towards a phenomenology of architecture*, Pallasmaa (2012), *The Eyes of the Skin : Architecture and the Senses*, Perez-Gomez (2016), *Attunement : Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science*. These works can all be read as normative positions, and serves as valuable sources for understanding the attitudes of phenomenology.

political, economic, perceptual and cognitive developments threatens the feasibility of architecture.

Phenomenology also displays some concern about the well-being of the system, particularly the social dimension. Pallasmaa (2012:25) shows concern about the impact of narcissistic and nihilistic attitudes he associates with visually-focussed architects. He argues that narcissistic attitudes regard architecture only as a means of self-expression, “an intellectual–artistic game detached from essential mental and societal connections”. He states that nihilistic attitudes disengage and isolate people from each other and the world, making the world a “hedonistic but meaningless visual journey”.

Attitudes towards *poiēsis*

Phenomenology considers architecture’s making processes as more than mere construction, it elevates it to an act of *poiēsis,* poetic and *techne*- inspired *making*. Norberg-Schulz (1979:5) argues that the purpose of architecture is to give man a means to find an "existential foothold" and architecture achieves this through "inspired technology”.

Like Slow architecture, phenomenology also shows a deep appreciation of craftmanship. Pallasmaa (2009: 52) deems craft as still highly relevant and believes that there lies deep, untapped potential in traditional skills and modes of making. He (2009: 69) is of the opinion that architects should reconnect their intellectual world with the world of making, and suggests cultivating deep, personal relationships with craftspeople, artisans and artists. Phenomenology thus regards *poiēsis* as a collective act.

Slow architecture as well as phenomenology encourage honesty in the expression of material and structural elements. Pallasmaa (2012:25) calls architecture devoid of tectonic logic and a sense of materiality, “superficial”. Construction should be authentic and reflect the realities of its materials and construction to avoid scenography (Pallasmaa, 2012:30). Norberg-Schulz (1979:5) quotes Louis Kahn’s question, what does the brick want to be? This implies that materials should be used according to their inherent structural qualities – the brick wants to be an arch.

Both phenomenology and Slow architecture prefer natural and minimally processed materials. Pallasmaa (2012:30) writes that natural materials, like stone, brick and wood – authentically express their qualities, including their age, the story of their origins and their history of human use. On the other hand, machine-manufactured materials, such as enameled metals, scaleless sheets of glass and synthetic plastics are dishonest. They usually do not convey their material essence or age.

Like Slow architecture, phenomenology embraces the concept of *wabi-sabi*, appreciating the transience of life and the natural imperfection of things. Pallasmaa (2012:30-35) expresses dissatisfaction with the ageless perfection of industrially manufactured materials and emphasises the importance of experiential time. Pallasmaa (2012:34) argues that all matter exists in the continuum of time and as such, materials should convey their age. “The patina of wear adds the enriching experience of time to the materials of construction.” Pallasmaa (2012:35) stresses that weakening of the experience of time in contemporary environments has devastating effects on well-being.

Nothing gives man fuller satisfaction than participation in processes that supersede the span of individual life. We have a mental need to grasp that we are rooted in the continuity of time, and in the man-made world it is the task of architecture to facilitate this experience. Architecture domesticates limitless space and enables us to inhabit it, but it should likewise domesticate endless time and enable us to inhabit the continuum of time. (Pallasmaa, 2012:35).

Phenomenology, like Slow architecture, is concerned with the intangible and poetic qualities embodied in tangible building technology. Norberg-Schulz (1979:14-15) writes that the material and formal construction of a boundary or place gives it a certain character. According to Norberg-Schulz, boundaries and enclosures are concrete, tangible things with character and meaning.

Attitudes towards experience

Phenomenology acknowledges that the emotional and sensual aspects of place influence the well-being of people, and as such holds the view that the purpose of architecture transcends the mere functional purposes advocated for by Modernism. Akin to Slow architecture, phenomenology does not negate functionality, but argues that emotional and sensual experiences should be considered just as significant as function. Norberg-Schulz (1979:5) states that there is a relationship between the emotional and the practical aspects of architecture. He also writes “to make practical towns and buildings is not enough” and “man's merits do not count much if he is unable to dwell poetically, that is to dwell in the true sense of the word…”

People require a sense of belonging. Pérez-Gómez (2016:7) argues that this is architecture’s central role; to provide a home, “ultimately a place of fruition and completeness analogous to erotic experience, a place for dwelling and not merely a shelter for our physical bodies”. The idea of 'being in place' is linked to a sense of 'feeling at home' or belonging. The concept of

home (*place*) is not just one of architecture, but one of psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology (Jordaan, 2015:175-176).

Norberg-Schulz (1979:19-21) argues that in order to belong to a *place*, two emotional needs must be fully met - orientation (know where one is) and identification (know how one is). Identification requires correspondence between the inner (psyche) and the outer (physical) world (Norberg-Schulz, 1979:19-21). Jordaan (2015:72) explains that boundaries and enclosures not only define places; they can also foster feelings of safety and shelter. This could not only extend to physical safety and shelter, but to a greater, existential sense thereof. Places arouse emotions and so, the qualities of place is of the utmost importance for human well-being (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:2). Emotions are crucial for cognition and have life-enhancing value (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:24). It is evident that phenomenology, alike to Slow architecture, places emphasis on the emotional aspects of architecture, which directly impacts well-being.

“Architecture is the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world, and this mediation takes place through the senses “ (Pallasmaa, 1996a: 42). Both phenomenology and Slow architecture place significance on multi-sensory experiences and criticise the dominance of visual media. Phenomenology emphasises direct experiences with the world rather than mental abstractions (Jordaan, 2015:19). Norberg-Schulz (1979: 190) identified the prominence of visual aspects of architecture and the subsequent neglect of the other senses. He described it as the “poverty of stimuli”. He goes on to describe Frank Lloyd Wright’s use of materials as a search for rootedness and ‘a hunger for reality’ – a counterpoint to one dimensional (perhaps rather, ‘one sensational’) architecture. Pallasmaa (2012:21) claims that “the inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as the consequence of the neglect of the body and the senses, and an imbalance in our sensory system. He blames architecture’s sensory neglect for the growing experiences of alienation, detachment, solitude, isolation and exteriority in the technological world today. “The art of the eye has certainly produced imposing and thought-provoking structures, but it has not facilitated human rootedness in the world” (Pallasmaa, 2012:21). Life-enhancing architecture evidentially should address all the senses simultaneously if it is to promote well-being.

Conclusion

Phenomenology demonstrates a profound concern about quality of life, emphasising the deeper, more poetic and ultimately more meaningful things that constitute a life of well-being. Norberg-Schulz’s (1979:23) wrote that the purpose of architecture is to help man to dwell, which entails more than mere survival. To dwell is to live a meaningful, fulfilling life – a life of well-being. Norberg-Schulz also (1979:23) argues that architecture belongs to poetry, and only

poetry makes human existence meaningful. Pallasmaa (2012:19) argues that architecture is deeply engaged in the metaphysical questions of interiority and exteriority, the self and the world, time and duration, life and death. Pallasmaa (2012:12) writes that “architecture manifests our human pursuits and sense of order in the otherwise measureless and meaningless natural space. Architecture does not make us inhabit worlds of mere fabrication and fantasy; it articulates the experience of our being-in-the-world and strengthens our sense of reality and self”. Pérez-Gómez (2016:6) states that architecture’s fundamental and recurrent existential condition remains the same and as pressing as always, that is “the profound need for humans to inhabit a resonant world they may call home, a healthy world for both mind and body, even when separated by global technological civilisation from an innate sense of place.”

Critical Regionalism

In the early 1980s the theorists Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre and Kenneth Frampton proposed a Critical Regionalist approach for architecture as a solution to the “universalisation” of the International Style, and to the Post-Modernist commodification of architecture (which had negative social consequences such as alienation or cliché). Critical Regionalism is not a style, but rather a dialectic approach that deconstructs universal modernism in terms of local values and vice versa (Frampton, 1983a:149). It should not be confused with other regionalist movements, such as populist, vernacular or historicist regionalism. Critical Regionalism is ‘critical’ in the sense that it aims not to have the anti-technological, sentimental or nationalist undertone associated with other regionalist movements. Critical Regionalism critiques the globalisation of modernisation, but it does however accept the emancipatory and progressive aspects that come with it (Frampton, 2020:522).

Attitudes towards context

Frampton (2020:522) advocates for architecture that is consciously bounded to its environment, but that is also aware of its larger context. Critical Regionalism perpetually considers site-specific factors, ranging from the topography, the local light conditions and climatic zone. In doing so, Critical Regionalism opposes to the tendency of Modernist universalisation to use compensatory measures like bulldozing a site, artificial lighting and air conditioning (Frampton, 1983b:26). “It tends to treat all openings as delicate transitional zones with a capacity to respond to the specific conditions imposed by the site, the climate and the light” (Frampton, 2020:522). Frampton (1983a:151) describes the ability of Alvaro Siza to ground his buildings into the given topography, in the specificity of the local context, giving particular attention to the subtle filtration and penetration of local light. He (1983a:152-153) refers to Luis Barragan's work as specifically regionalist and a move away from the

International style. He (1983a:156) also explains that the work of Mario Botta uses local artistic potential while reinterpreting cultural influences coming from elsewhere. Frampton (1983a:158) also mentions Tadao Ando as an architect who creates architecture that is situated between "the process of universal modernization and the idiosyncrasy of rooted culture".

In the larger context, Critical Regionalism is concerned with well-being, as it hopes to halt the loss of differentiation, specificity and locality (Fischer, 2011:141). Frampton is regarded as a socialist and humanist and is outspoken against the modern world's consumption and faith in technology, "the sphere of objects dominates to the point that individuals are subject to the ever-changing and impermanent world of the commodity, architectural and otherwise. Such a social condition replaces … culture with the production of kitsch or the celebration of technology for its own sake" (Frampton, cited in Barker, 2019:29). Frampton (1983a:148) writes that Critical Regionalism is intimately tied to political context, and that "a strong desire for realising an identity" is needed for this approach(1983:148). Critical Regionalism discussed in parallel to social, economic, political and philosophic issues, which implies an ethical responsibility on architecture to respond to all contexts, not just immediate environment (Fischer, 2011:143). In this sense Critical Regionalism clearly reflects the attitudes of Slow architecture.

Attitudes towards *poiēsis*

The thoughtful consideration of building technology is a key attitude of Slow architecture. Frampton (1983:151) praises the work of Alvaro Siza, as it demonstrates an extraordinary sensitivity towards local materials and craftmanship (1983:151). He also mentions Jørn Utzon, Sverre Fehn, Carlo Scarpa, Mario Botta, and Tadao Ando as practitioners whose work also demonstrated well considered material selection and craftsmanship. Like Slow architecture, Critical Regionalism also respects craftspeople and their well-being. Frampton wrote *Labour, Work and Architecture* to distinguish between the joy and life-affirming nature of labour, as opposed to the commoditisation of work (Barker, 2019:29).

Slow architecture values the honest expression of materials and structures. Frampton advocated for Structural Rationalism (originally stated by Viollet-le-Duc), which entails the use of materials according to their qualities and properties (Barker, 2019:26).The attention to detail in joinery, masonry, and finishes exemplifies the poetics of construction, where the process of making becomes a visible part of the building's story (Frampton, 1995: 20).

Slow architecture is concerned with the beauty and poetic qualities of architecture. Frampton (1995:2, 1983b:28) describes *tectonics* as “the poetics of construction” or “the presentation of a structural poetic”. He (1983b:27-28) explains that it refers to the expressive potential of building technology and that is innately tied to materials, craftmanship and gravity. This all relates to *poiēsis*. He quotes architectural historian Stanford Anderson:

Tektonik referred not just to the activity of making the materially requisite construction ... but rather to the activity that raises this construction to an art form .... The functionally adequate form must be adapted so as to give expression to its function. The sense of bearing provided by the entasis of Greek columns became the touchstone of this concept of Tektonik.

Attitudes towards experience

Frampton (1983b:29) writes that Critical Regionalism seeks to counter the Western tendency to interpret the environment in exclusively perspectival terms, whereby of the senses of smell, hearing, touch and taste are suppressed, and a consequent distancing from a more direct experience of the environment occurs. Frampton (2020:522) cautions against diminishing architecture to a series of superficial “scenographic” encounters, and states that Critical Regionalism promotes tactile and tectonic architecture, a poetic constructed reality that can be experienced through all the senses:

Critical regionalism emphasises the tactile as much as the visual. It is aware that the environment can be experienced in terms other than sight alone. It is sensitive to such complementary perceptions as varying levels of illumination, ambient sensations of heat, cold, humidity and air movement, varying aromas and sounds given off by different materials in different volumes, and even the varying sensations induced by floor finishes, which cause the body to experience involuntary changes in posture, gait, etc. It is opposed to the tendency in an age dominated by media to the replacement of experience by information. (Frampton, 2020:522*).*

Fischer (2011:142) writes that Tzonis, Lefaivre and Frampton suggested that the visual commodification of architecture can be countered by applying local materials, techniques and typologies, by referring to context, history, season and the landscape, altogether features that have to be experienced on site rather than in images. Frampton (1983:151) states that Alvaro Siza's approach is self-evidently tactile and materialist, rather than visual and graphic. He continues to write that Luis Barragan's work has always been of a sensual and tactile nature.

Synthesis

Some writers have explicitly linked the Arts and Crafts, Phenomenological and Critical Regionalist movements with each other. Both Louw (2014) and Fischer (2011) link the Slow Food Movement to Critical Regionalism. Slow food is, similar to Critical Regionalism, against the standardisation and commodification of taste and culture. Fischer (2011:142) links the Arts & Crafts movement with Critical Regionalism, stating that an emancipatory aspect is already present in the regionalism of the Arts & Crafts, and that according to Tzonis and Lefaivre, it started as early as the 18th Century English "picturesque" movement. Fischer (2011:142) explains that Tzonis and Lefaivre regard the English garden as "a natural, sensual, and regional alternative to the rationalism of the French formalist garden". Tzonis and Lefaivre also point to the specificity of the site – which Fischer links to *genius loci* in the Phenomenological discourse of Norberg-Schulz. Tzonis and Lefaivre also view the English garden as political manifestation of "liberal bourgeois ideologies of freedom, nature, self-awareness and last, but not least, distinct Englishness" (Fischer, 2011:142). Frampton explicitly links Critical Regionalism to Phenomenology, when he refers to Heidegger, calling the restricted focus on visual aspects a "loss of nearness." He (1983a:162) also states that if "any central principle of critical regionalism can be isolated, then it is surely a commitment to *place* rather than space, or in Heideggerian terminology, to *raum*". Fischer (2011:144) explains that Critical Regionalism goes hand in hand with the phenomenological theories of Norberg-Schulz and Alberto Pérez-Gómez.

Data analysis: Interviews and case studies

(Refer to appendices)

Selected architect: Kate Otten

Architecture for the everyday

Cheerfully humanist, delight-filled, human-centred, deeply personal and even *fun* (Lokko, 2016:15) are words used to describe Otten's work. She has innate need to 'do a good job' for the sake of it, to fulfil the requirements put forth to her (Lokko, 2016:16). Cooke (2013:1) describes her architectural approach as one with "a lot of flexibility within broad principles".

Attitudes towards context

Otten does not explicitly state that she believes context is a system, but when talking about context or landscapes, she speaks of it as a multi-faceted concept, spanning the natural environment, politics, history and socio-economic conditions (Otten, 2024). "South Africa is the country I call home. It is a diverse country with many extremes, most obviously the extreme of

poverty that exists alongside great wealth… varied cultures and complex histories. The layer of the natural landscapes is also varied; sometimes harsh and unforgiving, other times beautiful and nurturing" (Otten, 2020b:online). Akin to Slow architecture, Otten shows concern around the well-being of the environment. When approaching the issue of sustainability, Otten believes a building should be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Otten (2024) tends to opt for local labour and to design in accordance with the available skills, which benefits the local economy. She employs principles of energy efficient design and is passionate the use of reclaimed or recycled materials. Otten takes particular care in the placement of buildings on site with the aim of contributing to the well-being of the landscape. Vegetation is generally a priority for her, whether it is preserved, reinstated or created anew (fig. 5-8) (Otten, 2020b:online). Her attitude bears some relation to systems-thinking, showing care and thoughtfulness, all key attitudes of Slow architecture.

Figure 5: Courtyard with new garden at Law on Keyes, 2019 (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 6: Gabriel's Garden, 2005. The existing garden was preserved to the maximum extent possible . (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 7: The veranda opens up to a lush new garden at Our House, 2005. (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: WITS rural facility, 2017. *Referencing local cultural settlement patterns, prominence is given as much to the spaces between as to the actual built form. The buildings are designed as singular spaces linked by fully accessible covered walkways which allow the various parts to shift to accommodate the terrain and protected trees, simultaneously creating easy to navigate, defined movement between the structures. This shifting geometry creates a variety of courtyards, gathering places and informal teaching spaces. The roofs rise and fall, slipping underneath and between the extensive tree cover – in some places, trees even grow through the buildings (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).*

Figure 8: The roof is built around the existing tree at the WITS Rural Facility, 2016 (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture is directly connected to its context, and this is clearly reflected in Otten's attitude and designs. She has admired Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy[3], from her student days and specifically mentions the contextual appropriateness of his projects (Otten, 2024). The projects in her portfolio demonstrate sensitivity towards local climatic conditions, considering weather conditions, natural light and ventilation. Otten also relates her projects to their context in terms of scale, views and often blurs the boundaries between inside and out. She further makes use of contextually appropriate materials that reference the surrounding landscape, both in urban and natural contexts (fig. 9-10).

Figure 9: Materials familiar to the context are used at the Soweto Art Therapy Centre ensuring that the building is not alienating, as it is a healing space for trauma (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 10: Lulu Kati Kati, 2005. Built on a brownfield, urban site, the house exploits the natural features of the site – a steep north-facing slope, large rocky ridge and beautiful indigenous Dombeya tree, as well as views north to the koppie beyond. The bay window and steel sheeting on the front façade is a reinterpretation of the local Melville architecture (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture practitioners are pro-active and act as systems advocates and influencers. Being a woman in a male dominated industry has led Otten to develop a decidedly feminist attitude and is profoundly passionate about furthering the contribution of women to the architectural profession. Her practice is therefore predominantly and "unashamedly" made up

[3] Hassan Fathy (1900-1989) pioneered the use of appropriate *building technology* for building in Egypt, particularly the use of mud-brick and traditional as opposed to western building designs. Fathy was awarded the Aga Khan Chairman's Award for Architecture in 1980.

of female architectural professionals (Otten, 2013:online). Her experience has made her sensitive to the experiences of vulnerable people, especially women and children. Otten regularly participates in the architectural discourse. She is an active member of several professional bodies and is the current head of the South African Institute of Architects. She is involved in architectural education as a guest lecturer and examiner (Tumubweinee, 2013:98). Otten thus shows an attitude of advocacy, which can be linked to Slow architecture.

Attitudes towards poiēsis

Slow architecture prefers the use of local, natural, reclaimed or recycled materials – all of which are reflected in Otten's work. Otten (2024) has made use of timber, earth, stone and brickwork and collects building materials such as tiles, doors and windows with the aim of repurposing them. Her projects usually include the design of the landscape, adding vegetation to her material palette. This attitude is not only considerate towards the environment with regards to resource and energy use, but also fosters well-being on an economic and social level. It "keeps cost to a minimum and invention to a maximum; green building at its most practical and aesthetically pleasing" (Otten, 2020b:online).

Project showcase: Lulu Kati Kati, completed 2005. *(Fig.11) The building is made from a lightweight timber frame, suspended from 6m high gum poles on a steep slope. The design incorporates natural lighting, ventilation, heating and cooling. Solar energy is used to heat domestic water and for space heating in winter. Re-claimed, recycled and on-site materials are used as well as local labour and skills. The sun-screens are made from invader plants; insulation and privacy screens from recycled plastic cut into plant-like forms. Rainwater is collected, circulated and filtered through ponds and a reed bed to the bio-pool (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).*

Figure 11: Lulu Kati Kati, completed 2005 (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Like Slow architecture, Otten values the role of craftspeople, those physically making the architecture. In certain projects, Otten does not design everything down to the last detail. Instead, artisans and craftspeople are encouraged to express themselves on site and use their skills and abilities to best effect (Otten, 2013:online). Otten considers poiēsis as a collective act, involving the architect, client and craftspeople (Otten, 2020b:online). The self-expression of the maker and the input from the user all contribute to the architecture; "it tells the story of where it comes from and who made it" (Otten, 2020b:online). Otten argues that her open-ended approach has economic advantages, which is relevant to the economic reality of South Africa; her "details are sophisticated but use simple materials and techniques" (Tumubweinee,

2013:98). Ottens's approach allows participation in the building process for a relatively unskilled workforce, whilst simultaneously encouraging input from experienced craftsmen, thereby fostering social and economic well-being.

***Project showcase: Soweto Art therapy centre**. The exact placement of the dome, where it would be entered from, the height and proportion were specified by Otten. The exact texture, the brick patterns and the finishing of the dome, however, was realized through a process of issuing rough sketches and photographs and demonstrations by Otten herself. After a lengthy discussion at one site meeting it was concluded that the builders would produce a sample for her to view the following week. At the next meeting, instead of viewing a sample, she was shown, with great enthusiasm, a finished dome that exceeded her expectations (fig.12). The brickwork is of imprecise geometry with protruding and rotated brick elements (Wolff Architects, 2008:online).*

The timber screen (fig. 13) that defines one edge of the inner courtyard is made up of a series of planks on a gum pole frame. The screen is drawn with column positions dimensioned but with the randomly arranged planks configured but not dimensioned. An impression of the whole is given as opposed to an instruction that should be meticulously followed. The random timber planks have a structural logic but within the logic there is a looseness (Wolff Architects, 2008:online).

The building is a minimal composition of elements with each having a distinct character. The offer to the contractor to artistically participate in the character of the final project together with the informality and playfulness of the design add a wonderful association to the institutional purpose of the building as an art therapy centre (Wolff Architects, 2008:online)

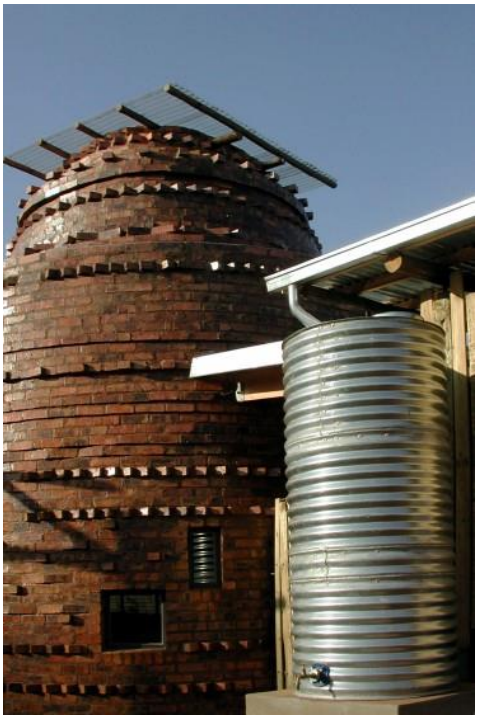

Figure 12: The brick dome at Soweto Art Therapy Centre (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 13: The timber screen at Soweto Art Therapy Centre (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture values the honest expression of materials and structures. Otten's designs are described as raw and earthy (Lokko, 2016:18), as she retains the natural appearance of materials. Materials such as timber, galvanized steel and stone is left as is (Otten, 2013:online), allowing them to age naturally over time without maintenance (fig.14). Almost all of Otten's projects articulate structure visibly and legibly. Otten (2024) has a fondness of gum poles (fig. 16), arguing that they have incredible integrity, because they inherently are a whole tree. Otten not only exposes structure, but also designs it to be beautiful and poetic (fig.15). She often juxtaposes tectonics and stereotomics to accentuate their inherent qualities (fig.14).

Figure 14: Juxtapose between stereotomic stone wall and tectonic timber frame at Gabriel's Garden (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 15: The new addition to the Women's Jail appears as a lightweight element, playfully jumping over the barrier, signifying newfound freedom (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 16: Use of gum poles at House Altman (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Attitude towards experience

Slow architecture considers both the rational, utilitarian aspects of places, but also the poetic, emotive aspects of places. Otten believes that fulfilling the emotional and spiritual needs of the users is as important as creating a functional space (Tumubweinee, 2013:98). A space should be "designed around how people will use and experience it" (Otten, 2020a:online) She emphasises the importance of truly listening to people's concerns. The variety of her work is testimony to the fact that each project is designed to meet the particular needs of unique individuals. Otten (2020b:online) refers to the 'touchy-feely' aspects of architecture as a major part of her work. She believes that buildings have an emotional presence and that space can affect, create or accommodate the emotional requirements of its occupants (Otten, 2020b:online, Tumubweinee, 2013:98). Otten strives to create spaces that are uplifting, inspiring, humane, welcoming and joyful, all emotions that create a sense of wellbeing (Otten, 2020b:online)

Like Slow architecture, Otten is concerned with how space is experienced through the senses and again refers to the work of Hassan Fathy, as well as Pancho Guedes (Lokko, 2016:18, Otten, 2020b:online). When speaking about her projects, she particular points out the sensory experiences in her architecture (fig. 17-21). She identifies the quality of light, shade, colour, warmth, texture, animation and visual delight as themes in her work (Otten, 2013:online, 2020b:online). She is mindful of how spatial relationships might be experienced, referring to volumes and the connections between the interior and exterior. Otten (2020a:online) stresses that incorporating nature is vital for enhancing people's sense of well-being. As mentioned, Otten's designs frequently incorporate landscape and vegetation, which can create a pleasantly scented environment and seasonal changes of colour (Otten, 2020a:online).

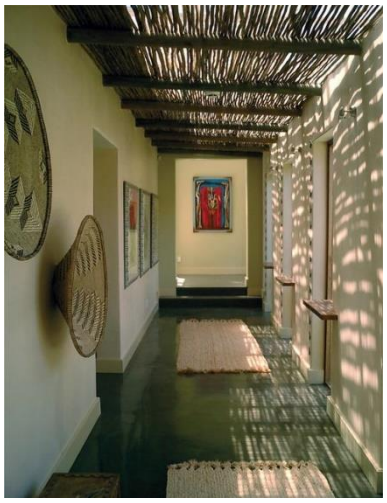

Figure 17: Pringle Bay House, (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure18: Lulu Kati Kati, 2005. (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

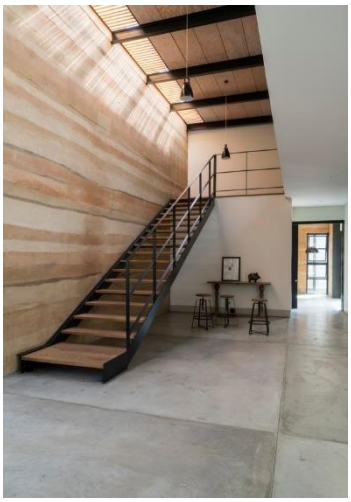

Figure 19: House Schutte, 2018 (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 20: My little red house, 2007 (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Figure 21: Pineapple republic (Kate Otten Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture is purposefully designed to enhance social aspects of life. Many of Otten's buildings are designed with a variety of courtyards and gathering spaces. Circulation spaces purposefully move through gathering spaces to facilitate the chance for social interactions. At the same time, she creates more private spaces that allow one to retreat. The social nature of spaces influence the way Otten designs them, with private spaces being smaller and more intimate, and public spaces more generous in volume with a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Otten also mentions that buildings should be able to change with time, according to the needs of people. Her buildings create a sense of welcome and promote a feeling of inclusivity (Otten, 2013:online), thereby fostering well-being.

Conclusion

Otten does not appear to have a signature - each project is unique and specific to the people and context it is designed for (Lokko in Otten, 2020b:online). But perhaps *that* is her signature: Otten applies care and sensitivity in all her projects, regardless of the circumstance (Hansen, 2020:online) resulting in architecture that is authentic to its context, making process and users.

Selected architects:

Braam de Villiers (1968—) and André Eksteen (1971—)

The Making of Meaningful Things

De Villiers and Eksteen are the founders and directors of the multi award winning practice, Earthworld Architects. The practice is based in Pretoria and has received a raft of accolades. Their philosophy is based on "the making of meaningful things"(Earthworld Architects, 2024:online). "When we talk about a meaningful thing, it is something that transcends the physical, becoming an icon, not because of beauty but rather because of the contextual relevance to its users and makers" (Eksteen & de Villiers in Basson, 2024:76).

Attitude towards context

Analogous to Slow architecture, Eksteen and de Villiers approach context through a systems-thinking perspective (De Villiers, 2024a:online). They believe that architecture is increasingly about its critical relationship to the system within which it functions (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online). "That's the future of us as architects. We should be systems-thinkers." This attitude is largely due to the eco-systemic teachings of Emeritus Prof. R. Fisher at the University of Pretoria (Barker, 2019:23). De Villiers (2024b) stresses that one should critically observe and understand the relations between systems at the outset of a project. They demonstrate systems-thinking, rigour and thoughtfulness, all key attitudes of Slow architecture.

Like to Slow architecture, Earthworld Architects strive to improve the well-being of the system. Every project is seen as a catalytic event, an opportunity to change the system for the better (Lambrecht, 2024)[4]. Eksteen and de Villiers (2024b) have long been concerned about sustainability issues due to the teachings of Dieter Holm, which was seen as ahead of its time. They actively strive towards sustainability and believe that it can be achieved through the creation of meaningful architecture. It entails much more than designing with 'green technology'; it involves environmental, economic and social resilience (Eksteen & de Villiers in Basson, 2024:79). “Every cent we spend has to benefit more people. I am not talking about altruism, but the bigger context has to benefit, rather than just the specific project” (Eksteen, 2024b)

Through their projects, Earthworld Architects contribute to the well-being of the socio-economic and environmental context of South Africa. Architecture must address the uniquely South African socio-economic challenges and needs if it is to become relevant (Eksteen, 2024b, Lambrecht, 2024). The practice’s designs increasingly make use of timber and CNC technologies (fig.22 and 23) , not only for its low environmental impact, but to stimulate a new localised economy. De Villiers (2024a:online) is convinced that using of local materials, local skills and digital tools can provide a new platform for growth in the South African economy, which currently experiences large scale unemployment with a low-skilled workforce. De Villiers (2024a:online) suggests that high-tech, digital manufacturing tools, like CNC Technologies, should be augmented by a low skilled workforce. The practice also founded the Earthworld Educational Trust, an initiative to provide financial assistance and mentoring support to disadvantaged university students. De Villiers and Eksteen clearly strive towards making a positive contribution to the well-being of the larger context, and this attitude echoes a Slow approach to architecture.

[4] L. Lambrecht is an employee at Earthworld Architects.

Figure 22: Use of plywood portal system at Future Africa Campus, completed 2018 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 23: Use of plywood portal system at Plywood House, completed 2023 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Direct connection to context is of high significance to Eksteen and de Villiers, as they believe the task of architecture is to mediate the relationship between humans and their environment (Eksteen, 2024a:online). Eksteen and de Villiers align themselves with regionalism as they mention drawing inspiration from local modernists with a regional approach, such as Norman Eaton, Helmut Stauch and ‘Ora Joubert (De Villiers, 2024b, Eksteen, 2024b). Norberg-Schulz’s (1926—2000) phenomenological theories of *place* have consistently shaped De Villiers’ and Eksteen’s thinking about architecture’s relationship to its context (Barker, 2019:online). “With our world becoming more and more global - virtual and less defined, the need for defining the *Heimat* has become greater than ever. (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online)” Eksteen (2024b) critiques trends of globalisation and calls for a more localised approach that incorporates local knowledge and tradition. Earthworld Architects believe that architecture should ”be harmonious with nature and climate” and “pay homage to the site”.

The designs of Earthworld architects are testament of a connection between architecture and its context. They typically integrate their surroundings through views, materials and form. Their buildings usually respond to local climatic conditions through natural ventilation and light, as well as orientation and form. The practice also shows respect towards the natural environment, having a conservative attitude towards nature, both in rural and urban settings. They also draw inspiration from heritage and culture in terms of traditional arts and crafts. Some of their projects are situated in 'placeless' contexts, like gated residential communities and industrial warehouse parks, but their interventions establish the required locality and a new felt sense of place and belonging, which fosters well-being. Their creation of a locale and contextually embedded designs falls in line with Slow architecture.

Project showcase: The Centenary Building, 2008. *"Situated on the University of Pretoria's main campus, the Centenary Building engages with its neighbouring buildings by consciously responding to their diversity in scale, proportion and finishes. It overtly acknowledges the adjacent neo-modern Law Faculty Building and continues its deliberated street front and axes. Furthermore, the Centenary Building gives equal prominence to internal and external space, with much of the circulation occurring on the exterior – a gesture purposely establishing a public interface between the complex and its surroundings" (Joubert, 2009:74).*

Figure 24: The Centenary Building, completed 2008. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: Foghound coffee shop, 2012. *The site, an existing office/ warehouse typology in Midrand, opposite Gallagher Estate Convention Centre, is a small parcel of land on Richards Road. The building was placed on the street edge to create a public interface with a somehow neglected sub-urban environment.*

Figure 25: Foghound coffee shop, 2012 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: House Alto, 2013. *Situated in a rural landscape, House Alto attempts to create an appreciation for the magnificent landscape by having as little impact on its context as possible. It does this by lifting itself off of the ground through concrete fins. Due to the remote location of the site the house has been designed to be entirely off- grid The centre piece of the house is a 9m, 3 tonne tilt-up door, allowing the valley to envelop the main living area in its entirety (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).*

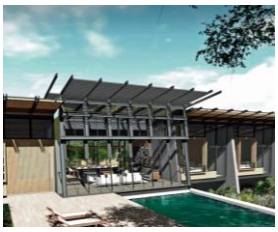

Figure 26: House Alto, 2013 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: House Mouton, 2014. *the site is a hectare plot of bushveld, thus requiring a sensitive approach to the siting of the building. The building is carefully placed as pavilions between the existing thorn trees. The four pavilions for living, sleeping, services and guests are linked to form a combined living unit. Pavilions form courtyards for living in the bush between them. The house consists of three conceptual elements: The roof and ceiling emulate the horizontal plane of the acacia thorn trees providing shade for its inhabitants. Secondly The 2 "anthill like" fireplaces are beacons in the landscape, and thirdly the jagged edge stonewall elements emulates the rocky hill of the landscapes. The roof height is kept to the minimum to create homely spaces as well as to ensure a low visual impact on the natural environment.*

Figure 27 and 28: House Mouton, completed 2014. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: I-CAT factory, 2015. *SAIS 2017/2018 Awards citation: This building is situated in a gated industrial area, with no real topographical features that would make it memorable in any way. The building conforms to all the available sustainable principles that can be sensibly achieved. This is abundantly evident from the smallest to the biggest design consideration and detail. The total environment that has been created by the architects and their client speaks of care and responsibility, but above all also of the delight that they have purposefully created in this building. The building creates a 'place', not only in relation to its industrial and unmemorable neighbourhood, but also a 'place' that exemplifies an environment that offers a valid and different approach to the malaise (SAIA, 2018:50).*

Figure 29: I-CAT factory, 2015 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: Stortemelk Hydro power plant, 2016. *Located in a rural landscape, the hydropower plant becomes a beacon and a celebration of clean energy. Clad in Corten steel and polycarbonate sheeting, the architecture is intended to be of its landscape. The polycarbonate sheeting flood the plant with natural light, whilst the rusted Corten sheets evokes a sense of respect for the natural elements. On approach to the site, the Corten sheeting reaches up into the skyline, announcing the building & adjacent river from a distance. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).*

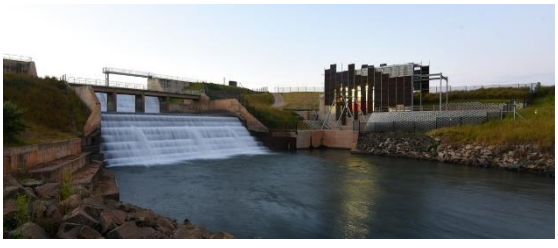

Figure 30: Stortemelk Hydro power plant, completed 2016 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online

Both Eksteen and de Villiers are involved in architectural discourse and share their approach to instigate action against globalisation and homogenisation. Although they are involved in independent voluntary associations, Earthworld Architects (De Villiers, 2024b, Eksteen, 2024b, Lambrecht, 2024) criticise architectural discourse for being too inwardly focussed and detached from the socio-economic realities of South Africa. Eksteen (2024:b) believes that the architect can have a much bigger impact than commonly assumed: The architect doesn't have to produce architecture - they can produce systems, strategies and mobilise entrepreneurship. “I was really theorizing a lot about how we can actually change the value system, how can we actually change old ways and globalisation, and how can we actually fight this whole idea of a of a monochrome, bland, grey society” (Eksteen, 2024a:online). Earthworld Architects also act as activists in their use of digital manufacturing, as they open the value chain to include unskilled labour and SMMEs (de Villiers and Eksteen in Basson, 2024:76). The attitude of Earthworld Architects show activism on social, environmental and economic fronts and is reflective of the activist-nature of Slow architecture.

Project showcase: KoSpaza, completed 2021. *The project investigates the possibility of small-scale businesses to participate in the building industry. The proposal is that architects can design building components that can be manufactured from any CNC-facility. This could lead to the decentralisation of manufacturing, meaning that the different components can be outsourced to different manufacturers, determined by their own capabilities, and any entrepreneur or entrepreneurs can become a supplier.*

The notion of small-scale alternative construction comes from seeing the latent talent that is found in our local communities, where people are pivotal to success. A system that can be easily constructed and assembled by locals, using basic tools and labour, was developed. In this process of new construction methods, there is a transfer of knowledge and skill which can be honed to create small businesses within the community, creating a building ecosystem where parts can be manufactured off-site and assembly on-site by different people.

Figure 31: The KoSpaza Shop, completed 2021. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Attitude towards poiesis

Earthworld Architects regard construction as more than a means to an end. Eksteen and de Villiers regard themselves as master makers, referring to the arkhitéktōn, who possess both the technical and the aesthetic knowledge (*techne*) of building (Barker, 2019:23, Eksteen, 2024a:online). The practice philosophy is deeply engaged with the creation of meaning, and this also manifests in the making process. Through their phenomenological lens, they believe that buildings define people's relationship to the world itself, that it is an existential reference (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online, Eksteen, 2024a).

The thoughtful consideration of building technology is a key attitude of Slow architecture. Both Eksteen and De Villiers prefer to use locally and sustainably sourced building technology. "I still believe in the Heideggerian principle, where making equals meaning. I don't believe that manufacturing should be something outsourced to such an extent where the source of an item is unknown or possibly unmeaningful to the person actually dealing with it" (Eksteen, 2024a:online). Eksteen laments the loss of pride, meaning and a sense of accomplishment in labour since industrial revolution's reduction of labour to a commodity. "We need to work towards a point where labour is more meaningful, where it's not about cramming in as much as you possibly can"(Eksteen, 2024a:online). Eksteen (2024b) also critiques the accepted norms of transporting energy intensive products across the world. Although Earthworld Architects have made use of imported materials, they are now more vocal about responsible material sourcing for its impacts on the environment and local economy. De Villiers (2024a:online) advocates for the minimum use of resources and as such, Earthworld Architects design their projects to minimise material wastage. The practice's aim of creating meaningful things is achieved through the care and consideration taken in terms of material sourcing and construction techniques which is indicative of Slow architecture.

Slow architecture considers *poiēsis* not as an individual act by the architect, but as *sympoiēsis*. Earthworld Architects allow for various inputs into their designs, not only from the client, but also from craftspeople, industrial designers and engineers (Barker, 2019:25, De Villiers, 2024a:online, Eksteen, 2024a:online). Eksteen (2024b) cautions against being overly prescriptive as the architect, instead one should allow room for innovation and personal development. "I think it is important to have respect for the craftspeople who make the building. You must be open to learn from that person, and you also have to give that person some freedom in the design so that they can also make a contribution" (Eksteen, 2024b). By valuing the contributions of all involved in the building process, Earthworld Architects ensure that each project is a collective creation, rich in meaning.

Even though the practice works with high-tech processes, the practice aims to celebrate the human hand and craft in architecture (Eksteen, 2024a:online). One can often read the construction techniques used the practice's projects. Eksteen believes that the architect should detail a building so that individual components are always identifiable. Eksteen (2024b) also believes that keeping building elements identifiable creates a larger sense of pride, ownership and meaning for those making the buildings, as they can look at the building and identify each part where they worked. The practice wilfully designs building components that facilitate the incorporation human labour. This creates not only job opportunities for low-skilled labour, but imbues the architecture with a sense of purpose and meaning, which Eksteen (in Basson, 2024:76) deems essential to sustainability

Project showcase: Future Africa Campus, 2018. *The CNC-cut plywood puzzle pieces are purposefully designed to be small enough to be carried by hand (fig.32). "Not one of the contractors responsible for the manufacturing and installation of the plywood systems has ever worked on a scale this large, nor produce anything of this nature. The level of ownership taken on by the small contractors has resulted in immense pride, meaning and a sense of accomplishment" (Eksteen, 2024:online).*

Figure 32: Hand assembly of CNC-cut plywood at Future Africa Campus, 2018 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: House Fitzgerald, 2021. *The house, with its meticulously executed brickwork and cast in-situ concrete is a testament to the capabilities of craftsmen. Bricks are laid in patterns and at angles (fig.33). Concrete walls are cast at various angles and curves (fig.34), with timber formwork to apply the texture of the grain of the timber to the concrete.*

Figure 33: Brickwork at House Fitzgerald. (Author, 2021)

Figure 5: Angled and curved concrete walls at House Fitzgerald (Author, 2021)

Slow architecture regards the truthful expression of materials and structures as beautiful and poetic. Using materials according to their intrinsic qualities is of high importance for Earthworld Architects, and it shows in their projects. Where possible, materials are left in their natural state and are allowed to age over time. De Villiers is dismayed by the fact that many architects have lost the ability to choose materials according to their inherent nature (Barker, 2019:26). He echoes the words of Louis Kahn, “what does the brick want to be?”. De Villiers (2024b) states that materiality of a building is very important, because it inherently determines the stereotomic or tectonic qualities of the architecture.

Figure 35: Courtyard House (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online). A simple palette of materials is used. The external walls feature Clinker bricks, flush jointed to create an earthy texture (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 36: House Mouton, 2014 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online). The stone walls, timber lathes and concrete floors all retain their natural appearance.

The expression of structure is also a significant principle for Earthworld Architects. Eksteen specifically upholds the Gothic cathedral as a prime example of visible and legible building technology (Barker, 2019:26, Eksteen, 2024a:online). Almost all of the practice’s projects visibly express structure. The practice’s projects are evidently honest in the use building technology and can thus be aligned with Slow architecture. The practice’s projects are however not just honest, they are poetic compositions that show an intentional pursuit of proportion, scale and rhythm. Opposing elements of gravity, mass, structure and light are often juxtaposed to accentuate their inherent qualities. Their projects are also exquisitely detailed and evidence of a thoughtful attitude towards material and structural transitions.

Project showcase: House du Plessis, completed 2014*. The project is an example of the honest expression of brick and concrete as both are visibly expressed. The off-shutter concrete shows the indents and lines of the shutter work panels used as formwork to cast the concrete. The concrete is left bare and allowed to age with time. The cantilever also expresses concrete's structural capabilities.*

The spatial hierarchy of the house moves from shared space on the upper most levels, to more intimate spaces below. This hierarchy became emphasized through the choice of materiality and texture, using glazing, brick & concrete in varying amounts to create different environments. The more intimate spaces, such as the bedrooms & private lounges are far more stereotomic in their composition in comparison to the shared spaces, which are more open and exposed (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 37: House du Plessis, completed 2014. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: House Niewenhuys, completed 2016*. Concrete is normally associated with stereotomic structures, but it does however offer the opportunity to create a fairly light shell structure(Earthworld Architects, 2024: online). "The house can be described as a virtuoso play with geometry and gravity, where the architects worked with the ideas of 'weight' and 'weightlessness' and the spatial interplay between open and closed spaces. The main material choice of the near 'invisible' glass walls set against the off-shutter concrete surfaces is another brilliant device that continues the theme of the juxtaposition of 'weight' against 'weightlessness'. (SAIA Awards, 2018:52).*

Figure 38: House Niewenhuys, completed 2016. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: I-CAT factory, 2015. *An example of the honest use of clay brick, where the stereotomic masses are countered by tectonic addition, curved corners and patterned facades (Barker, 2019:27). The building was also designed to keep maintenance to a minimum, materials were kept as natural as possible for this reason. A monolithic face brick wall creates a bold street façade which is broken up with a punched steel window frame and also by distinctive bricks that create an integrated woven fabric. A timber pole and thermo-treated pergola structure floats above the southern courtyard (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).*

Figure 39: I-CAT factory, completed 2015 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: Future Africa Campus, completed 2018. *This project showcases honestly expressed materials, construction techniques and structure.*

Dining hall: The steel bolts and plates are dark in colour to contrast with the timber and the joints between the CNC-puzzle pieces are also left visible. This articulates that the larger structure is assembled from components. The plywood portal frame is left exposed on the interior. The cross-bracing is articulated between the ceiling panels.

Housing units: All materials can be read individually. Concrete and brick read as stereotomic masses, creating intimate spaces of enclosure, which are contrasted with the tectonic character of the steel, glass and timber used for the outdoor circulation corridors, pergola

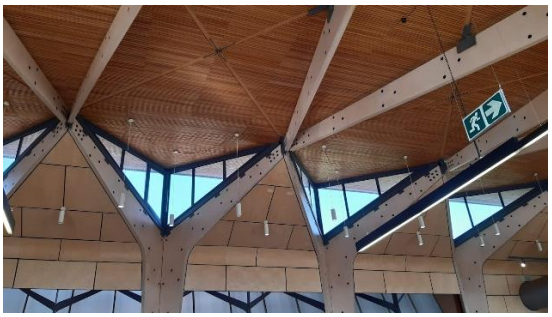

Figure 40: Dining hall at Future Africa Campus, completed 2018 (Author, 2023)

Figure 41: The housing units at Future Africa Campus, completed 2018 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: Highveld House, completed 2023. *This project showcases natural and honestly expressed materials, such as stone, honed and polished concrete, and bagged washed masonry (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online). The stone walls make up the stereotomic mass of this house and grounds it to the earth. The roof is a tectonic element and appears to float, barely touching the wall. The plywood rafters are exposed and finished to retain their natural appearance. The depth of the rafter varies to reflect the distribution of the structural load (Greyling, 2023).*

Figure 42: Highveld House, completed 2023 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 43: Highveld House, completed 2023 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Ultimately, Earthworld Architects' approach to design fosters a deep respect for the people, materials and the techniques involved, creating buildings that are not only beautiful, but also meaningful. Their work serves as a model for how architecture can honour both tradition and innovation, creating spaces that resonate on a humane level through thoughtful craftsmanship.

Attitude towards experience

Slow architecture considers both the functional and emotional needs of people. Earthworld Architects (2024:online) state in their manifesto that design should "respect function… a building should be simple; yet provocative and dynamic; a building should be an emotional experience, move you". For Earthworld Architects, mood and atmosphere play a significant part in architecture. De Villiers (2024a:online) states that the quality and aesthetic values of design is imperative in his thinking, and that "proper aesthetics" are not merely something superficial that can be disregarded. He (2024b) speaks about an "essence"" embedded within architecture. He also mentions *biophilia,* the innate need to have contact with nature. Natural materials and the incorporation of nature into architecture can evoke a sense of connectedness to nature, improving people's physical and mental health, productivity and well-being (Zhong et al., 2022:online). Eksteen (2024b) also believes that buildings influence the way people think, work, interact with each other. "You need a sort of serenity in the buildings where reflection is more important than form, and where atmosphere is more important than symbol" (Eksteen, 2024a:online).

The practice's portfolio reflects architecture that addresses all of the senses. Their projects are layered with the richness of various textural materials, like timber, off-shutter concrete, clinker brick and stone. Such rough textures are typically offset by smooth and reflective surfaces, like polished stone and glass. Materials usually retain their intrinsic colours and are often contrastingly paired to balance the different perceptions of warmth and coolness. Many of Earthworld Architects buildings also evoke sensations of bodily awareness, movement, balance and gravity. Alongside textures and tones, the practice also uses light and shadow to imbue spaces with specific atmospheres.

Project showcase: House Mouton, completed 2014. *The roof height is kept to the minimum to create homely spaces (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online)., and the rough texture and warm tones of the natural stone walls and reed ceilings are offset by the smooth polished concrete floor.*

Figure 44: House Mouton, completed 2014. (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Project showcase: I-cat Eco Factory, completed 2015. *SAIA 2017/2018 (2018:50) Award citation: "All the buildings in the surrounding area are mere 'sheds' designed with only the economy of means in sight. There is nothing 'wrong' with that approach. However, even 'sheds' can be designed in a thoughtful manner. This kind of industrial environment condemns mankind to be nothing more than mere 'machines' in the quest for higher levels of material accumulation. In opposition, this building, demonstrates that any enterprise can be successful by being environmentally responsible and sustainable, whilst also creating a humane working environment with human happiness and meaning in mind."*

Project showcase: Future Africa Campus, completed 2018. *The campus offers a diverse array of spatial experiences, all specific to the programme of each building, as well as the spaces in between buildings.*

Housing units (fig. 46): The bedrooms have a tranquil feeling of refuge. The cool tones of the concrete are balanced by the warm hues of the built-in plywood furniture. The light from the circular coloured windows instils a subtle sense of joy in an otherwise neutral colour palette, and is a reference to the cheerful primary coloured accents on the exterior.

Dining hall (fig 47): The interior has a sense of warmth and welcome, which is created by the plywood surfaces, suitable for a sociable space of gathering.

Resource commons (fig. 48): The building has an abundance of natural light, giving it an almost ethereal atmosphere, making one very mindful of one's own presence, suitable for a quiet place of study. Particularly the design of the staircase, with its haptic change in materiality brings forth bodily awareness.

The spaces in between (fig. 49) : The pergola at the conference centre creates dappled light, and the textures of the timber and face brick create a warm and earthy feel. The landscape at Future Africa formed part of the design by reintroducing 56 orphan crops and allowing foraging to explore alternative cuisines and interaction around new tastes, textures, and colours.

Figure 45: I-CAT factory, completed 2015 (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 46: Housing units (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

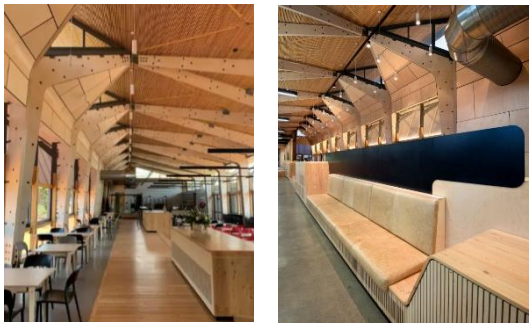

Figure 47: Dining hall (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 48: Research commons (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 49: Future Africa campus (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

***Project showcase: The Centenary Building, completed 2008**. The Centenary Building evokes a sense of movement through its articulation of the stairs and ramp. The movement along the ramp requires a bodily engagement that connects the user with the architecture in a kinetic manner. The ramp elongates the journey along the building, adding a temporal dimension to the architectural experience. The slow, gradual movement allows for more time to experience the environment. The stairs and ramps also act as mediating thresholds, as they facilitate the transition between the building and the street, preparing one to enter the building or exit onto the street.*

The materiality of the building shifts to evoke different sensations. On approach, the building materials are quite austere, with off-shutter concrete and rough clay bricks dominating the exterior space around the building. The materials reinforce the space as circulation, instead of space for lingering (although some attempt has been made to provide seating). Upon entry the floor surface shifts to a more refined material pallette. The floor is made from polished concrete with exposed aggregate, creating a smooth and glossy finish. Service ducts, doorways and certain sections of the ceiling are made from plywood. Entering the auditoria, one benefits not only from the warm tones of the timber, but also its accoustic properties.

Figure 50: Ramp to the Centenary Building (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Figure 51: Stairs to the Centenary Building (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

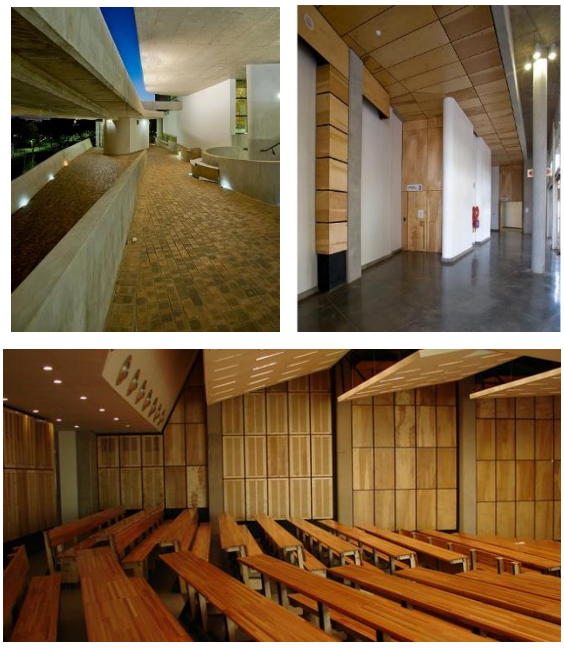

Figure 52: Shift in materiality from exterior to interior of Centenary Building (Earthworld Architects, 2024: online).

Conclusion

For Earthworld Architects, the building of architecture is fundamentally about being meaningful (Eksteen, 2024b). Their projects create a sense of place and foster relationships between people, architecture and the context. Eksteen and de Villiers have succeeded in creating architecture that allows one to “gain an existential foothold”.

Selected architects: Heinrich and Ilze Wolff

An architecture of consequence

Married couple, Ilze and Heinrich Wolff, are the directors of Wolff Architects, an award-winning practice based in Cape Town. The Wolff couple is explicitly concerned with “developing an architectural practice of consequence” through design, research, documentation and advocacy (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). Ilze Wolff co-founded Open House Architecture in 2007, a research practice she still oversees alongside Wolff Architects. Both directors have taught and presented internationally in numerous countries and their work has been showcased at prestigious exhibitions and biennales (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Attitudes towards context

Slow architecture conceptualises context as a complex and interrelated system. Aligned with this, The Wolffs acknowledge the systematic nature and sensitivities of context. They emphasise the importance of understanding context and regard it as a necessary and practical part of their approach (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). As such, research is a fundamental part of their working method, because it allows them to fully grasp a problem, before seeking solutions (Wolff, 2012:online). This recalls the notion that Slow architecture would take the time necessary to understand the context and its systemic workings as to identify the root of a problem and the best place to intervene, rather than merely treating the symptoms. Understanding the context and systems at play is a practical issue for them – from acknowledging the climate to the societal systems (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online).

The Wolffs demonstrate concern about the well-being of the system, which is comparable to Slow architecture. The couple emphasise the importance of ethics and the responsibility of the architect. “You have a responsibility to make sure that the decisions that you've made as architects for the particular project are ethical and are within a kind of a space that you and everybody are comfortable with”. Wolff and Wolff specifically question how to bring about healing in the post-apartheid South African context, but at the same time they show an awareness of socio-political and historical issues across the world, placing themselves within

a larger context (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). Wolff states that in a context like South Africa, it is irresponsible of an architect to ignore the trauma and epistemic violence embedded in the context (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online).

Project showcase: Usasazo Secondary School, 2004. *This project demonstrates that Wolff architects are concerned about the well-being of the larger context on several fronts. In underprivileged areas like Khayelitsha, schools are often the first public, permanent, durable and expensive buildings. Per se, Wolff and Wolff declared that such schools must play a critical role in the improvement of the quality of the urban environment (Wolff Architects, 2024). The street facade of the school has a strong image that can always be associated with the school (fig.53). This shows a commitment to improving the well-being of the larger context.*

The school is purposefully placed on the border of the site. This creates a defined street edge. Activity and passive surveillance are promoted as the classrooms on the street edge are designed to be used for entrepreneurial teaching with hatches that open to the street to allow interaction with the public (fig.54).

The school is in a densely populated area. There is a tremendous need for land, so space is considered as incredibly valuable. Therefore, the school occupies the smallest possible area (fig.55) and leaves the remaining land for a communal sport field and productive agricultural use (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Through their stance on the urban role of the school, the placement of the building on the, Wolff Architects demonstrate a concern for the well-being of the context. This attitude of considering the socio-economic and environmental impacts of a project is comparable to Slow Architecture.

Figure 53: Street edge of Usasazo Secondary School, 2004, Khayelitsha (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

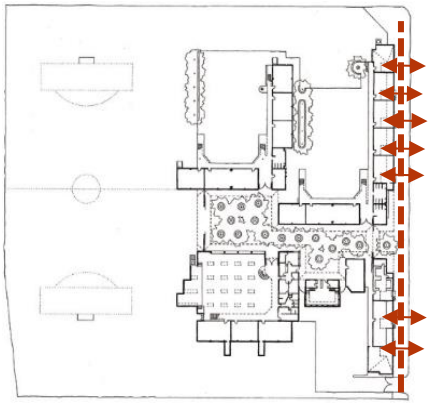

Figure 54: Plan active street edge of Usasazo Secondary (Adapted by author, from Wolff Architects (2024:online).

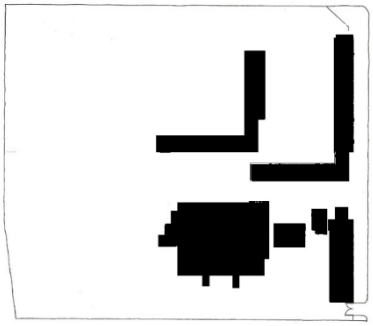

Figure 55: Plan indicating footprint at Usasazo Secondary (Adapted by author, from Wolff Architects (2024:online)

Wolff and Wolff are particularly concerned about the relations between the socio-economic context and architecture. In a 2018 conference paper titled, *Network Systems*, Heinrich Wolff explicitly shows disdain for the capitalist system, stating that it perpetuates inequality. This falls in line with the Slow Movements' contempt of approaches that are profit- over people-driven. "Architects often exacerbate situations of inequality by reproducing and echoing orders of privilege without any real sense of the suffering they bring about (Wolff and Wolff, 2022:55)." The couple frequently reflect on the consequences of their work to inform and enhance the quality of their work in the future (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). The Wolffs are evidently thoughtful designers, aware of the systemic consequences of their actions. This echoes the considerate nature of Slow architecture.

Project showcase: A crime against humanity. *Spaces of disconnection devoid of opportunity are shown in black. Open public space under democratic government is drawn in white. Each privately owned property is shown in a different colour to show the scale and magnitude of ownerships. Figure 56 shows the spatial ramifications of apartheid – a crime against humanity. Morphologically, the township is an island in the city, isolated by areas of immobility, with access restricted by four roads. Figure 57 shows a new development after apartheid, yet there is a striking resemblance – an isolated island with controlled access. But unlike the previous one (which has a plethora of owners) this property has one individual owner. The property is comparable in size to the CBD of Cape Town. The owner has the legal right to monopolise economic opportunity, which leads to a desaturation of opportunity elsewhere in the city. "This collaboration of architects and urban designers with predatorial capitalism is how we produce inequality in our society" (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online).*

Figure 56: Langa Township, post 1994, Cape Town (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online)

Figure 57: Century City, post 2000 (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online)

Akin to Slow architecture, the Wolff couple shows concern around the well-being of the natural environment. "[We] must develop more environmentally responsible buildings. The environmental change and environmental responsiveness of buildings and our environment is a major component of social change today. Our office is interested in contributing experiments and solutions to this international debate, and that can move it forward and make more responsible buildings (Wolff, 2012:online)." The Wolffs typically utilise natural light and ventilation in their designs, which reduces energy consumption. The couple advocate for the adaptive reuse of buildings over a tabularasa demolition process and new construction, as it is energy intensive and wasteful (Wolff and Wolff, 2021a:online) They also take particular care

in placing buildings on site with the aim of contributing to the well-being of the context, whether that be on an environmental, social or economic level.

Project showcase: Usasazo Secondary School, 2004. *Natural light and ventilation are utilised, which not only benefits of the environment by using less energy, but also reduces the operating costs of the school, which is economically advantageous. The buildings are designed to minimise the number of openings on the windward side of the building. The roof lights are formed to produce suction on the leeward side of the roof and to improve natural ventilation in summer when the warmer South-easterly wind blows. (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).*

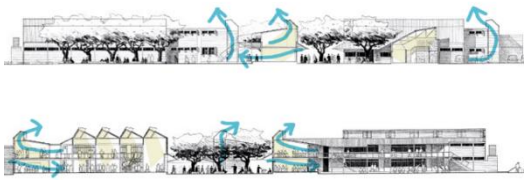

Figure 58: Sections through Usasazo Secondary School indicating natural ventilation and natural lighting , 2004, Khayelitsha (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: House van der Watt, 2014. *The site is located on a farm deep in the Cederberg mountains in South Africa, a landscape dense with biodiversity of the Cape Floristic Region. "You worry when you get a commission like that; you question whether you should be building there is the first place" (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). To minimise the impact of the house on the flora, Wolff Architects consulted botanists to identify safe open spots in the vegetation suitable for construction. The house is thoughtfully located down the slope rather than on top of the hill, as to minimise visibility to hikers (Wolff, 2012:online). The house is also purposefully placed in between rocky outcrops that obscures the view towards it.*

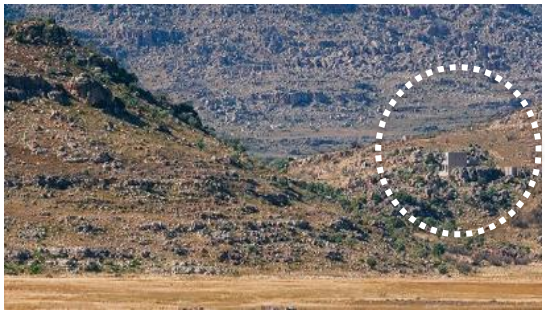

Figure 59: House van der Watt from afar, blending into the landscape (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: House Phillips, 2002. *The street facade of the house is minimised to preserve the public's view from the street towards the ocean (fig.60).*

Figure 60: House Phillips, 2002. (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture is directly connected to its context. Through their designs, Wolff Architects have demonstrated explicit ties between their architecture and its context. Numerous projects in their portfolio demonstrate sensitivity towards local climatic conditions. Wolff Architects further relate their projects to their context in terms of scale and views. They also make use of contextually appropriate materials that reference the surrounding landscape, whether it be urban or natural.

Project showcase: Usasazo Secondary School, 2004. *This project illustrates how Wolff architects creates a direct connection to the context in multiple ways, which is in line with Slow Architecture. The design of the Usasazo school attempts to perpetuate and formalise the character of this area in Khayelitsha. The central circulation space is undulating, which relates to the organic urban spaces created in informal settlements (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). The classrooms are only a single storey line along the street edge to emulate the scale of the informal settlement around it (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). The classroom blocks are L-shaped to protect the open spaces from the strong directional winds and wind driven sand (Wolff_Architects, 2024:online). A direct connection to context is thus created through responding to the local climate and the character of the surrounding built environment.*

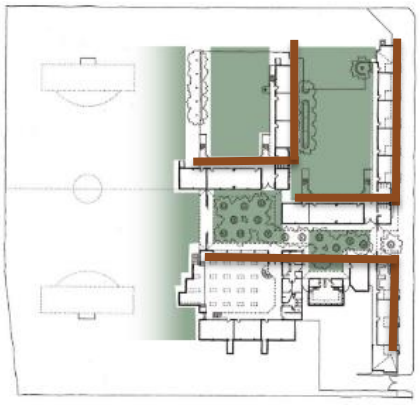

Figure 61: Plan indicating L-formed arrangement of school blocks and variation in courtyard sizes (Adapted by author, from Wolff Architects (2024:online)

Project showcase: House van der Watt, 2014. *This project illustrates how Wolff architects creates a connection to the context in various ways. This project clearly demonstrates that Wolff Architects pursue a direct connection to context through thoughtful choices in materiality, scale and form.*

The house is built of a material which is identical in colour to the rocks around it, creating a visual connection to the context and allowing the house to blend in with its surroundings (fig.62). The brick exterior is also contextually necessary to protect the house, as it is in an area prone to veld fires (Cooke, 2014:27).

This project is an example of using recycled and locally sourced materials. All exterior walls of the blocks are built of fairface cement brick, made with 70% recycled concrete (Cooke, 2014:27). The timber used for the columns and floor joists are made from SA pine, which also ties the building to the South African context (fig.63).

Figure 62 and 63: House van der Watt, 2014 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

The house is strategically placed close to habitable spaces between the rocks. "Rooms" were found in the natural landscape which could accommodate outdoor cooking and eating, living, and sleeping (Wolf Architects, 2024:online). The programme thus extends beyond the house, directly into the natural context (fig.64).

Figure 64: Outdoor cooking in the landscape surrounding House van der Watt (Wolf Architects, 2024:online)

Wolff architects also create a connection to the context by relating to the scale of the surroundings (fig.65). With no evidence of human life on site prior to this house, it was quite challenging to judge the scale of landscape features. To ensure the house is scaled appropriately in relation to the landscape, the Wolffs created a digital point cloud landscape through a 3D laser scanner to judge the size of the vegetation, rocks and topography (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). "We related the volume of the building to the volumes of the rocks around it" (Wolff and Wolff, 2021b:online)

Figure 65: "The fragmented forms of the house mimic the morphology of the rock outcrops of this mountainous site" (Wolff Architects, 2020:online)

The building mass was split into three separate blocks to reflect the surrounding fragmented rock cliffs and massive fallen boulders (Cooke, 2014:26). "The house is obscured in the landscape by varying heights and orientations of the building volumes to produce shadow patterns similar to the weathered rock around it" (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

A constant Westerly wind blows down the valley. To protect the house against this wind, the house was sited next to a rocky cliff to the West (Cooke, 2014:25). The double storey wing to the West screens the wind, protecting the balcony (fig.66).

Figure 66: Section through House van der Watt indicating wind movement (Adapted by Author, from Wolff Architects (2024:online).

Slow architecture practitioners are pro-active and act as systems advocates and influencers. The Wolff couple overtly state their hopes of inspiring others through their practice to do similar work (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). They have a public agenda and actively advocate for spatial justice through their selective attitude towards built projects, research efforts and exhibitions. In line with this, the Wolff duo have refused certain clients and persuaded others to expand or alter their programmes to contribute to the well-being of the greater context (Wolff

and Wolff, 2019:online). “The projects that we pursue in our office are projects that can participate in the societal project of extending freedoms (Wolff, 2012:online).” They are profoundly involved in conversations around decoloniality and against the homogenization of space (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). The couple is greatly invested in the creation of a “public culture” around the built environment, organising events where people can gather and exchange ideas about the greater implications of architecture on a societal level. It is thus evident that Wolff’s and Wolff’s attitudes of advocacy bare similarity to Slow architecture.

Project showcase: Usasazo Secondary School, 2004*. This project is an example of the advocacy role of Slow Architecture. Wolff Architects advocated for the programme to expand as to benefit the local community by allowing the school to be adapted to new Further Education and Training (FET) legislation which calls for more entrepreneurial training. Classrooms on the street edge are used for subjects like car and appliance repair, hair care and food trade. (Wolff_Architects, 2024:online).*

Figure 67: Street edge of Usasazo Secondary School, 2004, Khayelitsha (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: Chere Botha School, 2017*. Wolff architects thought that the brief lacked a call for a social infrastructure of the public domain. So, they made an architectural infrastructure that had that public domain - a place of socialisation and the public dimension of learning, everything from art, to making friends, to athletics, take place in these spaces (Wolff, 2019:online).*

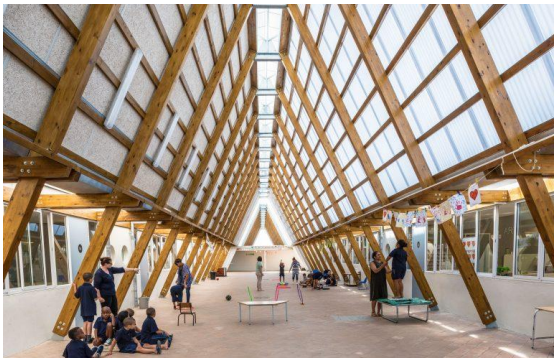

Figure 68: Chere Botha School, 2017 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: The Watershed, 2014. *This project is an example where the architects advocated for the programme to expand as to create economic opportunities (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). Rather than only designing a business incubator as required in the original brief, the ground floor is now a place of economic opportunity for small businesses.*

Figure 69: The Watershed, 2014 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: Vredenburg Hospital, 2017. *This project is an example where the architects pursued spatial justice. The Wolffs argued that everybody should experience the same quality architecture, from the cleaners and cooks to the nurse, patients and doctors. There would be no discrimination based on economic or social qualifications. The quality of light is equal throughout the hospital (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). The project is a physical manifestation of egalitarianism (Wolff and Wolff, 2021a:online).*

Figure 70: Comparison between spatial experiences in the hospital rooms and kitchen in Vredenburg Hospital (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Attitudes towards poiesis

Slow architecture considers *poiēsis* not as an individual act by the architect, but as *sympoiēsis*. This attitude of Slow architecture is shared by Wolff and Wolff, who do not believe that the architect should be the "all knowing, genius author". They however do not abdicate the role of authorship, but rather believe that it is shared (Wolff and Wolff, 2021a:online). The couple speak of collaboration and collective motives between architects, clients and the end users.

Slow architecture respects craftspeople and considers construction techniques as opportunities to enhance the well-being of the craftspeople. The Wolff couple demonstrates a similar attitude. They value the role of craftspeople and believe that there is not enough recognition of well-skilled labour in South Africa (Wolff, 2012:online). The Wolffs thoughtfully consider how their choices in building technology impacts socio-economic circumstances: "In South Africa, there's a big political drive to create a more labour-absorbent economy. Now, architecture can play a big part in that. When we are designing buildings in our office, we are conscious of the amount of jobs a chosen technology would create. We do a lot of buildings in very conventional technologies, simply because it allows for easy job opportunities, and it allows for appropriate training so that people can develop skills that can be used for future employment. On many of our projects, programmes are put in place for training. There's a focus on where people are from in the area, there's a focus on race and gender, and all of those sorts of things (Wolff, 2012:online)."

Slow architecture respects its regional and cultural heritage by means of poiēsis. Slow architecture not only preserves, but more importantly enhances heritage resources to ensure that they remain relevant through poiēsis. Wolff and Wolff (2021c:online) live in a context where architectural artifacts are typically demolished or kept aside as unusable monuments. They

find this tendency problematic. In response, they have adapted Fumihiko Maki's[5] (1928-2024) concept of a superstructure from an urban to an architectural scale. They conceptualise the superstructure as the enduring and permanent parts of a building; and a substructure is conceived of as changeable and movable furniture (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). This attitude preserves important aspects of a heritage building as an unchanging superstructure, whilst allowing the heritage building to meet changing needs over time and remain relevant.

Reflecting on the value of a superstructure, The Wolffs have consequently applied the concept beyond heritage applications. This attitude is particularly appropriate for public buildings where needs change and budgets are tight. Wolff and Wolff (2021c:online). Since the superstructure is conceived of as permanent, it is made from durable, better quality and more valuable materials, while the substructure is built inexpensively. This attitude has allowed Wolff Architects to build many cost-effective public buildings and is particularly suitable in the South African context.

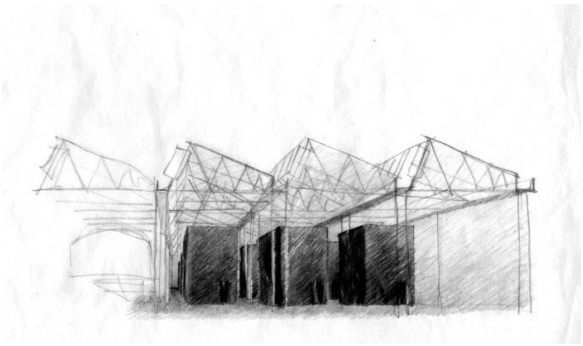

Figure 71: Concept of a superstructure for the Red Location Museum, 2005 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

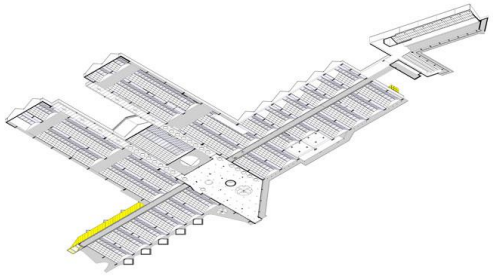

Figure 72: The roof as a superstructure for Vredenburg Hospital, 2017 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture is concerned with the beauty and poetic qualities of architecture, valuing the honest expression of materials and structures. Throughout their portfolio, Wolff Architects have visibly expressed structural systems, allowing one to read each member of the structure. They have also kept the integrity of the appearance of materials, particularly of timber.

We are very interested in making very beautiful things. We are interested in finding a kind of a beauty that oscillates between strangeness and familiarity. Familiarity being things that are right under our noses that people might not necessarily recognise, that we can bring into our work and give it a real kind of a power. Strangeness being a kind of a beauty that nobody has

[5] 1993 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate

ever seen, that we just imagine, and it has a real wild and wonderful impact (Wolff, 2012:online).

Project showcase: Usasazo Secondary School, 2004. *The steel roof trusses are exposed. One can also read the concrete columns supporting the roof structure and the independent masonry wall behind columns. Although the concrete masonry wall is painted, the mortar joints are articulated, allowing one to identify each individual brick.*

Figure 73: Usasazo Secondary School hall, 2004, Khayelitsha (Wolff_Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: The Watershed, 2014. The steel structure and services are exposed, making the building structurally legible. The steel of the original shed is painted grey, whilst the steel of the new structure is painted white, allowing one to distinguish the old from the new.

Figure 74: The Watershed, completed in 2014 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Project showcase: House van der Watt, 2014*. This building is poetic in its use of the stereotomic nature of brick, as it is purposefully designed to reflect the stereotomic mass of the boulders surrounding it. Fenestration is recessed from the façade, the wall and the roof share the same architectural language and details such as eaves, gutters and balustrades are designed to make house appear less than a building and more like a monolithic mass (Wolff Architects, 2020:online). Slow architecture regards patina, weathering and decay as poetic, because it shows evidence of the transience of life. The Wolff couple purposefully poured yogurt over the edge of the building so that lichens will grow onto the brick surface over time (Wolff and Wolff, 2021b:online). This will allow the house to camouflage even more, whilst the building is literally claimed by the landscape.*

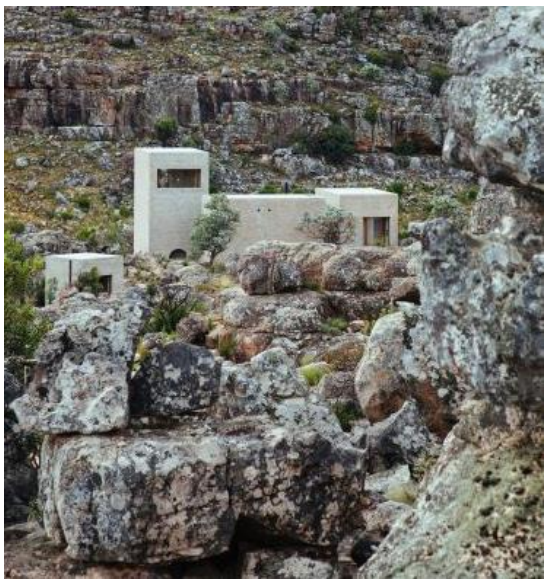

Figure 75: The house appears as monolithic masses, echoing the boulders around it. (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

On the interior, Wolff Architects have visibly articulated the SA pine structure of the roof and the first floor. They have also kept the integrity of the timber by retaining its natural appearance, allowing one to appreciate its knots and yellow colour (fig.77). The water pipes running to the shower are articulated and celebrated it as a feature (fig.76).

Figure 76: The exposed piping of the shower. (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

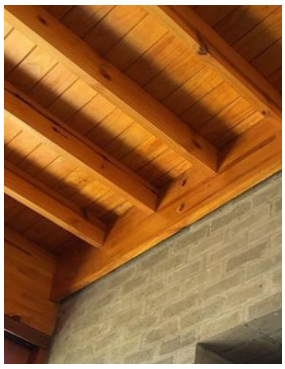

Figure 77: Underside of SA pine roof structure (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Project showcase: Chere Botha School, 2017. *The timber A-frame and purlins are visibly expressed in the covered courtyards. The timber also retains its natural appearance, treated with a varnish instead of being covered with paint.*

Figure 78: Covered courtyard at Chere Botha School, completed 2017(Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Attitudes towards experience

Slow architecture considers both the rational, utilitarian qualities and the poetic, emotive needs of people. Wolff (2021c:online) has shown great disdain for the Farnsworth House by Mies van Rohe, because the practical and emotional needs of the client was negated by the architect. “We have an agenda. And it is about joy, desire, love, happiness, justice (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c)”. Wolf and Wolf’s notion of a superstructure and a substructure is not only very functional in the sense that it can accommodate changing needs, but it allows people “to own a building, shape it to their heart's desire, transform it” (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). It contributes to well-being by fostering a sense of belonging, participation and agency. “Infrastructure should allow the will of the people… provide care…allow people to settle in ways that are safe and dignified” (Wolff and Wolff, 2021b:online)

Project showcase: Pelip Housing Project, 1999. *The houses were designed to allow ground floor shops, accommodate people with physical disabilities, store water for urban agriculture, while catering for the possibility of future additions. Most importantly, most of the units were made with a second entrance to allow the owners to sublet the house and thereby generate an income. The backyard space also allowed space for the construction of a self-built shack that could be rented out. These income generating possibilities were demonstrated through "additions" that were made to the project from the start.*

Figure 79: Pelip Housing Project, 1999 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Slow architecture is concerned with how it is experienced through the senses. The Wolffs demonstrate sensitivity towards the sensual experiences of architecture and speak of the pursuit of experiential pleasure in their architecture (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). The couple (2021c:online) mention Lina Bo Bardi's buildings as precedents, because it's so joyful. The intervention is all just so injected with joy, and care". They allude to the emotive experiences and mood in architecture, stating that a building exerts an influence over its environment (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online); space has a certain character and atmosphere.

Ilze and I very often have this thing of reading artifacts. You're reading either texts or artifacts. But there's something… you can read it. And a book can be serious, can be sad, it can be whatever. And buildings sometimes need to be serious or sad. But very often, they need to be delightful (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online).

The practice's projects show a well-considered balance in textural materials, where many surfaces are matte. Rough materials, such as timber, off-shutter concrete, and brick, are typically used more sparingly, but this actually accentuates their presence and allows for a richer experience. The practice skilfully uses light and shadow to not only imbue spaces with distinctive atmospheres, but also to also evoke a sense of gravity or weightlessness, increasing bodily awareness. Their projects also showcase the use of variation in volume, allowing a person to regularly relate the scale of their own body to that of the space. Wolff and Wolff thus create sensual spaces; hence their practice can be aligned with Slow architecture.

Project showcase: Chere Botha School, 2017.*This project demonstrates the thoughtful consideration of the sensory experience of architecture. Special attention was paid to the quality of light. "A lot of these kids are very sensitive to glare. And so, this is an architectural space that conceals all the light sources that brings light into it. And it makes sort of very soft general light into the entire space" (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). Through the use of various materials and muted colours, the project provides various textural stimulations, without being overwhelming.*

Figure 80: Textural stimulation provided by bricks on edge (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 81: Light study model of Chere Botha School (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Wolff echoes the words of Louis Kahn, saying that the character of light should convey the nature of a place. Wolff's and Wolff's portfolio showcases architecture that subtlety engages all the senses, providing rich but not overwhelming experiences. They have a fondness for colour in architecture, particularly yellow, because of its warm, welcoming and cheerful tones, indicating a deeper concern for sensual experiences beyond just light.

We have found that if you bounce around light inside buildings in very sunny climates, very often the light cools down and gets very blue. So, we very often have yellow elements inside roof lights, below roof lights or clearstory windows as a way of keeping the light warm and not the sense of grimness that you can find in a gothic cathedral (Wolff and Wolff, 2021a:online)".

Figure 82: Yellow accents in the tilework at Vredenburg Hospital, completed 2017 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 83: The timber provides warm tones at Vredenburg Hospital, completed 2017 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

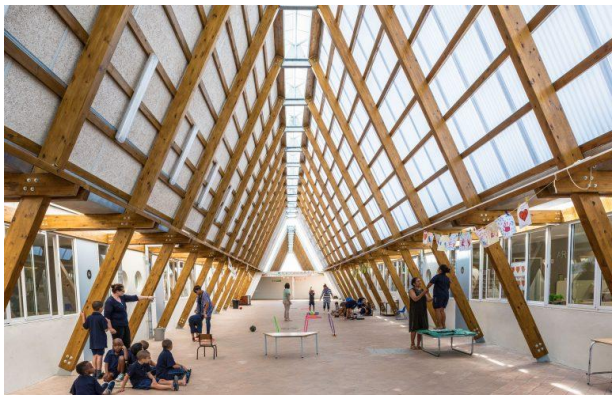

Figure 84: Chere Botha School, completed 2017. The colour palette of the school, where light tones are offset with warm hues from timber and brick to provide a warmer and welcoming atmosphere (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 85: Entrance to the Watershed, completed 2014 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 86: House Wolff, completed 2007. (Wolff Architects, 2024:online) Colour is used to articulate different planes, red for walls, yellow for the stairs and grey off-shutter concrete for the soffit.

Figure 87: House van der Watt, completed 2014. The warm tones from the timber and brick provide a homely atmosphere Wolff Architects (Wolff Architects, 2024:online).

Wolff and Wolff (2019:online) believe that architecture can be “spaces of the social imagination”. They refer to the “emotional landscape”. The Wolffs acknowledge that architecture can be a vessel for meaning, emotions and memories. They have become preoccupied with collecting spatial narratives. When speaking about forced removals and demolition in apartheid South Africa, they question if one could “hold a funeral for a building, the place and the space that it was?” (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online).

Slow architecture is particularly concerned about the social and shared experiences in life. The Wolffs conceptualise architecture as part of an infrastructure system, stating that there are two types of infrastructure, namely social infrastructure and physical infrastructure (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). They have established a preoccupation with the notion of developing social infrastructure, or understanding the correlation between social infrastructure and physical

infrastructure. They insist that developing a social infrastructure is as important as creating physical infrastructures through building. “We really believe that imaginative physical infrastructure follows on well-conceived social infrastructure” (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). The Wolff couple believe that every project, even private homes, has a public domain that must be considered (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online). “There's a relationship between private ownership and a collective… a responsibility towards the bigger socius” (Wolff and Wolff, 2019:online). Particularly in South Africa, public space has been commodified and society is generally disconnected. In response, the Wolffs (2021c:online) aim to expand the public dimension of projects to promote social interaction.

Project showcase: The Watershed, 2014. *This project is an example where the architects advocated for the programme to expand as to create economic opportunities (Wolff Architects, 2024:online). Rather than only designing a business incubator as required in the original brief, the ground floor becomes a street open to the public, creating social infrastructure.*

Figure 88: The Watershed, completed 2014 (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Wolff and Wolff consider both the tangible and physical experiences, as well as the intangible and imaginative experiences of architecture. They further pursue an agenda of creating social experiences as part of their designs. Their projects demonstrate that they purposefully design with the spatial experience in mind, which can be aligned with the attitudes of Slow architecture.

Conclusion

The Wolff couple evidently demonstrate an architecture of consequence. They show a deep awareness and concern for the well-being of the larger systems at play, particularly in the South African context with its legacy of apartheid with social, political, economic and spatial ramifications, as well as the well-being of the natural environment and the conservation of heritage. The Wolffs (2019:online) believe that architects should thoroughly understand the context their working in and should deeply consider the implications of their designs on a societal and individual level. “In terms of being an architect… we can only take it on as our personal responsibility and try and produce a practice that has an ethical standing within a very knowledgeable context of the societal structures that make it (Wolff and Wolff, 2021c:online).” They demonstrate care, thoughtfulness and sensitivity in their designs throughout their

responses to context, poiesis and experience. The attitudes and projects of Ilze and Heinrich Wolff are thus reflective of a Slow Approach to architecture and conducive to well-being.

Conclusion

New considerations for Slow architecture

All of my proposals for a Slow approach to architecture was affirmed during the process of data analysis. However, it was discovered that the three considerations, context, *poiēsis* and experience, are not independent of each other and that they are intimately intertwined. The relations between each context, poiēsis and experience will be described. It was also discovered that *poiēsis* should ultimately be informed by context and experience, so as to create architecture that fosters well-being.

Atmosphere

The theme of atmosphere is a recurring thread in the normative positions of the selected local architects, and should thus form part of a Slow approach to architecture. Returning to the literature, it was realised that experience and *poiēsis* are intertwined (fig. 89), as atmospheres are experienced through the senses, but created through *poiēsis*. Adolf Loos (in Pérez-Gómez, 2016:21) wrote that emotions “originate in the material used and the form.” Jordaan (2015:59) explains that atmosphere is related to the material world, as the physical things that comprise places can be seen and touched, it can echo and absorb sound, and conduct temperatures. Norberg-Schulz (1979:5) writes that “the concretisation of the existential dimension depends on how things are made, that is, it depends on form and technology”. Zumthor (in Jordaan, 2015) argues that places are made from ‘real’ things, material constituents, and these 'real' things have ‘presences’ (atmospheres) that are self-evident. The nature and qualities of building materials, construction techniques and structural systems thus influences how architecture is experienced.

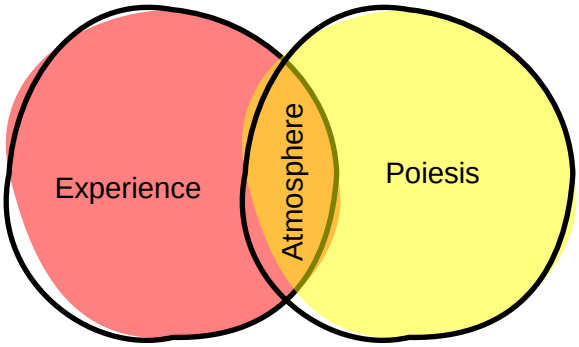

Figure 89: Atmospheres are experienced through the senses, but created through poiēsis (Author, 2024).

Atmospheres and well-being

Atmospheres influence existential experiences and emotions. Pallasmaa (in Jordaan, 2015:42) states that architecture can express the experience of being-in-the-world; that it can "increase one's sense of reality and self; and that it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being". Atmospheres set the tone for cognition, action, and thought (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:27). In this light, good architecture should be primarily concerned with creating atmospheres conducive to positive emotions, enhancing life to become wholesome and healthy (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:24). When architects create "appropriately tuned moods" (atmospheres) for human situations, it is of the greatest cultural and life-enhancing value (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:22) . Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty agree that existence is always "mooded." Zumthor (Pérez-Gómez, 2016:20-21) explicitly links atmosphere to architectural quality, stating, "quality architecture to me is when a building manages to move me". Space or place thus always have an atmosphere that influences emotions, which impacts well-being.

Character

The concept of character is another, perhaps more subtle theme, that can be identified in the work of the selected local architects, and should therefore be considered for Slow architecture. It was observed that when architecture responds to its context through *poiēsis,* it gains a distinctive character that speaks of its locality within the world(fig.90). Contemporary architects are simultaneously working in a local and increasingly global context, so one must consider global trends and advancements without compromising its local identity (Louw, 2014:161). The work of the selected local architects all possesses a local distinctive character, in the sense that they make use thoughtfully selected *building technology* that responds to the local context. Regional building materials are kept close to their natural state and construction techniques accommodates the skill-level of local labour, which innately creates an association to the context. Fuentes, Roaf and Thomas (in Louw, 2014:156) coined the term "building-in soul", which denote that materials have an essence that can connect a person to a specific region.

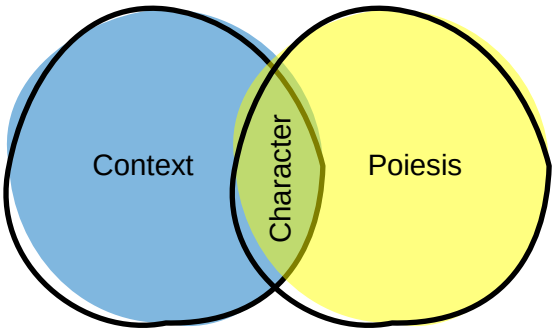

Figure 90: Poiesis that responds to context creates a distinctivly local character (Author, 2024)..

Character and well-being

Louw (2014:160) explores localised making (*poiēsis)* as a counter to increasing globalisation and mass production. He argues that it can promote the (re)emergence of existing and new local architectural typologies that are intrinsically linked to their context. He (2017:99) suggests that traditional *building technologies* can be re-interpreted and combined with novel technologies, leading to the creation of new skills and potentially the generation of new income sources for local communities, thereby addressing socio-economic issues whilst preserving the traditions of the cultural and historical context (Louw, 2014:164). Jekot (2007:66-78) also suggests that combining traditional and novel technologies combines different skills and knowledge, thereby promoting to the upliftment of local communities.

Meaning

The notion of *meaning* is overtly expressed by Eksteen and de Villiers, but it can also be traced in the normative positions of Otten, Wolff and Wolff. This is because *meaning* need not be artificially imposed onto architecture by making use of overt symbols. Zumthor in (Jordaan, 2015:88) feels that “richness and multiplicity emanate from things themselves, if they are observed attentively and we give them their due, opening the work up to a multitude of meanings and interpretations”. Meaning can thus be derived from the atmosphere and character of a building, which is a result of the *poiēsis*-response to context and experience (fig.91).

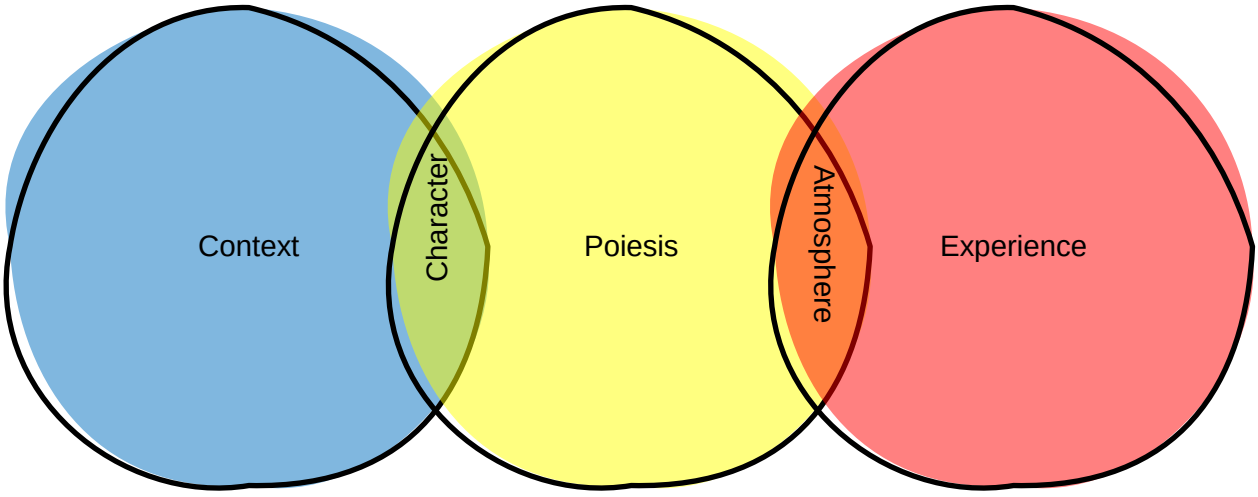

Figure 91: Architecture rich in character and atmoshere is meaningful (Author, 2024).

Meaning and well-being

Meaning is central to well-being, and as Eksteen asserts, should be the essential task of architecture. His assertion is echoed by others, such as Mallgrave (2015:17-18) who argues that architecture gives emotional meaning and purpose to biologically vital activities. Meaning directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self - it ultimately strengthens our sense of self, and permits us to engage fully in the mental dimensions of dream, imagination and desire (Pallasmaa, 2012:12-13), to live a life of fruition and not mere survival. Therefore, to promote well-being, architecture should ultimately be concerned with the making of meaningful places.

Synthesis

As architects are responsible for the design of places, they inherently impact the quality of people's lives. Architecture originated as a response to human needs, not only as a shelter to the physical elements, but also as a place of gathering meaning (whether that be social, cultural, material or existential meaning). Whatever architects design inevitably affects the well-being of humans and the wider world - it has social, economic and ecological implications. Therefore, should the ultimate goal of the architect not be to design places that improve well-being? The well-being of not only people, but the planet as well? Architects cannot claim that they are solely concerned with buildings. Such a position is unethical, as it avoids the moral responsibility for the consequences of an action. I propose a Slow approach to architecture. It is a thoughtful and sensitive approach to people and place. It considers the consequences of its actions, both on the direct user and broader context. Each decision is made with well-being of persons and place in mind. Slow architecture is meaningful, because of its relevance to people and place. Slow architecture does not merely satisfy needs - it positively transforms environments to create enriching experiences, positively contributing to a life of well-being.

Further research recommendations

There are limited records of South African design ideologies (Barker, 2019:23), and so it is recommended that more studies about local normative positions should be conducted. "We're faced with a very schizophrenic situation, where those who write about architecture do not know practice, and those who practice never manage to convert their knowledge into writing or any other communicable form"(de Graf in Lokko, 2016:18). Recording the philosophies of local practitioners could bridge the gap between practice and theory. It could also prove vital to inform and develop design approaches, both of students and professionals. Much focus was placed on the philosophies of local architects and global architectural movements. Future

studies could examine the built artifacts more comprehensively to establish whether there is a link between philosophy and practice.

Limitations

The literature on the Arts and Crafts movement, phenomenology and critical regionalism is vast. Therefore, the literature review was limited to seminal sources to a large extent. Only the normative positions of Otten, Eksteen, de Villiers, Wolff and Wolff were documented, as at the outset of this study, only their practice was deemed to be reflected of my normative position. This is not to say that there are no other local architects that practice in a manner akin to Slow architecture.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Kate Otten

Figure 13: Kate Otten (Basson, 2024:online)

Background

Year of Birth	Katherine Maree Otten (1964 -)	
Education	BArch (1987)	
Practice	Kate Otten Architects, established in 1989	
Awards		
Year	**Award**	
2015	Saint Gobain Architecture for Social Gain award	
2015	ArcVision Prize Honourable Mention	
2013	Mbokodo Award for Architecture and Creative Design	
2013	Sophia Gray Memorial Laureate	
Year	**Project**	**Award**
2023	Threads	GIFA Award of Excellence
2023	Threads	GIFA People's choice award
2023	Origins Centre for exploration	GIFA Regional Commendation

2023	Faculty of Science: BioPhy Precinct Post Graduate Centre.	GIFA Award of Merit
2020	Wits Rural Facility, Bushbuckridge, Limpopo	UIA Friendly & Inclusive Spaces Awards
2019	Law on Keyes	GIFA Award of Merit
2018	House Schutte, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit
2016	Wits Rural Facility, Bushbuckridge, Limpopo	SAIA commendation
2011	House Omisore	GIFA Regional Commendation
2008	Matchboxology	SAIA Project Award
2005	Lulu Kati Kati	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2005	Gabriel's Garden Pavilion	GIFA Regional Commendation
2005	Gabriel's Garden Pavilion	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	GIFA Award of Merit
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	Architecture +Cityscape Award
2009	Parkhurst Shops, Johannesburg	Plascon Prism Award
2002	Women's Gaol	SAIA commendation
2001	International House, Johannesburg	Architecture +Cityscape Award
1996	MATEP Art Therapy Centre, Soweto	Cityscape Architectural Review Award
1995	House Staude, Johannesburg	SAIA Award of Merit

Table 1: Kate Otten Architects list of rewards

Interview Transcript

Rouxléne Oosthuizen: I read an article by Professor Lesley Lokko that you were born in Durban, raised in Joburg, and that you lived in 24 different homes before the age of 21. How did this transient lifestyle impact your sense of home and belonging?

Kate Otten: So, I mean, I think for me, and be it a boarding school, bedroom, or I've always had to make home wherever I am. And even if I'm in a hotel room, I will jiggle it around to be more suitable to me. So, I think it's a thing about making space or making home rather than it… Home is a very strong [concept] in this country. And, you know, being born in Durban, I can't honestly remember very well. But, you know, Johannesburg has been an extremely exciting, amazing place to live. It's hectic, it's wild, it's all sorts of things. But I think that that's a... the opportunity is amazing. And I think that's been a very important part of my architectural understanding.

RO: Then the article also mentions that you really like the landscape and wilderness of KZN, or just in general the landscape. What exactly about the wildness of the landscape do you like?

KO: Yes, not of KZN specifically. Well, I think it depends on which landscapes and what they, I mean, for me, the landscape of Johannesburg is equally a landscape, and it is a very powerful landscape. I visited the Karoo, but I don't want to live there. I do think that it has amazing attributes, it's just the big sky, the wild, and the lack of people. I think there's something that's quite amazing about that that is very moving. But equally, when I talk about landscape, I'm talking about various landscapes. It's not it's not specifically, you know, not topographical levels or natural landscape. I mean, you know, often landscape for me can be, you know, South Africa's political landscape, so landscape is something much broader than the horizon and the sun rising and setting. Although I will say it's fundamentally important to me. And that's one of the things that I absolutely love about being here [at Lulu Kati Kati] is that I see the morning horizon, I see the afternoon. I see the horizon from here. And there's, there's some sort of quiet feeling, I am kind of grounded by that or so for example, I like to sit north when I'm drawing because I know where I am, and I do that automatically, that for me, where direction is which, which way I'm facing, which way is up or whatever it might be, I intuitively know, and I suppose also I've kind of lived and worked in Joburg for a long time, so navigating around Johannesburg for me is easy. What is also wonderful, is that you kind of watch the things you know change, the places where you used to just catch a bus to, you don't anymore.

Kayla Potgieter: Were there any hobbies that you undertook that were influential in your choice to become an architect? And also added, are there any hobbies that you still enjoy, or that you want to try out that fascinate you or inspires you in your architecture?

KO: Hobbies for me is a very strange word because they, you know, many people talk about hobbies and then your job, but, yes, some fun. You know, my favourite hobby at the moment is pottery, but it's a much more serious. Yes, [it is a] much more committed thing than a hobby. I have sewed since I was six years old. You know, I made things that, I don't know any of that, but maybe all of it [led me to architecture]. You know, I did architecture because my sister said it was a good idea. Also because I had applied for architecture at KZN, and that's where my guitar teacher was. I was a classical guitarist, and that's what I wanted to do. But that's where I signed up for architecture, so to speak. I only really fell in love with architecture in my practical year. It was just something I was doing. It wasn't something that I had chosen or really knew about. It was a really, I suppose, lovely coincidence. I was going to stop architecture and get into music, so I got accepted to because I had studied guitar for metric. But then I was in love when it came to registration. It was much easier to do architecture, because I was staying with

that, than to move to a new degree, and then I could go quickly to spend time with the new romance. And so it went on and followed itself, but my practice year I did in Muhammad Myatt's office and that was amazing, from so many points of view. But I also think it was the year that I kind of thought, I can do this, I like this, and it was around making some mosques in Malawi out of sunbaked bricks, which was kind of what was the part that really did it for me. Also a profound interest in Islamic architecture, which dates back to first year of architecture, or an interest in trying to fight the Western canon and Islamic architecture is very well documented. Well, there are lots of documents. You can get books in the library. And, and so, that became an interest for me. And, I suppose a handmade thing, and Hassan Fathy was always fabulous. And that was something also that was very much part of working in Mohammed's office .

RO: Did he expose you a lot to the Islamic architecture as a different way of thinking?

KO: I went on a journey with them, with him and a group of Muslim men. We were they were building the mosques up in Malawi. And, you know, it was just it was a really eye opening experience. It was fantastic.

RO: How does the making process inform your design? Do you, for instance, think about way of making something and then the design comes, or do you like first design. And then think of a way to, to make it.

KO: I think it's simultaneous and kind of all in, I don't sit there consciously taking the one part apart and, you know, so it's an understanding of the whole. So, I mean, I think that the work is very much about the response to where the project is, who the people are, you know, what are the skills available. So, it's very much about where is it and what's happening and who is it for. And what does the building hope to achieve, what is it going to do? How's it going to change things?

RO: So, would you say in the design process, you first take time to define what the aim is of the building?

KO: No, but I mean, yes, of course you do. You want to know what's the brief, what you're doing. But I don't think that that is fixed. I think that it can be something that's fluid. You know, if you find in working through it that there's something amazing that might be sort of that you've left off or whatever, you should be able to add that it can't be that it's this finite thing. I think that until it's built or even as it's being built, I mean you do that less and less the bigger the building gets, but if an opportunity arises you must take it because it's not just that you can say, oh shit. would it be nice to do that? But if you can still do it. I remember that very clearly

in the building called House Staden. That was the early building of did in Melville. When we got up to the first floor level, I realised that there were incredible views to the southwest, which I've never seen. So then we put a whole window in there. I mean, what it wasn't on the drawings. It wasn't in the budget, but it became obvious that, we would have to adapt. There is this kind of fluidity and I think that is part of the nature of life, I mean, you can't be so fixed in your point. You need to be available and open and you know, what are the opportunities and what is the.

RO: In terms of the constructions for self, what have you learned throughout the years, by doing these constructions for self?

KO: We are sitting in one of those; ostensibly constructions for self a buildings that I have built either for myself or my family. It is a space where I can be much more experimental if I want to be. It's got its other side, which is that I'm paying. The budgets are unbelievably tight. And it's about being, inventive and innovative with very few, money ain't going to solve the problem. How do you do that with other things? You will find that there's a lot of recycled stuff, a lot of hard, ordinary, relatively cheap things used in ways that are not necessarily their standard way in order to achieve something new or something different than I thought about. So, I'm going to jump to Lulu Kati Kati, which is probably good to explain it while we're sitting in this. This poor Lulu Kati Kati got half built and then left in the rain, so it got very messed up, which is why it's not straight. It's not perfectly straight and it never will be, but I'm not sure that that is the point behind this building at all. I think there are things that I kind of investigate in different ways. So, for example, this building follows, or was sort of simultaneous with the Women's Jail. The Women's Jail has steel columns on which the concrete floors are suspended. And this here is a timber column from which timber floors are suspended. It's kind of like a domestic application of a similar kind of idea, where a building hangs off its structure as opposed to it isn't structured. You can see that here from the outside. Everything kind of hangs off it. What was the desire to do that? It was an experiment. I don't have the budget to do it with steel etc. But I love gum poles. They for me have an incredibly integrity. Integrity because their whole columns, it's a whole tree. You get trees this tall, here they are. The one, the builder chopped the top off. Please don't ask me why, but he did. There's always up this error that we will forever live with. I wanted it to be suspended and float between this rockface which goes all the way down, and this amazing tree, so it had to hang there.

The idea also was that usually when you have a view site, you see less [of the] view because of the trees, but now you can see the Melville Koppies, and you used to be able to see down the street as well, but all the trees have become huge. They were little spindly things when I

planted them. There's always this thing of having this huge glass and then you see the view. [But] for me, in many ways, this is about different views and about making views, so you'll also see that the north side has got more windows in the south side, because you want to get more light and sun in from the north than you do from the south. And then it's, it's got a system that it works. That is the structural system that holds the walls up. But then why did they have these things? I did talk about this idea of camouflage. If you look up at this elevations and all the windows open because they're open in all sorts of different directions, it reflects the trees and reflects the sky. It's fun. The bay window is busy getting fixed because bugs have gotten in there. This is the idea of a bay window and corrugated iron, which is historic Melville. But now this is my version of the same, and you see this, it's not one sheet of corrugated iron. It's made like this because that lines up with what happens inside. They all kind of speak to each other. And I suppose it could be that you use leftover bits, you don't have to have massive sheets, and then you cut and you waste. So, it's got all these kinds of reasons why it is as it is, you know, like this whole thing of the relationship between the site and the building. Also the balconies allow you to move in between the trees. And the balustrades, they all take pots for planting. And then was a Kapok tree, but it is gone now, but it made pink flowers, so this (the kitchen) is all pink.

RO: I think is very interesting to see how your building adapts to the site. and especially that fluidity that you talked about. It seems like it's still an ongoing process.

KO: Well, it's quite interesting because we've now come back 14 years later and it's busy getting painted. So those shelves are new. Upstairs the space was divided into two bedrooms. Our daughter stayed in the one, we stayed in the other, but it was never really a perfect divide. But we now have taken all of that out, so we've just got a big studio upstairs. Okay, well, not big enough for us because we like lots of space. And then, the kitchen was pink. There is also the integrity of the walls. And then there's these services of to the side. You get the kitchen, with bathrooms up there and then the bathroom downstairs. When it was built, I wasn't sure what it was going to be; an office, a house, a this or a that. And so it was space. I should have put the toilet on this level. And not two upstairs. But you know that was theoretically were going to live. It was quite sort of incomplete when we came to live here. And my explanation to my family was just imagine that were going camping. It's going to be comfortable in the certain way, but experimental in another. It was one of the most exciting years, I think, that we had living here. It was wonderful.

You can see so the floor is parquet that I've collected at the time. The paving at the entrance there, that's all leftover bits. I'm a terrible hoarder because I think that, you know, I see these

things as possibilities of making something fantastic. I drive everyone mad, because I hoard. But they're all amazing, interesting, they have opportunities, possibilities, you know? Well, we just haven't quite found the right moment for them, so, you know, fortunately, I now have a barn so I can put all sorts of things in there. I collect tiles.

So, you know, you ask about hobbies. so, I mean, there were lots of things that I've done in my life, and I kind of did them, excelled and then moved on the next. I was a cellist at one point. I was a fanatical horse rider, a gymnast, a ballerina, you do all these things in your life but, architecture was the one that stuck. I think what's amazing is that architecture also has this incredible ability to be larger than just… It's a way of life. It's not just limited to my day job. It isn't in my life, but it colours everything that I see or how I see.

RO: How did your travels to India influence you? More specifically, did it impact you in terms of the eastern versus the western canon?

KO: I was 19 years old, and I went to an ashram. That's what it was all about. And it was, wild. I mean, you know, 19 years old back then. So, and, also as a white South African, you couldn't get a visa to get to India and you, they wouldn't touch your passport and so I had a transit visa and, that's how you have travelled. It was amazing. It was completely mind opening. I mean, I've never travelled outside of South Africa. You have to sit on the plane, it was so long for me. I was a crying baby most of the way. It was it was incredible.

I don't think it is east versus west. I mean, for me, it's a thing of the of a bigger picture. You know, I live in Africa. I don't live East or West. I've never consciously thought that, it's just a bigger picture. I think that it is India or had to do with because I was wanting to go to the ashram that I was attending in Lenasia. So, you know, like the main ashram was in Shajapur, India. So that's there.

KP: To add on to that, did you travel to any other places that was influential to you, even if it's in South Africa?

KO: Totally, I mean, I've done a lot of traveling, but nearly as much as my friend Hugh Fraser. But I think traveling is an incredibly important part of opening your mind to other cultures and to other ways of living, etc.?

Shannon Govender: I want to ask you about House Rowe. So, this question I'm drawing assumptions so you can disagree. But it is mainly from papers and also your website. So, the design process for that was an organic response to the existing conditions, both needs have a practical action. Elements within later changed and were redesigned as we have been

speaking about earlier. And then the building progressed as new objects and both elements were formed. It needed to be connected. Can you elaborate on the emotional needs for the home design? If they were into it and if this was an intuitive approach?

KO: What's interesting is a House Rowe went in three parts. The first part was the studio. Then much later we the house and then at the end we did a cottage. Sean, Alice and I became very good friends. And what was amazing was that the Sean, who was a photographer, brought pictures of his village, Credo Mutwa in Soweto. And they were just these very, they were evocative photographs. They were not to say, make it look like this. So they were not these Pinterest images. There were these very beautiful, evocative pictures from Credo Mutwa. I had read stories of Credo Mutwa to my children's, so that was very exciting for me that he'd been there and that he brought these photographs. It was years later, actually, when I actually went to the house – it is not a house, it is like a whole place – The Rowe couple were very engaged with the process. So, they had a bunch of stuff like doors and windows and stuff that they had salvaged from some warehouses downtown that were getting smashed or whatever it was. They wanted to make a space that about the way they worked, that is the photographic studio and the kind of atmosphere they wanted to create. And the whole place eventually became their sort of compound, I suppose, where there was the house, and then you could walk across this lovely bridge to get to the studio. They knew many kind of artists, they would make the light fittings or Alice was doing a lot of the mosaic work, etc. So, there was this lovely, intuitive, organic process. And then there were things that happened, like, for example, there's that beautiful tower that sort of does that, and it has these rivulets. So, so what we did was that we over plastered it and then hosed so that, the plaster walls slumped and made those rivulets, or those bottles that are the twinkling lights on the staircase. The thing with the bottles is, if you put them horisontally they leak, so you have to put them slightly at an angle and you have to wrap them so that they remain in place while you do the rest. Going back to that thing about experimenting; it worked with Sean and Alice. It was very nice to be able to experiment. But I mean, Sean almost completely lost his shit if something did not work, but it worked out in the end. And then they were married there. Then she had a baby there. The. And la la la la. you know, so it was very much a way of life.

RO: I think it's interesting the extent to which you, involve the client with the process and that they are a part of the design.

KO: I think it's critical, because I think the client does not have the breadth of knowledge that we have of architecture. I think that you - and it's not an arrogant thing, it's a sharing thing –

take them on this journey, then they will engage with what is going to be theirs. It's not yours ultimately, it's theirs'.

KP: Do you actually use computer aided design approaches?

KO: We do have computers and that is ultimately how all our things get done. I sit at my drawing table and I draw, and then things will get set up [on the computer] and then I'll draw into them. I would sort of put some vague dimensions on so that I can get it set up. It is something that I have to be very aware of, as do everyone who works for me so that it doesn't get kind of lost in translation, because what a hand drawing or a line that you draw can do that a computer can't, is that it can be indecisive, it can also suggest something rather than that, you know, it can be and it can mutate a bit. If you draw it dark, it [visually] jumps [out], if you don't draw it dark, it doesn't jump. If you change pen colours, it does different things. I think that computers are very useful, but I don't think that they are. I'm still very doubtful about AI. I think that the secret is, it still remains in the, in the maker. I think that it's it is only as good as you are. It's only as good as you're able to let it be. To be honest, it has no clue. It's that simple. And the clues that it has are only because they've been imported. I don't know how you short circuit that or un-circuit that. It is a bit counter-intuitive, but it's fine if that's your route. I think I would want to draw over it , and be able to stretch it more, whatever that might be. We used to build a lot of physical models, but the problem of that is that quite often, you do it when the building is quite advanced. I think the secret would be to do it earlier and to do it rougher. It's also nice way [of working], you can photograph it and you can draw into the photographs. But no, I'm not a computer girl.

KP: How does communities influence your designs?

KO: I think it's very particular to a project, you know. I think it also has to do with the size of the project, where the project is and what it is. For example, for the WITS rural facility, we may have wanted to have been more experimental in how we did certain things, but those skills did not exist in the area. So it was also valuable to use things that the communities surrounding the facility were able to do, so their skills were able to be used in the making of the building. I think that it's taking those and then sort of pushing them a bit further beyond their comfort zone. But I don't think it was reinventing the wheel. I think there's a subtle thing in that. A long time ago in doing the, when doing the Art therapy Centre in Soweto, that was a very much a hands on thing. The Rowe house was a very hands on thing with the actual builders who on site; people who were skilled plasters in a way trying to get them to un-skill themselves to achieve or to let them engage in a more relaxed process. Or for example, with the bricklaying at the

Art Therapy Centre. So, I have a picture of a kind of patterned but sort of fairly disorderly patterned, brickwork. We discussed this with the two bricklayers and then I said, could you do samples? And by the time I get back, it [the dome] was finished. And it was fabulous. And you can kind of see where one worked and where one didn't, when it moved from the one's work to the other, the decisions they made to make it all happen, which was wonderful. So yes. And I think those, when that happens, it's an amazing. I suppose because the people who are making the building then are completely engaged in it. But you do have to have a very clear - and I guess that's also where the constructions for self a more able to have those types of things. Whereas now, with the project for WITS we have to draw the pattern, and it can't be too complicated because they could do it wrong, it is too expensive etc.

RO: I read that you have a firmly held belief in the power of architecture to inspire strong emotions, to transform understanding and appreciation of space. How do you believe architecture can affect your emotions?

KO: Well, I think everyone is affected by the space that they are in and I mean, that's what's so wonderful about returning to this place (Lulu Kati Kati) for me. There is a sense of… on a hot day here, this is sort of cool and leafy atmosphere and there's this gentle breeze and you are sitting in the trees and there's something quite... I find this whole building; my soul sits very comfortably here. If you are up there, you can see out, there's this kind of expanse out that way. I noticed driving here today, I took the route that I used to take to our previous office. I used to feel a sense of dread going there. And now I don't have that when I drive here. I don't feel I shouldn't go to the office. It's lovely, I'll come on a weekend . I think that's a sort of much more felt thing. But I think it is also, to have somewhere that you can call home, it is an amazing thing. To know that you are safe and secure in that. Hassan Fathy always spoke about this thing of beauty and, that he felt that beauty was particularly important. That if the only thing that you have, is a home, that that should be beautiful. Aesthetics is not something that doesn't affect you.

RO: I'm glad you say that, because I think there's a lot of emphasis placed on functionality in architecture, but then there's sometimes a neglect of the emotional.

KO: For me, they are equally important.

SG: In the first phase, for Nandipha's studio, you acted as a building manager, collaborating with various small teams across people. Given your experience with this project and your ongoing interest in craft, how did you facilitate knowledge transfer between yourself as the architect and the skilled artisans during the construction process?

KO: So, you know what was interesting about the project is that Salma was the person who was the manager on the side. And so I think that it was the first project that she's done that I would come every so often, but I was not managing it. And I was not as hands on as much as I would ordinarily be. We worked with teams of craftspeople as opposed to one builder in charge. We needed to do it in accordance with a tight budget. The craft of building is often a lot more chunky than the craft of making a tapestry. We were building a warehouse. What we've done is built it [the frame] on the floor, the first one, and the engineer came to discuss. Then you can pick up the frame. Actually being on the site is incredibly important.

KP: Can we jump to the Threads project? On your online profile, it says that it tells the story of the of Johannesburg, but it specifically used the phrase *Laboratory of the Future*. You can speak towards like the whole experience of creating that. But what is your vision of what architecture should be in future South Africa?

KO: *Laboratory of the Future* was the theme of the whole exhibition. Lesley Lokko was the curated, so you can read up on that. Our project was called Dangerous Liaisons and then lady selected people to be in which part and whatever that might be. The whole exhibition was completely amazing. It was a curated exhibition; it was not like a building expo. It was more like an art exhibition, but it was way better because it was a whole story that was this *Laboratory of the Future*. It was very Afrocentric and global South. So, the piece that we did was Dangerous Liaisons you can read this though, but it's the ridge of Johannesburg. And if you look on Google Earth you will see when you put it on the satellite You will see this arc, where a creator formed from a meteorite. But what this piece is also talking about, is the idea that the discovery of gold was also the start of this dangerous liaison between great wealth and between poverty, between exploitation and the social landscapes that panned out. In in a way, it's a wonderful summary of my work so far with this practice. Because it's about craft, it's about women, it's about layers of landscape. It is a very three dimensional piece, it also has shadow as a kind of part of the story, which is all around the geology of the ground, and the tapestries, the weaving of the surface and then the beads, which was the idea of what is the night sky above, but that is also about the gold, and that it's not disappearing off to western shores. It's being claimed as an African resource, through the interpretation of how that's made.

So what was the point? What was my *Laboratory of the Future*? The whole idea was that it links back to laboratory of the future. It's not so literal, but it's this idea about connecting with craft, with making, with handmaking, so it engages with people and with humanity. What I'm saying is that if you leave out all the “touchy feely” stuff, you're going to lose it all. And that for

me is the future. It's not about the more away from ourselves we become. I think it's problematic and I think we need to come more into ourselves in the future.

RO: How would you describe your architectural philosophy?

KO: It's not one thing. I think it's a whole series of things. I like the word authenticity, bit it is very boring. It is about thinking. Each project is specific to itself, and you need to delve into those layers and find out what they are and bring that to the surface. But I think it's so much more than that (authenticity), I don't think is one thing. You know, I think it's, I think that's the that's the point. It's complex, and it's about detail. I don't know what my one philosophy is. I don't have one.

RO: For the Art Therapy Centre, how exactly did you engage with the client? So I now know the, the process with the builders, but what exactly was the process with the client, or the people that would use the centre?

KO: Oh, gosh. I mean, that's quite a long story. Maggie ran an art therapy centre from the gardens of a child welfare place. But that's a long story, because it's particular to each one, but yes, I worked very closely with her, but it took nine years before the money came through. But it was the most magical thing because the person who donated the funds never, never wanted to be named. We don’t know who they are to this day.

RO: So, your architecture, when I take it in, it immediately sparks joy. It feels human. What project is your favourite. Or which project spark the most joy for you?

KO: That such a that's such a difficult question. Do you know how many times I have been asked that question? It's usually the one that I'm currently working on, but, this house, this building, this organism… No, there isn't one particular one. But the ones that I do for me, I particularly like, but I love them all.

Appendix B: Braam de Villiers and André Eksteen

Figure 15: Andre Eksteen (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online)

Figure 14: Braam de Villiers (Earthworld Architects, 2024:online)

Background

Year of Birth	Braam de Villiers (1968—)	André Eksteen (1971—)
Education	B.Arch University of Pretoria (1995) M.Arch. University of Arizona (1999)	B.Arch University of Pretoria (1995)
Practice	Earthworld Architects, established in 2000	
Awards		
Year	**Award**	
2024	35th Sophia Gray Laureates	
Year	**Project**	**Award**
2021	Nando's Castle Gate	PIA Commendation for Architecture
2021	INOAR	PIA Award for Architecture certificate
2021	Embassy of Belgium	PIA Commendation for Architecture
2020	Future Innovation Campus	IUPA 2020 Special Prize
2019	Future Africa Campus	AfriSam-SAIA Sustainable Design Award - Sustainable Architecture Category A
2019	House Duvenage	SAIA Limpopo Award for Architecture
2019	House Coertse	GIFA Commendation
2019	House Dreyer	PIA Award for Architecture

2019	Wallstreet PTA	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Conference Centre	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Housing	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Hub	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Research Commons	PIA Award for Architecture
2019	Future Africa Conference Centre	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Housing	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Hub	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Future Africa Research Commons	PIA Category Award Trophy
2019	Melissa House	PIA Commendation
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Project	Construction Mag Best Projects - Winner – Architects
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	Construction Mag Best Projects - Special Mention – Sustainable
2018	I'CAT Environmental Solutions	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	House van Dyk	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	House Nieuwenhuys	SAIA Award of Merit
2018	Stortemelk Hydropower Project	SAIA - Commendation
2017	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	FSIA Award for Architecture
2017	Stortemelk Hydropower Plant	CESA Aon Engineering Excellence Awards - Commendation
2017	House Nieuwenhuys	PIA Award for Architecture
2017	House van Dyk	PIA Award for Architecture
2017	I'CAT Environmental Solutions	PIA Category Award
2016	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	SAIA – Commendation
2016	House du Plessis	SAIA – Commendation
2016	Lucky Bread Company Mall of Africa	Retail Design Awards – Commendation
2015	I-Cat Eco Factory	AfriSam-SAIA Award for Sustainable Architecture + Innovation
2015	Tribeca Original	PIA Award Commendation
2015	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	PIA Award for Architecture
2015	New Coffeeshop and Showroom for Foghound Interactive Coffee	PIA Category Winner – Commercial or Brand-Related Architecture
2015	House Mouton	PIA Award of Excellence
2015	House Du Plessis	PIA Award for Architecture
2014	Lucky Bread	Retail Design Awards – Best Restaurant Design
2014	House Gauche	PIA Award-Commendation
2013	House Gauche	PIA Award for Architecture
2013	Lucky Bread Company Brooklyn Shopping Centre	PIA Honourable Mention - Retail Design Awards – Best Restaurant Design 2013

2013	Lucky Bread	Honourable Mention for Architecture 2013
2012	N/A	Retail Design Awards – Best Retail Restaurant in South Africa
2011	House Zeeman	PIA Honourable Mention
2011	House Botha	PIA Honourable Mention
2009	Centenary Building	SAIA Merit Award in Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Award for Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Award of merit for Architecture
2009	Centenary Building	PIA Peer Awards

Table 2: Erathworld Architects list of rewards

Interview Transcript

Rouxléne Oosthuizen: Did you already know at school that you want to do architecture, was it something that you were interested in? How did you end up in architecture?

Braam de Villiers: Well, I ended up here by default. Andre was more focused, but no, I didn't know that at school. I actually went to the navy for two years. I decided after my time there that I'm going to do this.

RO: What made you decide to do architecture? Did you talk to anyone? Did anyone guide you in this direction?

BV: I went to the department of architecture at the University of Pretoria where I spoke with Roger and Schalk. They were the lecturers there at the time. I talked to them a lot before I decided to do this.

Kayla Potgieter: Were there any hobbies that influenced you to do architecture? Or are there any hobbies that currently influences your architecture?

BV: I played violin, so I did music. I think there is some correlation to architecture, in the sense of form, composition, precision. If you look at architecture and music, I think those are similarities in their processes, but maybe it is not that direct.

KP: Are there any other activities that influenced/s your architecture? For example, traveling or lecturing?

BV: On that, I think context is much wider. What is your social context? What is your environmental context? The nature around you? You must take it in, position yourself in your context. I think that's very important. I'm always busy with that act. I travel, I draw. I read; I listen. I listen to other people.

KP: Do you have any heroes in architecture, people you looked up early in your career, or people you still look up to?

BV: I have always had heroes, and it also constantly changes. When we were studying, I always say the four masters, but it was Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and Alvar Aalto. That was when we were studying… Walter Gropius. Andre studied the work of Kahn, I was also influenced by Kahn. We actually missed post-modernism. We looked at the new modernism. We were very influenced by people like Renzo Piano, Norman Foster, Richard Rodgers. Obviously, along with them come the Deconstructivists, like Zaha Hadid – but that was not a strong influence, however we were aware of it . But the new modernist influences were strong.

And then, locally, there was Uytenbogaart, Glenn Gallagher, Peter Rich, 'Ora Joubert - They gave us lectures, so they had a strong influence. And then Norman Eaton. He was a Pretorian regional modernist. I looked a lot at their work. And then, as I studied, the contemporary regional modernists such as Charles Garaya in India, Jeffrey Bauer in Sri Lanka…that pointed to a more contextual direction.

I think what was interesting was that we were the end of the post-modern era. And it was like... We started back in 1989. I think it was the end of post-modernism and people started looking elsewhere. And with Roger Fisher the environmental thinking started to emerge.

RO: Following up on that, you studied a master's degree in bioclimatic design if I am correct? Was it as a result of the focus on sustainability by Roger Fischer, or was it a personal interest?

BV: Look, Dieter Holm, who was head of the school at Tukkies, had a very strong influence on sustainability. He was probably the only one in South Africa who started talking very strongly about it. And it wasn't topical then. So, Dieter and Roger Fischer, were both systemic thinkers, so that started to influence me when I finally got a bursary to go to America. I decided to go to one of the environmental schools, there was the University of Arizona, New Mexico, Berkeley, all kinds of schools were there. Around the late 70s and 80s there were people thinking about sustainability, building in the desert, like Paulus Leary. Rick Joy was at my university campus...rammed earth. I was very strongly influenced by regionalism and contextualism. The desert climate has a very specific architecture. Will Bruder, Wendell Burnett, all of them were there. I was very strongly influenced by that.

Celine Nel: In terms of craft, where do you think this would fall in your philosophy as an architect, and is it relevant to your philosophy?

BV: I think what happened was when we studied at Tukkies, it was a very strong school of the making of things, especially with Joe Kemp and Hans Wegelin. There was very much, you would design it and then the next question was, how will you make it? How will you put it together? There was a very strong emphasis on the building technology of things and the making of it. It was integral to the course, so design and construction weren't two-step, they were taught very much in the same studio and classroom, and that was good. I think there they instilled that, and they were very mean.

They would mark up a set of working drawings, and they would redline the drawings. They were very strict on the making of this. I think together with that, and then there was people that taught us like, ‘Ora Joubert, whom had this very, let's call it a very African approach, looking at African technology and African filmmaking, as well as African building technology, for instance, working with poles and such. It was very much in the school, and it very much translated to what we were taught. I think at that time, if you live in a city where Norman Eaton has built, he was obviously very influenced by African pattern making in terms of his own architecture, you see that and you try to emulate that, or try to understand it, or try to copy it, if I can call it that. I think it was the very place, the region of Pretoria, and Pretoria regionalism definitely had a very strong influence, and modernist Pretoria, if I can call it that.

And people like Helmut Stauch also had a very strong influence because those buildings surrounded us… Philip Nell, the Aula. Those buildings were there and we looked at them and we wanted to be these modernists, if I can call it that. Not post-modernists, modernists.

CN: How does your design process generally start? In what manner of execution and what tools do you employ at the beginning of a process versus at the end of a process?

BV: I think the most important thing firstly is context, to really understand the context. Whether it's a residential project or an industrial project, any project, is that you first need to understand the context, and that starts with observing it. Meaning that you, just by looking at the environment around you, you can get a lot of clues.

Obviously, the climate that you are designing in, that's part of the context. And then the textures, and then the site, the site specifics. What's the potential of the site? So the first one is site, context and place. Also social, what's your approach socially, what you're going to do? Meaning, how can the building be the catalyst for social change? I think that's very important; it is always what we are thinking and doing.

But then next to it, right next to it sits the materiality of the of the building. What are we going to build it out of? Very important. From day one, are we going to use bricks? Are we going to use concrete? Because I think a lot of times the materiality is not it's only an afterthought, not necessarily the catalyst…again the making of the building. So, if you decide you're going to build in brick, what sort of brick technology are you going to employ? Or timber? If you decide in timber, are you going to build with plywood, or are you going to build with mass timber? Are you going to build with GLT? It's a very important decision. Because that definitely influences the aesthetics of the building. So, is the building going to be heavy, stereotomic, or is the building going to be tectonic? Is it going to be light? Is it going to float above the earth, or is it going to be grounded in the earth? That's all material decisions. I think you need to make it fairly early in the process. It definitely guides design.

RO: That was actually one of my questions, but you seem to have answered it. Does the making process inform design, or does the design inform the making process? But from what you just said, I think with you it's very much the making process, the materials and the technology, that informs the design.

BV: Yes, definitely. It can almost be the first, one of the main catalysts along with context, obviously. And then I guess concepts, but we do not necessarily work with abstract concepts. We have experimented with that in the office, with different people working here. Let's say you have this abstract notion that you're going to explore space and light, or explore how light enters the building. It's part of that but it's not the main generator of the concept. In that sense we're very traditional in our design thinking. I think the other thing that André is passionate about is sometimes just pure form. Just aesthetics. I think a lot of design can be generated through pure aesthetics, meaning that you look at it's like a piece of music. The form, the format, or the scale and then the rhythm.

Those kind of things that it's like for instance… I'm constantly looking at that little plastic building. There is a kind of wilful aesthetic approach, which is frowned upon these days. But I think it's super important to almost wilfully push the form in a specific direction. That you don't have to post-rationalise everything.say it needs to look like this. It needs to feel like this.

RO: I think I can relate to that. I'm looking at the work of Peter Zumthor in an international sense and he talks about the presence of a building. Some things just have an innate presence. They're not trying to say anything abstract, it is just the material, for example timber or brick. Each one is inherently different and so you choose one just because of what it is.

BV: Yes, Kahn used to say, what does the building want to be? Zumthor does that. He would say this whole bath must now be carved out of granite. We're going to just use granite and mortar and then he's going to stick to that pallet and he will wilfully push that thing in that direction. Or poles, that one museum of his. It's a skeleton and then it's got a skin over it. That's what it needs to be. Then he would just focus on that end goal.

KP: How did you end up doing all these crafted, mass produced elements with the timber, the CNC and the plywood. How did you get to this point? Because you said you were quite traditional, but I disagree.

BV: I think that's another very important thing about design we always refer to that quote of Einstein. Einstein said you can't change the system with the thinking that's created that system. That is very important. I think a lot of times in architecture people will just do the same thing over and over. It started off with André, who had a project - I think it was the African Wildlife Foundation project - which was first of all was in another context, but because the building was far away, we asked if we could manufacture the building in South Africa? Couldn't we manufacture components in South Africa? And there André drew this light plywood roof at that time and said we can make these elements, we can make them here, then we can put it on a ship and we can come build it in Kenya. The building was never built but I think that thinking started there. And then it progressed.

(André Eksteen joins)

So, for timber there was two projects. One, André did a portal frame structure house in Stellenbosch. It was a portal frame structure; it was actually a wood box that was built on an existing brick building. And soon thereafter I did a house in Mooikloof, House Dreyer, where I did the same thing, where the bottom was brick and the top was timber. So I think that's where the timber construction, the production of elements off-site and putting it together on-site, started.

André Eksteen: The first plywood we did was in the Centenary Building in 2008, the ceilings, the acoustic panels, the benches… and it was around that time that we had a project in Kenya that they built an IWF. That was the first time we had the idea to cut out puzzles pieces and then to put them together on the ground.

KP: So, my research is about what we can learn from traditional craftspeople, but also how we can make something new from it in the future. I also have a question about what you envision the future of architecture in South Africa, because it is changing a lot.

AE: But how do you think it is going to change?

KP: The reason why I am talking about indigenous knowledge, traditions and craftsmanship, is because my vision is that we are going to draw a lot more influence from there.

AE: But what is traditional? Is it ethnic, cultural, traditional?

KP: Yes, it is cultural and traditional, but any old ways of doing things.

AE: Yes, but you have to define the old ways before you start to formulate your argument. Because old ways are very vague. Because we only come from the European building tradition. When people talk about traditional buildings, do they refer to vernacular buildings? You have to keep that in mind. What we are very interested in, is for example, what is the most dominant building technology in South Africa? How are most of the buildings built in South Africa?

RO: Brick and mortar buildings.

AE: No, if you look at it from a quantitative point of view.

RO: Well, informal shacks.

AE: Now you can ask yourself, is it a modern vernacular? Because most people look at it with aversion. But is it not just a modern vernacular? Is it not just new materials, new ways of building?

BV: Yes, and the material is context driven, meaning that if a [underprivileged] person wants shelter, they are going to create their shelter on the most cost effective, not necessarily the most climatic materials, but they want to build something that they can build themselves, which is very important. What used to happen was that buildings were built for [underprivileged] people, but now [I think] they have to build themselves. Nobody is going to build for them.

AE: It is interesting enough, I want to argue that there is more ownership, more importance of building in that self-build culture, that informal culture, than there is in the formal building culture.

BV: André's thesis is specifically this. He did his thesis in a township, and he did exactly that. It was in a time when all these fancy theses were done about the fancy buildings in the city…

AE: Yes, it was time of the archer, all the buildings were curved.

BV: Yes, and André said, if you take gum poles, because he drove in the townships, and he saw people buy the gum poles and S-profile sheeting, load it on their truck, and they started building it themselves. There was no one to do it for them. So, André's whole philosophy was, how can use that primitive technology to build a settlement?

AE: I just took picture the other day, when I drove behind a bakkie with building materials. I sit and think to myself, you know, this is our local building practice, this is what we need to be aware of, this is what we need to be sensitive for. What we try to do at Earthworld, is to merge that strong western culture, with this emerging culture, or this emerging vernacular.

Amira Osmund said, it's not about the replacement of informal settlements, it's about the upgrading of informal settlements. There is a big difference between the two. Because it's impossible to sculpt a city, you know…

Laetitia Lambrecht: I think it has to do with enabling people. We easily talk theoretically about enabling people, but we hardly understand what it means, because, just as an example, look at all the houses that burn down in the Cape, how upset people get. Because it's not about, their possessions, their minimal possessions. It is about the fact that they built it, they formed a community. They lost not just their possessions, they have lost a part of their community, that which they built themselves from the minimal money they have earned from social grants. And that is where the notion of enabling people to gather building components over time comes from. It goes back to the argument of: how do we (architects) make architecture relevant again for people, to solve real, South African problems? And we (Earthworld Architects) begin to integrate this into our design process.

AE: I think there is nowadays a differentiation, between architecture and the architect. Nowadays everyone is an architect. You get an IT architect, and strategic architect. But architecture is the artifact, it is the thing that stands there. And I think the discourse, the conversation about architecture, revolves a lot around the product, about the thing that is standing there. And it's not enough about how you get there.

I think, how you get there, is what the architect occupies their time with. The architect doesn't have to produce architecture, he can produce systems, he can produce strategies, he can be innovative, he can mobilise entrepreneurship. You know, and I think that is where we, as architects, need to start positioning ourselves.

Because, it is a barren field, there is not a lot of people that play there. I think that architects are actually one of the few professions that can think comprehensively about systems. I think

this is where our practice (Earthworld Architects) plays. We have a lot of ideas, in this sense, that have not been implemented yet. The other important thing, to think about, is that in the process of design, and in the making, the building, there are many users involved. There are not just the final users, they aren't the only people who are important. The users are the people who build the building, and the people who walk past the buildings. So it is a much more comprehensive way to look at buildings, or at the process, or the action of building.

RO: Yes, that was actually, one of my questions. How do you consider the people that physically make the buildings in your design process?

AE: That generates the design.

BV: Yes, the craftsman, the craftsmanship. Like I said we start there, we look at the materiality of the building, but at the same time, let's say we are going to build with timber, we think about how we are going to actually going to build it while we are designing. It's not something that someone else will resolve, the builder won't resolve it. The architect, they must propose a resolution. He can say, these components have to be small enough that two people can carry it. That is a very integral part of the plywood system, it must be light enough that people can carry it around. There is a massive difference, between that and for example, a big CLT building that's assembled with a crane. Same material, but there is a vast difference in the manner of assembly.

AE: Another important thing, is that South Africa has a dwindling skills base, there are not that many craftspeople. Most of them have learned it themselves, so their knowledge is very limited and focused on a narrow scope of work. What's interesting when one is on the terrain, when one works with the with the people who make the buildings, is to see how different people, approach the same thing differently. I think it is important to have respect for the craftspeople who make the building. You must be open to learn from that person, and you also have to give that person some freedom in the design so that they can also make a contribution. Because, as soon as it's a very prescriptive thing - we, as architects tend to be very prescriptive, the contract documentation must be right, and there has to be a specification, and that leaves a lot less space for invention and personal development.

But it's only with isolated, small projects, that you can explore with this kind of theory. You won't be able to do it easily on a large, public building, because there's just too much red tape in that kind of environment. But there will also come a time when that red tape starts to change, and you can make a bigger impact, and the message can go out further.

Earlier today, I observed the people on site. There are two groups. Now, the one group, theoretically, has a lot of experience. The person is over 60 years old , and his assistant is also a senior. On the other side, are younger people and people with a lot of practical experience, but less formal training . The older man learned from his farther, who was a trained cabinet maker. But what is interesting is how much better the uneducated person solves a problem, because they are not limited in their ways of thinking, which comes with training. It is a much more diverging process. As an architect you have to design for that divergent thinking. You have to leave crumbs outside of the hole, if you want the mouse to come out. This is something I previously never intended, but it is what I have discovered. Remember, your career as an architect is a journey of discovery. You are not supposed to know precisely where you are going. You are supposed to walk a road of discovery, to go on a voyage of discovery. Design is a process of discovery. You have to allow yourself to discover, not just this year, but for the rest of your career.

RO: That is something that stood out for me from your practice. Each project is unique and explores something in a different way.

AE: I think financial pressure causes a lot of firms to create standard and repetitive designs. But a lot of times the building blocks can stay the same, what matters is how you position those blocks.

RO: My research is specifically about architectural normative positions and establishing a normative position for myself. At the moment I am working with three aspects: context, poiesis and human experience.

AE:. Those three categories you have, you need to set out what you want to achieve with each one, and what is the relationship between them. How does context influence poiesis, how does human experience influence poiesis?

RO: Yes, at the moment I have a diagram with 3 circles indicating each category, and I have done where they overlap, and then the middle. At the moment I only use the word place from Norbert Schultz, a meaningful place to describe my aim in architecture, but I am still looking for other terminology in the literature.

AE: It is interesting, I have to admit. Have you seen our manifesto on the website? That is a type of normative position that addresses a few things. But I think ultimately, architecture and the building of architecture, is about being meaningful. I think that is essential.

LL: Yes, creating meaningful things. I think that is also something that you specifically asked before, how does Earthworld approach design? I think one of the things that stands out to me and that has not been touched on yet, is the approach that every project is seen as a catalytic event. That means every project is an opportunity to change things. And what are those things? It is possibly the team, how you work, how the systems in the building work, how you are working in the context, in the social context of a community. So if you have such an approach to every project, to see it as something that can bring change, then you are ultimately making the potential impact bigger.

AE: It gets the wheels rolling. And where meaning comes in, is actually that as a catalytic event, the process and the building can become meaningful beyond its primary use, beyond just the client. A building has to be iconic to a certain extent. It has to be recognisable to a certain extent There needs to be ownership from the community's side. That ownership can come from involvement, meaningful involvement, not just a few wheelbarrows full of dahha, but the feeling that you have actually contributed something significant, no matter how small, but it has to be identifiable.

I think that is what is interesting about the open building story, is the notion that you can walk by and say, I put that thing in there. And this is not a rule, but it is a way to think about it, about how I as the architect detail a building so that the components are identifiable after the construction, so that it is not superficially covered up. I think that is one thing about our work - you will never get something that is superficially covered up.

Even at Future Africa, the client was very unhappy with us, because we drew every service exposed. There are no ceilings, the ducts and electrical lines are visible where they are. It was wilfully designed that way. Architects typically work in zones, creating a large void in the ceiling that nobody uses.

BV: I don't know if you have looked into a ceiling void, if you open that ceiling up, then it is a dust chamber, full of services that have been thrown in. It is to me the most wasteful thing.

RO: And it is an issue every time you need to do maintenance on the services.

AE: But when it comes to the catalytic event, that is actually where regenerative architecture starts, I think. Or am I wrong? You are a bit more academic.

LL: It is sustainability. There is that book, IntegralSustainability, sustainability is much more than green technology. It is about the sustainability of the building itself. How it is made, how did it get there, was everything imported from overseas, or was it made locally?

AE: Meaningful architecture is sustainable in essence.

BV: Is the book Integral Sustainability part of your prescriptive reading? Chrisna (current head of the architecture department at UP) talks a lot about that. But there are four quadrants. The bottom quadrant is about me, and that is where meaning comes in, and aesthetics come in. I think a lot of times, when it comes to sustainability, people just look at performance. You can use so much electricity, use so much water, we have to optimise it. It is actually an engineering thing, but we have to do it as architects, but it is a quantitative process. But when it comes to quality, you as the architect, the designer of the buildings, how do you put meaning and aesthetics in the buildings? Proper aesthetics, not superficial things.

You talked about Pieter Zumthor's work, which is in essence about the material of the buildings, then you get a very specific aesthetic. I think you have to look at sustainability much broader than just numbers and quantities. And then the other quarter that is very important, is systems. How does systems fit in each other? How does nature fit in buildings? How does buildings fit in nature? That nature is very important. I think a lot of times, and you hear a lot about biophilia, it is a very important thing, because it means you actually have an affinity for nature. You know, there is also a building in Johannesburg, it has a four-star green rating. They look at performance. Performance is the most important thing. There are tick-boxes, but that building is not sustainable. It is not beautiful. There is nothing about nature. It is not even green around the building. So how can it be nature? So, the principle of sustainability, is about it has to be green. And then the other thing that everyone misses is the bottom quadrant. It is about us, people, social sustainability. How does the building influence the way people think, work, interact with each other? I mean, imagine you are sitting in that four-story building; you can't even open a window.

AE: You can talk about this endlessly. I think South Africa is dealing with unique problems; sustainability is not a luxury; it is a necessity. In Europe, sustainability is a luxury. But here, we simply have to be sustainable, every cent we spend has to benefit more people. I am not talking about altruism, but the bigger context has to benefit, rather than just the specific project. And I think that is important, especially for public money. If you explore one little thing that is innovating, maybe that can be the spark for someone else to start a business. It doesn't have to be the whole building, because that also costs a lot of money, and a lot of time. Just consider that. You don't have to buy everything that is imported from Europe. The other day, I had this guy phone me for some market research. He was a French guy, and he didn't want to tell me for which company it is. Eventually, when we came to the end, he wanted my name. I said, I am not going to give you my name until you tell me who you are doing this research for. "We

are doing it for Saint-Gobain". I said you tell Saint-Gobain, and I hope this is recorded, they are the least sustainable company in the world. By far. Because they globalise, they move energy intensive products all over the world, and they absolutely exclude any local knowledge, or any local tradition, or any local involvement.

BV: And again, that talks about systems. How are things interconnected? So that piece of plywood that is made in York Timber's factory has to come just 500 kilometres and we can build from it. It is much more sustainable than that gypsum board that comes all the way from China. It's crazy.

AE: It's crazy to think you use gypsum that is made in China. I hate gypsum.

CN: But everyone is using it, it's conventional, and it's cheap.

AE: And there are standard details and practices available.

CN: So, I just wanted to know whether you think it's appropriate to prototype in architectural design, in the South African context? Where in the design process do you specifically consider it?

BV: I think that if you want to use a different material, you need to have it in your process from the start. It's not something that you can halfway down the road, suddenly decide to change ships in that stream. So, in most cases when we design buildings, when we're in the concept phase of the building, we decide on the technology, and we also decide on the risk factor in terms of the project. That means if the project is small, like that (points to plastic block building nearby) and it is plastic blocks and it's your own, you can easily prototype there and you can experiment with that because the project is small. You can test. Part of prototyping is testing and when you prototype, you don't necessarily always know that you can be successful. So, there's a risk involved and you need to assess the risk. That's the first thing. You need to also then at that point, if you have a client, discuss the risk with your client. You need to allude to the fact that you going to try something new. We just completed the Plywood house. It's the first time that we've built a Plywood house for a client. And we built it ourselves. I couldn't go and show him another one. Normally you can go and show and say, I've done this. Here it is. You can look at it. In the time of Future Africa, it was the same, the dining hall, there was never a structure built like that before, although we have experimented with that before in smaller projects. But the thing is, you need to understand the risk. Because it's not just about prototyping. It's really about building the whole building with that technology.

Then there's a lot of research to be done about the specifics. You need to go and search on the internet. Then obviously the next thing is you need to go and find somebody that can do it for you. If you're not going to do it yourself, you have to know that there's a person around that will do that for you. And you have to start engaging with that person and sort out all the detailing already in sketch design, or what's called design development first. You need to know exactly how that thing is going to be put together. For instance, on the Future Africa housing, the housing was precast concrete. We had to go and find a pre-caster, and we had to negotiate with the pre-caster to make sure everything works. And we had to find his factory, we had to go to his factory and see how it's done. We had to check his capacity. All of those things. So there's a lot of research about the material. Both on a technical level and also on a level that it's going to be executed.

LL: when you want to prototype for something else, then you yourself have to first identify the risks. And then you come up with solutions how you're going to manage those risks. And then from there...So when that concern is raised by your client, you can actually say no. And it's also about talking to people outside of architecture. And outside of your discipline. And understanding what their concerns are. For example, if you're going to use timber, a lot of engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical, some wouldn't know what to do with it. So you have to also do that research. And then be able to say, oh, this is something that I found. Whether it's a timber construction from Canada or wherever. Rotho Blast for example, also from Italy. I mean, those resources are there. So to manage the risk, you first have to identify the risk. You have to find possible solutions before your client starts asking.

In the office now, we have sometimes speculated that architecture it will stay relevant if we pursue these things. If we approach projects like we do. However, the structural, civil, and also mechanical, electrical engineers eventually might be taken over by more digital formats. Most of Revit and ArchiCAD already has the building functions for MEP design, which stands for Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing And then there is the architectural engineering which is how they work overseas.

KP: What do you think the future of our architecture is?

LL: I think we are at a tipping point. I think on the one hand, things can change for the better, but if it doesn’t, things will get much worse. I think some architects will get left behind. On the other hands, some architects work in AutoCAD, and they are still relevant, some work with the hand, but they are still relevant.

BV: Why is the word prototype so important to you? Because it was a very specific action. Let me put it this way, we don't prototype, we actually build it. What do you actually mean with prototyping?

CN: I defined prototyping as it's an iterative and experimental process that often makes use of tangible models. But obviously you can prototype in a digital realm as well. Model making tends to be representational, but I'm arguing that the architect needs to have a more haptic sense of understanding the fabrication process and the making process. So it's more about understanding the making process and having an influence on the final product. But I use prototyping because it's an action and it's a very deliberate whether conscious or unconscious but it's a very deliberate, iterative, experimental process where you should be conscious of the outcome.

BV: It's different than building a representational model. It's really understanding how to make that thing. Renzo Piano does it a lot. He has a workshop where they build these things on a scale one to five so that they can see how the thing comes together. So, I think it's a different design process. The outcome of the building can be quite different because you're doing these things. Actually, that's a prototype (points towards KoSpaza) . That's a full scale prototype. So we built that thing and everything that we understand about the Plywood House now came from this.

CN: I also see prototyping as a tool for creating a catalyst in the innovation process.

BV: You can use that as an example. It first started in the computer, we built a lot of prototypes in the computer and then we built these small prototypes lying around, the connection prototypes, then from that prototype we built the KoSpaza, it was the first building that we built. It is really about how these things come together, in the computer and eventually in a kind of full scale model.

CN: I'm trying to argue that when you are testing, something, like a certain connection detail, it can have an impact. The factors of appropriateness are economic, social, environmental and contextual, because if something is detailed in a certain way that influences how the labourer will combine it and build a structure, or it influences the amount of material. I think if you look at that process of testing more holistically, it can result in more responsive architecture and more appropriate architecture to the South African condition.

AE: I think there should be constant innovation and constant prototyping. Unfortunately, it's quite difficult to prototype on the fly. You need risk takers to start off with, you need to be willing

to take risks and you need to employ it in such a way that they don't know that you experimented.

CN: I kind of want to understand that process.

RO: I would think there's maybe two types of clients. There are the ones who demand that you be innovative; and there's the ones you need to hide it from.

AE: You need to be conservative to be inventive. I always say there must always be a sacrificial component in any design. And you must always hide what you like most - nobody must know about it. Because that's ego. Ego will kill what they assume you like. What they assume you're enthusiastic about. So, if you want to if you know you're doing something that hasn't been done, they shouldn't know about it. You should know you're putting the balls on the block. The most important thing is, what's the benefit of innovation? You should prove the benefit of innovating and that should then justify prototyping. But you can't just innovate for the sake of innovation. Innovation isn't a new idea, because people tend to think that ideas equal innovation. Innovation in today's days is quite often merely a reorganisation or changing the connections between the different role players or the different systems. Uber is still the best example. That's truly innovative, but it didn't innovate anything new. It just was innovative in the way it harnessed spare capacity. And we try to work like that. Harnessing spare capacity, rather than forcing something. Because quite often you get this idea. I think it is a difficult thing.

I can use Future Africa as an example. The idea of building with plywood layers, combining them and hand assembling them is one thing. But I believe that true innovation was basically just the discovery that it could be done with unskilled labour. That was the essential discovery, that was the essential innovative component. But it wasn't intentional, it was something that we discovered. And one must just leave... And once again, all these things we're talking about, having a good understanding of the vernacular of traditional craft, having a framework, a normative position in which you can position all these things that you witness, and then combining all of that into an innovative system. It's absolute system thinking. And that's the future of us as architects. We should be system thinkers. The traditional architect is dead.

BV: A traditional architect these days are merely drawing plans. They're draftsmen for a developer that knows what he wants to do.

LL: But that's also a question for my side, because what is a traditional architect? Because if you take the master builder…

AE: But the traditional architect is a master builder, but the modern architect is a professional consultant.

LL: Then let's rather than call it not traditional architect, but the modern architect.

AE: That article speaks about the disconnect between the architect as artist and the architect as professional consultant. That's where architects lost their foothold. Because now they've become basically pen pushers and administrative jockeys, rather than true craftsmen, rather than true builders. All of these things we're talking about.

BV: But what I think also is interesting now is that these CNC technologies and BIM and all of that actually gives us new tools. And if we can master those tools, we can be relevant in the profession again. But if we are merely building consultants, the client asks you what... Consultants are actually somebody that gives the client an opinion.

LL: There was recently a book published, or it was actually last year or the beginning of this year, by Thomas Heatherwick, Humanise. And I listened to a podcast by Simon Sinek where he talks about optimism. And he talks to Thomas Heatherwick and then he refers to the book. He says that if we look at any other discipline there's a lot of innovation. But if any one of the past would come back now, they would look at the cars that are being designed, and all the technology that’s available, and they would think, wow, there's a lot of progress. And then they would look at the new buildings that are coming up. And then they would think, well, why is the architecture industry still lagging behind? Or why is there no progress? Progress; innovation is important. But how do we keep on going?

CN: I think the way that we can keep on going, is sometimes you don't need to always make something new, but you need to do something in a different way that is more appropriate.

Maybe what we are trying to kind of get at is that we sort of have all the tools that we need. It's not that we necessarily need to make a new tool. I think we just need to apply things more appropriately.

LL: No, definitely. I mean, this, to touch on Kayla's idea of bringing in traditional with modern, I visited a house in KwaZulu-Natal. And it had this polycarbonate sheeting, but a clear type. So that's even more, you know, and the humidity of the Durban. So, what he did is he approached a Zulu lady who was making baskets, weaving baskets. And she also made those prayer mats. He asked her, can you make me a three-meter long prayer mat? And she's like, she's very confused. But he said, I'll pay you, etc.. And he bought, I think, three or four from her. And he put them within the beams of the roof and the loft in between, he took a photo and

he showed it to this Zulu woman. And she was so impressed. And that is the thing that we as architects have an ability to have an effect on, a real impact on, by bringing in that traditional aspect that's there. South Africa is rich in that. There is that possibility. But how do we actually make it possible? How do we bring it to life? And then celebrating that and going back to the person who made it so that they understand, because initially she couldn't understand why would you need such a long prayer mat? And he ultimately just showed her, look, this is what I did with it. And that innovated her as well as a person, as that social component.

BV: But I think the one thing in that process is critical thinking. Because I think a lot of times, people just repeat the same action. People will put the same roof sheet down. But suddenly he looked at this object and he reappropriated it with critical thinking.

Appendix C: Ilze and Heinrich Wolff

Figure 16: Ilze and Heinrich Wolff (Wolff Architects, 2024:online)

Background

Year(s) of Birth	Ilze Wolff (1980-)	Heinrich Wolff
Education	B.Arch, University of Cape Town M.Phil. University of Cape Town (2004)	B.Arch, University of Pretoria (1991) B.Arch, University of Cape Town (1995)
Practice	Wolff Architects, Established in 2012	
Awards		
Year	**Award**	
2018	Milde McWilliams Memorial Laureates	
2011	Heinrich Wolff: Designer of the Future by the Wouter Mikmak Foundation	
2007	Heinrich Wolff: Daimler Chrysler Award for Architecture	
2005	Heinrich Wolff: Lubetkin Award	
Year	**Project**	**Award**
2020	Vredenburg Hospital	Afrisam SAIA Sustainable Design Award
2019	African Mobilities – This is not a Refugee Camp Exhibition	IFI Design Distinction Award – Humanitarian Category – Silver
2019	Cheré Botha School	CIfA Award for Architecture
2019	Vredenburg Hospital	CIfA Award for Architecture
2018	Unstitching Rex Trueform	CIfA Award for Architecture
2016	N/A	Moira Gemmill Prize for Emerging Architecture shortlist - Ilze Wolff

2015	Unstitching Rex Trueform: the story of an African factory	L'erma di Bretschneider C International Prize for scholarly works in Modern and Contemporary Art
2015	Watershed	CIFA – Merit Award
2015	Watershed	SACSC – Retail Design and Development Award
2015	Watershed	SACSC – Gold Footprint Marketing Award
2015	Watershed	SAISC – Retail Category Award
2013	Watershed	SAPOA – Innovation Award
2012	Vredenburg Hospital	SAIA – Project Award
2010	House Wolff	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2009	House Wolff	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2009	Phillips Beach House	SAIA – Project Award
2009	House Phillips	SAIA – Regional Commendation
2008	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	Chicago Athenaeum – International Award
2008	Red Location Museum	SAIA – Award of Excellence
2008	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	Cityscapes – International Award for Community Buildings
2007	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	BAQ – South American Architecture Biennale (XVI) third prize in the SOCIAL HABITAT Category
2007	N/A	Daimler Chrysler Award for South African Architecture
2007	Usasazo Secondary School	Chicago Athenaeum – International Award
2007	Inkwenkwezi Secondary School	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2007	24 Alfred Street	SAIA – Regional Award of Merit
2007	Red Location Museum	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2006	Phillipi Business Place	SAIA – Project Award
2006	Red Location Museum	RIBA International Award – London
2006	Red Location Museum	Lubetkin Prize from the RIBA for best building outside the EU for 2005 – 2006 – London
2006	Red Location Museum	Dedalo Menose Commendation – Vicenza
2005	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – National Award of Merit
2005	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – Award of Merit
2005	House Toussaint	SISC Award – Winner of "Residential and functional architecture" category
2001	Red Location Museum	World Leadership Award (Architecture)

1999	Usasazo Secondary School	SAIA – Project Award
1999	Lebaleng Anglican Church	SAIA – Project Award

Table 3: Wolff Architects list of rewards