

# EARTHWORLD



# MANIFESTO

In pursuit of beauty ... a single brush stroke should suffice.  
a building should be simple; yet provocative and dynamic.

...a building should be an emotional experience  
...move you  
...technology and program guide the process  
...a building defines the inhabitant's relationship to the world itself...  
the way it's entered...  
an existential reference...

space should embrace technology, culture, style,  
nature and context

space should...  
...pay homage to the site,  
...have respect for function,  
...embrace the natural and humanmade order,  
...be harmonious with nature and climate  
...pay service to aesthetic values...

Proportion, Light, Shade, Mood, Texture, Atmosphere



# SOPHIA GRAY MEMORIAL LECTURE & EXHIBITION

In the Making of Meaningful Things  
André Eksteen & Braam de Villiers  
earthworld architects



fourth revolution

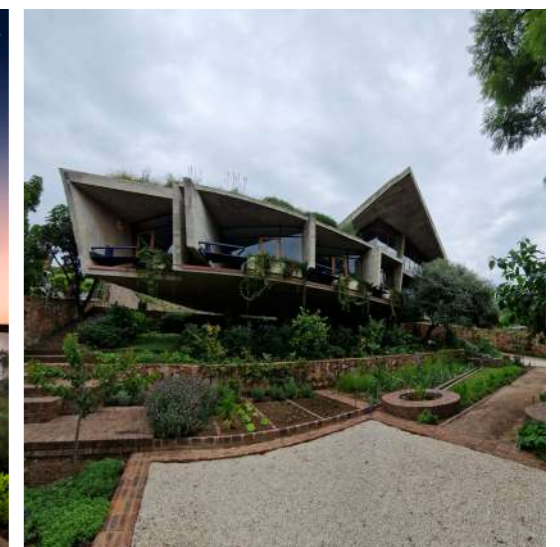
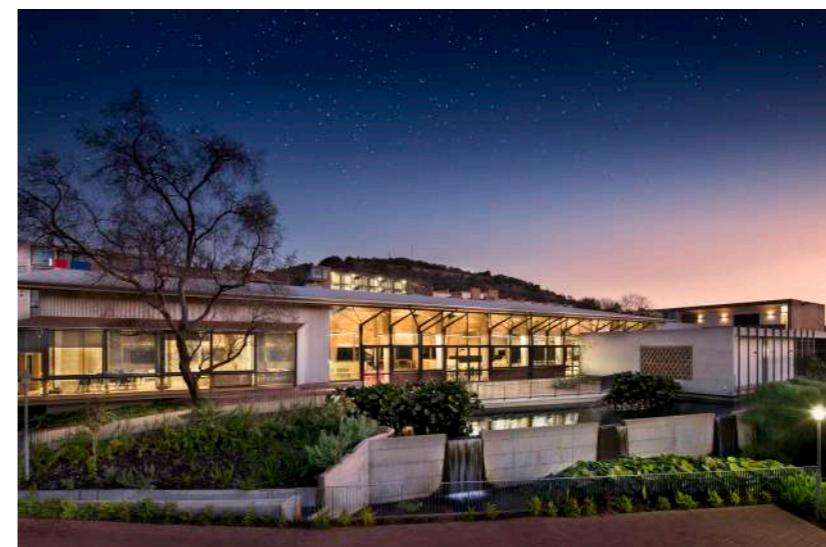


# SOPHIA GRAY MEMORIAL LECTURE & EXHIBITION

35th Recipient  
22 August 2024



Inspiring excellence, transforming lives  
through quality, impact, and care.



## **PUBLIC**

**06**

FUTURE AFRICA HUB  
FUTURE AFRICA CONFERENCE CENTER  
FUTURE AFRICA HOUSING UNITS  
FUTURE AFRICA RESEARCH COMMONS  
CENTENARY BUILDING  
UNIZULU  
WINTERVELD SCHOOLS  
BELGIUM EMBASSY  
ROYAL THAI EMBASSY  
HIGH COMMISSION OF CANADA SOLAR  
I-CAT OFFICES

## **PUBLICATIONS**

**46**

MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, ARTICLES AND BOOKS

## **RECOGNITION**

**50**

AWARDS  
THE TEAM

The brief called for the design of an environment that would facilitate and enhance transdisciplinary research within the African context. The facility should be a place where collective research is done with a strong focus on science leadership development. The Hub is a space where the whole campus can congregate, eat, and share ideas.

A complete plywood structural portal system - designed in detail and modeled three-dimensionally in the architect's offices, and then sent to CNC (Computer Numerical Control) Machines for cutting and manufacturing of site components, and then rapidly assembled on-site.

Future Africa is to provide an integrated live-work environment for postdoctoral students from all cultures and backgrounds, fostering fellowship, understanding, and collaboration among the vast diversity of cultures and disciplines on our continent.

The facility consists of 280 one, two, and three-bedroom living units with four communal living and cooking areas and a creche. Additionally, it includes a Central Hall (Future Africa Hub), a Research Commons, and a Conference Facility (250-seater auditorium with two 50-seater multi-purpose rooms and six break-away rooms, all linked to the auditorium and doubling up as translation booths).

The environment resulting from the development must foster community, ownership, participation, and thought integration through spatial transparency, democracy, and choice. The conventional approach at universities calls for clusters of buildings with some shared facilities central to the residential units, which still creates islands and isolation. The reimagining of this typology called for centralized spaces for interaction, which would facilitate collaboration, cultural interaction, and friendship. Central to the collaboration/communal facilities are food and its preparation. With the vast cultural diversity on our continent, the idea of sharing thoughts around "dinner tables" was at the core of the organization. The landscape design also formed part of the system by reintroducing 56 orphan crops and allowing foraging to explore alternative cuisines and creative interaction around new tastes, textures, and colours.

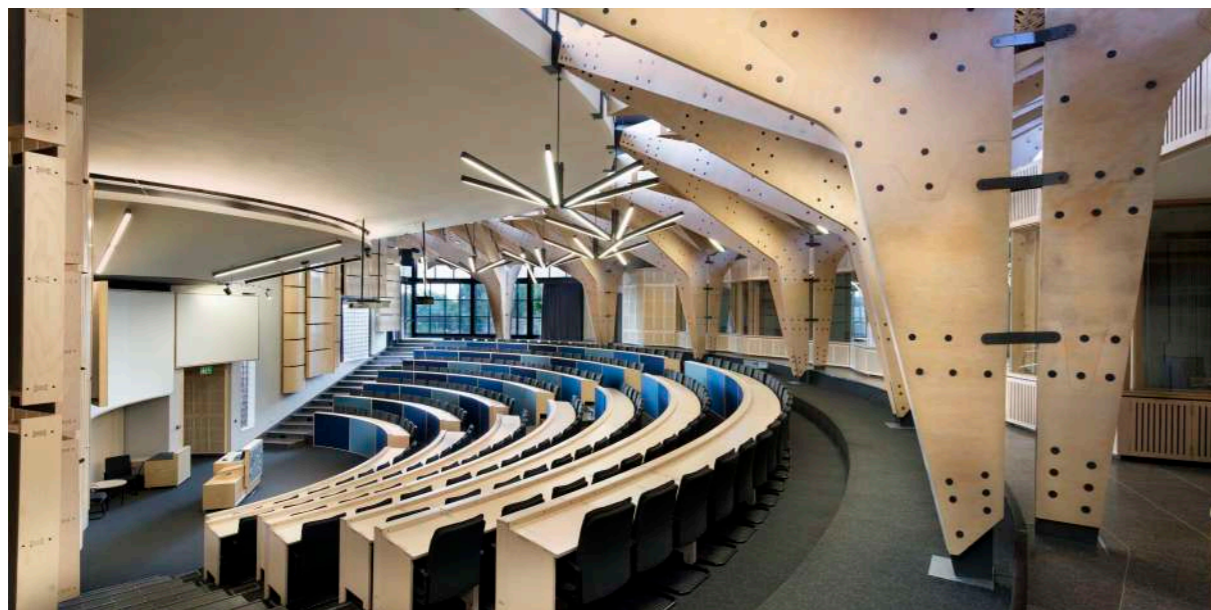
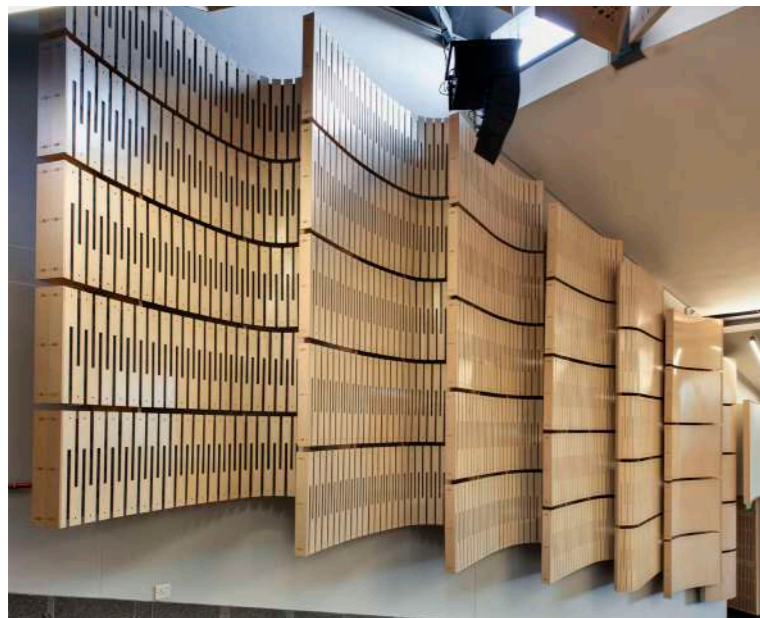
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# FUTURE AFRICA HUB

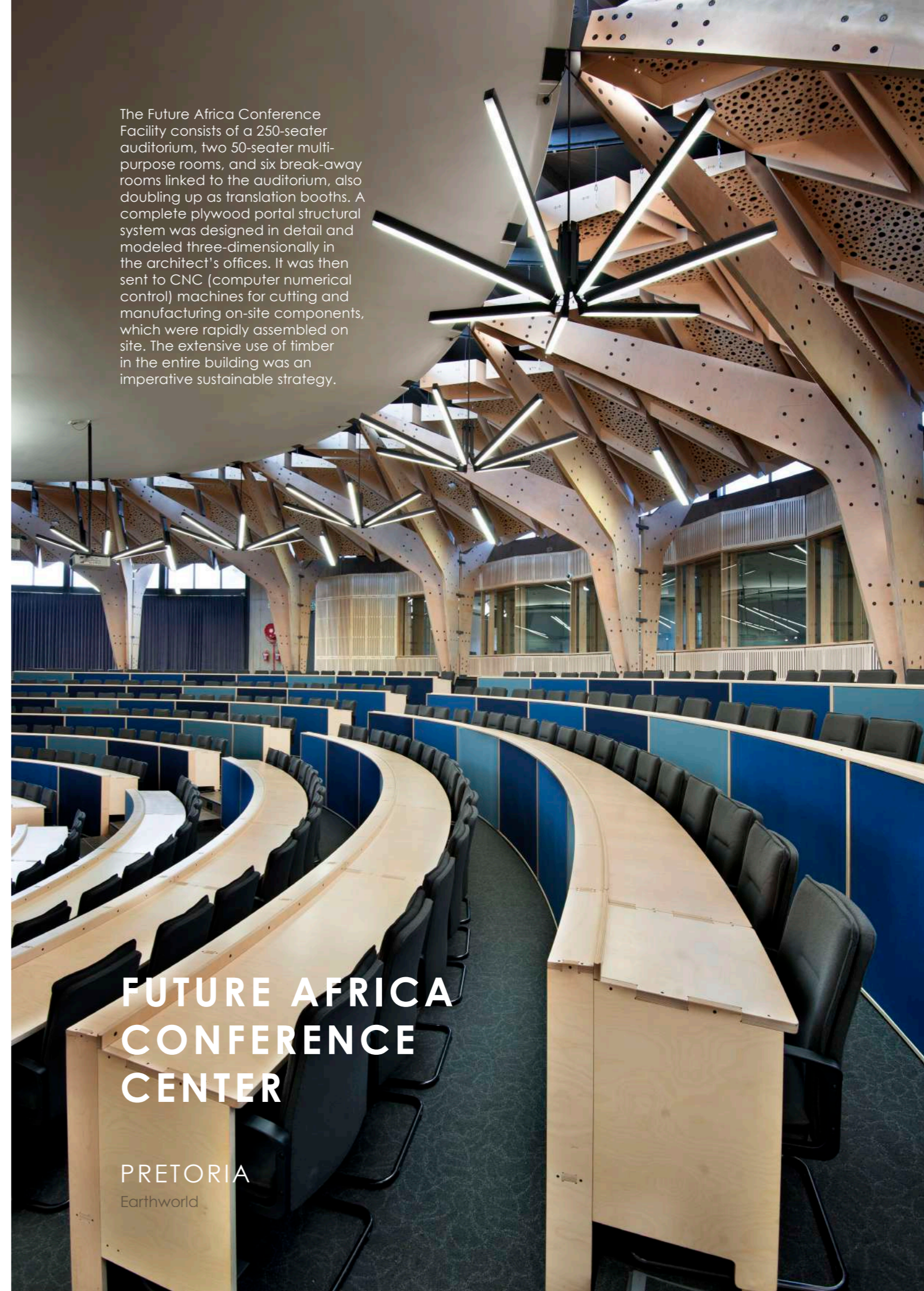
PRETORIA







The Future Africa Conference Facility consists of a 250-seater auditorium, two 50-seater multi-purpose rooms, and six break-away rooms linked to the auditorium, also doubling up as translation booths. A complete plywood portal structural system was designed in detail and modeled three-dimensionally in the architect's offices. It was then sent to CNC (computer numerical control) machines for cutting and manufacturing on-site components, which were rapidly assembled on site. The extensive use of timber in the entire building was an imperative sustainable strategy.



# FUTURE AFRICA CONFERENCE CENTER

PRETORIA  
Earthworld



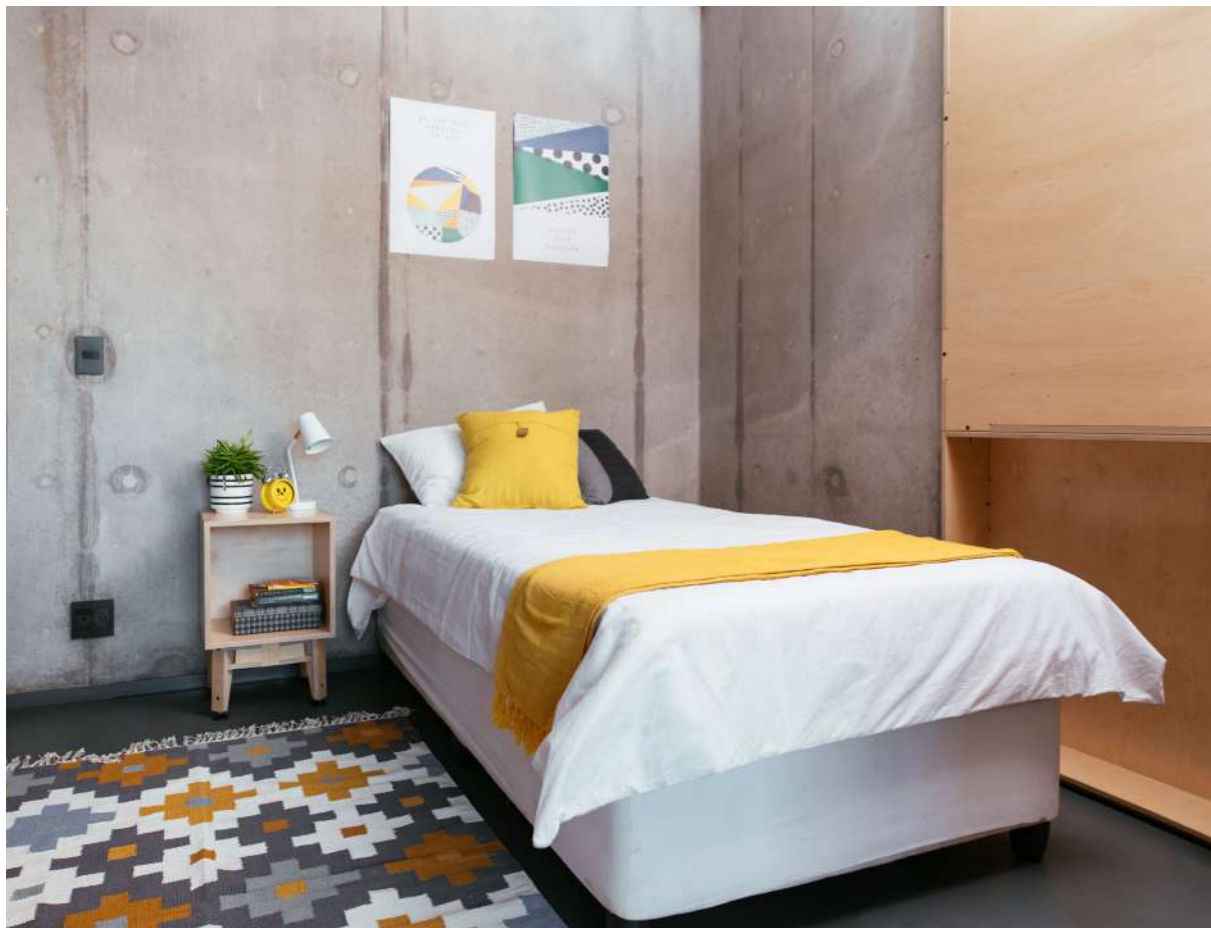
# FUTURE AFRICA HOUSING UNITS

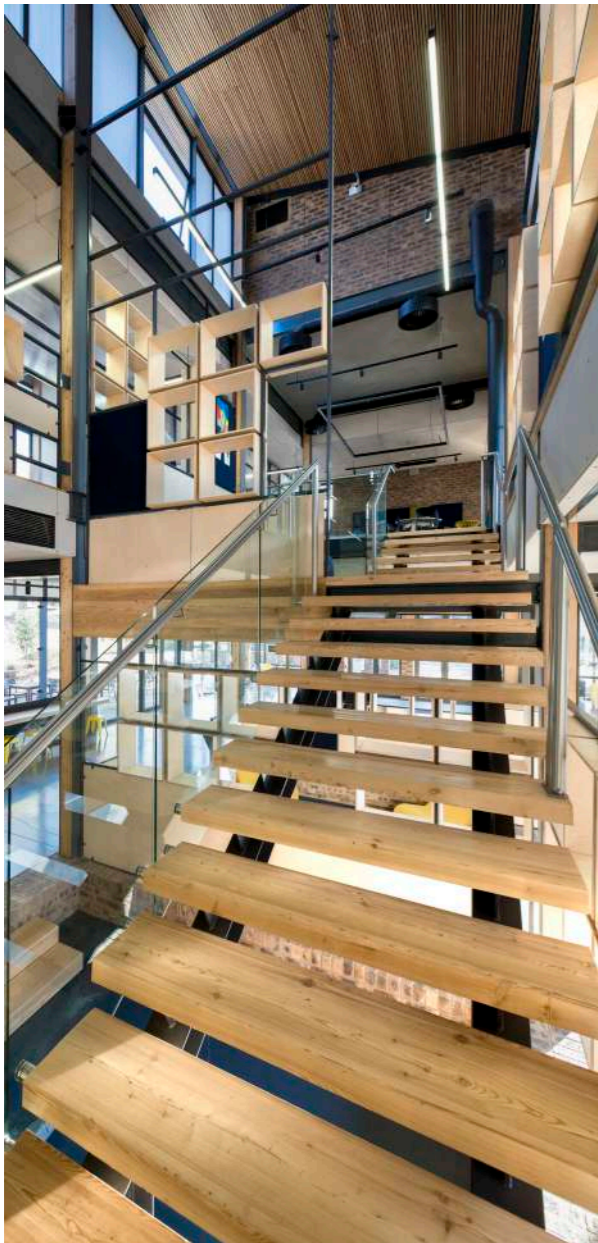
PRETORIA

Spatial organization went against the norm for hostel/communal living environments, where isolated blocks with either 8 or 16 rooms are organized alongside small kitchen and living areas. Although the living units are comfortable and allow for private contemplative activity, the circulation is through the communal living areas, which also house communal kitchens.

The housing complex consists of 280 one, two, and three-bedroom living units. The electronic models were shared with the precast manufacturer. Precast concrete elements were manufactured 11 km off-site and then brought to the site for on-site assembly with cranes.

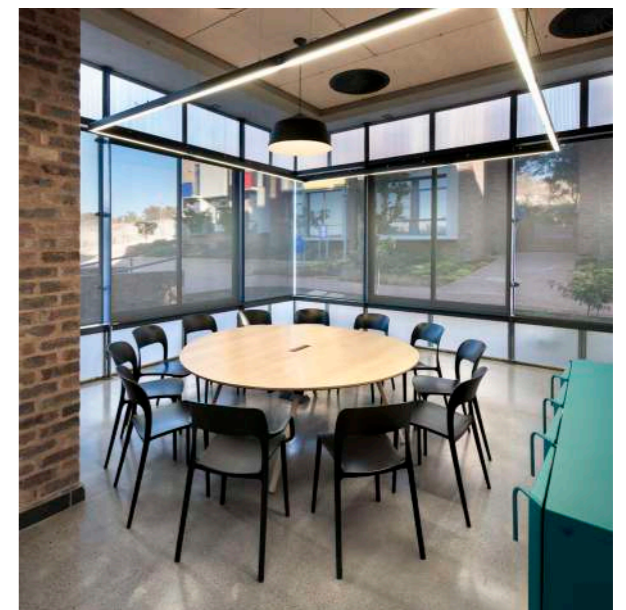
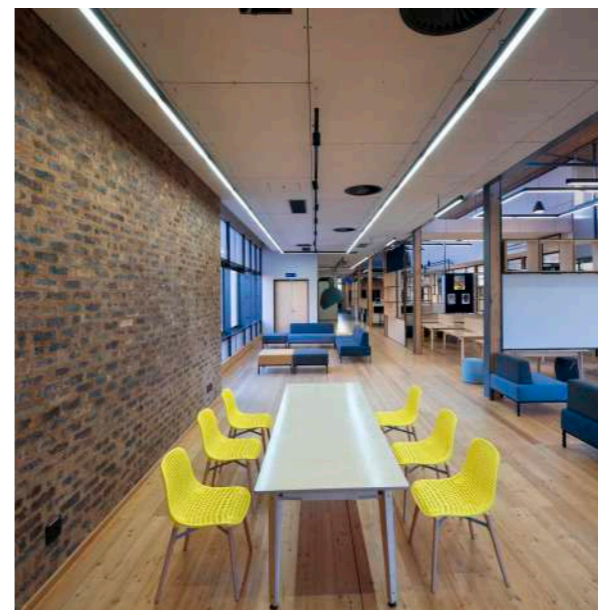






**FUTURE AFRICA  
RESEARCH  
COMMONS**

PRETORIA

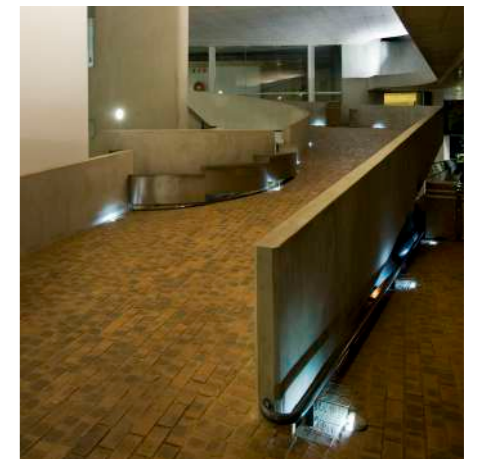


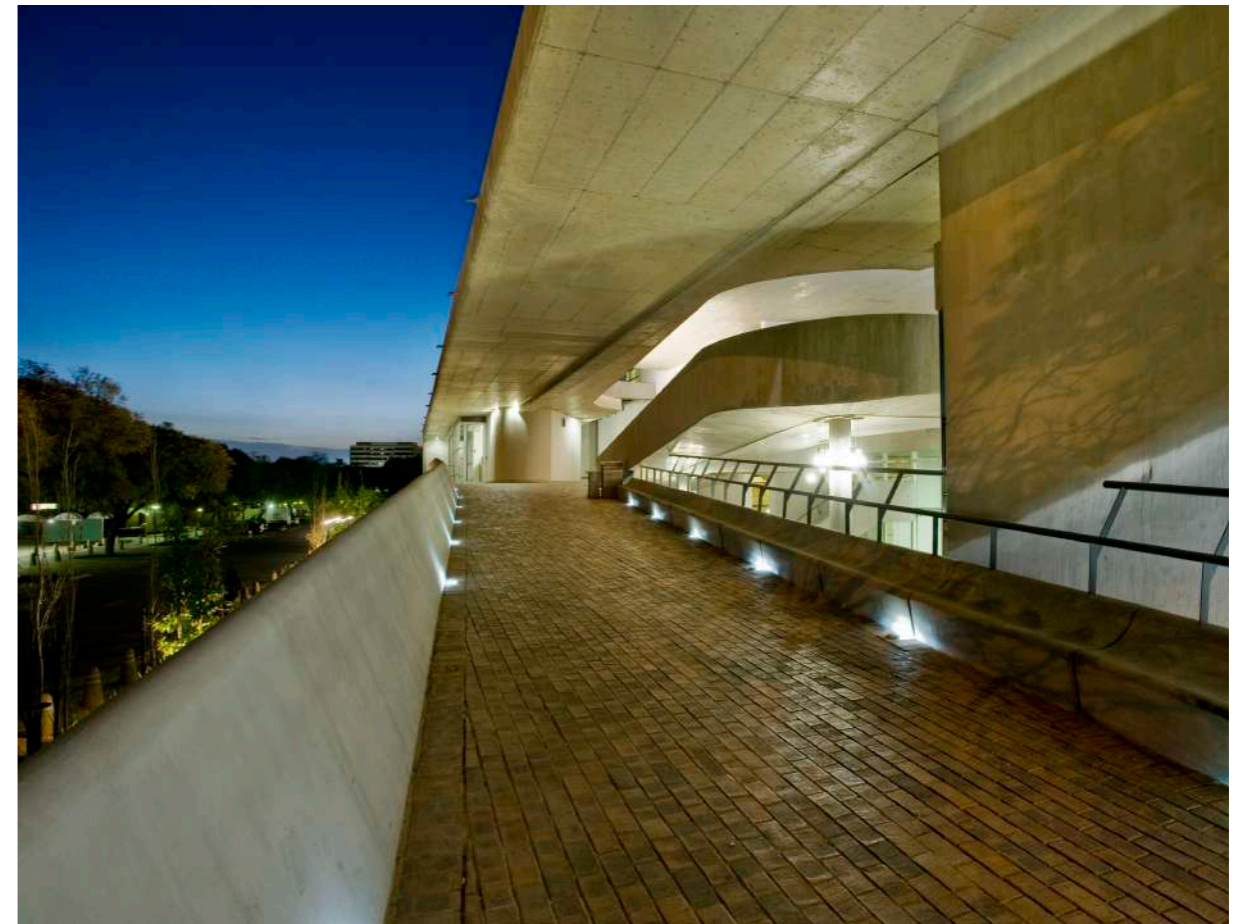
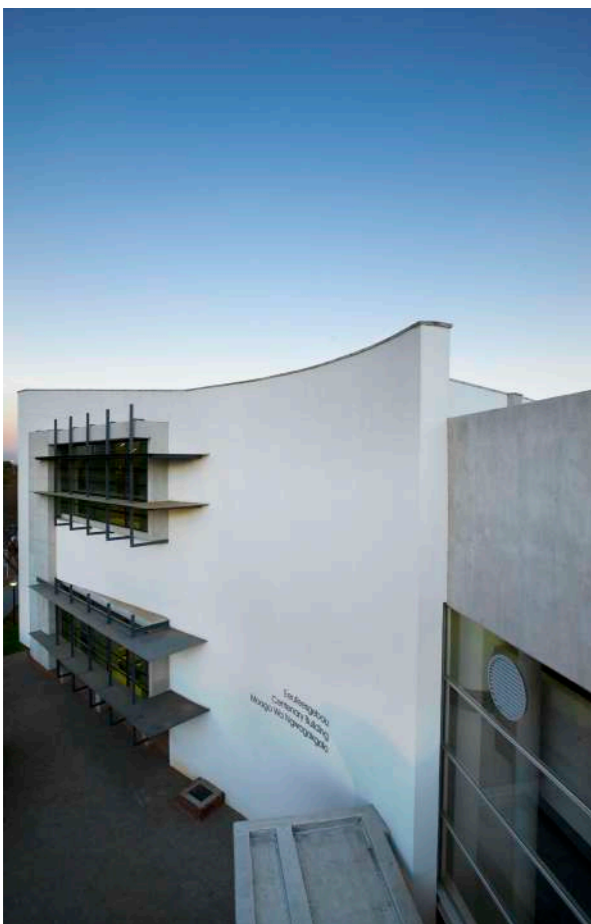
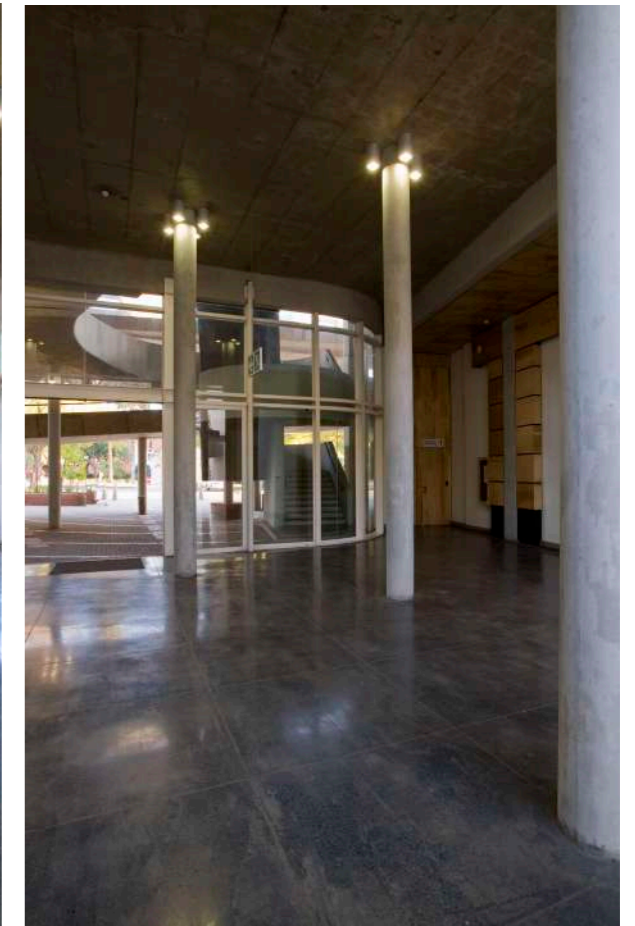
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

# CENTENARY BUILDING

On a micro scale, the Centenary Building engages with its neighbors by consciously responding to their diversity in scale, proportion, and finishes. It overtly acknowledges the adjacent neo-modern Law Faculty Building and continues its deliberate 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. The Centenary Building also

reacts to existing pedestrian patterns, resulting in different circulation routes and means of access, which substantially contribute to its formal modulation. On a macro scale, the building draws inspiration from other celebrated structures in its proximity, particularly the sculptural modernist examples by Jooste and Sandrock. The ultimate merit of the Centenary Building, however, lies in the creation of a micro-regionalism through the perceptive distillation of a design idiom specific to the University of Pretoria campus.





RICHARDS BAY

# UNIZULU

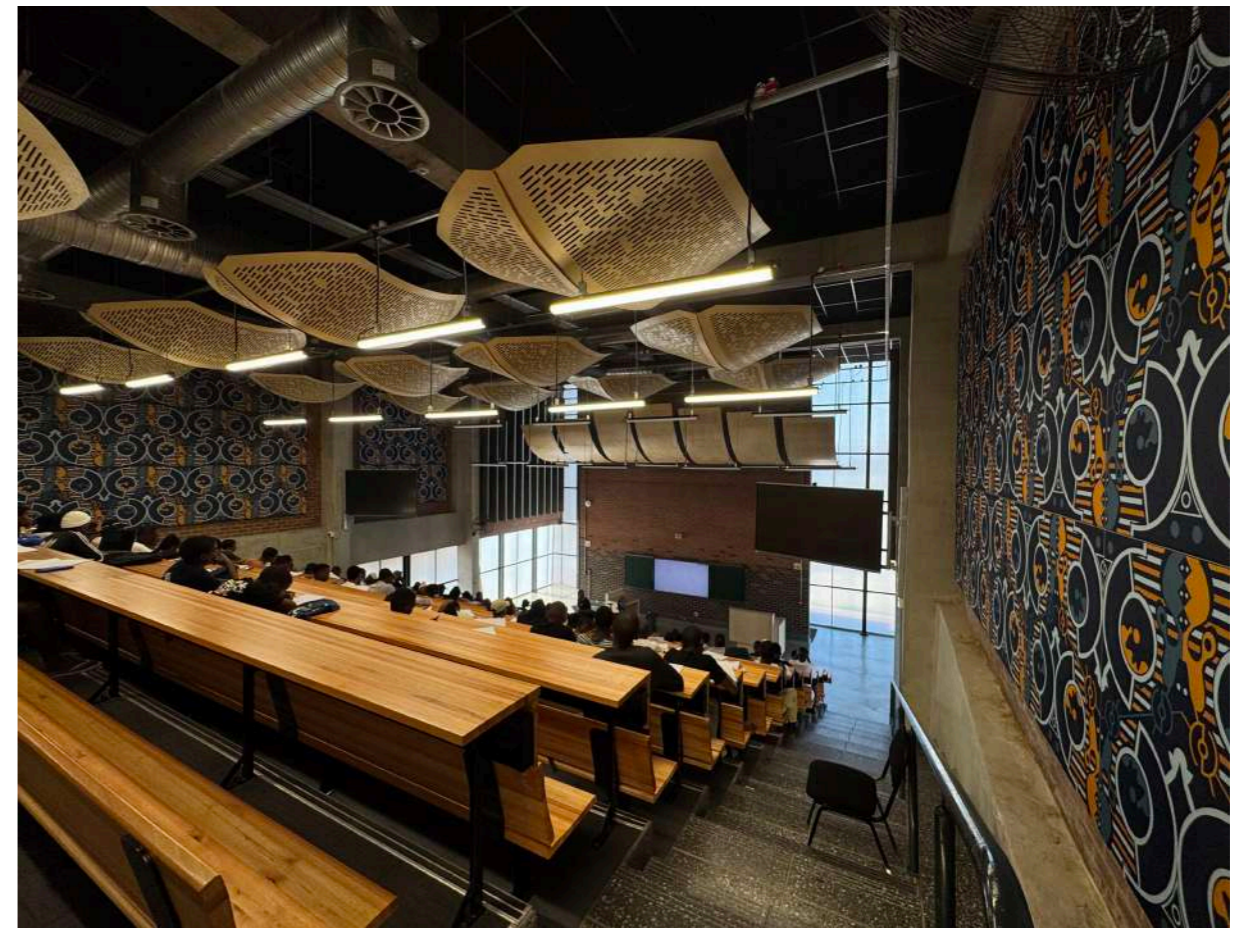
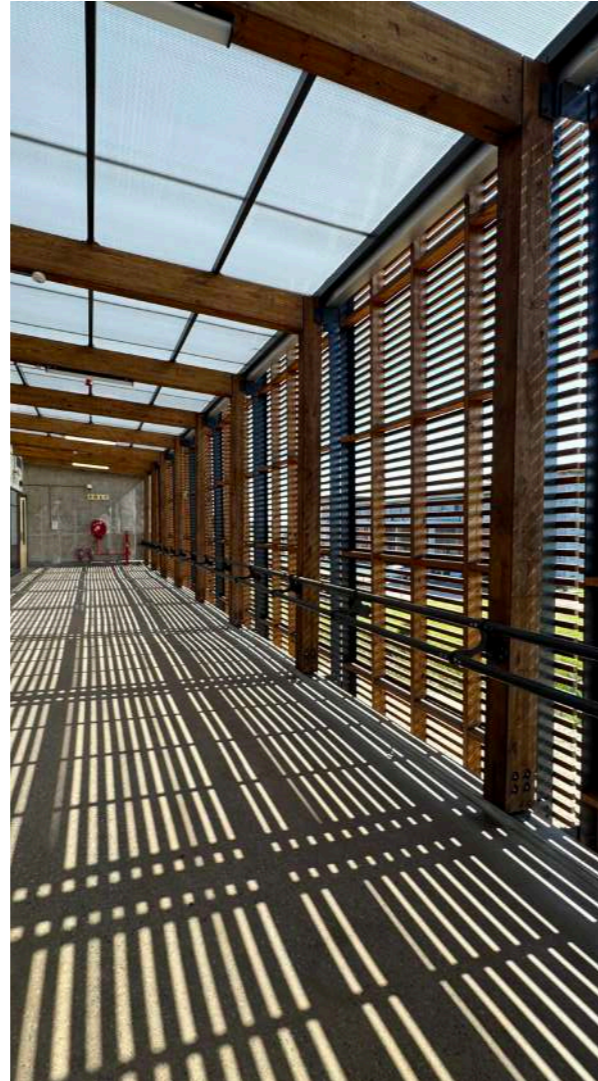
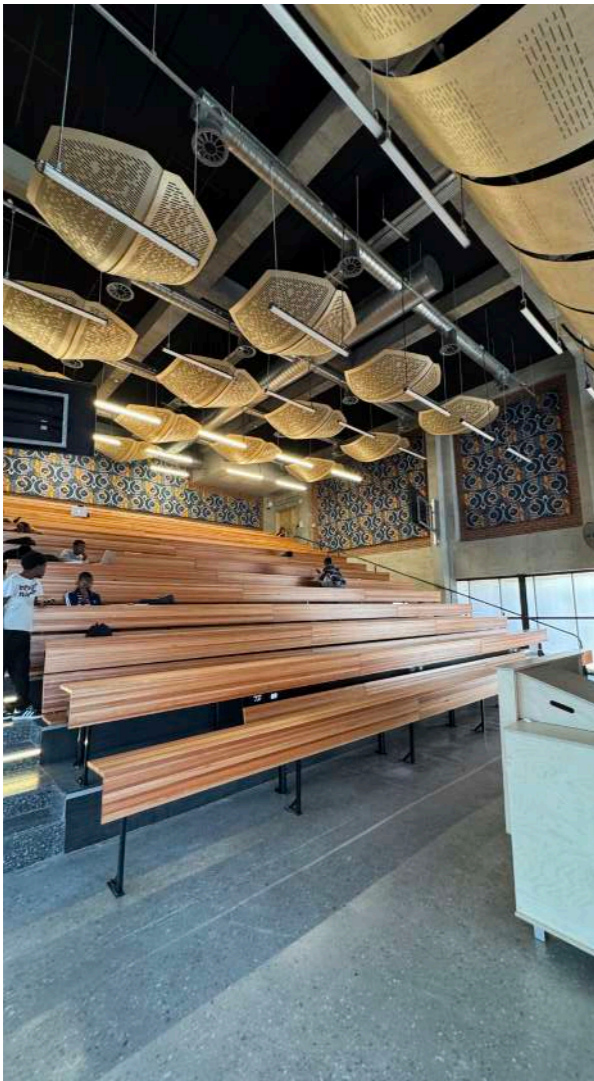
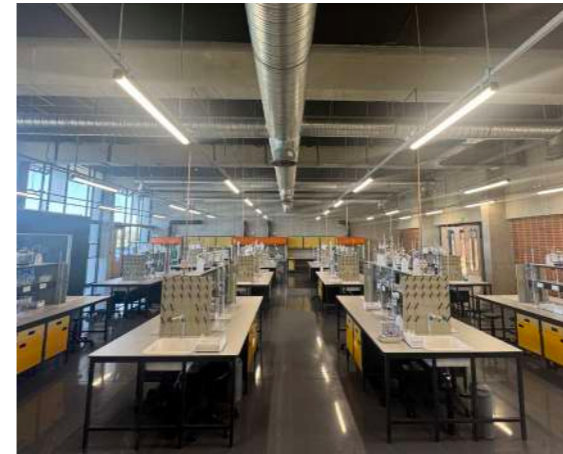
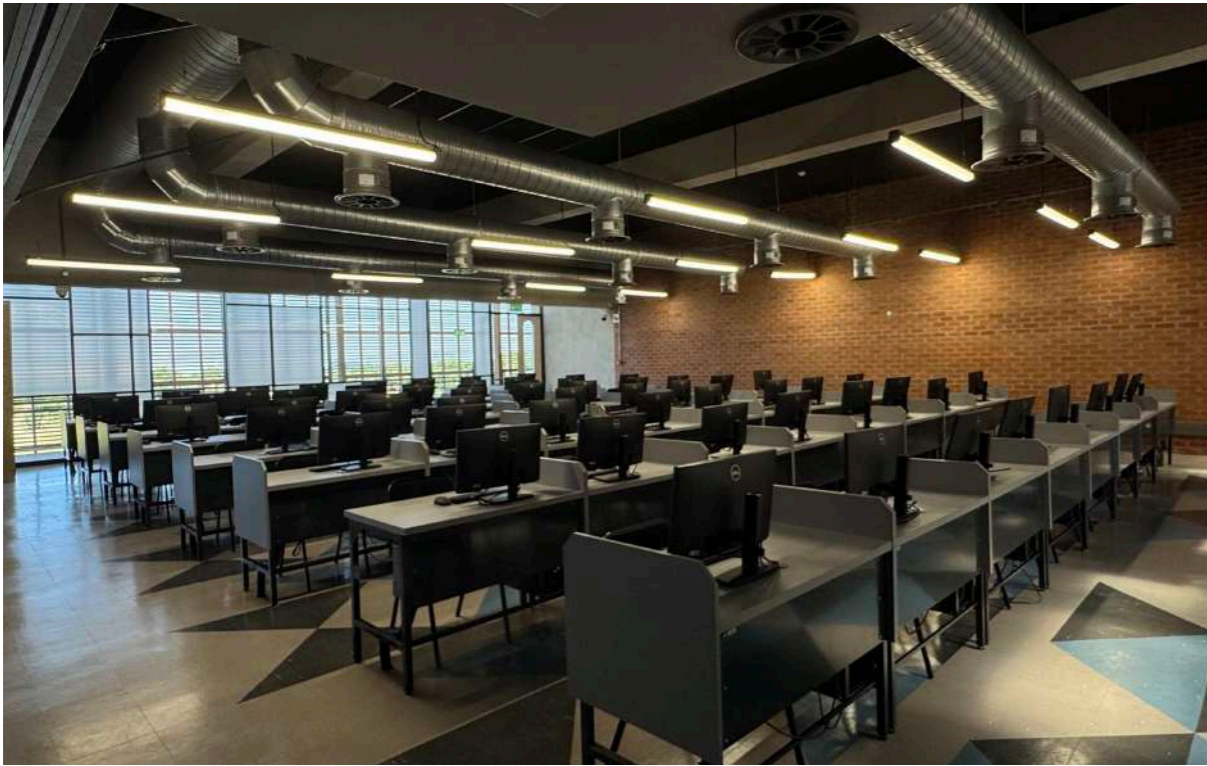
The University of Zululand's Richards Bay Campus is located in an urban coastal town, positioned at the edge of the urban-suburban fabric and forming a strong connection to the natural landscape of Richards Bay. The new Engineering Building is envisioned as a landmark and urban anchor for both the campus and the surrounding community. Due to the scale of the program, the building has been designed modularly, allowing phased construction over several years. The complex includes lecture halls, offices, and training laboratories, creating a vibrant environment where learning, collaboration, and innovation intersect. Importantly, the building is not only a space for education but also a catalyst for community engagement—both during construction and in its final form. Earthworld Architects proposes an alternative

economic model that integrates community development into the capital project itself. This strategy focuses on sustainable growth through local material use, skill development, and inclusive participation. Micro-Factories and Local Empowerment: Tertiary components are manufactured by local subcontractors through micro-factories established within the community. These factories: Use local materials, produce computer-aided design components for efficient assembly, and Focus on single-component production for streamlined operations. A mentorship and training program led by architects, contractors, and graduates—supports factory owners in operations and development, ensuring long-term sustainability beyond the project's completion.

Public Architecture



Earthworld





# WINTERVELD SCHOOLS

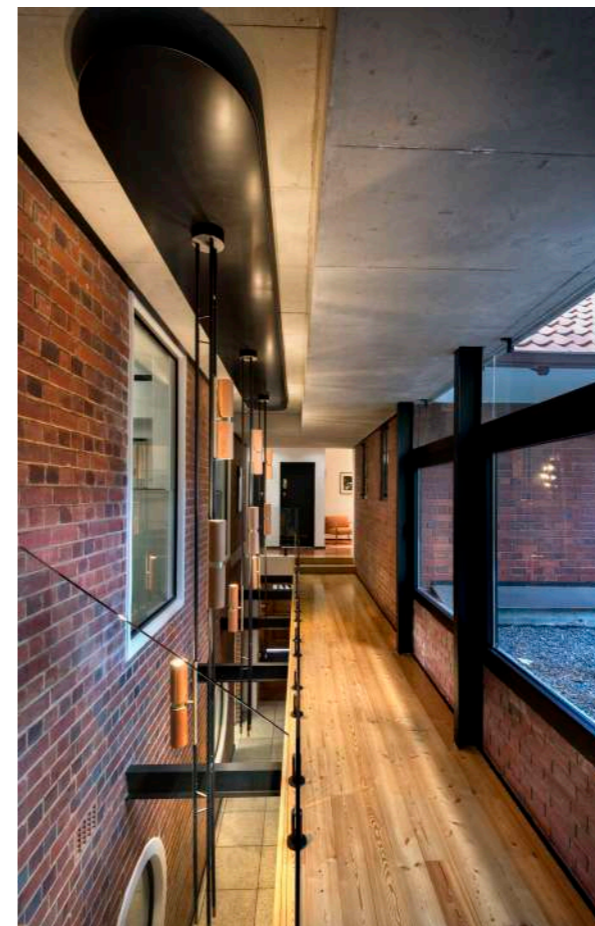
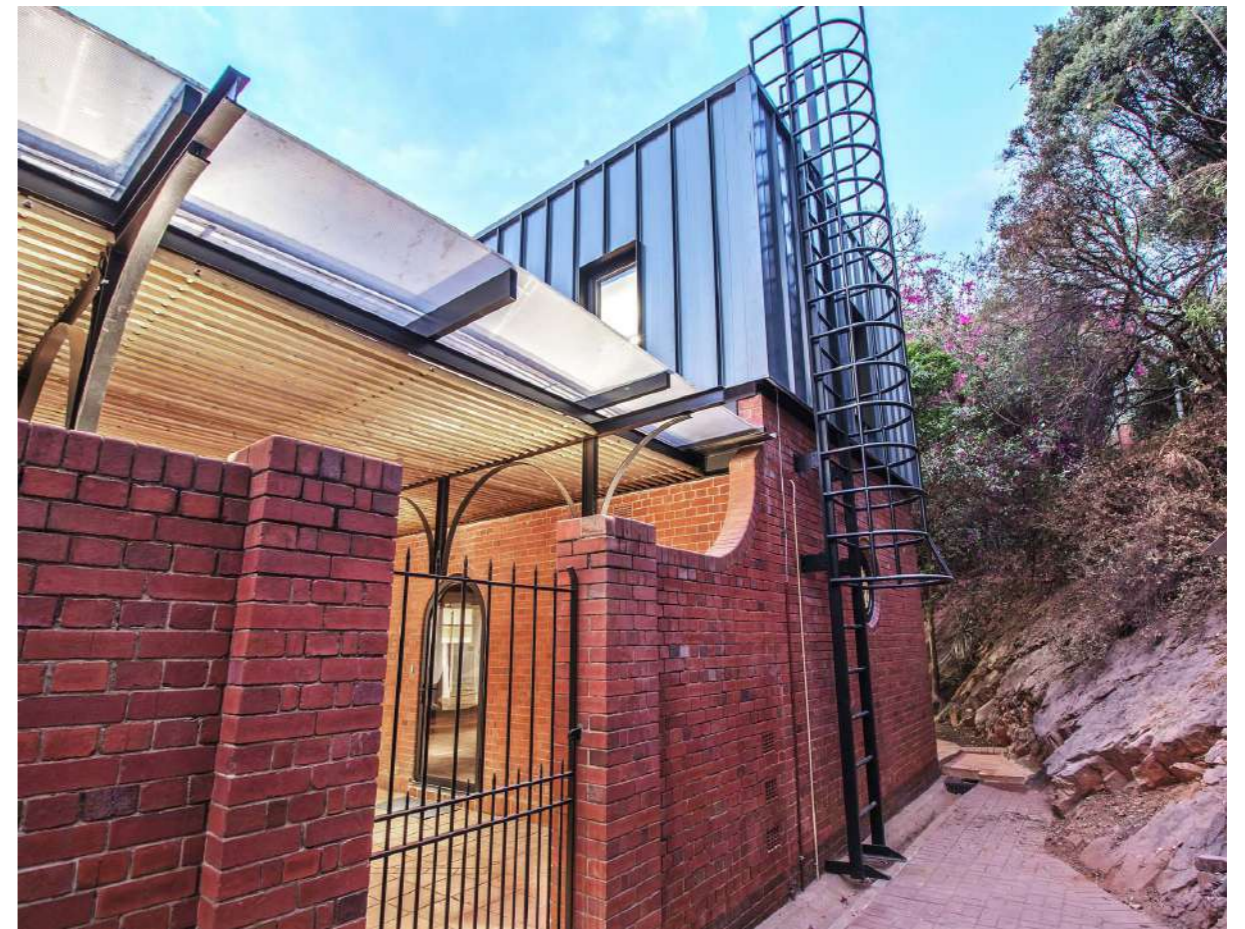
With the dawn of South Africa's democracy in 1994, architects Andre Eksteen and Braam de Villiers began their careers at Joubert Kammeyer and De Villiers (JKD) Architects. One of their earliest and most formative projects was the design and delivery of 21 schools in the Winterveld area, located north of Pretoria's CBD. The project encompassed a diverse range of educational facilities—including primary, secondary, middle, and technical schools—each tailored to the needs of the local community. A key innovation was the use of 50 emerging contractors, a bold and logistically complex strategy that aimed to empower local builders and promote inclusive development. This approach was pioneering at the time and laid the groundwork for alternative contracting methods in South Africa. As young architects, Eksteen and de Villiers brought fresh ideas to the table, exploring new approaches to functional layouts, material use, and the urban placement of schools within the community fabric. These buildings became laboratories for experimentation with steel structures, timber framing, and detailed brickwork—techniques that would influence their future work. The Winterveld Schools project marked their first deep engagement with building in a South African context, blending social responsibility, architectural innovation, and practical execution. It remains a cornerstone in their professional journey and a meaningful contribution to post-apartheid educational infrastructure.

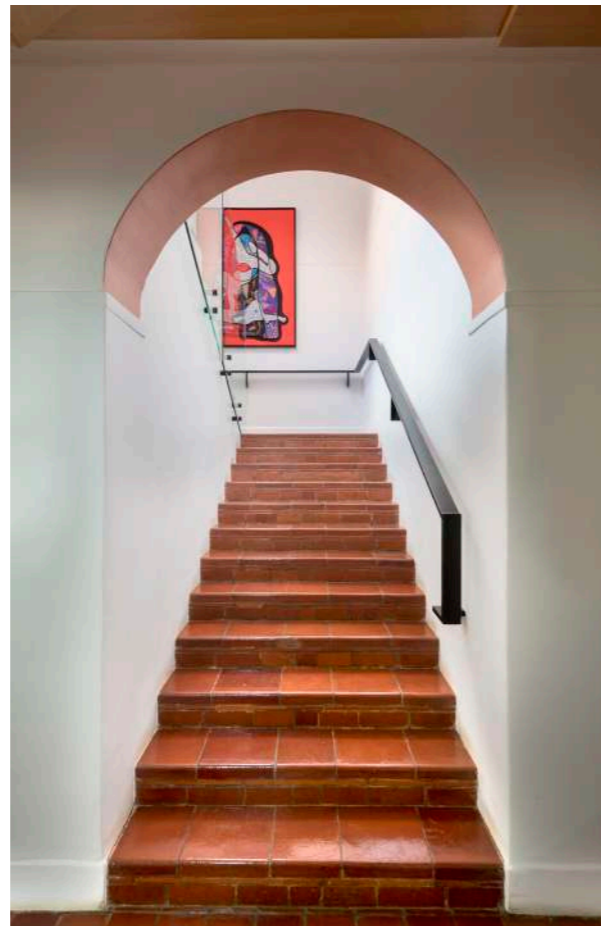


MUCKLENEUK

# BELGIUM EMBASSY

This restoration of the historical, John Kirkness – old mayor of Pretoria’s, house called for specific and careful intervention. Requiring heavy security, new IT infrastructure, efficient climate control and contemporary working spaces – all while remaining sensitive to the historical house. The ornamental ironmongery was kept in fact and restored. Significantly, the Kirkness bricks had careful consideration preserve the beauty of the brickwork. Where existing walls were removed a clear indication on the floor was made with hand-made tiles to indicate their original position.



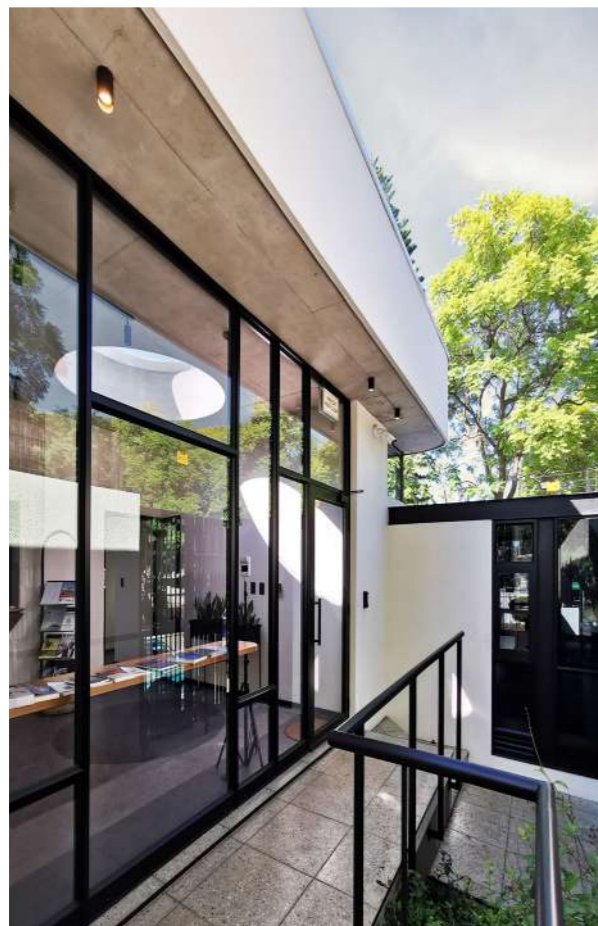


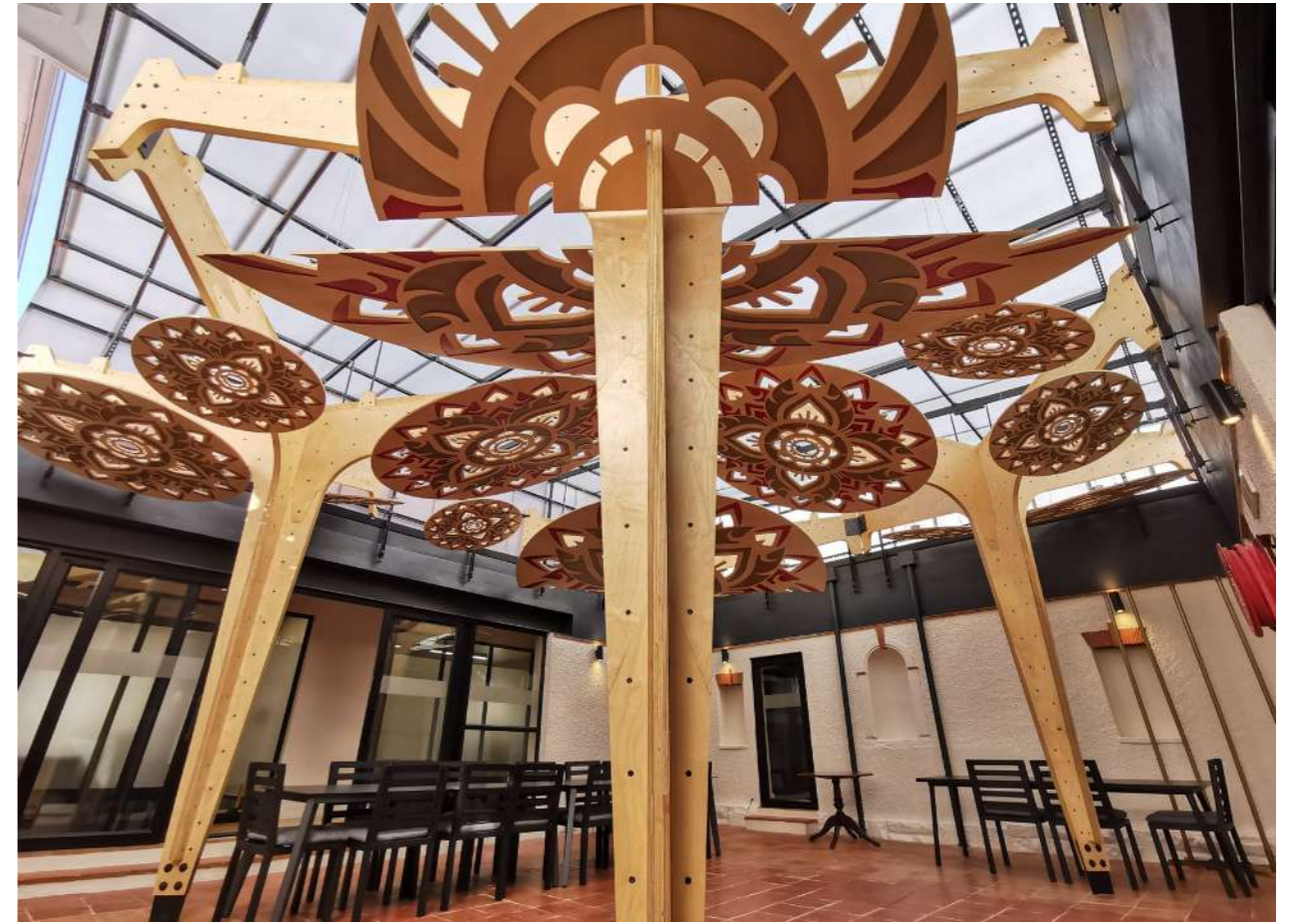
PRETORIA

## ROYAL THAI EMBASSY

The aristocratic dwelling was built at the beginning of the 20th century. The original features include a grand timber staircase, numerous ornate fireplaces, built-in classical joinery, and a grand room with exposed detailed trusses. The design approach was to peel back the layers of add-ons and identify, preserve, and restore precious heritage fabric, such as fireplaces, brass ironmongery, picture rails, doors, louvers, joinery, and timber floors. The new addition's aesthetic is distinctively modern, showcasing the juxtaposition between the new and the old.

The main objective was to modernize the entire building from an energy-efficiency and building-services perspective, introducing and upgrading artificial lighting, mechanical ventilation, and IT infrastructure. A custom timber tree pergola was added to the existing main courtyard, allowing for additional public space that can be used year-round. We closely collaborated with the clients, incorporating symbolic Thai patterns onto the hanging panels to create a sense of ownership for the building's current inhabitants. The project's end result is a sensitive fusion of opposites: a marriage between old and new, between an old home and a contemporary office, becoming a flagship representation of what a 21st-century embassy in South Africa should embody.







# HIGH COMMISSION OF CANADA SOLAR

PRETORIA

Earthworld Architects has undertaken a wide range of engineering-integrated architectural projects, with a strong focus on sustainable energy solutions, including solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and hydroelectric power plants. A key philosophy in their infrastructure work is the seamless integration of engineering and architectural design. This approach ensures that technical systems are not merely functional but also contribute to a cohesive and inclusive spatial experience—avoiding the appearance of being overly “engineered.” One such project is a microgrid system designed for an embassy, which integrates new photovoltaic panels and inverters with the existing power infrastructure, including backup generators. To house the solar panels, a series of steel carport roofs were designed. These structures take the form of stylized, tree-like steel frames, offering both structural efficiency and architectural expression. The result is a solar installation that is not only functional but also visually symbolic of growth, sustainability, and innovation.





PRETORIA EAST

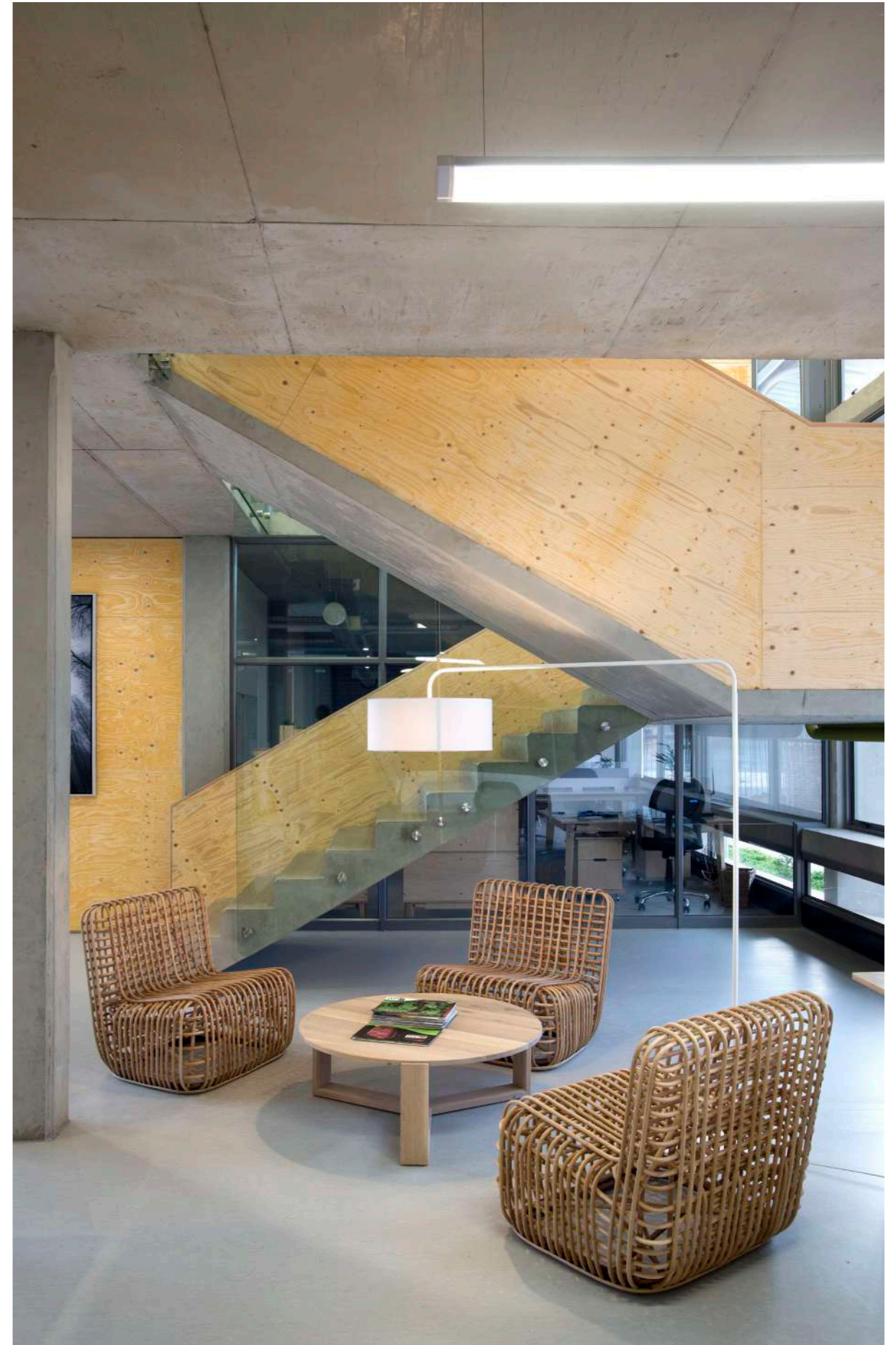
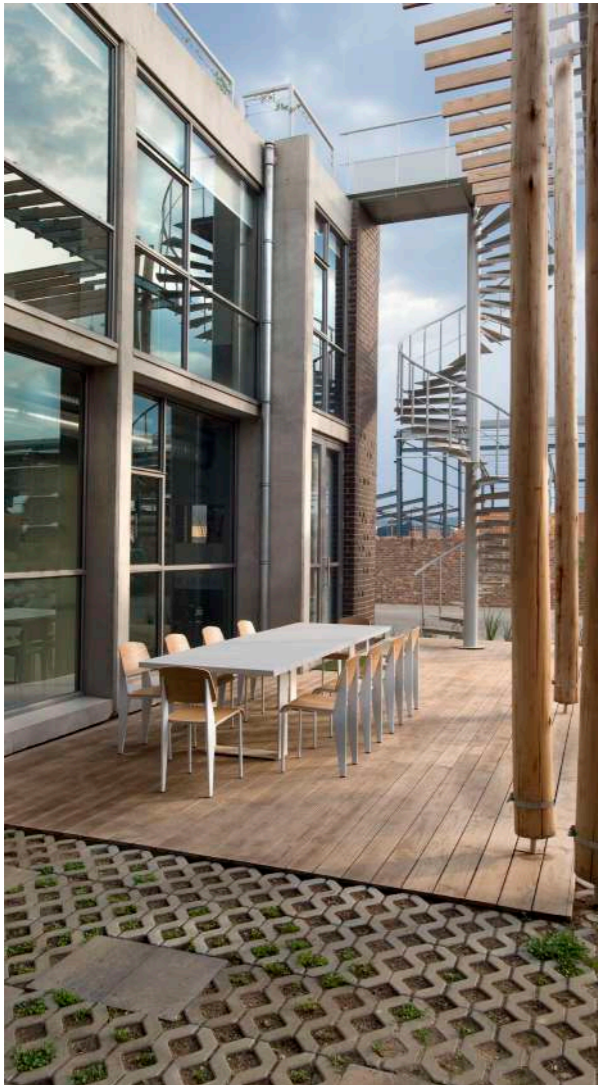
## I-CAT OFFICES

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In essence, a building should be sustainable on all three levels: ecological, social, and economic. The brief from the client required a building that could showcase sustainability concepts - the values that I-Cat embraces. The design of I-CAT's new offices and warehouse aims to perform on all these levels of sustainability. Passive design systems such as orientation, shading, natural ventilation, and lighting were carefully considered to create a strong foundation for the building's sustainability. These systems ensure a broader comfort zone for users. The building's envelope is oriented directly to the north, and a courtyard was created on the southern side to further moderate the climate during summer. The northern overhang allows for winter heat gain and summer shading, while the southern facade permits ample natural light.

A grid-tied photovoltaic system was designed to meet the day-to-day energy demands of the building. Rainwater from the roofs is collected and stored in a large underground water tank buried in the courtyard. All water is pumped from the tanks to a water filtration plant located in the warehouse. The design attempts to minimize building maintenance, and natural materials were prioritized. A monolithic face brick wall creates a bold street facade that is broken up with a punched steel window frame, further enhanced by special bricks that form an integrated pattern in the brick facade.

A horizontal concrete box frames the glazing on the northern facade, serving as a light shelf, and also protrudes inward to act as desk shelving. A timber pole and thermo-treated pine pergola structure float above the southern courtyard, which is planted with grass blocks and low water-usage plants, and further enriched with timber decks and a linear koi pond. The fever trees planted in the courtyard will eventually grow through the pergola structure. A spiral staircase extends from here to the roof garden, providing an aerial overview of the pergola and courtyard.



# MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, ARTICLE AND BOOKS

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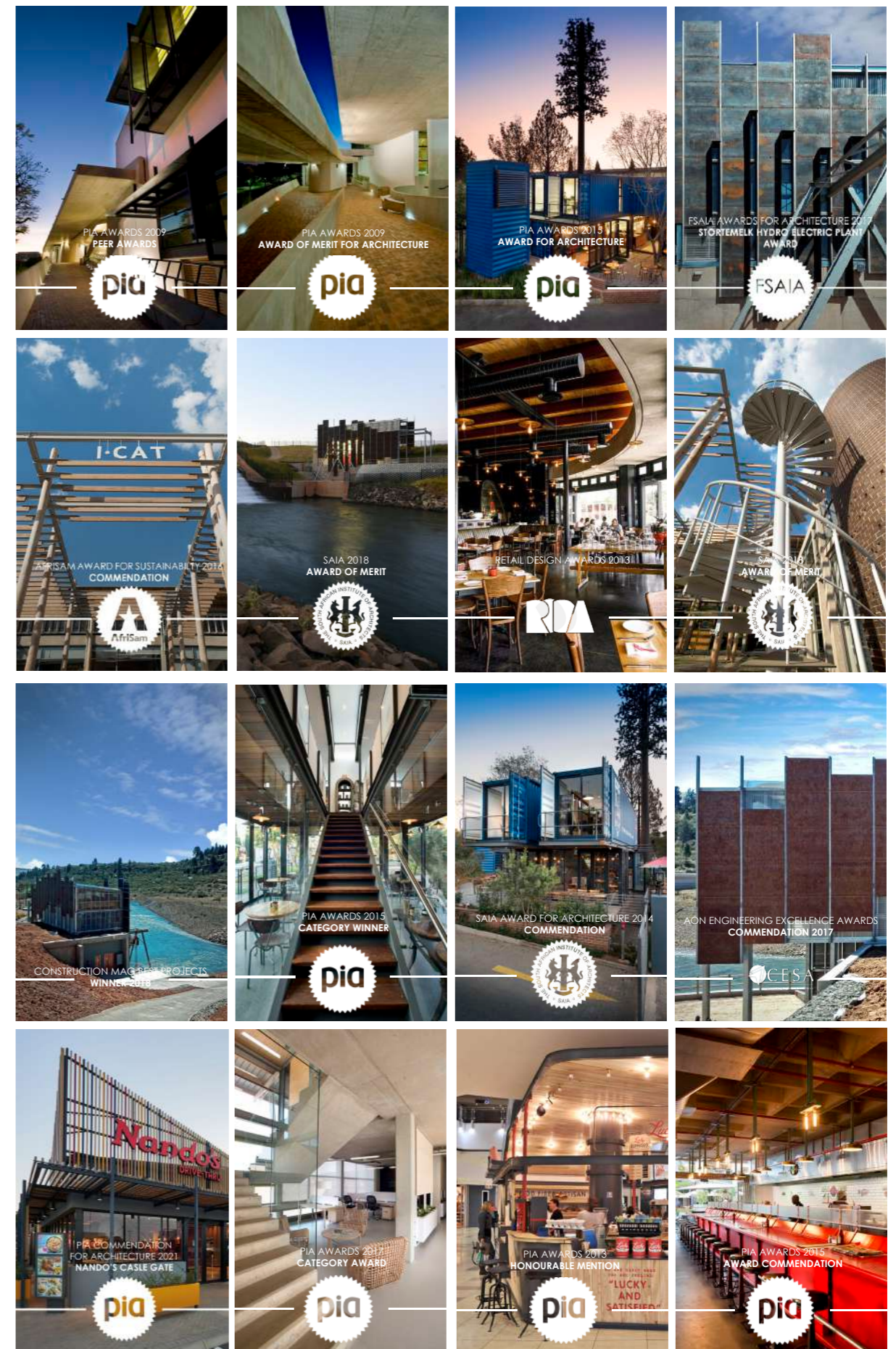
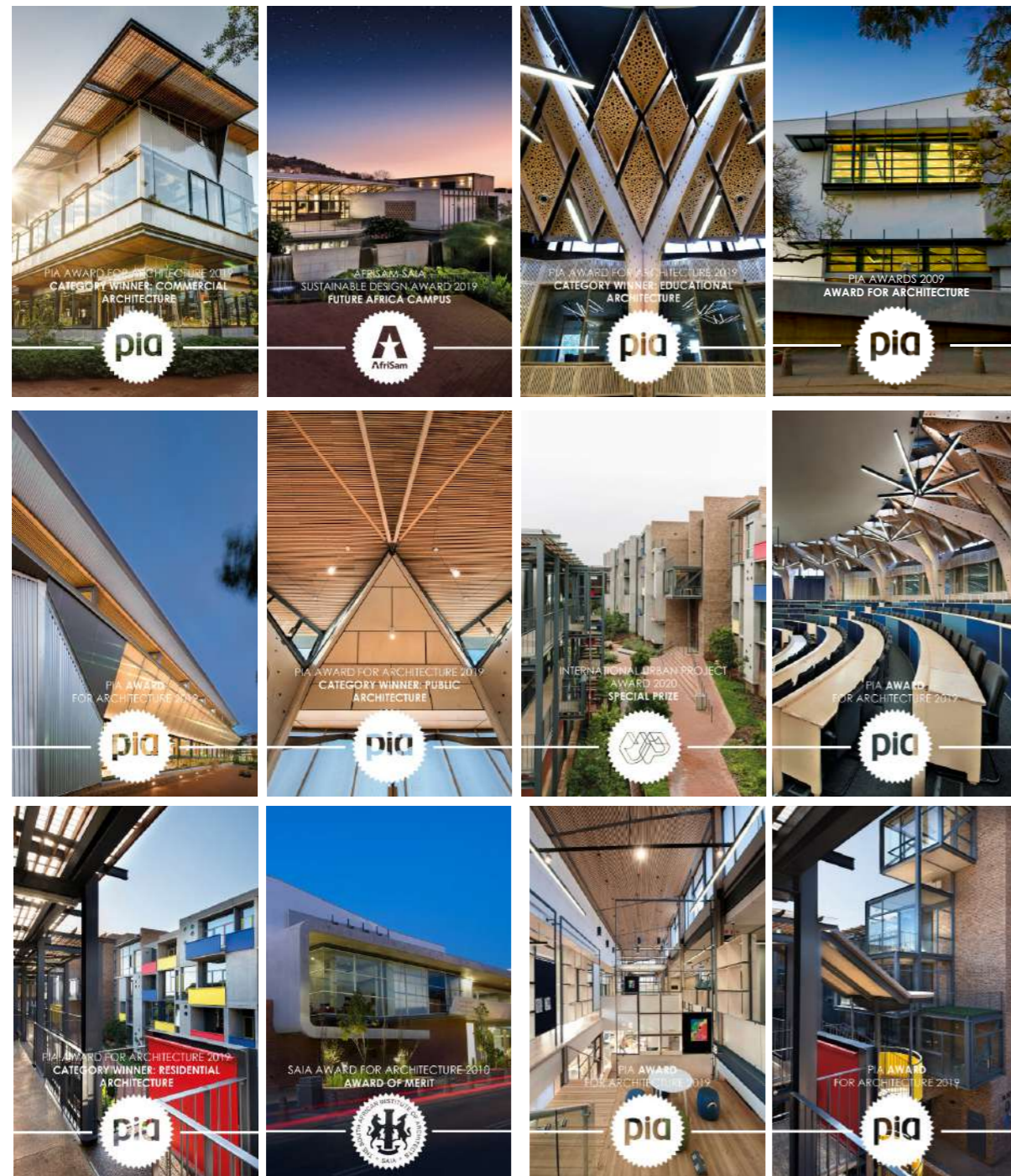
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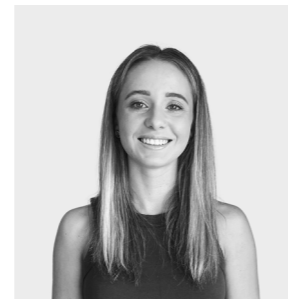
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