

# UWC building garners top award

## Eight SA projects win Corobrik-SAIA Awards for exceptional contributions to architecture

EIGHT SA projects have been chosen out of the 55 that were put forward for the 2011/12 Corobrik-SAIA (SA Institute of Architects) awards of merit and awards for excellence.

The projects were singled out at a ceremony held on September 14 as part of the SAIA AZA Biennial convention in Cape Town.

"The Corobrik-SAIA awards are made to SAIA members to encourage and recognise good design or a significant contribution in the field of architecture. The awards for excellence are made only for an exceptional achievement in the field of architecture," says SAIA president Fanuel Motsepe.

The SAIA award for excellence was introduced in 1990, and is conferred every second year for an exceptional contribution to the field of architecture. The award programme was revised in 1999, and now includes the awards of merit running concurrently.

**'Good architects have the sensibility to design spaces that advance lifestyles while being sensitive'**

The awards programme is structured over two years and conducted in three stages. In the first year, awards for architecture are presented by the various regional institutes affiliated to SAIA. The Corobrik-SAIA awards of merit are presented in the second year, and winners are eligible for the awards for excellence.

The panel of adjudicators for the 2011/12 awards was convened by Motsepe, and consisted of Peter Kidger of Corobrik, lecturer in architecture Philippa Tumubweine, and fashion designer David Tlale.

"Good architects have the sensibility to design spaces that advance lifestyles, while being sensitive to the environment and mindful of promoting healthy social values," says Motsepe.

"Architecture in South Africa is cementing its confidence as a global roleplayer and the country's architecture has clearly matured, confidently and convincingly, out of the provincial years of isolation."

The three 2011/12 Cape winners from the Cape Institute of Archi-



WINNER: The UWC Life Sciences building was one of eight projects that won Corobrik-SAIA awards for excellence.

itects are:

● The new University of the Western Cape Life Sciences building designed by dhk Architects fuses six departments into one development to promote interdepartmental and trans-disciplinary research.

The two major components – laboratory and learning centre – are joined by a social nucleus comprising the lobby and gathering space. A shading canopy is supported by tree-like columns. The learning centre integrates the development into the broader campus and houses a state-of-the-art lecture theatre, a computer lab-resource centre, seminar and tutorial rooms, and a cafeteria.

The judges say the building showcases a commitment to sustainable building practice and resource efficiency in the way that it responds to

the environment and demonstrates cost-effective strategies, placing this building at the forefront of responsible architecture.

The architecture is progressive and will set a benchmark for institutional buildings. The depth of attention to detail – as in the blinds to shade the sun and the vegetable garden on the roof – is a serious attempt to tread softly to create architecture with a low impact in spaces that are inspiring and in context with the progressive nature of the institution.

The chairman of dhk Architects, Derick Henstra, says the firm is committed to design fit-for-purpose developments on time and on budget, while creating spaces that reflect contemporary as well as functional design.

"Our emphasis is also to promote sustainable projects that contribute to the natural as well as built environment. UWC is just one such development – a building that reflects urban reinvention and rejuvenation and combines various elements to create an imposing and lasting landmark."

● The second award went to a beach house suitable for a family of four, on a vacant site in Voelklip, Hermanus, designed by Stefan Antoni Olmesdahl Truen Architect. The gently sloping site presented the opportunity for a split-level living space, allowing lounge and dining to be placed above the bedrooms on the ground level, all with dramatic sea views.

● Untamed is the result of a collaborative process between a scul-

ptor, a writer and an architect. Dylan Lewis, the sculptor, had a strong intuitive idea about the subject that Ian McCallum, the writer, discusses in his book, *Ecological Intelligence*. He researched environmentally conscious architects who had collaborated with artists and approached Enrico Daffonchio Architects.

"Conceptual and briefing workshops explored the internal psychological conflict between our rational mind and our repressed wildness. This theme was expressed in the building by the contrast between the 'living wall' and the rusted metal wall," says Lewis.

The judges say: "Architecture, sculpture and philosophy are brought together in a seamless gesture of fusional arts, crafts, science and literature."

"It is a temporary structure whose spatial experience, through a considered imagination, brings about meditation on the philosophical text and sculptures housed within the folly: transcending the perceived experience of gallery."

"The museum feeling makes one think how relevant the real issue of environmental sustainability is, particularly the issues of indigenous flora and fauna, the importance of using recycling and recycled materials and combining vegetation with recycled materials."

Awards for buildings from other provinces went to:

● The Ubuntu Centre, in Zwide, Port Elizabeth, was designed by Field Architecture in association with John Blair Architects and Ngonyama Okpanum Hewitt-Cole-

man. It was commissioned by the Ubuntu Education Fund as an operations centre for its health and educational outreach programmes serving the township of Zwide.

It has a wellness wing with a clinic specialising in HIV and tuberculosis prevention and counselling and an education wing for group study, remedial classes and career guidance.

At the heart of the building, running through two floors, is a multipurpose space for after-school educational programmes, community theatre, and workshops.

● Circa on Jellicoe, in Johannesburg, was designed by StudioMAS Architects and Urban Designers, and when viewed with the adjacent Everard Read gallery, is evidently more than just an art space. It aims to be a multifunctional semi-public space that alters perspectives of everyday life in the city. Primarily, its form aims to intrigue people, drawing them into this flexible space that may be used for public events or private functions.

The architecture is a sculpture, moulding itself around its contents.

● Investec's regional head office in uMhlanga Rocks. Investec initiated a move from its offices in Durban's CBD to the Ridgeside Office Park in uMhlanga Rocks in 2006.

The brief for Elphick Proome Architects was to provide premium-grade offices with a sophisticated expression capturing an established corporate image and rendered in quality materials. The views of the sea and distant cityscape informed the arrangement of the office space around public interface and service spaces.

● The Concierge Boutique Hotel and Freedom Café. Tucked behind the commercial zone of Durban's Umgeni Road is a series of Victorian workers' cottages from the late 1800s. When the client acquired four of these semi-detached units, the brief for Architecture Fabrik and Don Albert & Partners was to create a boutique hotel with adjoining studios for creative professionals.

The new structure is not physically connected to the historical buildings and is set back from the street, retaining the character of the area while enabling a visitor to distinguish the "new from the old".

● A new house in Groenkloof for Louw/Delport by Mellet and Human Architects is like a high-level penthouse absorbing the unobstructed views of Pretoria from a small, steep, subdivided stand bordering a green belt. The site was terraced to provide a single-level layout.

The linear plan places all living areas and bedrooms north of a gallery that doubles as a circulation space and section to house an extensive art collection.

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