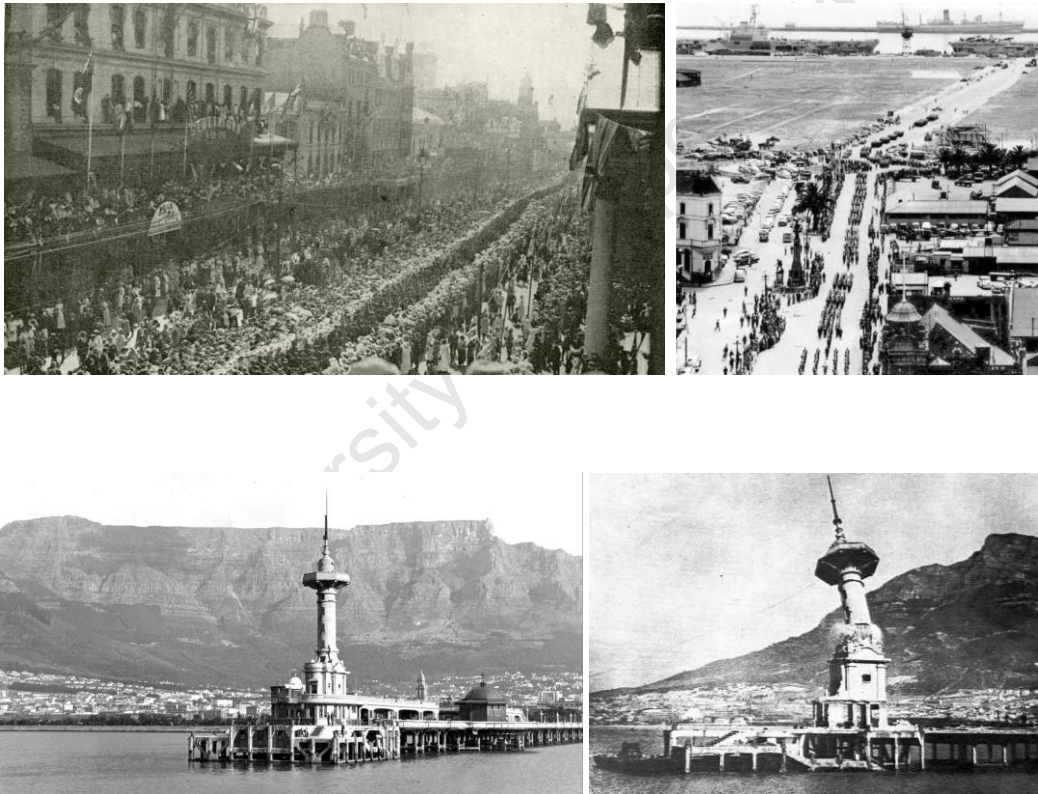


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# Negotiating Modernism in Cape Town: 1918-1948

An investigation into the introduction, contestation,  
negotiation and adaptation of modernism in the  
architecture of Cape Town.



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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

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### THE NEGOTIATION OF MODERNISM IN CAPE TOWN 1918-1948

In the early twentieth century modernism radically changed the world, affecting all aspects of life. Twentieth century modernism incorporated new inventions that changed the modes of travel, it re-structured methods of production and the way in which people lived, worked and played. This radical change was to be reflected in all sectors, and was particularly manifested physically in architecture. Modernism demanded a radical shift from an architecture that had been slowly evolving from nineteenth century eclecticism, overlaid with reactionary concerns for the overwhelming impact of industrialisation on society and on the built fabric of cities. It sought to identify new ways of dealing with these issues and finding new methods of spatial production and ultimately creating a new means of architectural aesthetic expression that came to be referred to as the Modern Movement. The response to the radical change implied in modernism resulted in a process of negation and contestation, leading through negotiation to a mediated compromise before an ultimate acceptance.

The epicentre for these developments was Europe, particularly in Germany but also in France. As this radicalised approach to architecture spread out from here it underwent a series of metamorphoses as it was challenged, negotiated and ultimately absorbed into local architectural practice around the world. However, away from Western Europe, modern architecture came to be, as Sibel Bozdoğan (2001) points out in her study of the introduction of modernism into Kemalist Turkey, a representation of modernity without, necessarily, its material and social basis.

In colonial and former colonial countries such as South Africa in particular, modernism did not have the strong socialist concern for improving the well-being of its entire people, but rather became primarily a mechanism for improving production, restructuring urban areas into racially and physically segregated areas and dealing with issues around health and slum clearance. It also became an aesthetic of the urban avant-garde. More often than not, it was a mediated modernist aesthetic that characterized modernism rather than a new approach to the production of space.

Johannesburg has always been regarded as the place where this introduction and adaptation took place in South Africa, as it was introduced into the academic architectural programme at Witwatersrand University, championed by the architect and academic, Rex Martienssen and a group of his fellow academics and local architects. Gilbert Herbert (1975) described this process of introduction and it has long been held that the ripples of modernism were gradually to spread to other centres in South Africa from Johannesburg. However, the issue of modernism that was debated and experimented with in Johannesburg was essentially formalist and focussed largely on housing for a middle-class White proletariat. It did not challenge the existing order on any other

basis than the notion that modernism was an international *Zeitgeist* that needed to be assimilated into South African architectural practice.

But this is not the case in the way in which modernism was introduced in Cape Town, nor did it follow the same process of assimilation. This research seeks to identify the unique way that modernism was introduced, negotiated and ultimately assimilated into architectural practice in the city. In Cape Town the end of the First World War marked a significant break with the nineteenth century colonialism that had still permeated the city in the opening decades of the twentieth century and can be identified as the point at which modernism began to impact on the city. Likewise, 1948 marked the coming to power of the Nationalist Party, bringing with it the adoption of modernism as a mechanism of State. The modern architecture of the period is examined within the framework of architectural culture, linking modernism to issues of social engineering- issues that lie beyond form making alone. Bozdoğan (2001:12) again suggests that a study needs to examine buildings, projects and architectural writings as a collectively constituted discourse. She argues that

The idea behind the study of architectural culture is not to explain the work through what was said and written about it but to see the ways in which what was said, written and built, collectively confirm, interpret, contest, or negotiate the political and ideological agendas of the time.

In the first place, what makes South Africa uniquely different to other countries is that in the Thirties it was not only a colonial country, albeit with dominion status, strongly influenced by its links to Great Britain, but also its form of political control in the twentieth century was still fundamentally racist. This is evident in the manner in which people were treated and discriminated against at all levels of political control, and spatial practice was used to reinforce these racial constructs and create mechanisms of control. The architecture of the period presented a simulacrum of modernism with few of the underlying catalysts and concerns that led to its implementation in Europe.

This thesis proposes that it was this underlying concern with control and power that was to create a representation of negotiated modernism in Cape Town, whose unique characteristics were embodied into a project of social engineering on a citywide scale. James C. Scott (1998) in describing what he called 'Authoritarian High Modernism' identified three characteristics: firstly the wish to order society; secondly, the unbridled use of power to achieve this; and thirdly, a weakened civil society that does not have the ability to resist these plans. (Scott: 88-89) It is this form of the implementation of modernism in Cape Town that made it unique not only in South Africa but also in relation to other cities in the world.

Modernism was adopted by the city council for the design of housing for the city's poor. (Jeppie 2001: 116; van Graan 2004) Here it was linked to issues of health and race and became the tool for the implementation of racially based housing policy, and modernist design principles were adapted to create new forms of housing for the African and Coloured sectors of the population.

This was closely linked to town planning considerations that were used to create separate residential areas, removed from the city, for the creation of ethnically based housing. (Pinnock 1989:157) Even the types of accommodation, based closely on European prototypes, reinforced the precepts of social engineering. As the dominant informant of social engineering, modernism was used to inform the triad: housing, health and the workplace to create an environment that sought to control the lives of the disempowered people of colour at all levels.

Fundamental to the introduction of modernism into architectural praxis in Cape Town is the notion of negotiation. Modernism did not overwhelm the existing order in the city overnight. Unlike Johannesburg, the conservative Cape School of Architecture located within the Michaelis art school was not sympathetic to the need for change, nor was there any architect, much less any academic, to espouse the cause of modernism and to champion it as had happened in Johannesburg (Herbert 1975). Instead it was the local Cape Town-based media, represented by the professional journal, *The Architect, Builder and Engineer* that was the mouthpiece for debate around modernism in the city. This remained the status quo until the appointment of Leonard Thornton White as Professor of Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1937. Even then, with the intervention of World War Two, it was only after the war that modernism really came to be widely accepted as the norm in the city. This research examines the professional architectural media in South Africa as a terrain of negotiation. The Cape-based media carried the debate around modernism on a broadly conservative basis. In examining the media in the period under review the process of negotiation is clearly manifested.

Negotiation implies the development of a compromise and this, as the research will show, is what happened in the architecture of the city. Reaction to modernism, as reflected in the media of the time, follows the typical pattern of initial contestation and rejection, followed by cautious adaptation through negotiation before final acceptance. Cape Town followed the same trend that manifested itself in Britain and America, as well as many other countries around the world: architects were divided into 'traditionalists', modernists and what Hitchcock, writing in 1928, referred to as 'New Traditionalists'- those who sought a negotiated compromise between these polarities (Striner 1990: 24).

The civic authorities experimented with Modernism in architectural designs for 'The Colonial Other'- the indigenous population. As has already been alluded to, this was linked to projects of social engineering on a massive scale, often under the guise of 'health' and the concomitant slum clearance schemes that were popular even in Europe (Bickford-Smith et al 1999:144). This experimentation represents the next level of the negotiation process where new ideas for living were being experimented on for people who were unable to have any say in the design process (Jeppie: 123-125). Modernism was being adapted and modified to suit a political agenda. More sinisterly, this social engineering aspect exemplified what Foucault described as being central to power relations: to render visible both the mechanism for the wielding of power and to create

mechanisms of surveillance through architecture and planning as a means of control. The form of colonial modernism found in Cape Town was a simulacrum of both the social as well as the architectural intent of modernism: it created a mirage that obscured its real motives- on both levels. Fears of racial integration and the spread of disease led to an ambitious housing and healthcare programme that resulted in the building of new housing estates, clinics and hospitals.

Modernism was also used to improve efficiency in the workplace and this is apparent in the design of factories built for the garment industry, which expanded rapidly in Cape Town in the inter-war period. Soja (1989:34) identifies a 'spatial fix' in modernity that he relates to a crisis in capitalism: a need to maintain social control and to stimulate increased production and consumption. Thus there was an increase in industrial development in the city as well as the establishment of new forms of retail outlets to increase consumption. These often adopt a 'negotiated' form of modernism- a cloak of modernist form concealing a traditional structure and layout.

The thesis thus identifies the negotiation process followed as modernism was introduced into Cape Town from media debate through tentative experimentation to general acceptance. It attempts to identify those factors that made the negotiation of modernism unique in Cape Town, setting the stage for the acceptance of modernism in the city by the late Forties when political change took politicised modernism to a new level as a mechanism of social control and segregation.

The negotiated compromise that characterised Cape Town architecture of the period prior to the Nationalist political victory in 1948 remains a characteristic of the architecture of the city where a conservative attitude towards architecture has always held sway. The reluctance to accept influences from beyond the Cape and to retain a strong sense of architectural introspection can still be found among architectural practitioners in the city in the twenty-first century. This is still coupled to a deep suspicion of influences from 'up north' and the north-south divide remains as prominent and problematic as it was eighty years ago- socially, politically and architecturally.

## **Keywords**

Cape Town, Modernism, modernity, negotiation, colonialism,

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The profession: the university or the workplace as fields of study

The architect and the profession: the innovator and the follower

Industry: modernism and functionality

Commerce: modernism as mechanism of progress

Dwelling: *Heimat* or *Wohnung*? The City as dwelling place

Play: new forms of entertainment

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## **ABBREVIATIONS:**

AB&E	The Architect, Builder & Engineer (periodical)
CA	Cape Archives
CIA	The Cape Institute of Architects
CTCC	Cape Town City Council (Now Greater cape Town Metropolitan Council)
ISAA	Institute of South African Architects (now South African Institute Of Architects)
MSS&A	Manuscripts & Archives: University of Cape Town
SAAR	The South African Architectural Review (journal)
SAB	The South African Builder (journal)
UCT	University of Cape Town (Includes the Michaelis School of Art)

## DEFINITIONS

**Discourse:** an organised body of statements that are governed by the rules and conventions of a specific discipline. It is used here in the sense that discourse is not a product of specific subjectivity, and that it plays a key role in the production of the symbolic architectural system.

**Discursive formation:** a group of statements in which it is possible to find a pattern of regularity defined in terms of order, correlations, position and function. It is used here in the sense that was defined by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

**Eclecticism:** a composite system of thought made up of views selected from various other systems. It is a rejection of the acceptance of a single architectural system *in toto*, but the adoption of rationally considered elements used in the past that are now appropriate albeit in different contexts.

**Homotopia:** a homogeneous ordering sensibility that discards difference in favour of continuity and familiarity. This utopian way, applied to the examination of historical data relating to architectural work in the inter-war period has led to an iconic view of the way modernism developed.

**Heterotopia:** a sensibility that distributes a multiplicity of things into seemingly incoherent categories. (Porphyrios p2) "things are 'laid', 'placed', arranged in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a common locus beneath them all". (Foucault 1994: xxviii)

**Modernisation:** This is a term used to describe the process of social development, the main features of which are technological advances and industrialisation, urbanisation and population explosions, the rise of bureaucracy and increasingly powerful nation states, an enormous expansion of mass communication systems, democratisation, and an expanding capitalist world market. (Heynen 1999:10)

**Modernity:** Modernity, according to Heynen, is "the element that mediates between a process of socio-economic development and subjective responses to it in the form of modernist discourses and movements". (Heynen: 10)

**Modernism:** This refers to the progressive architectural movements of the 1910s and 1920s. (Colquhoun) Bozdogan relates it to the "use of reinforced concrete, steel, glass, the primacy of cubic forms, geometric shapes, and Cartesian grids, and above all the absence of decoration, stylistic motifs". (Bozdogan)

**Modernistic:** This was used to denote the use of elements from modern movement architecture as stylistic devices in combination with more traditional elements, particularly the plan form, to create an eclectic architecture. The term was often used in a negative way.

**Modern movement:** This is a term relating to the architecture that emerged in Germany and France in the Twenties, which was derived from the artistic avant-garde and rejected the bourgeois culture of philistinism that used pretentious ornament and gave precedence to purity and authenticity with a clearly visible constructional logic. (Heynen 1999: 28)

**Negotiation:** Defined as a conference (with another) with a view to compromise or agreement. In this thesis it is used to describe the way in which architectural praxis amends concepts and forms in an attempt to create a synthesis between existing practice and critical challenges in the form of new architectural ideas.

**Other:** in this context the term refers to the discursive production of an other -a process typified by the way in which Europeans produced an African-as-other; by asserting control over the means of communication and interpretation and defining colonial people as non-selves who are different.

**Programmatic Modernism:** Heynen uses the term to identify modernism a project of progress and freedom. She identifies two components: an irreversible emergence of autonomy in the fields of science, art and morality; and the notion of a project which has the potential to rationally organise and improve daily life (Heynen : 28)

## CHAPTER 1

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Negotiating Modernism 1918- 1948

The exceptional, indeed cancerous, development of panoptic procedures seems to be indissociable from the historical role to which they have been assigned, that of being a weapon to be used in combating and controlling heterogeneous practices. Beneath what one might call the 'monotheistic' privilege that panoptic apparatuses have won for themselves, a '*polytheism*' of scattered practices survives, dominated but not erased by the triumphal success of one of their number (de Certeau 1988: 91).



**Figure 1: Cape Town from the end of the pier 1939 (B.Werksman)**

#### Background

Modernism in the early twentieth century brought profound change to the social and political structures of societies around the world, and to the way they perceived and produced architecture. In the aftermath of the First World War, the traditional way that architecture was created was questioned, and its relevance to an apparently new world order re-examined. In the first instance, changing perceptions were manifested in Europe that had witnessed the destruction of the old order on an unprecedented scale in the Great War of 1914-1918. Concurrent with the war was the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 where the old order was violently overthrown. Pre-war certainties were replaced with tentativeness: an uncertainty about the future and what it should look like. In those countries that had suffered the most in the war, the urge to overthrow what remained of the old order in favour of modernity was the strongest. Thus it was found that in Germany, Russia and to a degree in France, the demand for radical change was heard loudest. But as Gwendolyn Wright (2008:10) points out, it is untenable to speak of a single modern consciousness rather than recognise that there were contentious and contradictory variations in the experience of modernity and that these variations were the outcome of negotiation processes

as compromises were reached. In architecture, modernism created a schism between architects who adopted the radical view of modernism as a new architecture that broke with tradition, and those who believed that the pre-war developments in architecture should continue to evolve naturally. This led to the evolution of a third group of architects, perhaps the silent majority, who sought to find a mediated standpoint that attempted to find a middle ground between these antagonistic polarities. It is this process of negotiation and compromise that resulted from the introduction of modernism in early twentieth century Cape Town's built fabric, that is the focus of this thesis.

### **The shift from epicentre to periphery**

From its European base, the new order: the demand for a modern approach to society and the built environment, spread. Away from the epicentre of change the demand for change was echoed, albeit with different responses depending on local circumstances. Presented with an existing situation that was no longer considered relevant and a new, radical approach to modernity, this created uncertainties and ambivalences at a local level and the burden of resolving ambivalence falls on local groupings that need to negotiate a new position. Thus, as the new approach to architecture spread out from Europe it underwent a series of metamorphoses as it was challenged, negotiated, and ultimately became normative local architectural practice. Away from Europe, modern architecture came to be, as Sibel Bozdoğan (2001) points out in her study of the introduction of modernism into Kemalist Turkey, a representation of modernity without, necessarily, its material and social basis. The appurtenances of modernism came to represent the essence of modernity. Negotiation often resulted in the creation of a simulacrum of modernism without its underlying substance.

In Europe, modernism was the vehicle for developing a new socialist architectural vision of a utopian egalitarian society, based on broad Marxist principles. This restructuring of society was manifested in social programmes involving urban housing, healthcare and education schemes, in addition to creating new workplaces for a rising urban proletariat. (Hilde Heynen 1999; Elizabeth Darling 2007). There were often contradictory forces at play- the incorporation of socialist ideals while simultaneously seeking to avoid the schismatic disruption of a socialist revolution. Modernism became the mechanism for visibly demonstrating change: the visualisation of political will.

Modern architecture in South Africa necessarily has to be understood within a continuous relationship with the history and theory of the western tradition emanating from the metropolitan centres of Europe and the Americas. By posing a relationship – with all the associated complexities- between centre and margins and interrogating conceptions of modernism and modernity within the complex relationship between metropolitan ideas of space and the circulation of these ideas to colonial contexts, it becomes possible to situate an argument about colonial modernism in a dialectical relation between those two interrelated sites of modernist expression (Noëleen Murray et al 2007: 45).

In South Africa, a British colonial system, strongly grounded in an ethnically segregated population that marginalized all people who were not White, overlaid with a divisive English/Afrikaner antipathy, held sway (Dunbar Moodie 1975: 77; Bickford-Smith 1989: 47-62). Architectural modernism first found a foothold in Johannesburg. It has always been regarded as the place where the introduction and adaptation of modernism took place in South Africa as it was introduced into the academic architectural programme at Witwatersrand University, championed by the architect and academic, Rex Martienssen and a group of his fellow academics and local architects. The process is recorded (Gilbert 1975, Chipkin 1993) and it is generally held that modernism gradually spread to other centres in South Africa from here. However, the issue of modernism that was debated and experimented with in Johannesburg was essentially formalist and focussed largely on housing for a wealthy White proletariat. It did not challenge the existing order on any other basis than the notion that an international *Zeitgeist* needed to be assimilated into South African architectural practice. (Chipkin 1993: 89). It proposed a new order that did not countenance difference or negotiation (SAAR June 1931: 7)

### **The issue: modernism in colonial Cape Town**

A society is...composed of certain fore-grounded practices organising its normative institutions and of innumerable other practices that remain 'minor,' always there but not organising discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others. It is in this multifarious and silent 'reserve' of procedures that we should look for 'consumer' practices having the double characteristic, pointed out by Foucault, of being able to organise both space and languages, whether on a minute or a vast scale...The exceptional, indeed cancerous, development of panoptic procedures seems to be indissociable from the historical role to which they have been assigned, that of being a weapon to be used in combating and controlling heterogeneous practices.

By showing, in one case, the heterogeneity and equivocal relations of apparatuses and ideologies, (Foucault) constituted as a treatable historical object this zone in which technological procedures have specific effects of power, obey their own logical modes of functioning, and can produce a fundamental diversion within the institutions of order and knowledge (de Certeau 1984: 48-9).

In 1918, a regionalist architectural style, based on the assimilation of Cape Dutch architectural elements into an Arts and Crafts vocabulary, was firmly established in Cape Town for domestic buildings (Bickford-Smith et al: 48; Coetzer 2003). Commercial architecture was entirely based on Classical Beaux Arts principles. This reflected the prevailing architectural style of the British Imperial imperative and locates the prevailing architectural discourse in the city within the context of contemporary, essentially British, architectural developments (*vide* Coetzer 2003). Modernism and the development of an avant-garde modern movement had, by the early 1920s, swept through Europe, and were reflected in the teachings of schools of architecture as exemplified by the Bauhaus in Germany; and in the architectural output of many European architects. Over the next twenty-five years Cape Town's architecture was to change radically as the concept of modernism was introduced, debated, negotiated, and incorporated into the architecture and planning of the

city, so that by 1948 the city appeared to have been changed into a 'modern' city- yet arguably only a simulacrum of the modernist ideal. Modernist architecture was the norm, having entirely supplanted any other architectural form. Yet ironically, the form of the city had merely shifted from a colonial, ethnically divided town to a city whose layout and architecture used modernist principles to reinforce ethnic spatial segregation rather than create a more humane and egalitarian environment, the planning aftermath of which was to endure into the twenty-first century. The political victory of the Nationalist Party in 1948 saw the adoption of modernism, as a mechanism of state: modernist architecture became the visual politics of the state.

The South African-born British town planner, Lord Holford, in a speech made in Cape Town in 1956, described the city as having been 'infected' by the diseases of modern city planning, including monumentality and the cutting off of the city from the sea. Bickford-Smith et al (1999) claimed that this monumentality was "both the aesthetic and political product of twentieth century 'modernism'" (Bickford-Smith et al: 144).

### **The aim of the thesis and the hypothesis**

It could be held that the historiography of early modernism in architecture generally focussed on the Modern Movement as an iconic trajectory (Giedion 1944, Pevsner 1960, Banham 1960) rather than engage with the multiple trajectories that developed to examine influence and interdependencies as the modernist discourse was negotiated and adapted (Alan Powers 2005: 29). The negotiation process that emerged in the debate in Cape Town appears to reflect not only local issues, but to highlight contradictions that emerged in the development of modernism. The debate over the transitory modernism of the avant-garde Modern Movement would seem to identify an underlying contestation that is not always reflected in accounts of the period. This process of contestation resulted in a negotiated form of modernism being developed in different regions. Both Peter Collins (1965) and Demetri Porphyrios (1982) draw attention to the concept of *modern eclecticism*, based on a critical evaluation of different approaches to architecture to draw on those principles that are deemed most appropriate to a specific set of circumstances. This formed a far greater field of heterogeneity; and Homi Bhabha (1995) describes the development of a 'third space', as a negotiated terrain. This negotiated terrain in South Africa is largely identified with the media, which played a significant role as the space for debate and contestation. The architectural players of the time were divided into 'Traditionalists,' who believed that classicism could be taken on an evolutionary path to remain relevant, 'Revolutionaries,' who followed the precepts of Le Corbusier, believing that a schismatic break needed to be made with the past, and what some writers such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock termed 'New Traditionalists' (Striner 1990: 24), who attempted to negotiate a compromise between these two extremes.

In post-colonial countries, such as South Africa, modernism, particularly programmatic modernism, was used as a tool of the State to express political power and control. (Soja 1989; Jeppie 2001)

Modernism was not 'a clean knife' as Le Corbusier described it (1923: 220) but a process of negotiation. This research focuses on this process of negotiation that took place in Cape Town as the discourse of modernism was introduced into the architectural practice of the city, specifically from the mid-Thirties onwards and examines those fields in which it had the most significant impact. It locates the local architectural practice and the manner in which it negotiated modernism as a formal construct rather than a spatial practice, within the wider modernist architectural discourse.

### **The negotiation process**

Michel Foucault in his paper, *Of Other Spaces*, (1982 trans.), described the twentieth century as an era of juxtaposition of differences. The present time he considered to be an age of space. Space, in his terms was heterogeneous. Differing conditions of existence he defines as *utopias* and *heterotopias*. The architectural historian, Porphyrios, in his examination of the work of Alvar Aalto (Porphyrios: 1982) in developing an argument for what he termed 'modern eclecticism', as mentioned above, related this to the concept of heterotopias, which he defined as '*the state of things laid, placed, assigned sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to define a common locus for them all*'. Collins, (1965) considered eclecticism to be the development of a system of thought that is based on the removal of facts that are deemed valid from their original contexts and then reassembling them to create a new coherent system of knowledge, and this would seem to be closely linked to Bhabha's concept of a 'Third Space' (Bhabha 1995) as a negotiated space that draws its identity from divergence. De Certeau's description of the negotiated spaces that are created by people (De Certeau 1988: 98) is significant in understanding both heterogeneity and heterotopias.

The negotiated space for the expression of different identities through architecture became possible as the dominance of British imperialism waned. Within the debate around eclecticism and heterotopic spaces, hybrid identities emerge as significant factors that need to be considered. Foucault suggested the use of an archaeological process of analysis (Foucault 1966), as this would assist in uncovering differences and contradictions, and the way that compromise was negotiated. "In relation to a history of ideas that attempts to melt contradictions in the unity of an overall figure ...archaeology describes the different spaces of dissension" (de Certeau 1988: 50).

### **Scope and focus**

Early writings on modernism in architecture generally focussed on the Modern Movement as the outcome of an inevitable logical process (Pevsner 1936; Giedion 1941, among others). These writings show little regard for the contestation, mediation and negotiation that appears to have been taking place all over the world and focussed instead on the work of a relative minority of architects. Bhabha (1995), as mentioned above, in an essay on cultural diversity and difference, describes the notion of a 'third space' that challenged the development of cultural knowledge as

an integrated process and introduced the idea of ambivalence as a component of the construction of meaning. He describes the way in which the intervention of this negotiated space "quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing unifying force...It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew". He asserts that:

...the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or post-colonial provenance...(and) a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an inter-national culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity...By exploring this hybridity... this 'Third Space', we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the other of our selves (Bhabha 1995: 208-9).

I believe this assertion to be fundamental to research in a post colonial environment such as that which existed in Cape Town in this period. When this is linked to the discourse of modernism (but as 'programmatically modernism', rather than the avant-garde modernism as identified by Hilde Heynen)<sup>1</sup>, this was certainly an integral component of the redevelopment of central Cape Town. The project of modernity was manifested in Cape Town through reliance upon scientific, technological solutions to spatial and social concerns. Another proposition is that the dominant instrumentalisation of segregation - whilst initially a racist, values-based project - was bureaucratic and technocratic. Therefore, its spatial manifestation was also a technocratic one: rather than the ambiguous, negotiated manifestations of the nineteenth century; those of the twentieth century were precise and produced initially through the work of the planners, rather than the inhabitants, of space. (Tomer: 2006).

During this period there were also significant changes in the hegemonic perceptions of the city and this was substantiated by legislation introduced by the local city council. For example, the eradication of slums in the early 1930s served as a catalyst for spatial change and the dislocation of lived space as the city sought to re-create itself as a modern, rationally planned metropolis. Architects sometimes appeared to use the criteria of the modernist discourse as a mechanism to

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<sup>1</sup> Heynen in (1999) *Architecture & Modernity: A Critique* distinguishes between what she refers to as "programmatically modernism" and "transitory modernism". Programmatically modernism is identified as being essentially a project of progress and freedom. She examined what this means to theorists such as Habermas and finds two components: an irreversible emergence of autonomy in the fields of science, art and morality; and the notion of a project which has the potential to rationally organise and improve daily life. This is contrasted with the concept of transitory modernism, which relates to the desire for innovation, of breaking with tradition; of creating an aesthetic of rupture. This second meaning is perhaps most closely linked to the avant-garde movement in architecture.

wield social control on marginalized members of society; creating mechanisms of removal, exclusion, surveillance and control based on ethnicity.

## RESEARCH FOCUS

This research extends and broadens the investigation that was begun in an earlier study into the impact of the 1934 Slums Act on public housing in central Cape Town by contextualising the architectural responses to modernism as a construct and locating it within a wider social and political context. It is not a broad survey and categorisation of all the architecture of the city in the period between the two world wars, but specifically attempts to trace indications of the response to modernism and the contestations and negotiations that occurred as it was incorporated into contemporary architectural praxis. The focus has been on a range of relevant building typologies. However, the study does not examine the development of planning nor of housing programmes in any depth, other than to identify aspects of modernism in these fields. Both of these fields would constitute major fields of study in themselves. Since the study examines the negotiation process as manifested in the built fabric of the city it has also not traced any of the counter-modernist movements in any detail, other than noting their existence. Classifications such as 'Art Deco' have also been more cautiously approached, as this is a modern retro-classification that sometimes tends to obfuscate rather than clarify and has too frequently been used as a 'catch-all' for most buildings designed within this period.

There has been comparatively little architectural focus on the emergence of modernism in the architecture of South Africa in the twentieth century and hardly any examination of the underlying influences on its generators. The seminal work in this regard is Gilbert Herbert's doctoral thesis, subsequently published as *Martienssen & the international style. The modern movement in South African architecture. Architectural education, professional practice, journalism and achievements in Johannesburg, Pretoria/1920-40* (Herbert 1975). His work focussed on the way in which the Modern Movement was introduced into Johannesburg and the University of the Witwatersrand School of Architecture in the late Twenties and early Thirties, spearheaded by the endeavours of the architect and academic Rex Martienssen. In his research he examined the state of architectural education in South Africa at the time and the metamorphosis it underwent as it changed from an essentially Beaux Arts approach that was linked to a pupilage system of architectural education, to a more rigorously academic and professional basis, in line with international trends in architectural education. Thus reference is made to architectural education in the Cape and to the state of architectural practice in Cape Town, although this is done as a side issue to the main focus of his study and is used as a contrast to the developments that occurred in the then-Transvaal. He also examined the corpus of modern movement buildings that were designed in this period, and although largely based in Johannesburg and Pretoria, it also identified some architects in Cape Town and illustrated some of their buildings. The prime initiator and

promoter of modernism in South Africa he identifies as being Martienssen (1905-1942), and after his untimely death in 1942 he sees the movement losing its impetus.

But the structure of Herbert's thesis follows a format identified by Elizabeth Darling (2007) in her examination of modernism in Britain, where local provincialism is contrasted with European vibrancy and the importation of modernism is seen as a catalyst for change. Herbert's thesis tends to follow, in the Pevsner tradition, the apparent inability of South African architecture to find a way forward from the Arts and Crafts tradition, introduced and promoted by Herbert Baker and others of the so-called Baker School, towards modernism until a 'Pauline experience' occurred in the late Twenties—a complete schismatic moment when modernism was suddenly revealed. Darling identifies a series of prejudices inherent in this form of analysis.

First is a tendency to see architectural history as comprised solely by a series of 'actual monuments', and hence to analyse monuments primarily with reference to others, rather than relating them to the broader contexts within which architecture is embedded. This is paralleled by the tendency to therefore see architecture as something produced solely by architects and to focus on them as protagonists of change (Darling 2007:3).

Clive Chipkin's *Johannesburg Style* (1993) is much broader based and examines the architectural development in Johannesburg from the 1880s through to the 1960s. It does, however, because it is written as an overview of architectural development in that city, tends to be more inclusive and describes in some detail other modernist trends that developed simultaneously during the inter-war period.

Cape Town-based architectural research has tended to focus on the earlier periods in the architectural development of the city as part of the Cape Colony, such as Ronald Lewcock's *Architecture of the Cape Colony from 1795 to 1837* (Lewcock 1961), or Dennis Radford's *The Architecture of the Western Cape 1838-1901* (Radford 1980). Hans Fransen's *Old Buildings of the Cape* (2004) is an extension of earlier recording and research on early Cape buildings carried out by him and Dr. Mary Cooke in the early 1960s and is an extensive record of early Cape architecture. More recent research has focussed on aspects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Desmond Martin examined ecclesiastical architecture in the city in his dissertation *The Cape Town Church Building Boom 1880-1909* (Martin 1993) and B.D. Johnson's doctoral thesis, *Domestic Architecture at the Cape 1892-1912: Herbert Baker, his associates and his contemporaries* (Johnson 1987), examined the domestic architecture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while Nicholas Coetzer's thesis *The Production of the City as a White Space* (Coetzer 2003) selectively examines the domestic and residential architecture of the period between 1882 and 1935, with an emphasis on the British re-inscription of the domestic architecture of the city. Other dissertations have examined specific aspects of the city's built environment such as Noëleen Murray's *Imperial Landscape at Cape Town's Gardens* (Murray 2001) or Sharone

Tomer's *Examining a Boundary: Spatial Manifestations of Social Practice along the Buitengracht, Cape Town, 1652 – 2005* (Tomer 2006). *The Influences on the two Inner City Housing Projects of the Bo Kaap and District Six in Cape Town built between 1938 & 1944* (van Graan 2004) examined the impact of the Slums Act of 1934 on housing in the inner city and considered the socio-political context as well as the architectural responses.

In identifying a time frame for the study, it became clear that traces of modernism emerged in the late nineteenth century and that the trajectory did not end in 1948. However, as Bickford Smith et al suggest in a Chapter entitled 'The Emergence of the Modern City...1919-1945', it seemed that the First World War, 'hastened the modernisation of Cape Town' (Bickford Smith et al 1999: 62). They go on to say: 'between the wars Cape Town grew from a small commercial port to a modern industrial city. The merchants who had dominated the nineteenth-century economy gave way to a new breed of businessmen and industrialists, protected by Union economic policies' (Bickford Smith et al: 63). In addition, mechanisms for the control, separation and distancing of people on ethnic grounds, described as 'social engineering,' (Bickford Smith et al 1999: 62) became part of the modernist discourse in the city at this time, particularly as it sought to deal with the urban poor and slums in the inner city, through issues of health and housing.

The Second World War saw the Cape Town City Council (CTCC) developing ambitious housing and health programmes and the architecture shows no break from pre-war developments. Unlike places such as Britain where the war marked a clearer break in the development of architectural modernism, both private and public projects continued after the war in the same manner, with the design and construction of public housing projects continuing during the war when wartime restrictions on building materials effectively halted private developments. The victory of the Nationalist Party in the 1948 elections, however, marked the end of the negotiated, ambivalent phase of modernism. It became an uncontested mainstream movement and the new regime of Dr. DF Malan (1874-1959), leader of the Nationalist Party and incoming Prime Minister, adopted modernism as a means of creating and justifying a new legislated segregated identity based on ethnicity for the country under Afrikaner rule. This also marked the end of the initial negotiated phase of architectural modernism.

At an architectural conference held in Johannesburg in June 1951, Professor John Fassler of the School of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand, in his paper entitled, *The Future of Architecture in South Africa* said: "That we have reached a crossroads not only in South Africa but also in Europe and America is clear enough. An architectural revolution has been accomplished. The first flush of victory is over" (SAAR July 1951:167).

## Research framework and methodology

Structuralism, or at least which is grouped under this slightly too general name, is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other-that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually, structuralism does not entail denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history (Foucault 1967:1).

Historical research, although a specific form of research, is related to qualitative research in that it also uses documents, interviews, biographies and events or objects and their interpretation. Like quantitative research, it demands objectivity and acknowledges the principles of validity and reliability. History is a significant record, evaluation, systematic analysis and synthesis of evidence concerning human endeavour, according to Burns (1990). He goes on to describe it as "an integrated account of the relationships between persons, places, times and events... It is a reconstruction, undertaken in a spirit of critical enquiry" (Burns 1990:481).

Historical research, it must be acknowledged, has a stronger individual bias than more conventional qualitative research. Bozdođan (2001) suggests the concept of 'architectural culture' as a way of studying architecture within a specific socio-cultural context. She echoes the sentiments of Darling (2007) in suggesting that it should not be examined as "an autonomous, self-referential discipline interested in forms and form-making alone, but rather as a larger institutional, cultural, and social field with important political implications". She goes on to say that

The concept of architectural culture implies a cultural historian's approach to the buildings, projects and architectural texts that collectively constitute a 'discourse' about architecture...The architectural discourse of a particular place and time includes all the institutional practices- architectural schools, publications, exhibitions, competitions, and professional associations- that produce, reproduce, discredit, or lend credibility to discourses about architecture (Bozdođan 2001:12).

She suggests that the idea behind the study of architectural culture is not to explain the work through what was written or said about it, but rather to examine the ways in which what was written, spoken and built "*collectively confirm, interpret, contest or negotiate the political and ideological agendas of the time*" (Bozdođan 2001:12). Architecture is often examined as in isolation rather than being seen as the result of a process that has social as well as political roots and it is through a contextual examination of architecture that an understanding of architecture as a manifestation of these imperatives that gives a clearer understanding of the discourse.

This has been used as the basis for formulating both the research questions as well as the basis for the research.

## THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of the research is to examine the way in which modernity was introduced, contested, negotiated and adapted in the architecture of Cape Town in the period between 1918 and 1948.

- How was modernism negotiated in Cape Town?
- What were the predominant influences on architectural production in this period and its formal application?
- How does the architectural response relate to what was happening elsewhere in the world and in South Africa at the time and what caused the shifts in the response, and what were the parallels?
- What were the power structures that informed spatial production?
- Who were the key architects responsible for introducing modernism into the city?
- What was the nature of architectural debate in the local media at that time, both within and outside the profession?

### Outline of research strategies:

- Power structures: An examination of power structures, both national & local that exerted an influence on the contemporary built form will help to explain the influence of political issues on planning and architectural responses.
- Architectural Responses: Establishing international trends in architecture and architectural theory at the time. This would look the work produced at the epicentre of modernism, and the responses at the periphery, to find commonalities and discrepancies and highlight the negotiation process.
- The identification of buildings in Cape Town that meet the criteria for a negotiated architectural response and identifying the key architects. These need to be contrasted with the buildings that respond to the other two opposite approaches- avant-garde modernism and conservative classicism.
- Investigation of architectural education in Cape Town and a consideration of its impact on the architecture of the city.

In examining the manner in which modernism was introduced and negotiated in Cape Town this thesis seeks to identify the key influences on the negotiated modernist discourse in the city. It will be shown that there was an underlying concern with control and power that was to give modernism in Cape Town its unique characteristics as it was embodied into a project of social engineering on a citywide scale. Cape Town, more than any other city in South Africa embarked on a comprehensive project of modernism that encompassed all aspects of society from planning

issues, through concerns about the workplace, health and disease, to ambitious schemes, unequalled at the time in the rest of the country, to re-house its non-white population in a manner that parallels what James C. Scott (1998) described as 'Authoritarian High Modernism'. (Scott: 88-89) It is this form of the negotiation of modernism that made it unique not only in South Africa but also in relation to other cities in the world.

It is necessary, firstly, to locate the modernist discourse in architectural historiography. It is essential that not only what was said, but also that the manner in which the message was transmitted through the architectural media, is understood. The following chapter locates the modernist historiography in terms of what Tournikiotis (1999) describes as the evangelisation phase when modernism was being propounded in Europe and subsequently also in America as the way forward in creating a new architectural approach. This was done both in a manifesto form by architects such as Le Corbusier, (Le Corbusier 1923) but, very significantly, also strongly backed by photographic images that helped develop a modernist aesthetic that embodied stylistic attributes into a supposedly astylar approach to the production of space. This focus on the visual image underlay the approach to modernism in Cape Town as it was negotiated as a purely formalistic architectural language, unsupported by significant change in the way in which spaces were produced. The response to modernism is examined through modernist architectural historiography, both international as well as local, to determine the 'evangelisation' phase as well as the subsequent reflective phase.

## CHAPTER 2

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### CONTEXTUALISING MODERNIST HISTORIOGRAPHY

As identified in the rationale, the historiography of modernism in architecture generally focussed on the development of the avant-garde Modern Movement and disregarded any concurrent deviations. These writings showed little regard for the contestation, negotiation and adaptation that appears to have been taking place all over the world, and focussed instead on the work of a relative minority of architects. This leads to the erroneous assumption of an 'International Style' as described by Hitchcock & Johnson (1932), that was equally applied both at the centre of modernism in Europe and on the (colonial) periphery. Sibel Bozdoğan (2001), the Turkish architectural historian, asserts that although the modernist aesthetic became a universally rational and valid doctrine that was applied worldwide, the discourse is interpreted differently in various parts of the world as it is internalised by different cultures.

This difference lies between the abstracted concept of modernism, and the lived reality of its particular location. Bozdoğan draws attention to the hybridity and complexity of non-western societies, and argues that there are multiple and heterogeneous trajectories within the discourse of modernism. This is central to any consideration of the way in which early modernism was negotiated in Cape Town. It is equally critical to remember that architectural modernism appears internationally as a later development, after the introduction of modernism in socio-political terms. This is apparent in both Europe and elsewhere. In South Africa the notions of modernism in architectural form as exemplified by the avant-garde forms of the modern movement are really only apparent in the 1930s and in the case of Cape Town this could even be located only really from the mid-thirties onwards. However, political modernism emerges strongly after the First World War and modern planning in the 1920s.

#### Reflecting on the early proselytisers

The writing of books, which become influential, and even more the editing of magazines- what they choose to include, and very importantly how this material is framed- can be seen to create architectural discourse as much as anything does. The resulting emphasis on the visual as the means to comprehend modern architecture has meant that the architectural photograph can be interpreted as a misrepresentation of a more purposive modernism. The history of modernism has been shaped by the development of the visual media in parallel with the practice of modern architecture: the new architecture, new media and new photography worked together to mutual advantage. Had they not done so, the *forms* of modernism rather than any deeper level of its meaning or realization, might not have become so pervasive (Higgott 2007:12)

Since there was no academic support infrastructure for modern architectural discourse in Cape Town until the late Thirties when a school of architecture, as part of the university, was established, modernism was either introduced by architects who studied elsewhere, or through dissemination in contemporary literature. Given the socio-political structure of the city, this literature was essentially British-based, and thus the focus would have been on literature available in books and journals that were published in English. If we turn to the early twentieth century writings on modernism, we find that there are a series of seminal books that profoundly impacted globally on the notions of modernism in architecture. Most of the early books, as suggested by Higgott, relied heavily on photographic images to carry across the message, with less attention being given to the actual discourse of modernism. These establish a so-called evangelising framework. They are often concerned with how to do it, in many cases reducing the architecture to the facadism that they purported to reject. (Tournikiotis: 33)

In examining the historiography of modernism in architecture it is soon apparent that the issues around modernism have been extensively debated since the mid 1920s. The debates range from contemporary essays that sought to identify and justify the revolutionary developments in architecture both from a moral as well as an aesthetic basis to discourses that related these developments to notions of *Zeitgeist* and social ordering. What is also apparent, however, is the emergence of a powerful iterative trajectory that identifies and reinforces the development and progression of the modernist mainstream, as if there had been no other possibilities or directions. This process is examined as the de facto course of modern architecture with little consideration being given to any other possible contestations or negotiations that might have occurred, and is substantiated by significant genealogies.

Tournikiotis in his book *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (1999) categorizes the historiographies using three hypotheses to analyse the texts. Firstly there is a historical dimension that establishes the relational structure between present, past and future, and that creates a genealogy. Secondly, there is a social dimension that links concept to a social programme. Finally, there is an architectural dimension whereby "*a position about the essence of architecture*" (Tournikiotis 1999: 14) is projected onto the text.

This historiographic development is particularly apparent in the earlier literature where the importance of contesting the normative architectural development was paramount and any consideration for other alternatives were subjugated to the main thrust of architectural polemic that sought to promote the avant garde of the modern movement. Tournikiotis (1999) identifies the early histories, which were describing contemporary architectural developments within a terra incognita, as discourses that "*stated rules and hypotheses about the implementation of another and still wider set of projects: those of the new architecture in a new society*". (Tournikiotis: 2) He also identifies the theme in early writings of prescriptive criteria, aesthetic as well as technological,

that defined modernism in architecture. This is apparent in the writings of Le Corbusier (1923) as well as Hitchcock and Johnson. (1932)

There is a heavy reliance in much of the early contemporary writing on photographic images to carry the message of modernism, often backed up by a somewhat less incisive text. Bruno Taut's *Modern Architecture* (1929), written in English, typifies this genre with the book's 212 pages dominated by 284 large photographic images. Taut's discourse is strongly architectural and not a critical discourse. It develops a genealogy for modernism, and specifically *his* modernism, that traces it back to the work of Schinkel in the early nineteenth century.

In the earliest writings in English, perhaps the most influential of all was the (mis) translation by Frederick Etchells in 1927 of Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture (Towards a New Architecture)* first published in French in 1923. In the foreword, Etchells, seeks to allay fears about the revolutionary language of Corbusier and refers to the significance of the engineer 'preoccupied with function' who produces 'new and strange forms' (Le Corbusier 1923: vi). This leads directly to Corbusier's own preoccupation with engineering forms in the illustrations. These focus heavily on industrial structures as well as ships, aeroplanes and motorcars- the new technological forms of the period. Corbusier's text is heavily laden with slogans and could certainly be seen as a manifesto for change in architectural thinking and a rejection of the then current predominantly Beaux Arts-dominated architecture. There are guidelines as to how the new architecture needed to be created. The first section, the 'Argument', summarizes the text in sections starting with the 'Engineer's aesthetic and architecture'. Corbusier goes on to identify 'three reminders'-namely, 'Mass', 'Surface', and 'Plan'- a move away from the contemporary facadist architecture towards the plan as a generator of form 'The plan proceeds from within to without; the exterior is the result of the interior'. The invocation: 'A great epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit...the "styles" are a lie. Style is a unity of principle animating all the work of an epoch, the result of a state of mind, which has its own special character. Our own epoch is determining, day by day, its own style' (Etchells in Le Corbusier : 3) clearly presents a zeitgeist argument for change. He concludes his opening by saying: "If we challenge the past, we shall learn that a style belonging to our own period has come about; and there has been a Revolution". The architecture that Le Corbusier uses to argue his case is largely his own, particularly in the section dealing with housing. The engineering images are evocative and appear to be seen as forms and form generators, which contradicts Corbusier's argument regarding form generation. His text, in some ways, only presents a new stylistic argument, for form based on engineering forms, rather than the astylar architecture that he espouses.

Reaction to the book was strong, particularly in Cape Town where the architectural magazine, *Architect, Builder & Engineer*, launched an explosive response:

If Beauty exists in spite of the slide rule machinations of the man behind it, then the provocative and cocksure French author is lost in the greatest darkness of error. He bid us admire a city of multi-storeyed houses, which he has designed for our instruction, but

which cannot fail to provide the thoughtful with amusement...he needs Raymond Unwin to set him right here. It has been demonstrated beyond all cavil that the economic waste in storeyed building to the nth degree is astounding...

(Architect Builder & Engineer March 1927)

This was followed by an editorial the following year:

Le Corbusier, *Vers une Architecture*: To one prominent critic, and to many who have not attained to prominence, the houses which Corbusier has erected in actuality or in dreamland are but 'filing cabinets for families', lacking all grace, spirituality, emotion, beauty- call it what you will- call it Art and have done with it. To another class of readers, the book speaks of Truth, naked and unashamed, of a dropping of shams and of the adoption of a new outlook on the life and practice of design. To us the determination of Corbusier's place as a vaunted leader and director of thought in regard to modern design is easy- he isn't one! (Architect Builder & Engineer, Oct 1928)

In Henry-Russell Hitchcock & Philip Johnson's influential book originally published in 1932 as *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*, Alfred Barr, in the introduction, points out the controversial nature of modernism when Hitchcock says that the "assertion of a new style will seem arbitrary and dogmatic". He describes the approach of the authors by identifying their definition of modernism as following three aesthetic principles.

Emphasis upon volume- space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and, lastly, dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament (Hitchcock & Johnson 1932: 29).

The authors assert that "Today a single new style has come into existence... it is unified and inclusive, not fragmentary and contradictory... there is now a single body of discipline" (Hitchcock & Johnson: 36) "Architecture is always a set of actual monuments, not a vague corpus of theory". (Hitchcock & Johnson: 37) The book, which accompanied an exhibition, also has a large body of photographs, captioned so as to identify when the work meets their criteria for the new architecture. "The proportions are rather heavy..." (Hitchcock & Johnson: 141) or "There is too much variety in the size and spacing of the first floor windows in an attempt to achieve a progressive rhythm." (Hitchcock & Johnson: 139). Hitchcock had earlier written on the impact of modernism on architects and the resultant debate that polarized architects in America, leading to the emergence of a group of architects who attempted to create a synthesis between these polarities. Striner, writing on Art Deco architecture notes:

In 1928, noted commentator Henry-Russell Hitchcock Jr., broadly sketched the character and interaction of what he regarded as the key design tendencies of the times. They were essentially past-related, future-related, and mediational. In the first group were "Traditionalists"- those whose "controlling idea" demanded the "adaptation of the various architectural of the past to the needs of the moment." At the other pole were the "New Pioneers"- the radical modernists seeking "purity" and "austere beauty" through "ascetic avoidance of ornament." Finally, there were the "New Traditionalists"- those who were "retrospective in their tendency to borrow freely

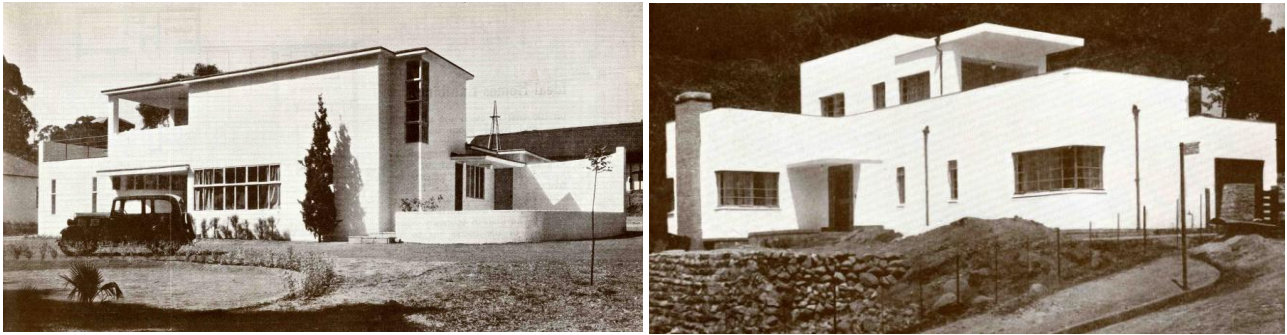
from the past" yet "modern in that they feel free to use and combine...the elements thus borrowed (with) new materials developed by science, controlling them so that they do not shock the eye" (Striner 1990: 24).

This position can be identified in the architecture of the period in South Africa, and specifically, in the Cape. The "New Traditionalists" were the majority of Cape Town architects in the late Twenties and early Thirties who looked somewhat askance at the developments of the Modern Movement. Despite the vituperative comments on Le Corbusier in the Cape-based journal *Architect, Builder & Engineer*, the early South African media responses to the Modern Movement in contemporary books are appropriately conciliatory, as highlighted by L. Cumming-George's *Architecture in South Africa*, published in two volumes in 1933 and 1934.

Cummings-George describes his first book as a record of the modern buildings of South Africa and he cites the English writer Alys Fane Trotter's *Old Cape Colony* and Dorothea Fairbridge's *Historic Homes* as earlier writings on this theme. He says: "Cape Dutch architecture, particularly domestic, is one of our most artistic and national assets, but side by side with it, have grown up our English styles in domestic work, *together with modernism which is at once an expression of our age and a new art*" (Cummings-George 1933: 3). The books take the form of catalogues of buildings built over a fairly long period. They are lavishly illustrated and the text takes the form of captions rather than a critical discourse, unlike say the near contemporary writing of Hitchcock and Johnson (1932). The changes in the second volume (1934) are greater, as the foreword suggests "one will readily perceive the change that is taking place in the architectural world. The modern note is emphasising itself, but apart from that, South Africa is creating an architecture which, while it may follow the modern trend, is distinctly and definitely South African". Cummings-George goes on to explain that the first volume showed architecture 'of the older school' although he noted wistfully that 'here and there the modern note crept in'. The second volume records 'advanced expressions' along with the more conservative work. (Cummings-George 1934: 3) Descriptions, typically, are such as that used to describe the high-rise office block, Dunvegan Chambers in Johannesburg: "The building externally has been designed on straightforward up-to-date lines" (Cummings-George 1934: 35). In his comment on the house by Douglass Cowin for the Ideal Homes Exhibition in Johannesburg he says:

"We have seen recently erected here in South Africa the 'machine' type of house in which Continental examples have been slavishly adhered to, regardless of vastly different climatic conditions". He goes on to criticize

Those whom we may term the 'novelists' in architecture, who see in the modern movement nothing more than an opportunity to be different, and whose work represents much that is good, distorted and embellished by ornament. If then, logic tells us that no ornament is necessary on our buildings, how are we to make them beautiful, for it is essential that as works of art they should be beautiful? The solution lies in the handling of the masses, proportion, form and colour (Cummings-George 1934: 9).



**Figure 2: Douglass Cowin, Johannesburg, left & A.C. Johnston, Oranjezicht Cape Town, right. (Cummings-George 1934: 9 & 87)**

This is very closely aligned with Hitchcock & Johnson's criteria. It is interesting to note that a few pages later he describes a house in Park View, Johannesburg, as "This house, which is of the more modern school, though not of the ultra-modern type". Contradictions inevitably abound, and one finds in his description of the OK Bazaars building in Darling Street, Cape Town by WH Grant "In design it follows modernistic tendencies, and has a clean-lined austerity until the top storeys are reached, where the decorative precast stone strikes a refreshing and attractive note". He does warn, in his description of a house by AC Johnston in Oranjezicht (above right) : "Cape Town has proved rather conservative in following the modern trend in domestic architecture. While this is not an ultra modern residence, it shows the most contentious development, the flat roof, with a reasonable amount of modernity". (Cummings-George 1934: 87)

The importance of the flat roof in modern architecture is further emphasized by an article by Cowin entitled: '*The Flat roof in domestic architecture*' (Cummings-George 1934: 101) in which Cowin argues that the flat roof is climatically appropriate for hot countries rather than pitched roofs and discusses the practicalities of construction and waterproofing- a major problem at the time. As the English historian, Alan Powers, points out 'flat roofs were an important signal of Modernism and yet they were also one of the main causes of scepticism and opposition'. (Powers 2005: 24) Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson gave the impression that modern architecture was exclusively based on box-like forms. Powers attempts to come to terms with the symbolic link between the flat roof and modernism and links it to the writings of Gaston Bachelard who "interpreted houses as images of the individual psyche, with the implication that a flat roof allows a swifter passage upwards to a kind of transcendental state, which may also be interpreted as a sexual arousal" (Powers 2005: 25). Whittock (1940), in his evaluation of the significance of Mendelsohn's work, also alludes to the theory that art arises from sexual repression, linking it to then-current psychological theory regarding the conflict between the unconscious and the ego. (Whittock: 1940: 161-162)

In 1933, a manifesto for modernism was published in Johannesburg called *Zerohour*, which sought "to bring into closer relationship the public consciousness of architecture in its many manifestations". The publication criticises the contemporary architecture in South Africa, saying

that "the characteristic south african house has the style and essence of 1908, or what is worse it is a degenerative type. where we should be rational we hide in sentiment". (Lower case as originally printed) It focussed on the work of Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe internationally, and on the work of the Transvaal Group who followed the ideals of the modern movement, such as McIntosh in Pretoria and Martienssen and Hanson in Johannesburg. (Zerohour 1933)

But there was to be a backlash against modernism, particularly in Britain, where in 1934 Sir Reginald Blomfield, an old-school architect, published *Modernismus*, a withering attack on modern architecture that was not particularly well received. In the same year Sir Giles Gilbert Scott commented on modern architecture that it had a limited vocabulary and was forced to rely a great deal on its materials. His views were published in the Cape Town media:

If by modern architecture we mean a style of design and building suited to modern ways, i.e. the needs of our time, then we can do without the word 'modern' altogether and simply refer to architecture (rightly so called) which has in all ages answered the needs of the times... We are eclectic because we have no singleness of purpose.

(AB&E Feb 1934: 7)

The editorial of the same issue adds to the derision heaped on modernism:

(Scott) realises the mental posturing that goes on behind the production of much of the work that is called modern. That posturing is related to the attitude of mind that suggests modernism as being an expression of genius; 'Genius is to madness close allied': therefore since much of modernism is madness, it is genius. A syllogism! A certain type of modernistic design and designer demands that the window of the room must be in the corner. So much the worse for that type of modernism.

(Architect Builder & Engineer, February 1934: 6)

Nikolaus Pevsner's book, *Pioneers of the Modern Movement, from William Morris to Gropius*, first published in 1936 traces the genealogy of modernism from William Morris (an important starting point for English modernism as it carried the essential credentials of the Arts & Crafts Movement) through Sullivan, Wright and the German writings of Hermann Muthesius and Alfred Lichtwark on *Sachlichkeit* and *Maschinestil*. This sets the stage for the fundamental aptness of the German Bauhaus architecture, and, in the process, sets up the mythological genealogy of English modernism. Fundamental to his approach is the German core reasoning of the spirit of the age (*Zeitgeist*). Pevsner links art and architecture in his writings to reach a description of "The Modern Movement in architecture, in order to be fully expressive of the twentieth century had to possess both qualities, the faith in science and technology, in social science and rational planning, and the romantic faith in speed and the roar of machines." (Pevsner 1960: 210) For Pevsner this was exemplified in the work of Walter Gropius who he sees as the key figure of the Modern Movement rather than Le Corbusier. Tournikiotis (1999) describes the polemical structure of Pevsner's approach as using the device of projecting opposites, the antithesis, that then justifies the thesis. (Tournikiotis

1999: 32). David Watkins (1977) suggests that Pevsner was proposing "a morally, socially, politically, and artistically cohesive package from which no one must be at liberty to abstain". (Watkins 1977: 95)

Possibly one of the most significant and influential books on the modern movement was Siegfried Giedion's *Space Time & Architecture*. (1941) Gropius referred to this as the standard work on the development of modern architecture. The book, according to Watkins (1977: 53) suggested that some permanent modern architectural consensus was imminent. Giedion also rejected the notion of style saying that the term should not be used to describe modern architecture. He considered that this would result in a formalistic approach. He attempts to consolidate modern architecture as cohesive and as a fundamentally new form by establishing its genealogy. Giedion identifies three phases in the history of architecture. The architecture of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece belong to the first phase, during which the conception of architecture combines volumes that interlock with one another without any real concern for interior space. In the second phase, which begins with the Romans and ends in the eighteenth with the decline of Baroque, the focus is on interior space. The nineteenth century Giedion sees as a period of transition that used all the styles of the second period in a disconnected and incoherent way. The modern period forms the third and final, heroic phase. In this phase modern architecture strives towards a synthesis of the concept of volume from the first phase, with the concept of interior space of the second period. Watkins is scathing in his comment on the book, which he describes as 'pretentious'. This equally applies to the title and text "that the architectural synthesis he is proposing will have an unchallengeable position because of its harmony with the Space-Time conception of the universe defined in modern physics". (Watkins: 56) He explains Giedion's approach to the revelation of the "synthesis of apparently conflicting tendencies of the modern world" as being derived from the neo-Hegelian *Geistesgeschichte* with which Giedion was brought up. He goes on to link Giedion's view of the movement towards architectural self-consciousness as a strength that exposes the truth behind the architecture, to the teachings of Burckhardt who argued persuasively for the importance of *Zeitgeist* in the measure of the veracity of a work of art or architecture. (Watkins: 56)

The essay written by Pevsner for the special December 1939 edition of *The Architectural Review* in England is highly significant. However, the outbreak of war in September of that year led to the special edition being abandoned, and it remained unpublished until 2007 when the Twentieth Century Society published it (Charlton et al 2007:11). Pevsner addressed a number of issues under separate sub-headings, all of which are pertinent to the issue of Cape Town's negotiated modernism of the period.

He starts by examining the façade treatment of commercial buildings under the heading: The Messel-motif in commercial buildings. This refers to the breaking up of the structural bays by a sequence of uprights, where vertical ribbons of fenestration are divided by projecting uprights. He traces this back to the 1904 design of the Wertheim Store in Berlin by Alfred Messel, and Josef

Olbrich's Tietz Store at Dusseldorf of 1908. The genealogy of the motif is traced through to British commercial buildings from the Edwardian period through to the department buildings of the late Thirties.<sup>1</sup>

He differentiates between the rhythmical fenestration described here and the strict verticalism obtained by alternating between uninterrupted uprights and recessed windows. This form he traces back to Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building at Buffalo of 1903 and Peter Behrens' AEG factory in Berlin in 1912. This is traced through John Burnet's seminal Adelaide House of 1924 to a large number of buildings in London. Again there are a number of buildings in Cape Town that follow this form.

He goes on to discuss the Paris Exhibition of 1925, which he saw as "*the fountainhead of the Modern Movement in Britain. Several of the most opposed tendencies in architecture and decoration are to be traced back to it.*" (Charlton et al: 20) He starts by examining what he calls "French Florid, a peculiar type of decoration which occurred in many of the French pavilions". He goes on to derisively describe 'Jazz, that vulgar jagged ornament which swamped Britain immediately after the exhibition'. This 'nasty style of ornament' he traces back to German Expressionism. He points to the similarity of the angular ornamentation to the details of the house, New Ways in Northampton designed by Peter Behrens<sup>2</sup>.

Pevsner begins his discussion on the International Modern Movement by saying that it is "*the synthesis of two apparently contradictory tendencies, the impermeability of the cube put up by human hands in opposition to nature, and the unhindered admission of light into the inside of a building by means of a free fluctuation of air and light*". (Charlton et al: 21) These principles, he points out, can be traced back to the Italian Renaissance. He cites the 1925 Bauhaus buildings by Walter Gropius and the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau at the Paris exhibition of the same year as examples of these two tendencies, but draws no comparison with British buildings here. He does, however, go on to say that Le Corbusier's chief merit is "*to use the pretext of a house for creating a*

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<sup>1</sup> The D.H. Evans building of 1935-7 that he makes reference to in this regard was designed by Louis Blanc, who designed the Stuttards building in Cape Town at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> The angled central window was to be much copied in South Africa and reached its zenith in its use by Fred Glennie in his 1934 design of the Old Mutual building in Cape Town.

*new conception of architectural space as an abstract art.*" (Charlton et al: 22) From him, Pevsner also sees the principle of free grouping of buildings as well as the use of piloti to lift buildings off the ground. The use of a shaped porch or entrance canopy is often used in the Corbusier fashion to express the transition from building to the 'free rhythm' of the natural surroundings. He also attributes the use of small concrete balconies and uncovered external staircases to him. He ascribes the "popularity of another Corbusier motif, the port-hole... (to) its associative value... the similarity of the modern house...with the modern liner."

In the period after the Second World War, architectural writing took Modernism to be the *sine qua non*. It simply forms part of the historical genealogy. Bruno Zevi (1957) is insightful in his evaluation of modernism, but his work was initially only published in Italian and only appears in English much later, thus had no impact on the work under consideration. What is interesting, though, is that he identified modern architecture as being based on the Jewish concept of space-time, as opposed to the Greek concept of space that forms the basis of classicism. Greek thought allows for existence without movement, whereas in Jewish thought, being is inconceivable without movement (Tournikiotis: 56). Zevi believed that architecture was useful to us, not through its *form* (Greek concept), but its *use* (Jewish concept). This enabled him to admire the work of the Expressionist, Eric Mendelsohn, who had been largely played down by the earlier historians in favour of the Bauhaus architects whom Zevi considered to be static. Ultimately, Zevi's view of modernism is utopian, and he does not consider any of the other options that were available to architects of the heroic period of modernism in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **Situating modernism in South Africa**

There was no writing on the impact of modernism on South African architecture until the 1970s. As described in Chapter 1, Gilbert Herbert's book, *Martienssen and the International Style* (1975) examines the introduction of the modern movement into South Africa in the 1930s. Here it was essentially focussed in Johannesburg, led by architects such as Rex Martienssen, John Fassler, Bernard Cooke and Norman Hanson. Herbert refers to the work of Roberts & Small, Max Policansky and Andrews & Niegeman in Cape Town as coming close to the ideals of the modern movement. He quotes Prof. Pryce Lewis, of the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town, who suggested that the work of the 'Transvaal School' was influential in the Cape, perhaps more so than 'overseas philosophic movements', but there is little evidence of this until the post-war period. He conceded: "On the whole I think we looked at the Transvaal achievement with envy and with detachment as something rather remote and without possibility of realisation here" (Herbert: 226). Herbert notes that John Fassler wrote despairingly of the Cape Town architects: "It is obviously impossible to even venture any discussion on architectural topics which verge on the modern. What a crowd! The results are everywhere apparent" (Herbert: 153). It must be remembered that the benchmark for modernism in South Africa that was being applied by architects such as Martienssen and Fassler was that of Le Corbusier who developed close links with the so-called

'Transvaal Group'. They took a narrow, radical view of modernism, uncompromising, with a rejection of any historical context. This was easier in Johannesburg; a relatively new city, which preferred not to look back to its mining-town roots, but rather forward to a brave new world.

Herbert claims that "Cape Town, the other principal centre of architectural journalism and architectural education was solidly conservative; and its path to modern architecture had few landmarks" (Herbert: 153). His view exemplifies the differing attitudes taken to modernism in South Africa and is questionable since he uses the work of a small group of Transvaal architects as the basis for his comments, ignoring the numerous dissenting architects in Johannesburg. Herbert suggests that the Cape was encouraged by the work being done in Johannesburg, but that it was not related to the work of the modern movement architects of the Transvaal, nor was it regionally derived, but rather that it was drawn from overseas sources, and specifically: "the very diffident and derivative English architects, or the work of Dudok" (Herbert: 226). There was, he concedes, some architectural merit in some of the work, "but it represented a dilution of intensity, when compared with the archetypal work in the Transvaal". He linked this to the contemporary architectural media in Johannesburg and Cape Town: "This state of dynamic tension between the Cape and the hinterland, in the case of the architectural journal, paralleled that which existed in education. The rivalry, which existed, stemmed from hostilities on both sides, traditional in nature. Neither side was guiltless, when it came to putting provincial partisanship before the broader issue of national unity. But the upshot of these separatist tendencies was to isolate the Cape from the mainstream of development, and to consolidate the Transvaal in its dominant position, as the centre of influence, and the focus of initiative in the architectural world" (Herbert: 226-227).

Martin, in her examination of South African architecture of the 1930s points out that "the architecture of the 1930s in South Africa was characterized by extraordinary diversity and complexity, and by the segmentation of the architectural profession into different camps- Beaux-Arts classicism, art deco, and the International Style" (Martin 1994: 9). She highlights the relational issues that informed the divergent approaches taken in South Africa in the 1930s as modernism was debated and negotiated in the local media and suggests that "The divergences were profound and palpable; the congruencies- the overlaps, shifts, and affinities linking the three dominant styles- were subtle and persuasive" (Martin: 17). She also alludes to the intense debate that took place in the media and says that "in the journals, such as *The South African Architectural Record*, the battle of styles was fought, but from the beginning modernism was triumphant... The architectural profession was critical of the tenets of the Modern Movement" (Martin: 10).

Modernism in South Africa was a highly contested issue and the media was to play a significant role as the terrain of contestation and negotiation, with strongly regionally held positions. The contrast in position between 'north' and 'south' was largely an issue that related to the control of the architectural media in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Rex Martienssen, the primary advocate of the Modern Movement in South Africa, edited the Johannesburg-based *South African Architectural*

Record during the 1930s. It was to him that Le Corbusier in 1935 saying "how touched he was to find "a youthful conviction, a feeling for architecture and a great desire to attain a philosophy in these things... in that faraway spot in Africa, beyond the equatorial forests," the Modern Movement in South Africa found acknowledgement of its excellence" (Martin: 10). This link to the fountainhead of the Modern Movement emphasized the divergence between Johannesburg and Cape Town where *The Architect Builder and Engineer* was controlled by a very conservative group of older practitioners, such as William Delbridge (1878-1946), and Herbert Brownlee (1885-1947) and resistant to the schismatic change propounded in the north. In this journal then, the issue was hotly contested and, ultimately, through negotiation, a mediated position was reached.

### Historiographic reflections

To think historically is to see myriad changes and alternative possibilities as well as broad patterns. This does not entail nostalgia for an illusory past or limitations on present-day freedoms. The relative clarity of earlier circumstances makes it easier to discern such possibilities in the murky confusion of our own time, encouraging diversions from the usual path of passive acceptance or antagonistic opposition.

(Wright 2008: 276)

In the Fifties, historians had begun to dismantle the utopian view of modernism as they examined the relationship between the intention of the architect and the completed work. In the Sixties the robustness of modernism was challenged, and a more heterogeneous view of the period was being taken.

Perhaps one of the most significant books to challenge the worldview on modernism was Peter Collins' *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (1965). This is described as being of catalytic importance (Tournikiotis 1999). Collins attempted to define the principles of architecture with the intention of reintroducing the theory of building into architectural practice. He put his work forward as a critical and substantive integration of the established histories of architecture. He criticized the architects of the International Style for being form givers. He is critical of historians such as Pevsner and Giedion for founding the genealogy of this architecture on the evolution of forms and thus creating a schism between modern architecture and the historicism of the nineteenth century. Unlike other historians, he refused to exclude the nineteenth century ideals from his book. He saw the pluralism of the nineteenth century as a consciousness of different histories. Significantly, he introduces the position of a "veracious eclecticism" that is based on freedom of choice. As Tournikiotis points out Collins proposes "*an architectural philosophy that follows the spirit of a higher rational eclecticism*"(Tournikiotis: 184). It is important to note that he rejected the overly romantic indifferentism of architects who whimsically switched styles, as this was his criticism of the entire twentieth century. The consequence of his argument is the scope for the retrieval of appropriate

architectural components from different contexts and then synthesizing them into a coherent, albeit heterogeneous system. This view of Collins is a significant departure point for considering the emergence and negotiation of modernism in the architecture of Cape Town.

This argument is carried through in the writings of William Curtis as presented in his book *Modern Architecture since 1900*, published in 1982, taking a broader view of the way that modernism was negotiated and adapted. Curtis challenges the notion propounded by Hitchcock of "a single true style that relegates any deviants to a historical dustbin". (Curtis 1982: 234). He points out that the majority of buildings built in 1930 were continuations of earlier traditions and questions the validity of a *Zeitgeist* when he says, "It is wrong then to pin a style to a particular 'historical moment'". (Curtis: 236). He also includes the omission of Expressionism and Art Deco from contemporary treatises. The latter he admits:

Scarcely presents coherent stylistic entity and it has to be admitted that there was little of lasting architectural value in it...In each of these cases, an inherited armature of Beaux-Arts axial planning was cloaked in modern materials and elaborately decorated and colourful wall surfaces (Curtis: 236).

He goes on to describe Art Deco "as a middle-brow bridge between modernism and consumerism". (Curtis: 236) By implication, this would describe so-called Art Deco architecture as an eclectic mediated modernism. His view corresponds with Martin's comment that

Art deco architecture was aligned with eclecticism and historicism, its underlying philosophy tending to be conservative rather than radical, and in form and planning the buildings are axial symmetrical in the Beaux-Arts manner. This is very different from the asymmetry and fragmentation of form that characterize the buildings of the modern movement, and the opposition to surface ornamentation (Martin; 17).

Mordaunt Crooks (1987), in his examination of the 'way of building, codified in imagistic style' (Mordaunt Crooks:11) in *The Dilemma of Style*, critically considers the emergence and contradictions of English modernism, viewed from a Post-Modernist perspective. The viewpoint is particularly pertinent in Cape Town, as the introduction and reaction to modernism, closely parallels it, both philosophically, and because of the overwhelmingly strong English influence in the city in the first half of the twentieth century. He describes two opposite conditions for aesthetics: extrinsic or intrinsic. The nineteenth century Romantic movement ascribed to the former, while the Modern Movement, returning to the principles of classicism, argued for the latter; specifically, the authority of function. His examination of the English Arts & Crafts movement's basis in a search for an elusive, organic vernacular has a strong parallel in Herbert Baker's Cape Dutch style. As modern design emerged after World War 1, Mordaunt Crooks examines the changing attitude of William Lethaby (1857-1931), a founder of the Art Workers' Guild and Professor of Design at The Royal College of Art until 1918. Shortly before his death, Lethaby had reflected on the changes wrought by modernism. He said: "I greatly fear that a modernist fashion will be imported as a style and not

arrive as a natural growth... 'Modernism' as an inverted archaeology is quite different from experimenting for ourselves and being modern". (Mordaunt Crooks: 236) Interestingly, Mordaunt Crooks points out that nearly all the early leaders of the Modern Movement in England had roots abroad. This is certainly equally true in Cape Town. Here, it was often the case that locally born architects had been trained abroad- and the schools of architecture preferred were in England. Mordaunt Crooks also implies that Le Corbusier was misunderstood in Britain and that he was hoisted on his petard that Utility=Beauty. He stresses the importance of aesthetic expression and says that:

Architecture without design- in effect, style-less style- is a contradiction in terms. Style in architecture is indeed a way of building codified as image. But its basis is a complex dialectic between form and function.

(Mordaunt Crooks: 244)

Ultimately it is important to consider the framing of the debate on the nature of modernism in terms of the critical evaluation that is presented by Hilde Heynen in her book *Architecture and Modernity: a Critique* (1999). Heynen begins her critique of architecture and modernism with a search for the meanings of the word and the concept of 'modernity'. She identifies it as "the element that mediates between a process of socio-economic development known as modernisation and subjective responses to it in the form of modernist discourses and movements." (Heynen 1999:10)

Heynen goes on to distinguish between what she refers to as "programmatic modernism" and "transitory modernism" (Heynen: 11). Programmatic modernism is identified as being essentially a project of progress and freedom. She examines what this means to theorists such as Habermas and finds two components: an irreversible emergence of autonomy in the fields of science, art and morality; and the notion of a project which has the potential to rationally organise and improve daily life. This is contrasted with the concept of transitory modernism, which relates to the desire for innovation, of breaking with tradition; of creating an aesthetic of rupture. This second meaning is perhaps most closely linked to the avant-garde movement in architecture. Heynen sees the avant-garde as radicalising the basic principle of modernity- "all norms, forms and conventions have to be broken; everything that is stable must be rejected, every value negated." (Heynen: 27) She uses this to contextualise the modern movement as an architectural avant-garde of the 1920s and 30s.

Of considerable significance to this thesis is the study by the Turkish historian Sibel Bozdoğan of the introduction of modernism into Turkey after the proclamation of the Turkish republic under Mustafa Kemal, entitled *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*. (2001). She emphasizes the strong Euro-centricity of most studies of modernist doctrine. Yet modernism claimed universal validity and rationality. Bozdoğan identifies the way in which "this imported ideology was interpreted, justified, modified and contested". (Bozdoğan :12) She points out that the more conservative form of modernism found in Turkey was mostly a stripped down

classicism, rather than the canonic aesthetic of the International Style. She identifies contradictory trends in Turkish modernism, where, for example, architects sometimes privileged the aesthetics, whereas at other times they rejected the stylistic implications in favour of the principles of rationalism and functionalism. Turkish architects also attempted to reconcile the universality of modernism with the specificity of national- much as was to happen in South Africa under Afrikaner Nationalism. Bozdoğan stresses the need for a distinction to be made between modern architecture and 'high modernism'. Modern architecture she sees as a critical discourse "that defied received notions and established canons of architecture" (Bozdoğan: 7). She points out an emergent field of study of the hybridity and complexity of non-Western societies.

The scholarly trend now is expose multiple and heterogeneous trajectories...Looking at different experiences in different places and circumstances is the most effective way that we can ensure that modern architecture, traditionally reified by both its supporters and opponents, becomes historically situated, contextualised, and most importantly, politicised (Bozdoğan: 9).

This aspect of Bozdoğan's approach has informed the research method of this study.

Alan Powers' study of the modern movement in Britain (Powers 2005) usefully identifies the beginnings of modernism in architectural schools in Britain after the First World War. He quotes R.A. Duncan, a teacher at the Architectural Association who recalled that students entering the school in this period questioned things on an unprecedented scale. As was the case in South Africa, he says that in the Twenties, Le Corbusier was taken less seriously than say the 1925 Decorative Arts exhibition in Paris and this gave rise to the notion of 'Modernistic' design, which later is linked to Art Deco. Powers sees a blurring of the terminological difference between 'modernistic' and 'modern', with the recognition of middle ground where they overlap. (Powers 2005:15) Powers sees the decade of modernism in Britain really spanning from 1930-1940 (Powers 2005:18) and he also points out "the fringes are in some ways more fascinating and fall into several categories, including Art Deco and stripped classicism" (Powell 2005: 8).

The same is probably true of Cape Town. Powers gives consideration to the materials associated with modernism, specifically the use of a flat roof, concrete framing and walling, and the implications of conservative building regulations on the execution of these ideas. The book is largely a catalogue of modern movement buildings by specific architects, and he acknowledges the difficulties in making choices, given the pluralism of modernism in Britain.

One cannot simply apply the principles of avant-garde modernism to the built fabric in South Africa in order to determine whether or not they represented 'modernity'. Architects in the city were debating the concept of modernism and what it meant, as much as the architects quoted by Bozdoğan (2001) were in Turkey. Modernism is a contested terrain, and by examining the professional media at that time, it appears that there is a negotiated modernism that appears in

Cape Town, and doubtlessly elsewhere. Thereafter, the forms of avant-garde modernism were read as a 'style' and applied to the built form. They are broken down into elements and combined with more traditional forms and compositions to create a compromised modernism that relates to the concept of modern eclecticism as identified by Porphyrios (1982). As Kurt Jonas, the Johannesburg-based architect and academic acerbically described 'modernistic' houses:

With senseless corner windows; with a flat roof, which is only applied as a modern feature without being utilised in any way to free the plan beneath; with glass-brick, bull's-eyes; meaningless curves, and still more meaningless corners; with horizontal glazing bars painted carmine; in short with a sprinkling of 'modern' features, which is as lavish as it is ridiculous (Jonas 1938:102).

The eclectic form that Jonas complained about, the South African architectural historian Chipkin describes in his book *Johannesburg Style* (1993) as borrowing "Indiscriminately from the disciplines of the modern movement (but it) remained nevertheless tied by an unsevered umbilical cord to Edwardian and Beaux-Arts classicism." He goes on to note that: "It is surely ironic for a style so obsessed with innovation and newness that behind the surface stylisms stand the four-square axial symmetry, vestigial orders and heaviness of earth-bound Edwardian classicism" (Chipkin 1993: 94-95). The rejection of the avant-garde modernism of the International Style in Cape Town appears to have been countered with an acceptance of a more mediated notion of what 'modernism' was. Chipkin describes the reaction by commercial architects in Johannesburg to the Modern Movement: "The commercial architects were able to take this in their stride...including the stylisms of the modern movement. This surrogate modernism was labelled at the time 'modernistic'" (Chipkin: 90). He concludes that many architects were able to absorb these transitory modernisms into personal statements of great power. In this sense they created an indigenous vernacular architecture of the 1930s, outside the Modern Movement" (Chipkin: 95).

But, as Mordaunt Crooks (1987: 251) describes the development at the time, architects were merely replacing one group of images with another. He points out that once the Modern Movement had been recognised as the *International Style*, the way was open for the next phase: Modern became modernistic. He says: "The basis of modernistic design was not function but fashion; not ergonomics but stylistics". (Mordaunt Crooks: 252) It marked an acceptance of the reality of modernism- it had indeed become a style. He goes on to describe the ornament of Art Deco in 'proto-post-modernist' terminology as "statics made visible, function in semiotic form". Goodhart-Rendel, Director of the AA had said that: "Treated as a style and not as a religion, modernism has great capabilities". (Mordaunt Crooks: 253)

Bozdoğan refers to Scott's (1998): *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to improve the Human Condition have failed* for its insight into the application of modernism. Scott considers that the modernist project created one of the most 'tragic episodes of state development' (Scott: 88). He highlights a development of this that he refers to as "High Modernism." He explains that it combines three elements: the administrative ordering or rational engineering of nature and society; the

unrestrained use of power to achieve these designs; and thirdly, a weak or emasculated civil society that is unable to resist these plans.

High Modernism he sees as a sweeping view of the way in which scientific and technical progress could be applied to all arenas of human endeavour. High Modern states began with an extensive prescription for a new societal structure, which it then imposed. Scott points out that after the Enlightenment a new role emerged for the state: the welfare of all members of society. But this was not done in a purely benevolent manner but as an end in itself. Society became an object that could be manipulated and controlled by the state using social engineering. Scott points out the paradox between the notion of societal control and the experience of modernism in all disciplines where it is reflected in speed, movement and change. He relates this to the stylistic concept of 'streamlining'. Rather than stopping social change they tried to give social life a form that would minimize friction. However, social engineering was inherently authoritarian, and diversity was replaced with uniformity with a designated social structure. Social engineering based itself on principles of science and disallowed any other judgemental modes. It broke with history and tradition- scientifically deduced structures were seen as superior to traditional ones. At its most radical, high modernism proposed sweeping the slate clean and beginning again. Scott's writing provides a clear insight into the application of modernist philosophy, and helps inform the theoretical framework of this study.

Of the more recent writings on modernism there are several significant publications. The first is Alan Powers' *Britain. Modern architectures in history* (2007). Here he gives an assessment of British architectural development from the decline of the British Empire to the rise of devolution. He discusses architectural practice, and the changing economic and differing political policies that altered its trajectories. He makes the point that

The received view is that the 'white hats' of Modernism are lined up against the 'black hats' of otherness, under whatever name...I have deliberately looked along the boundary line where they sometimes fade to grey. This is important in my view, because the lack of widespread popular acceptance of Modernism in Britain since its inception cannot simply be ignored or dismissed as the stupidity of the unenlightened (Powers 2007: 7).

Powers (2007:13) identifies the tentative emergence of modernism in Britain in the mid-Twenties He points out that: "By insisting that modernity and Modernism are inseparable, more prominence is accorded to aesthetic factors than to actual innovation in engineering..." (Powers 2007: 15) He draws attention to the significant degree that changes in construction technology impacted on the design of buildings that were generally designed by 'commercial architects'. (Powers 2007: 22) In the years after the First World War, a housing crisis in Britain could have provided the same opportunity for the development of modernism as occurred in Germany and the Netherlands, but as Powers says "In Britain there was no avant-garde waiting to translate technique into poetry."

(Powers 2007: 29) Among the architects interested in the problems around housing he identifies S.D. Adshead, an associate of Charles Reilly, who developed the 'Dorlonco' construction system for the Dorman Long steelworks. The innovative structural system was, however, over-clad in a late Georgian style. Adshead was later to visit Cape Town and was critical of developments he saw there. His criticisms were not well received by the insular local media who regarded his comments as interference from uninformed outsiders. The Cape Town media noted acerbically:

Professor Adshead told the pressman that Table Bay was more beautiful than heaven, the old plaster tower of St. Georges more beautiful than St. Pancras, and all we really needed was the gentle art of Town Planning...

Seriously, though, we very strongly resent these snap remarks by condescending visiting experts who favour us with their views from a distance appear to assume that we are Kaffirs just emerging from the blanket stage or are only comparable to such.

We want help and are not such fools as not to know when and where to seek it, but we do not want the third-rate statuary, the unsympathetic architecture, and the (from a South African point of view) cramped and stupid town-planning methods of European provincial towns thrust upon us, and that's that (AB&E Oct 1930: 5).

Powers also mentions the development of steel windows by the Crittall Manufacturing Company who acquired the British patent for an Austrian designed window system. (Powers 2007: 31) The same manufacturers were to introduce steel windows into the South African market, and their windows were specified in a number of buildings in Cape Town in the Thirties. Powers attempts to reconcile the changes in social policy towards housing and health with a seeming British reluctance to adopt the outward cloak of modernism with few exceptions until the arrival of émigré architects from Europe introduced modernist forms. There was however an almost immediate adaptation of the white cubist forms of European modernism to the British preference for materials such as brick and timber.

Powers' arguments are countered by Elizabeth Darling's book: *Reforming Britain. Narratives of modernity before reconstruction*. (2007). She argues strongly in her problematic that there is not much known about the manner in which modernism was absorbed into architectural discourse in Britain before and during the Second World War, but that modernist architecture of the period have been well documented and a narrative developed to explain its origins. She recognises the argument presented that modernism was imported into Britain. She says:

This importation happened variously. The reporting of European work in the pages of the architectural press, and the translation into English in 1927 of Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture* are often cited as important turning points in awakening in those receptive enough to realize its potential. Modernism's arrival is, however, most often attributed 'to the work of outsiders' (Darling 2007: 2).

This leads, she argues, to the notion that modernism was primarily a phenomenon of the 1930s and the introduction of the trope of importation by the historian Nikolaus Pevsner. She makes the

significant point that architectural history tends to be seen as a series of 'actual monuments' that are then analysed in relation to other monuments rather than "the context within which the architecture is embedded. This is paralleled by the tendency to therefore see architecture as something produced solely by architects and to focus on them as protagonists of change" (Darling: 2-3). She argues that it is imperative that architectural modernism must be located within the various contexts in which it was embedded.

In Part 1 of the book she examines the work of people in fields relative to architecture to create or motivate for, modern forms and approaches. She identifies 'sites of campaign' such as the architectural press, and 'sites of encounter' where protagonists of British modernism met. Many of the forces that led to the adoption of modernism, and the counter-movements that opposed it, as identified by Darling, have parallels in South Africa and thus her approach is particularly apposite in an examination of the negotiation of modernism in Cape Town.

She examines the decline of the British Empire in the period after World War One, and its eclipse by the New World. The role of the government is considered, and she mentions new forms of industrialisation as well as the emergence of democracy- the latter totally lacking in South Africa, despite voting rights being given to white women. She looks at the attitude of Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government as well as that of Ramsay Macdonald's minority Labour Government in 1924. (Darling: 13) In addition to considering sites of campaign including groups such as MARS, she looks at new initiatives that were undertaken in dealing with health, particularly mass housing and healthcare. These two major factors are closely linked to developments in Cape Town too. Darling examines healthcare facilities designed in this period as well as the range of experiments and developments in the provision of mass housing- both of which are paralleled in Cape Town as terrains in which the modernist discourse was most clearly developed.

Andrew Higgott's study (2007) of the influence of the media in the development of modernism in England, *Mediating Modernism: Architectural cultures in Britain*, critically examines the impact that the media has had on the development of modern architecture in Britain since the Twenties. He cites Royston Landau, who applied Foucault's thoughts on archaeology to architecture, saying, "the production of an architect includes their writing, discussions and set of beliefs, quite separate from what his or her buildings might look like." (Higgott 2007:11) He thus takes up a position much like Bozdoğan on architectural culture. He also notes that Colomina's book *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* points out:

The 'new photography' and the architecture of what came to be called the International Style were both products of a modernism created in response to the machine...Her emphasis (is) on the role of the media in creating rather than simply representing architectural ideologies (Higgott: 11).

Gwendolyn Wright's study of modern architecture in America (Wright 2008) 'unstiffens some familiar premises in order to expand canonical histories, reframe customary narratives, unravel tangled ambiguities'. (Wright 2008: 10) She notes that

History is an ongoing and fluid process, not a sacred narrative. It can illuminate alternative positions, so necessary within the homogenizing forces of today's global economy. (Wright: 15)

She clarifies the issues around terminology by defining modernism as 'a broad cultural phenomenon with striking shifts in forms and intentions between (and within) different intellectual or artistic domains... The experience of modernity has elicited conflicting human responses, exhilarating liberation but also materialism, alienation, a sense of loss or foreboding'. (Wright: 10) She develops five themes in her book. The first is the hybridity of American modernism. The second is the role of commercial culture and the third, industrial production. She identifies the media as a fourth influence and an environmental sensibility as the fifth. She also makes the point that 'a broader historical perspective will always challenge established assumptions'. (Wright 14) There are distinct parallels between certain aspects of modernism in America and in Cape Town, particularly in relation to the development of high-rise office buildings or 'skyscrapers', apartment buildings, garages and cinemas as well as department stores where the American example was followed.

I do not think there are any modern buildings in Europe, which can compare with the modern buildings in America...wonderful towers and skyscrapers in New York...American architecture is good because it is based on commonsense. The worst kind of architecture is based on nonsense (AB&E October 1920:21).

As Wright explains: 'American Modernism tended to dissolve categories like High and Low, spurring lively debates about form and programme' (Wright: 79). She identifies some of the alternative routes to modernism taken by architects who 'paid no attention to structural honesty or restraint, the hallmarks of orthodox Modernism. They took a different path towards modernity, exploring visual perception and ephemeral special effects'. (Wright: 85)

Issues around the manner in which the modernist discourse was introduced and debated, form the core of much of the literature on modernism in architecture. It brought about one of the most profound and schismatic changes in the built environment around the world. Modernism was contested and negotiated before it was accepted in many parts of the world. The process of negotiation and mediation is however seldom recorded and it is critical that this aspect of modernism be highlighted if the impact of modernism in centres such as Cape Town is to be fully understood. Many historiographies of modernism have adopted a one-sided approach to this issue and focused on a single aspect rather than recording and laying out the various strands of the narrative. It is only by presenting the debate that the full impact of modernism can be fully understood and it is also essential that, in Cape Town, the varying levels of negotiation depending

on building typology be understood as this will give a clearer understanding of the underlying architectural culture.

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## CHAPTER 3

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### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discourse of modernism in architecture, particularly in a colonial context, is strongly grounded in theories of power, power relations, mechanisms of control and terrains of contestation and negotiation of difference. Modernism was a discourse grounded in the way that space was constructed and perceived. In considering a theoretical framework for this research it is necessary that these diverse elements that relate to early modernism in a colonial context be linked.

Modernism in Europe in the early twentieth century represented a paradigm shift in thinking about the way that space was made and conceptualised and established a new modernist architectural discourse. The shift reunited a schism that had developed between spatial production related to function and building form or style. In the context of Cape Town in the Twenties and Thirties of the twentieth century prior to the establishment of a department of architecture at the University of Cape Town this understanding of modernism as a discourse rather than as an aesthetic appears initially to have been incomprehensible.

Twentieth century theorists such as Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre have re-asserted space into the discourse of social science and history, posing alternative conceptions of space that highlight the significance of space in social discourse and reformulate the nature of space itself. The examination of the spatial dialectic is a discourse; every discourse operates through language. The language of this study is architectural – the reading of space through photographic images and representational drawings and the comprehension of the construction of architectural artefacts. Michel Foucault developed the concept of a 'discourse' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). For Foucault, everything exists within a discourse: it is contingent on it and part of it.<sup>1</sup> Where he refers to 'statements' within a discourse (Foucault 1969:30-1), these could be books, articles, clients or buildings: a discursive formation brings these diverse elements together, but can never be definitive, always provisional. It is therefore in Foucault's archaeology- that does not imply a specific genesis, that the products of culture can be evaluated. Foucault also makes the link between the understanding of discourse as expressed through architectural culture and the significance of the production of space. He focuses attention on the spatiality of the actually lived and socially produced space of sites and the relations between them and referred to these real, heterogeneous spaces as 'heterotopias' in contrast to planned 'utopias'. He regarded architecture as 'not only an element in space, but ...is especially thought of as a plunge into a field

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<sup>1</sup> 'Discourse (is) a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated...; it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined.' (Foucault 1989:130)

of social relations in which it brings certain effects'. ( Foucault 1986:362) This is fundamental to an understanding of architecture as the visible politics of a colonial society.

In his paper, *Of Other Spaces*, (1982 trans.), Foucault described the twentieth century as an era of juxtaposition of differences. The present time he considered to be an age of space. Space, in his terms was heterogeneous, and he speaks of living "inside a set of relations that delineates sites that are irreducible to one another and absolutely not super imposable on one another". These differing conditions of existence he defines as *utopias* and *heterotopias*. Heterotopias in turn are divided into heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. This concept of heterotopias would appear to be a useful mechanism for defining the way in which modernism, as a societal and aesthetic construct, was negotiated and contested in colonial and post colonial architecture.

The architectural historian, Demetri Porphyrios, in his examination of the work of Alvar Aalto (Porphyrios1982) develops an argument for what he termed 'modern eclecticism', and he related this to the concept of heterotopias, which he defined as 'the state of things laid, placed, assigned sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to define a common locus for them all' (Porphyrios 1982:2) He defines the principle categories of 'heterotropic sensibility' as: *discriminatio* and *convenientia*. These he defines as follows:

*Discriminatio* refers to the activity of the mind, which no longer consists in drawing things together, but on the contrary, in imposing the primary and fundamental investigation of difference. *Convenientia* refers to the adjacency of dissimilar things, so that they assume similarities through juxtaposition (Porphyrios 1982: 3).

This concept of eclecticism is also reflected in the writings of the English architectural historian Peter Collins, (1965) who considered eclecticism to be the development of a system of thought that is based on the removal of facts that are deemed valid from their original contexts and then reassembling them to create a new coherent system of knowledge, and this would seem to be closely linked to Homi Bhabha's concept of a 'Third Space' as a negotiated space that draws its identity from divergence.

Julian Pefanis (1991:132) says: "Jean Baudrillard writes in 'Modernité' (Encyclopedie Universalis Vol. 2, 1972), that modernity is a characteristic mode of civilisation 'irradiating from the west'". The meaning of modernity is something more than the old binary of ancient/modern. Modernity describes a structure of change and crisis, "a canonic morality of change" which smashes traditional morality. The establishment of the administrative state, the secularisation of the arts and philosophy of the everyday (De Certeau 1988) are characteristic of the mode of life in modernity. Ideologies are another expression of modernity, and this is revealed in the analysis of decolonisation:

The field of anthropology shows more clearly than European history the truth of modernity- that it is never a matter of change or revolution, but of entering into an

implicit game with tradition, in a debate where the two are in a connected field, in a process of amalgamation and adaptation. The dialectic of rupture largely gives way to a dynamic of amalgamation (Pefanis 1991:141).

Underlying studies of colonial structures is the study of power. Foucault demonstrates that it is not that power becomes a production of design professionals, but rather space a realm appropriated by politics. Social operations, productions of power, are conducted *through* and *in* the realm of space. He points out that: "After all, the architect has no power over me. So he should be placed in another category-which is to say that he is not totally foreign to the organisation, the implementation, and all the techniques of power that are exercised in a society" (Foucault: 1986:357).

According to Foucault, space is itself not exclusionary or prohibitory

Nothing is fundamental. That is what is interesting in the analysis of society... These are not fundamental phenomena. There are only reciprocal relations, and the perceptual gaps between intentions in relation to one another (Foucault: 1986: 356).

In considering a framework for an examination of the divergent identities that emerged in Cape Town in the inter-war period, the investigative basis does not lie neatly within any single theoretical framework. The theories of Foucault as outlined provide the most suitable mechanism for evaluating issues that revolve around power, identity and the development of ethnic heterogeneity as expressed through architecture, as well as the contestation and negotiation that accompanied it. Foucault was adamant that:

...we study dynasties. Playing on the Greek words *dunamis dunasteia*, I would say that we try to bring to light what has remained until now the most hidden, the most occulted, the most deeply invested experience in the history of our culture- power relations (Foucault 1973:17).

Modernism in the colonial context led to the creation of hybrid identities that were based on power relations. In South Africa, with the strengthening of Afrikaner Nationalism and increasingly overt racism in the period under consideration, a simple binary division of Self and Other is inadequate as a basis for the multiplicity of identities that emerged or were officially created. The notion of a heterogeneous, unequal society was to be reflected in the architectural use of modernism. Post-colonial writing often debates the impact of modernism on colonial societies and writers such as Sangari (1995) consider it to be a significant act of cultural self-definition within these societies.

The dominant discourse of British imperialism waned at this time, creating the space for the expression of different identities through architecture. Within the debate around eclecticism and heterotopic spaces, hybrid identities emerge as significant factors that need to be considered. The South African academic, Desiree Lewis in her paper *Writing Hybrid Selves* (Erasmus 2001) says that

both the terms hybridity and hybridisation are used to describe the production of differing identities and questions the idea of polarised, completely essentialised identities. Spivak(1988) questions the validity of simple binary subdivision of :

...the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity. It is well known that Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century. But what if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine? Perhaps it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism to be recognised as 'subjugated knowledge (Spivak 1988: 24-25).

Although Spivak refers specifically to colonial discourse here, it is equally possible to apply it to the modernist episteme that denied the validity of any subtext that was disqualified by the tenets of mainstream modernism. It is critical to examine the heterogeneous discourses that were developing simultaneously and not attempt to selectively edit developments. To develop this, Tarfuri is insightful as to how heterogeneous projects of this period need to be evaluated:

...it will become necessary to destroy the contrived significance to the concept of 'the work.' But not, as Foucault proposes, in order to establish the ineffable supremacy of the anonymously produced word, nor to revive slogans dear to the infancy of the Modern Movement...To undo the mass of threads artificially tangled together, we shall have to lay out many independent histories alongside each other, so that we may recognize, where they exist, their mutual interdependencies or, as is more often the case, their antagonisms (Tarfuri 1987:18).

Much of the primary data used in the thesis is visual representations of space, specifically photographs and architectural drawings. Knowledge of architectural language affords the ability to read evidence of social and spatial practices into those graphic representations, thereby asserting the significant contribution that architectural research can provide to the field of social history. The focus is on the contradictions that emerge in the civic, public and commercial architectural projects in the city, and highlighting the different approaches taken. Foucault suggested the use of an archaeological process of analysis, as this would assist in uncovering differences and contradictions, and the way that compromises were negotiated. He indicates that:

In relation to a history of ideas that attempts to melt contradictions in the semi-nocturnal unity of an overall figure, or which attempts to transmute them into a general, abstract, uniform principle of interpretation or explanation, archaeology describes the different spaces of dissension (Foucault 1989:170).

The modernist agenda of the architecture of Cape Town was a negotiation of ordinariness, a way the architects of the city attempted to come to terms with an agenda that they did not fully comprehend. De Certeau's description of the negotiated spaces that are created by people is significant in understanding both heterogeneity and heterotopias. He links his concept to those of

Foucault, who he says, distinguishes two heterogeneous systems. He relates this to the separation of two forms of power: the political technology of the body over the doctrinal body.

By following the establishment and victorious multiplication of this 'minor instrumentality,' he tries to bring to light the springs of this opaque power that has no possessor, no privileged place, no superiors or inferiors, no repressive activity or dogmatism, that is almost autonomously effective through its technological ability to distribute, classify, analyse and spatially individualise the object dealt with (de Certeau: 46).

In considering the application of these theoretical concepts, James C. Scott's critique of what he calls 'The High Modernist project' is a significant channel that connects more abstract theory to its application within a discourse. He explains that it combines three elements: the administrative ordering or rational engineering of nature and society; the unrestrained use of power to achieve these designs; and thirdly, a weak or emasculated civil society that is unable to resist these plans. He says that "The ideology of the high modernism provides, as it were, the desire; the modern state provides the means of acting on that desire; and the incapacitated society provides the levelled terrain on which to build (dis)utopias" (Scott: 89).

Elizabeth Darling, in her evaluation of the nature and practice of architectural modernism in inter-war Britain (Darling 2007) describes a series of 'narratives of modernism' and considers both what she terms 'sites of campaign' and 'sites of encounter'. This matrix is then applied to the terrains of modernity, both social and cultural.

Space is produced as an operation of power productions. It is again necessary here to remember that space, as defined in this research, consists of more than just solids and voids. Inhabitation and events also are spatial aspects and operative of power relations and productions. The work of Foucault and Lefebvre complement each other, and the conceptual premise of this research: namely, that modernism emerged in Cape Town as a process of negotiation within a discursive formation that can be read through material aspects – built and unbuilt projects – as well as other narratives such as the media.

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## CHAPTER 4

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### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

As I see it, the practices of human communication, the negotiation and performance of acts of meaning- should become our model for how we tell about the empirical world. Then we would feel compelled to produce narrative, evocative, dialogic texts that show human beings, including ourselves, in the process of creating, negotiating, and performing meaning in a world of others (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 748)

Researching modernism in Cape Town, as a process of negotiation, has required developing methods of architectural historiography that adopt an attitude towards the approach that Bozdoğan describes as:

The concept of architectural culture implies a cultural historian's approach to the buildings, projects and architectural texts that collectively constitute a 'discourse' about architecture...The architectural discourse of a particular place and time includes all the institutional practices- architectural schools, publications, exhibitions, competitions, and professional associations- that produce, reproduce, discredit, or lend credibility to discourses about architecture (Bozdoğan 2001:12).

In developing a method for researching the introduction of modernism, the object has not only been to examine the history of modernism as a narrative, building on the tools used in the architectural discipline. The approach to the research has been to utilise a qualitative research framework for structuring the research paradigm, and the data collection. This has been integrated with an application of architectural techniques for analysing the data and presenting the research. Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 635) suggest that

Much evidence- that is, written texts and cultural artefacts- endures physically and leaves its traces on the material past. It is impossible to talk to and with these materials. Researchers must interpret them, for in them are found important meanings about the human shape of lived cultures.

#### Methodological strategy

As stated above, the intent of the research is to uncover modernism as a product of architectural culture, finding relationships between building typologies, professional practices and politics; seeing how each element changed in the period. The approach to the research has been qualitative, as it examines issues of *how* and *why*, rather than quantifiable questions such as *what* or *how many*.

The methodological approach taken is the narrative study of the architecture of the period as material culture. In this instance, the question posed is how modernism manifested itself in Cape

Town – how it *architecturally* manifested practices of social engineering as well as practices of paradigmatic shifts as architects 'negotiated' the specificity of an architectural approach to the discourse of modernism. As a historical subject, the research aims to examine the history of modernism from media commentary, through political processes to resultant architectural form. The interrogation is relational – finding the relationship between text and artefact- media and architectural manifestation.

Today it is understood that material culture, in all its forms, is a gendered, social and political construction.

How the past is reconstructed and interpreted very much determines how it will be constituted in the present and remembered in the future (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 635).

The collection of research material utilises documentary evidence including visual archival data – architectural drawings, photographs and published images and artefactual evidence- the buildings themselves. The evidence gathered has been read as textual evidence: reading the evidence "as self-contained systems" (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 7) rather than examining in order to uncover the systems of production of evidence. I am aware of the concern of subjectivity in the production of documentary evidence that forms the basis of this research. I have focused my research on uncovering the narratives of introduction, contestation and negotiation of modernism in Cape Town rather than the meaning behind the evidence. Derrida points out: "There is no 'original' or 'true' meaning of a text outside specific historic contexts. Historical archaeologists have come to accept that historical documents and records give not a better but simply a different picture from that provided by artefacts and architecture". (Hodder 2000: 704) I have used documentary evidence in awareness of and in agreement with this premise, but I have not engaged with examining the context of evidential production but rather that of context definition.

The methods of interpretation of material culture centre on the simultaneous hermeneutical procedures of context definition, the construction of patterned similarities and differences and the use of relevant social and material culture theory (Hodder 2000: 705).

It is in the analysis and re-presentation of the research that I have attempted to use architectural methodologies. The research utilises architectural culture as a technique for drawing out the relationship between social practices and architectural manifestations. The technique for representation of the research is a combination of narratives and the presentation of visual data. Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 4) describe this form of piecing together as a bricolage "that is a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. These interpretive practises involve aesthetic issues, an aesthetics of representation that goes beyond the pragmatic, or the practical". Whilst those techniques illuminate the scepticism of the possibility of uncovering "objective reality" through representing multiple voices and methods, the narrative approach provides a similar perspective through rendering transparent that the story presented is

one amongst alternate possibilities. It is not intended, or even desired, to suggest that the narratives of the negotiation and assimilation of modernism are a singular, objective reality. This does not suggest that they are not grounded in verifiable research, but the products of research – data collection, analysis, and interpretation – are inherently reflective of some subjectivity and selectivity as historical research includes different theoretical perspectives that are potentially, inherently contradictory. As Hodder (2000: 714) points out:

The methods of interpretation of material culture centre on the simultaneous hermeneutical procedures of context definition, the construction of patterned similarities and differences and the use of relevant social and material culture theory.

In developing a framework for evaluating the negotiation of modernism in Cape Town, I have adapted this format as a structure for my research. The use of a series of narratives in various terrains would seem to be an appropriate way of interpreting both Foucault and Tarfuri's evaluative process of laying out independent histories or narratives alongside each other so that mutual interdependencies, or, as Tarfuri suggests, antagonisms may be recognised.

Grondin (1994:117) notes that 'in terms of its form, understanding is less like grasping a content, a noetic meaning, than it is like engaging in a dialogue'. In other words, meaning is negotiated mutually in the act of interpretation; it is not simply discovered (Lincoln & Guba 2000: 195)

The narratives that I examine are set within terrains of activity in social, political and spatial practice and, unlike Darling (2007); I have used the narrative in perhaps its more literal sense of giving an account. I have also considered the sites of campaign, which, in the case of Cape Town is largely in the architectural press. The sites of encounter, which occur in Britain, seem less relevant in a colonial context where personal encounters outside of the universities rarely have any significance. Here in Cape Town it would seem that the urban locations of modernist projects, and specifically the range of building typologies where modernism was negotiated at different levels, constitute 'terrains of encounter'.

I recognise the potential limits to the reliability of the data gathered, due to the subjectivity inherent in both visual and contemporary published data such as photographs and periodical articles. Often photographs as illustrated in journal sources, when verified against other sources, are found to contain a specific bias as writers take stances that are *not* objective. I believe this situation probably occurred numerous times, through numerous representations, and does inhibit the degree to which accuracy of representations will be verifiable. However, this reflects an attitude towards modernism that by its bias is either exclusionary or inclusionary- both attitudes are insightful in reaching an understanding of the modernism that developed in Cape Town.

## Research Question(s)

In researching modernism, the following critical question has been examined:

### **How was modernism introduced, negotiated and adapted in the architecture of Cape Town in the period between 1918 and 1948?**

In order to answer the above question, the following issues have been examined:

- What were the sites of negotiation?
- What influenced the architecture of the city in this period?
- How does the architectural response relate to what was happening elsewhere in the world and in South Africa at the time and what caused the shifts in the response, and what were the parallels?
- What was the nature of architectural debate in the local media at that time?
- Who were the key architects responsible for introducing modernism into the city?
- Can one draw parallels between the way modernism was introduced and adapted during this period in Cape Town and present-day architectural developments?

## Sources

There are four types of historical data sources: documents, oral records, artefacts and quantitative records, including statistics. The material gathered for the study has been of three primary types:

### **1. Documentary evidence of modernism**

This has primarily consisted of photographs and architectural writings, specifically in the architectural media. The sources for material in Cape Town are collections at the Cape Archives and the National Library of South Africa

In this particular research, I have drawn extensively on the Cape-based architectural journal, *The Architect, Builder and Engineer* (AB&E) as it is particularly rich in its detailed response to the state of the profession, social and political change and the introduction of modernism in Cape Town. *The South African Builder* is an equally conservative publication, but contains a great deal of data on building plan approvals, tenders received and photographs of many buildings in both Johannesburg and Cape Town that are not recorded elsewhere. The Johannesburg-based *South African Architectural Record* (SAAR) is much more of a proselytiser of modernism and largely ignores the actual state of contemporary South African architecture.

In addition, the extensive City Council records and minutes in the Cape Archives as well as the South African Institute of Architects records lodged there have been consulted.

At UCT, the Manuscripts and Archives department have considerable architectural records, which have been extensively used.

As the proponents of this period are no longer alive it has not been possible to use oral records, although individual architects' response to modernism is sometimes recorded in the journals and minutes.

## **2. Social and political history of Cape Town between 1918 and 1948.**

Social history has been primarily gathered through secondary sources. The possible sources are vast. I have focused upon the schools of thought:

Contemporary historical research that has either been completed in the post-apartheid era or that is critical of apartheid and colonising practices. This work has predominantly been undertaken by historians associated with the University of Cape Town, such as Vivian Bickford-Smith and Sean Field, as well as international researchers such as John Western.

A limitation to the research has been that primary sources have not been used in examining the related social history. The reason for this is that the data gathering focused upon primary visual material and the scope of the research effort did not render it feasible to also gather primary social history research material. It was also not necessary or appropriate to focus the data gathering on the social history - the finding of social practices - as the study is an architectural one, and therefore the focus is upon examining primary evidence of architectural manifestations.

## **3. Artefactual evidence: the architecture of Cape Town in the research period**

Finally, the material culture itself- the architecture of the period- has been examined and evaluated in terms of relevant social and political histories to develop a framework of architectural culture.

Material culture is a framing and communicative medium involved in social practice. It can be used for transforming, storing or preserving social information. It also forms a symbolic medium for social practice, acting dialectically in relation to that practice. It can be regarded as a kind of text, a silent form of writing and discourse; quite literally, a channel of reified and objectified expression (Tilley 1989: 189).

## **Method**

The research focused upon the following topics and methods of investigation:

Duality has emerged as a theme in the operations of the research: duality of built form and social practices, and duality in the compilation and analysis of knowledge production- Bozdoğan's notion of 'architectural culture'. I have simultaneously worked from two directions: from compiling the practices occurring within different terrains, and from locating the actual buildings within a matrix of building typology. I have organised knowledge of social practices into the terrains of planning, housing, health, industry and commerce and within each terrain identified significant events, then divided practices into political, economic and cultural. This enables seeing the social practices in specific fields in its entirety, including contradictory practices.

## Locating the Operations

The operations developed have been in response to a desire to find techniques for architectural research that address issues of identity and enable engaging the production of locality in architectural research. The operations also stem from the use of post-colonial theory and desire to find an architectural application of the theoretical position.

Post-colonial theory has been applied to the research as I have found in my examination of post-colonial theory that its application to built artefacts within the context that led to their development lends a greater dimension of clarity. I have found, in my literature review that often post-colonial critiques of architecture have applied to representations of architecture, rather than built artefact. I would like to reiterate that I am engaging with examining and critiquing the representations of the modernism'. Therefore, the research method has been structured to uncover the systems of the production of programmatic modernism as described by Heynen (1999), and to conversely use the architecture as a text through which to uncover and critique the social practices manifested.

Architecture - may be used as a text through which to read identity. Space provides a measure for constructing and reading identity: The study of the negotiation process attempts to enable the reading of identities in Cape Town, through examining the introduction and negotiation of the discourse of modernism as a manifestation of social practices and therefore as a process. Significantly, however, it is not static identities that the research attempts to uncover but rather identifications, or the process by which identities are constructed. The secret of the capacity to make meaning lies in the artefact. Beginning as an object that is out there, embedded and indistinguished from the rest of nature, fixed first by sight and then touched by the magic of the hand, the artefact, in its artifice, becomes a 'collapsed act', a structure whose response is given in advance (Richardson 1984: 174)

Localities are fluid entities, being both context *derivative* – formed in relation to contexts - and context *generative* – forming contexts themselves. As contexts can, and always do, change, so too are localities fluid. Contexts may be ecological, social, or even cosmological. However, like in all social practices, space is a dimension of the production of locality. "Text and context are in a

continual, state of tension, each defining and redefining the other, saying and doing things differently through time. (Hodder 2000: 704)

This suggests looking at the subject of the study as a production of localities. The social story the research has uncovered is of the productions of localities that have occurred through the unequal introduction of modernist practices. Because locality is fluid, because it both generates and derives from contexts, it is necessary to develop operations which identities contexts, which recognises fluidity in space, and which sees the spatial subject as a generative process rather than an artefact.

### **The narrative terrains**

Paul Ricoeur argues that history is to be understood as a form of narrative that draws causal connections between events in order to explain them. Simms (2003: 87) cites Ricoeur's view that "To explain why something happened and to explain what happened coincide. A narrative that fails to explain is less than a narrative. A narrative that does explain is a pure, plain narrative".

Three points need to be made regarding reading the subsequent narratives: firstly, the identification of the time frame when modernism is gradually incorporated into practices in Cape Town, secondly, the use of images in the narratives and thirdly the identification of terrains of encounter as described by Darling (2007) where the paradigmatic shifts occur. In the evaluation of the gradual introduction of the polemics of modernism into the heterogeneous components of the city, the process is recorded chronologically through textual evidence of the stages of negotiated modernism.

The second navigational explanation is the use of images. As mentioned earlier, the research has been undertaken through the identification of the implementation of modernist discourse and practice within patterns of social practice and media debate and manifested in visual evidence—the actual buildings of the period; it therefore follows that the presentation of the research should also be visual and graphic. Therefore, the narratives will be told through both text and images. The visual presentation of images provides an insightful means of triangulation, one that clarifies the narrative, bridging the divide between rhetoric and practice. The inclusion of images documents part of the research process, thereby rendering the research methods more transparent in the communicating of the findings. Unlike the British situation as described by Darling (2007), in South Africa the sites of campaign and encounter occurred in the architectural media and the universities in the first place. In the case of Cape Town there is little evidence of 'encounter' whilst campaigning was vociferous and often acrimonious.

There are clear links between what happened in Britain and developments in South Africa, particularly in Cape Town. The issues around the Centre-Periphery debate are significant markers

that define the introduction of modernism into Cape Town and need to be considered. The next chapter explores these issues and looks at the 'fields of campaign', particularly the local architectural press.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 5

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### SITUATING MODERNISM: THE CENTRE AND THE PERIPHERY

#### The emergence of a new '*Sachlich*' architecture

The concept of modernism has its origins in the age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century when the idea of modernity was linked to critical reason. Colquhoun identifies it as 'an architecture conscious of its own modernity and striving for change'. (Colquhoun 2002: 9) Dissatisfaction with the course of architecture became stronger in the latter half of the nineteenth century when style revivals seemed to have become arbitrary and illogical. Both Pevsner and Colquhoun identify the Arts and Crafts Movement under William Morris as a significant stage in the development of modernist architectural theories in the 1920s. Colquhoun sees the development of Art Nouveau as significant in the development of "the concept of an uncoded, dynamic, and instinctual art, based on empathy with nature, for which it was possible to prescribe certain principles based on empathy with nature" (Colquhoun: 33). But it was particularly in Germany and Austria in the period prior to World War One that the most significant changes were gestated. Architecture was closely linked to cultural concepts of national identity and form or *Gestalt*. The architect Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927) attempted to fuse the conflicting ideologies of the classical and vernacular traditions with their stability and anonymity on the one hand, with the machine aesthetic with its use of simplicity, repetition and regularity. These ideologies, one 'bureaucratic and nationalistic, and the other classicising and normative' (Colquhoun: 61) became inseparable within German architectural discourse as modernism developed in the years prior to World War One.

The historian Hilde Heynen (1999) distinguishes between *modernity* and *modernism* by describing the former as referring to the typical features of modern times, whereas modernism she describes as the *implementation* of cultural tendencies and artistic ideas about modernity and she relates this to architecture. In Germany these ideas were to be developed by the Bauhaus under the direction of Walter Gropius and the school became a catalyst for the spread of architectural and design modernism throughout the world. In Holland the logic of the machine influenced designers of the Dutch avant-garde developing into the Amsterdam School, the chief exponent of who was Michiel de Klerk (1884-1923) and the work of Hendrick Berlage (1856-1940); and the De Stijl movement with the work of Gerrit Rietveld (1888-1927) and J.J.P. Oud (1890-1963). Also extremely significant was the work of Le Corbusier (1887-1965) in France. Although there was little architectural activity there until 1923, his work showed a desire to reconcile architectural tradition with modern technology.

Modernism in the twentieth century was received differently in different parts of the world. Architectural focus has largely been on modernism as expressed in the architectural avant-garde of the European Modern Movement as exemplified by the work of the Bauhaus School in Germany

and the architectural output of architects such as Le Corbusier, Gropius and Mies van der Rohe. However, historians such as Heynen have distinguished this avant-garde form of modernism that attempted to change the direction of architecture by radical ways, from other types. She refers to Baudrillard's notion of 'an aesthetic of rupture' (Baudrillard, 1982: 28) in order to distinguish it from other forms of modernism. She also describes this as *transitory modernism* and draws on Baudelaire's definition of modern as "*the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable*" (Heynen 1999: 12). The underlying concept of a rational introduction of ways of improving living conditions, she points out, can often be found despite the lack of architectural avant-garde form. This she calls '*programmatically modernism*'.

Modernism can be evaluated from both forms as identified by Heynen, and the compromised result is the outcome of a negotiation process that can be traced from the more tentative programmatic basis through to the ultimate acceptance of the more radical avant-garde Modern Movement ideals inherent in transitory modernism. This negotiated compromise appears to be more significant in any assessment of the architecture of Cape Town, rather than the narrower focus of transitory modernism as defined purely by the avant-garde of the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier.

### **Centre versus periphery**

As Daniel Herwitz has argued, it follows that modernism in the South African context can only be understood in terms of its relation to the metropolitan centres of Europe and America. He argues that the first form of modernism emanates from the centre- where modernism- in art and architecture- arose in the context of spirited 'cultures' of modernism. In contrast, the second form exists at the margins where modernist art and architecture developed along significantly different lines (Herwitz :1998 cited in Murray at al: 2007)).

In considering the manner in which modernism was adapted and adopted in South Africa it is necessary to evaluate the disjunctions between the different receptions of modernism to be found around the world. This reception inevitably involves a negotiation between the tenets of modernism and regional praxis and traditions. The historian Bozdoğan (2001), who examined the impact of modernism on the socio-political environment in Kemalist Turkey, calls for the need to recognise the different ways in which modernism was negotiated in different parts of the world, and she introduces the notion that the political impact of modernism on developing and colonial countries needs to be considered. It is critical to draw comparisons between what was occurring at the catalytic epicentre of modernism in Europe and the effect that this had on other places around the world that were on the periphery of modernism. She points out that

Critical histories of modern architecture have been dismantling the idea of modernism as a thoroughly rational and universal doctrine that the architecture of every nation would sooner or later emulate... Looking at different experiences in different places and circumstances is the best way that we can ensure that modern architecture,

traditionally reified by both its supporters and its opponents, becomes historically situated, contextualised, and, most importantly, politicised (Bozdoğan 2001: 8-9).

In Cape Town it is imperative that these histories are examined as the city represents a late colonial development of modernism rather than the more usual post-colonial adoption. This results in the aspects of social engineering as expounded by James C Scott in his study of high Modernism being particularly significant. (Scott 1998)

Modernism in Cape Town needs to be seen in relation to modernism in South Africa and modernism at the catalytic centres. As part of the colonial periphery of the British Empire in the introductory phase of modernism, comment in the Cape Town-based journal *The Architect Builder and Engineer* as well as the training of individual modernist architects, make it clear that the centre for modernist initiatives in Cape Town is not South Africa, but Britain and to a degree in the Twenties, America.

Coetzer (2003) identified an architectural praxis in the city in the earlier part of the twentieth century that was characterised by the desire to reflect a dominant British character as part of the imperialist project. This influence continued into the Thirties, until the development of a Department of Architecture at the University of Cape Town under Professor Leonard Thornton White in 1937 started to develop a strong local node that became significant in the post-war architectural development in the city. Yet even then, since he was trained in Britain, as were a significant number of the lecturing staff, British influence continued to dominate.

Despite modernist historiography's contra viewpoint, in the 1920s there was a considerable scepticism shown towards early European modernism. The comment made in the journal, AB&E that 'examples of wild and woolly compositions in matters architectural that seem to be significant of post-war debacle in matters architectural cannot be without significance...' The article goes on to say:

This is particularly noticeable in mid-European efforts towards architectural expression. The strange and fantastic designs that are now emanating from Holland, Germany and Denmark are particularly noteworthy and the neighbouring centres show little greater restraint...Much of the work shown is, in our view, much worse than the extreme vagaries and vulgarities of the so-called new art movement which began more than two decades ago (AB&E August 1925: 3).

By comparison, the visit by the eminent local architect Fred Glennie to Europe and Britain in 1923 elicited the comment that "For modern work England leads the way, and there is promise on all sides of the beginning of a style of architecture suited to solve modern conditions, taking into account the influences of the reinforced concrete- easy and rapid modern transport and the mad modern rush". (AB&E December 1923:32) Although the work of a number of older Cape Town practitioners would be considered to be Art Deco in influence, at the time there was a certain

ambivalence shown towards this form of 'modernistic' design. The media slammed the 1925 Paris Expo saying: "Many of these pavilions reach a height of absurdity which it is difficult for a sane person to comprehend... a congeries of architectural horrors... By no stretch of the imagination can any of them be called beautiful... The Czecho-Slovakian Pavilion absolutely defies description, but is nothing so much as a worm in a fit". (AB&E August 1925:3) They also delighted in printing Hillaire Belloc's views on European modernism, where he ranted that he was:

...as much offended as anyone by the abominations of our industrial towns and by the type of new buildings run up to meet the scarcity of houses since the war. But things are worse outside England by far. The new Prussian architecture of the Germans is a striking offence and the new architecture of France is appalling.... Neither would be possible in England... Particularly in England the eye is pleased by one example after another of new work, which carries on tradition (Hillaire Belloc in AB&E October 1926: 3).

The cautious approach to modernism apparent in the British writings of Thornton White reflects this 'English' attitude. When he reviewed Goodhart-Rendel's building at Hays Wharf in London he commented:

The fashionable tags of "modernism", "functionalism", etc., will in turn be applied to this building. It can well afford to smile good-humouredly at them all. Indeed, if label it must have, "traditional" is the one most fitting, for it is built on altruistic foundations, without preoccupation with academic ideals. Like the best buildings of the past, it solves its problems of accommodation with imagination; it chooses materials and methods for its construction with consummate care and uses these practical matters as a vehicle for the interplay of forms expressive of its century (Thornton White papers UCT).

He did not share the same sureness about the general direction of architecture in Britain. In his critique of the Shell Mex building in London he says:

The stream of English architecture, vitally flowing and crystal clear little more than a hundred years ago, is now so diverted and diffused as to present to the eye a seemingly endless swamp of stagnant water. This immense and apparently inert tract is of sufficiently long standing as to be accepted as an inevitable state of affairs by an equally immense number of people. The morass is old enough, too, to encourage exploration by small groups of the more healthy minded of the younger men (whom Sir Reginald Blomfield has recently and rather unkindly called "amateurs") and by an increasing number of an older generation who retain essential vitality or have regained enthusiasm enough to search beyond the ostensible stagnation... More recent explorers have every chance of success- they are for the most part architecturally old enough to have partaken personally in earlier journeys to the source, young enough to avoid the resulting prejudices of sentimentality and romanticism and sincere enough to seek for some honest filtration, as distinct from popular shibboleth (Thornton White papers).

The AB&E is more outspoken in the early appearance of modernism. The journal observed: "Mr. TS Tait has a design for a house at the Silver End Garden Village which would rejoice the heart of anyone who can tolerate the experimental horrors of the Rue Mallet Stevens...restraint is thrown to

the winds". (AB&E July 1928:5) Yet, ironically the same house was one of the only British buildings to be illustrated in Bruno Taut's *Modern Architecture* published in 1928.

The attitude of British architects to modernism was always reflected in the local media. Charles Reilly's view on what an architect stood for was quoted in the local media:

With the twentieth century, however has come a revolution. The world is no longer content to look backward. Everywhere new ideas are being experimented with. These ideas are being tackled, particularly by the younger man, with enthusiasm. The new problems of design, freed from old conventions to adopt new materials and methods are being boldly faced. Everywhere the modern architect, himself knowing the principles of engineering, employs the constructional engineer specialising in the heating, sanitary, electrical and other departments, to the best advantage. In doing so, he is able to extricate us from the complications of modern life (AB&E November 1934: 3).

Counter views had also been recorded and in *The South African Builder* Howard Robertson's views were published. Higgott (2007) has noted how significant Robertson's views were in the early dissemination of modernism in Britain. His negative view of British architecture stands in contrast to the more positive views expressed in South Africa. Robertson criticized England for being so conservative in architectural design. "One reason lies in the comparative stagnation of the past fifty years, and the lack of an evolutionary link between the past and the future, which makes it difficult to create new forms alongside the old" (SAB June 1930: 7). The views of British architects, such as Reilly, remained a potent informant in colonial locations. This was the centre- the source of inspiration for colonial architects. The AB&E noted "to what high standard the best British architecture has attained in the last decade; and also that architectural style is becoming international". (AB&E January 1935: 8). The view of the centre from the colonial periphery remained as significant as ever; the belief in the correctness of British modernism remained unwavering throughout the period under review. Any negotiation of modernism was to be based on British precedent. But, there was always to be a debate around whether the periphery should merely emulate or develop its own unique characteristics. As early as 1926 the local journal recorded with some pride that "the architecture of South Africa excels that of all the other dependencies of the British Crown in its versatility, vigour and accomplishment" (AB&E Nov 1926: 2).

### **Modernism at the periphery: the colonialist situation**

...Modernism is governed by the 'unevenness...of a class society,' and this- along with its mobility and dislocations, finds a home within the 'imperial metropolis' (that) leads to the characteristic experience of 'estrangement and exposure (Williams 1984: 221-3).

Modernism was to transform the appearance of the city during this period as it moved from the imperialist realisation that gave substance to Herbert Baker's assertion, in speaking about the

building of New Delhi, that "First and foremost it is the spirit of British sovereignty which must be imprisoned in its stone and bronze" (Havell: 1927: 263).

The architectural response in Cape Town seems to have been more tentative, with the new stylistic language of modernism being assimilated into an architecturally eclectic praxis. Yet, in terms of planning, the approach taken in Cape Town seems much more modern in the manner in which it sought to create a planning *tabula rasa* for new architecture. This was expedited by the reclamation scheme of the Foreshore that resulted in a new, modern plan for the city being adopted in 1947, whilst the historic city remained as a background to the modern area. In addition, the city used the concept of programmatic modernism to create satellite, segregated suburbs to the east of the city on the Cape Flats and in this development the city was much more radical than the rest of the country.

The development of society from a broadly-based binary division between an 'us' that was white and a 'them' who were not, now fragmented into a much more heterogeneous subdivision as a result of the racist discourse that created multiple identities and socio-cultural groupings, and this is reflected in the architecture of the period and the different responses to the adoption of modernism that characterizes the architecture of the period.

Cape Town retained certain characteristics of colonialism despite all the ostensible modernism. Political perceptions remained locked into mechanisms of power and control that would ensure the continuation of white socio-political supremacy. Inequalities based on ethnicity increased during this period, and even the white sector was deeply divided along class lines that were based on ethnic difference. The division between the English and the Afrikaners grew stronger. Even some white immigrants were seen as being of a lower caste, and the undercurrent of anti-Semitism ensured that the rising Jewish middle class assumed an identity distinct from that of the English or the Afrikaners. Milton Shain (1994) identifies the anti-alien lobby of the mid-twenties as developing eugenicist-based fears that led to the development of a new racial discourse in South Africa in which "'Russians' and 'Jews' joined 'Orientals', 'Africans', 'Europeans', 'Anglo-Saxons', 'English', 'Nordics' and 'Mediterraneans' as racial groups impacted upon Jewish immigration.'" (Shain 1994:119) Racial differences were to become the *leitmotif* of development in the city in this period. The inscription of ethnic identity was linked in the architectural press to the identification of a possible direction for a new architecture in the period immediately after the First World War.

The assimilation of traditional Cape architectural forms into the architectural praxis in the period before the war, continued to guide the *Zeitgeist* of the early Twenties. The regional architecture was to be considered as a possible *leitmotif* for a new architecture. By contrast, it is interesting to find a strong acceptance of the elements of modernity in the form of new inventions and materials. The aeroplane, motorcar and ocean liners are celebrated, as are materials such as reinforced concrete and steel. In addition to architectural forms of structures such as grain silos were, in Cape

Town, as much as elsewhere, photographed and commented on. But it is in pages of the Cape-based journal, *The Architect, Builder & Engineer* (AB&E) that the contestation, negotiation and mediation of modernism are apparent.

### **The search for a new direction**

In the early twentieth century the notion of 'cribbing' or copying from other sources was the established tradition and did not carry the pejorative quality it came to assume as modernist philosophy focussed attention on 'originality'. In the early years after the First World War the local press debated the suggestion that "now the philosophy of permissible cribbing is involved, and the measure of it varies with the individual sensitiveness to conscientious promptings". (AB&E August 1919:13) they argued that there was no originality, adding "The architectural act is a derivative one and consists of the combining in fresh ways of earlier forms arranged in a stylar or stylistic manner..." The suggestion made was that "We ought to work out our own problems and not fly to keys and cribs". (AB&E August 1919:3)

By 1920 the notion of 'a return to first principles', with tradition acting only as a guide was being mooted and in this year much was made of the President of the RIBA, John Simpson's assertion that "Steelwork and reinforced concrete must express themselves as such, and not be made shams, something false, something pretending to be materials of another kind...Truth in beautiful expression is the aim of good architecture". The journal goes on to point out that

A new school of architecture has arisen, and as the President said, much work that has recently been done are gems of design. Labour conditions necessitate buildings of the severest simplicity. Architecture must express itself mainly in beautiful proportions and sound planning. It is something to be devotedly thankful for that we have left the era of stick-on obtrusive ornament. There is a new spirit abroad. The younger school particularly is taking architecture as primarily an art, and not as a business. There is a change for the better all around; in the art schools, in the ateliers, in the journals, and in the examples set up as models (AB&E December 1920: 35).

The following year there are more references to simplicity when it is suggested, "Any effort should be obtained by very simple lines, which should be bold and outstanding, and by dignified proportions..." (AB&E November 1921: 4). This reference to proportioning reflects an ongoing concern with classicism, a concern that Striner suggests "the polemics of Le Corbusier, who had initially argued for a modern design that would achieve a twentieth-century reformulation of classicism, had yielded by the 1930s to a widely held conviction that classicism and modernism were fundamentally at odds" (Striner: 25). These references to simplicity are also continued in the AB&E with references to the regionalist architecture of the Cape, but not, as Baker had done, as a

design sourcebook, but rather as a conceptual framework. There is a very clear expression of a critical regionalist philosophy in the leader of the Cape Times that was republished by the AB&E

In our old Dutch architecture we have our tradition at hand. Not that it is wise to be a mere historical copyist: that is not living architecture. But it does give a conception, which is suitable, imaginative and simple. If these ideas are followed with sympathy, with the originality and with fitting purpose, we shall not be inflicted with the exotic, the bizarre and the chaotic. A true architecture is born out of right thinking and right temperament. It is the visible expression of beauty, which is truth and imagination (Leader from the October Cape Times, republished by AB&E Nov 1921:4-5).

The editor, Delbridge, added sourly, "that primary cause appears to be the low standard of general culture prevailing among the public". Charles Reilly commented favourably on drawings of Cape Dutch architecture submitted to the Empire Exhibition of 1923 saying:

The Cape is fortunate among other parts of the Dominions of having a fine traditional architecture of its own. It is an architecture of great breadth and humanity, strong and unaffected, yet showing evidence in the richness of its baroque detail of a hearty appreciation of the good things in life. It is a tradition which should make, and we know does make over there, for comfortable, sane, and happy new work (SAB Dec 1923: 19)

The proposal put forward by Le Corbusier in 'Towards a New Architecture' was expressed in Cape Town at a surprisingly early date. In 1922 Stubbs, a local engineer said:

From an engineering point of view it was hardly possible for Moderns to conceive of any great necessity for the study of old styles of building, since the modern architecture practitioner had to deal rather with the bread and butter needs of his time than with the reflected glories of past days. The modern building he described as an engineering steel structure with an architectural shirt on (AB&E May 1922:10).

The journal continues to reflect the subsequent ideas expressed by Le Corbusier when at a meeting of the Cape Architectural Students Association; a discussion on 'The Bases of Style in Architecture' firstly considered the notion of simplicity, which was seen as being central to style because it was direct and unequivocal. The discussion on modern innovations is even more significant as an early expression of Le Corbusier's subsequent philosophy:

The modern motorcar or ship achieves style in spite of complexity and such a modern all-encompassing style should be possible in architecture if a proportionate amount of consistent thought were brought to bear upon its many problems. If this does come to pass the new style will be the greatest that ever existed, for the triumph of achievement in relation to the magnitude of undertaking (AB&E June 1922:7).

In November 1922, Professor Snape, an engineer who lectured at UCT posed the question: What is good architecture? He goes on to make direct references to the use of steel and honesty of expression in engineering structures. He suggested:

If iron is designed on good lines, it will look better in itself, without these gewgaws. We could not have a better example of this than the Galerie de Machines at Paris; an iron roofed structure on the grandest scale in which there is not a particle of decoration and yet which is so fine and imposing that it deserves to be called a great work of architecture as well as engineering..." and he continues: "We can appreciate the beauty of simple things: the graceful lines of a yacht, the bold clear outline of a well-designed modern locomotive and the plain well-proportioned simplicity of a motorcar (AB&E November 1922:15).

This expression of admiration for modern inventions would seem to presage the main themes of Le Corbusier in *Towards a New Architecture* and one is left wondering whether he really was a pioneer in this field or merely expressing the spirit of the age. I believe these laid the groundwork for the subsequent adoption of modernism. In August 1923 the AB&E suggested that "South Africa needed a new and intimate style of architecture and that well-trained architects should carry it out...In our school we have the beginnings of what might one day develop into a new and better standard of architecture implementing proper social and domestic conditions" (AB&E Aug 1923: 15). In the same month there is the complaint that "Architectural jazz is just as ephemeral, as noisy, and as discordant as the jargon of sounds that profane the name of music. Every city has lapses from the canons of good taste. Now that real architecture shows some signs of renaissance there may be more danger ahead" (AB&E Aug 1923: 45). The concern as to how Cape Town would respond to changing demands often expressed. Fred Glennie's cautionary "Following the theme of evolution to its logical conclusions, one is forced to realise that no set of conditions prevailing in Europe are suitable for our Cape conditions. We must work at our own salvation" (AB&E Dec 1923: 32)

The relationship between material and form was also considered in Cape Town. The AB&E questions whether "the use of new materials should modify the ancient forms and proportions, that the preliminary signs of an architectural revival, of a new style, as they say, are showing themselves, and they revolt against the notions resulting from tradition: no more scholarly schemes for them, form should simply result from calculations and scientific facts". (AB&E October 1924:17) Corbusier speaks of "the engineer's aesthetic and architecture- two things that march together and follow one from the other- the one at its full height, the other in an unhappy state of regression". (Le Corbusier 1923:11)

Since Le Corbusier's writing at this point was newly published, and at this stage only available in French, it would seem unlikely in Anglophone Cape architectural circles that there was any awareness of his writings. But the ideas of honesty of expression of structure was contested by the conservative reactionaries, led by architects such as the Australian-born Herbert Brownlee, who

was then the Principal of the Cape School of Architecture, and who reflects his innate conservatism when he derided Perret's reinforced concrete Church of Notre Dame at La Raincy in France. He compared it to Gilbert Scott's Liverpool Cathedral, which he believed "in its beautifully proportioned masses of suitable material conveys to the mind a conviction of noble fulfilment of purpose, directly attributable to the sense of permanence expressed in the structure. The modern French example in reinforced concrete is entirely lacking in this important characteristic". He also speaks of the 'emotion' expressed in the English example and is deprecating about "the French School (that) does not attempt to engage emotions: it adopts an unimaginative attitude which is claimed to be in keeping with modern thought..." (AB&E November 1924:7)

The consideration of the significance of an authentic South African architectural architecture appears to change at this point and one is left speculating what impact of the change of government in June 1924 had on architectural thought. This was the move to a Pact government led by the Afrikaans Barrie Herzog with a number of former Boer war veterans in his cabinet, along with Labour Party members under Colonel Cresswell who had been imprisoned during the 1914 strike. There is a shift away from 'Englishness' and a questioning of the validity of the English roots as suggested by Herbert Baker who had made reference to the English origins of Cape architecture. Even the journal riposted:

We fail to see why South African architecture should be dominated by even "old home-born architecture" since we conceive that the metamorphoses which the European forms must necessarily undergo in a climate such as ours and an architecture which ought to be rightly practised by our own home-born here ought to exceed in accomplishment importations and adaptations, whether of forms or men...The origins of our architecture must naturally be the origins of all real architecture and these are embedded in the history of mankind as a whole (AB&E December 1926:1).

Here, not only is there an argument for a regionalist approach that is developed from first principles, but one that is linked to climatic considerations: an approach that was adopted by Le Corbusier! It ends on the notion of universality that is super-national as the underlying generator.

### **The arrival of the Avant Garde through Le Corbusier**

If the year 1927 were not remarkable for anything else, it was remarkable from the architectural point of view in that a new spirit in design was markedly intensified by the appearance of several thought-provoking works upon design and construction.

Perhaps the most remarkable of these works is one translated from the French and published in England under the title of "Towards the Architecture of Tomorrow". The book itself is not a little curiosity, and a preview of it adds piquancy to the doctrines propounded (AB&E January 1928: 5).

This first response to Frederick Etchells' English translation and the reference to 'a new spirit' suggest an agreement with the premise of the book. But later in the year, with possibly some further reading

and reflection on Corbusier's writings, the resistance to early modernism hardens. It is interesting to consider the reasons for such strong reaction against Le Corbusier's writing. Already in 1927 there was a very negative response to Corbusier's ideas on the modern city. It is likely that they simply were too revolutionary and unrelated to anything that they had experienced that drew such powerful invective.<sup>1</sup> The notions of housing were still tightly linked to the Arts & Crafts tradition and this is possibly borne out by the prominence given in the local architectural media to the thatched late Arts & Crafts houses of Pinelands Garden Suburb. At this stage there was significant opposition to flats as a solution to the urban housing problems.

But if the reaction to Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* appeared positive in the beginning of 1928, by October of that year the invective against 'the fountainhead of the International Style' is reflected in a review of Le Corbusier's book, '*Towards a new Architecture*'

To one prominent critic, and to many who have not attained to prominence, the houses which Corbusier has erected in actuality or in dreamland are but 'filing cabinets for families', lacking all grace, spirituality, emotion, beauty- call it what you will- call it Art and have done with it. To another class of readers the book speaks of Truth, naked and unashamed, of a dropping of shams and the adoption of a new outlook on the life and practice of design.

To us the determination of Corbusier's place as a vaunted leader and director of thought in regard to modern design is easy- he isn't one! (AB&E Oct 1928: 1)

In this period it is clear that the early modernism was being contested at the Cape, whilst it was finding acceptance in the Transvaal. Rather than seeing the European modernism as a way forward one sees the reactionary response in Cape Town. 'Revolt against accepted canons of taste is sometimes a sign of independence of thought, but it is still more often a pose and much more often still the result of a self-satisfied ignorance injurious alike to our fellows and ourselves'. (AB&E Sept. 1929:2- Architectural Heresies)

When Rex Martienssen was writing appreciatively in the Johannesburg-based South African Architectural Record on the 'modern spirit' in architecture and countering the claim of modernism not being English in 1931 he drew attention to the work of Gropius and the Bauhaus as well as "Corbusier's ideal of a Paris built above the ground" (SAAR June 1931:59). By contrast in Cape Town, there is a complaint that:

The writing of architects and their writings about architecture are not of equal quality, or why are we tormented when we open 109 current architectural reviews from overseas by the torrent of abuse and praise that alternating author-architects lavish upon Corbusier? (AB&E April 1931:3)

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<sup>1</sup> If Beauty exists in spite of the slide rule and the machinations of the man behind it, then the provocative and cocksure French author is lost in the greatest darkness of error...He bid us admire a city of multi-storeyed houses which he has designed for our instruction but which cannot fail to provide the thoughtful with amusement merely. He needs Raymond Unwin to set him right here. It has been demonstrated beyond all cavil that the economic waste in storeyed building to the nth degree is astounding... (AB&E March 1927: 3)

Le Corbusier and local reaction to him dominates the local architectural media in the Thirties, almost to the exclusion of all other modern movement architects. No illustrations of any of his work ever appear in the AB&E, whilst the SAAR frequently illustrated his projects. Attacks on him are strangely personal and laden with sarcasm:

He is of course nearly related to the Great Architects. He himself admits it. He could plan an industrial city in a series of two-dozen skyscrapers. Why not let him do and be happy. Why should Sir Flinders Petrie<sup>2</sup> indicate the similarity of the Temple of Edfou to the workshop of a German glassblower in the manner of Corbusier? (Or words to that effect) and WW Woods tell us that all the houses of the year 2000 will be in the Corbusier manner... (AB&E March 1931:3)

But the debate on modernism was ongoing and, despite an apparent lack of understanding of modern movement architecture, was coupled with an attempt to rationalise its impact:

It may be that the bareness and lack of detail in modernistic work will yield in the earlier stages of the movement, results that are stark and bare when contrasted with those achieved when working in the grand manner... (a) simplicity...resulting from the absence of unnecessary and often fussy detail (AB&E March 1932: 5).

But the following month there was another outburst against all forms of modernism including the film 'Metropolis' by Fritz Lang in an article titled 'The City of the Future':

Film rubbish like "Metropolis", the concrete posturings of Corbusier and similar manifestations of defective or unpleasant imaginative outlook notwithstanding, everyone must be interested in forecasts of the architecture that is to be. Not many popular authors are equipped for intelligent guessing in this direction (AB&E April 1932: 3).

Le Corbusier's concept of the house as a machine for living seems to have attracted the most comment in the Cape media and in May 1932 they reflected:

When we come to believe, for instance, that our houses are machines for living in rather than shrines for our domestic gods; when we are led to believe that our success is to be judged by the quantity of work we do, rather than the quality...then our pedestals fall and we with them (AB&E May 1932: 5).

Attacks on Le Corbusier's writings slowly seem to diminish with odd outbursts though continuing until the outbreak of the Second World War. It seems that he was seen to symbolize all that the older architects saw as negative in modernism and was a clear target for their abuse. It is clear that other writings in English had little impact, as they elicit no response. But, if there was a strong reactionary press responding to Le Corbusier, other elements were opening the debate in other directions.

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<sup>2</sup> Sir William Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) was a noted archaeologist and Egyptologist and a pioneer of systematic methodology in archaeology. (www.Wikipedia.org, accessed on 8.08.2007)

Issues of revolution and Bolshevism had been linked to the modern movement and the debate in this arena reveals a great deal more about the architectural ethos at the Cape.

### **Received modernism: the secondary wave**

I imagine a new kind of stone but with the toughness of steel and obviously a new kind of architecture is called for. It is this architecture; more prominent on the continent so far than it is with us, which may cause, and probably will in the end, as great a revolution in building as did the Roman concrete eighteen centuries ago.

To begin with we shall no doubt think the buildings ugly. In the end we shall find them possessed, I fancy, of strange power (Charles Reilly quoted in AB&E December 1927:35).

In June 1930, modernism was linked to Bolshevism by the local media and in an editorial headed 'Bolsheviki' it spoke of the 'diabolical state of political chaos' in Russia and it linked Bolshevism to modern architecture. An article in the magazine 'The Cape' on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1930 by Professor Bell, the head of the College of Music at UCT prompted this response. He wrote of his surprise at finding an article called 'Bolshevism in Architecture, Capetown's Monstrosities', attacking new buildings in the city. He speaks of his admiration for the grain silos at the docks and the Milling factory at Salt River' that was 'honest building, not a mass of pretentious and meaningless ornament'. He goes on to say: "It is this spirit that men like Henri Carbusier (Le Corbusier?) are rallying around them in the world of modern architecture", and adding: "So the first duty of the architect is to conceive of a house as a machine to live in, an office a machine in which to do business, a factory a machine in which to work, a shop a machine for selling things". He went on to suggest that "Capetown is showing signs of this renaissance, and if, in their efforts to achieve an worthy end they make a few failures, time will sort things out; and the movement will go in spite of cries of Bolshevism" (Bell cited in AB&E June 1930: 6). The editor of the AB&E was outraged and appalled at his suggestion that the grain silos were beautiful and well proportioned. (Despite them being described and illustrated in the journal on several occasions! <sup>3</sup>) Bell's assertions are refuted and the editor notes: "Architects have long since abandoned pretentious ornament and the public neither needs nor wants house machines, office machines and the other affectations of the ultra-modern architect-iconoclasts" (AB&E June 1930: 5). They were equally acerbic in their view of the Swedish Exhibition of 1930: "The modernist note in architecture has been struck in the loudest and most discordant fashion possible in the exhibition of Stockholm..." (AB&E Sept 1930: 3). By comparison, Rex Martienssen writing in the South African Architectural Review commented on the Swedish Exhibition saying:

It is no wonder that England lags so far behind Sweden in the matter of taste. For the cycle is endless- and unless some new force surges in (from Heaven knows where!) we

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<sup>3</sup>Upon the site of old Malta House at Salt River has arisen one of the finest examples of reinforced concrete engineering in South Africa, if not in the whole world, (the) new Mill and Silo Elevators designed by the 'eminent architect Sir Henry Tanner'...The architectural treatment is suitably adapted to concrete. No external sign of 48 storage bins... 'Norman cornice' (AB&E November 1927: 6-7)

shall still be shaking our heads at Continental work in fifty years time, and cherishing the myth that in England at least we have not violated tradition (SAAR June 1931: 57).



**Figure 4: Grain Silos at the harbour and the flour-milling factory at Salt River**

In October 1930 the local architect, Richard Day wrote on modernism in an article entitled: This So-called Bolshevik Architecture. Day studied at the Michaelis School before going to the AA in London where he studied from 1925-28. So his response in the press was made two years after his return to Cape Town. Day is quite conciliatory in his approach, starting with the comment that 'modernism' merely refers to contemporary.

The term is based purely on the thought, needs and ideals of the day and the artistic efforts that are nearest to expressing these can be considered modern. New forms are not justified except by necessity and, of course, it would be just as wrong to adhere to any unknown historic shape, as it would be to introduce an unnecessary detail out of sympathy with the spirit of the moment... (AB&E October 1930: 7)

He goes on to suggest that there was a need to 'reason afresh', but that this did not necessarily mean abandoning precedent. His argument for the adoption of modernism lies strongly in economic considerations. He says:

People are beginning to realise that to drape a building in a meaningless cloak of precedent costs money. The hard commercial man's aesthetic feelings are much more catholic than of yore; he appreciates the advertising value of his building but must see a comfortable return on capital invested (AB&E October 1930: 7).

He points out that it is illogical to construct a classical façade around a steel structure. He also recognises the changes made to both art and construction by the machine and urges: "The modern designer must keep in close contact with the industrial developments of the day". New forms are only justified by necessity and he argues for recognition of a spirit of the age, saying that it would be wrong "to adhere to any outworn style as it would be to introduce an unnecessary detail out of sympathy with the spirit of the moment". Interestingly, when he examines modernism

he looks to America and cites the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, from whose article, 'The Architect and the Machine' he quotes: "One may live on canned food quite well but can people live a canned life in all the rudimentary animal expressions of that life indefinitely? Canned poetry, canned music, canned architecture, canned recreation, all canned by the machine" (AB&E Oct 1930: 9) He considers that America has established an honest, national style that 'has almost reached perfection' and he extols the virtues of the skyscraper- that quintessential American creation'. He compares them to 'slow-moving rockets'.

He goes on to consider other modernisms and speaks of:

France with her concrete and steel frames, glass skins and clever shop fronts, Holland and Germany with their reinforced concrete and beautiful brickwork and Italy- well, she is still asleep (AB&E Oct 1930: 9).

Simple lines, he argues are modern. They cover up complexity. He also relates modernism to colour contrasts and the use of "light and shade (obtained by unbroken planes and definite mouldings), continuity of line (the unbroken line of fashion, stream lining, etc). To be modern one must incorporate a definite sense of rhythm- one may cite our modern music, dancing and the frank accentuation of form in fashion". As examples of this modernism in architectural terms he cites Adelaide House in London by John Burnet as being a 'fine example of modern architecture. '. Boston House in Cape Town by W.H. Grant he also considers to be in the same idiom. Responses like Day's are in keeping with British sentiments of the time as modernism was beginning to make an impact there.



**Figure 5: Adelaide House, London, by John Burnet and Boston House by WH Grant (AB&E Oct. 1930)**

Martienssen was in 1931 reacting to the apparent lack of enthusiasm for modernism when he wrote:

One often hears the criticism that Modern Architecture is in general impersonal, de-nationalised. In the past our architects have expressed their personality by small recognisable touches...

A façade that needs "pulling together" by some trifling ornament external to the main fabric, that relies for success on some feature to distract the eye- surely is organically faulty. These pleasant touches are makeshifts to cover the botches of inorganic design.

In modern work the personal qualities are apparent throughout the design- distributed and imbedded in every form, not applied like a trademark to the finished pattern. Breadth and repose are not sacrificed to a fictitious centrality. The traditionalist's horror of assimilating new forms in his architectural vocabulary always strikes me as extremely illogical. "Not English" or "totally unsuitable," are the war cries (SAAR June 1931: 58).

One senses a concern about the manner in which modernism was created and there is a vain questioning of 'inspiration' when the AB&E asked, almost in response to Martienssen's comment: "We have a dim idea that in order to obtain inspiration, some ultra-modern lovers deliberately go to desert lands where aloes, cacti and watermelons rear their appropriate heads and where many freaks of nature abound" (AB&E Sept 1931: 2). But the journal continues with the debate around modernism and a conciliatory note seems to be present when they comment:

It may be that the bareness and lack of detail in modernistic work will yield in the earlier stages of the movement, results that are stark and bare when contrasted with those achieved when working in the grand manner...simplicity...resulting from the absence of unnecessary and often fussy detail (AB&E Mar 1932: 5)

The following year the journal ponders the issue of modernism suggesting, "Many an old-fashioned practitioner of architecture has been apt to wonder during recent years, whether there was anything really vital and inspiring in so-called modernistic design..." and then goes on in a surprisingly conciliatory manner to say:

The spirit that lay behind that New Art movement became for a while dormant but it has been revived today and the modernistic movement is strong upon us. With many of its affectations we may well quarrel. Its loud talk about 'functionalism', its cant about dwelling houses as "machines to live and work in", its insistence on cutting corners out or off, upon ...methods, cubism and so forth are only variations of old and well-recognised convictions stated with different and sometimes more intense, if offensive, emphasis. That phase will pass and a good aftermath- some contribution to the sum of our design knowledge- will be left behind...Progress must necessarily be hindered by lack of reverence for the past. As also by a lack courteous consideration for the strivings of the present...It does not really seem to matter a bit whether we design in the old ways or the new, but we would be much less the wise if we neglected to learn what we can from both ways (AB&E May 1933:11).

In 1934 much prominence was given in the local architectural press to Sir Gilbert Scott's reaction to modernism. It seemed to justify their reactionary response to modern architectural education. Scott also uses the term modernism in the sense implied by Richard Day and suggests that 'modern' can be applied to all architecture that meets the needs of its time. The editorial went on in support of Scott:

He realises the mental posturing that goes on behind the production of much of the work that is called modern. That posturing is related to the attitude of mind that suggests modernism as being an expression of genius: "Genius to madness close allies": therefore since much modernism is madness, it is genius. A syllogism! (AB&E February 1934: 5)

The editorial concludes: "Modernism as an enquiring attitude of mind must be all to the good, but as a professional posture veiling profound ignorance, it is veritably execrable". And then suggests:

If by modern architecture we mean a style of design and building suited to modern ways, i.e. the needs of our time, then we can do without the word "modern" altogether and simply refer to architecture which has in all ages answered the needs of the times. Architecture, whether regarded as stylistic or astylar, is an aesthetic expression of human needs within the opportunities afforded by thought, labour and material at the time of the concept and its embodiment in building AB&E Feb 1934: 5).

One is left with the feeling that the older Cape Town architects saw modernism as a threat to their perceived positions and the comfortable role of being senior practitioners in a conservative society. The older architects were pillars of society. They often held positions of importance in the City Council or on advisory committees to the Council and to Government departments. Modernism undermined their position. It was a concept that they simply could not grasp and the first line of attack on something that is not understood is to undermine it, to question its validity. This the architectural elders did at every opportunity and they maintained their position by ensuring that they retained control of the architectural media, unlike the way that the architectural media in Johannesburg had been taken over by the younger generation of architects. They also had recognised that architecture had to change to suit changing circumstances, but they were determined that those changes would be made in terms of rules that they understood and could control.

Thus on a professional architectural level it would seem that the contestation of modernism has to do with issue of power and control. In this case it was the positions of authority of older architects that were being challenged, and the tools to fight back were by assuming control of the means of dissemination.

Were the constant attacks on Le Corbusier a form of Imperial xenophobia? It was obvious in the writings of Sir Reginald Blomfield in Britain in 1935. In his attack on modernism he had insisted on referring to modernism as 'Modernismus', to indicate its perceived foreignness, and he indeed wrote a book under this title. Britain is always contrasted with modernism elsewhere and 'Fortress Britain' seemed impregnable from her far-off Dominion. Martienssen said derisively, in response, that "In architecture where apathy and indifference are only too prevalent (this is only too true in South Africa) on the part of the lay public, remarks such as those made by the 'champion of the past' (?) find ready agreement..." The response of the modernist architect AD Connell as recorded

in the SAAR would possibly find an echo in the sentiments of the Cape architects, who shared much with their British counterparts.

You too are too instinctively frightened to participate fully in the inevitable progress of modern civilisation. You are afraid of the present phase of evolution because you can neither understand nor use it. So you protect yourself with a philosophy which pretends that it does not exist. You have told us that you dislike the machine- but what you really seem to dislike and fear is efficiency, and fear is the basis of your misunderstanding. I suggest that you look upon modern architecture with a vision trapped by fear (AD Connell quoted in SAAR July 1934: 194).

In 1936, as the AB&E published Norman Hanson's rebuttal of their comments on 'Junior Practitioners' they included Hillaire Belloc's diatribe on modernism. Belloc (1870-1953) was a French-born but British-educated writer and politician who lived in Britain until his death. He loathed the Germans and hated what had happened in France in the early twentieth century. Thus he was not enamoured with European modernism to say the least. The editorial naturally concurred with Belloc's point of view. They report that according to him

A new architecture is appearing in Europe, an architecture of violence and aggressive ugliness.

It is not a new style...though it is often called 'modern' It is not a new style because it lacks unity...three things (are) common to its various manifestations: firstly, that it is deliberately intended to break with tradition; secondly, that it is informed with a vicious intention of shocking and startling; and thirdly, that anything is permitted to it so long as it is wilfully and basely perverted (AB&E April 1936: 4).

The language used by Belloc reflects the negative language used by the AB&E in its own invectives against modernism and le Corbusier. But Cape Town was not alone in its attacks on Le Corbusier. In March 1936, the SAAR published an article by the Johannesburg architect Leo Grinker entitled: "Le Corbusier"- and other fallacies. (SAAR March 1936:91-92) He uses a theological basis for his critique: "There is only one God," says the pure young men, "ultra-ultra-modernism- and Le Corbusier is his Prophet." In his response, published in the same issue, Kurt Jonas replies: "That there is only one God is indeed today the creed of the whole civilised world. So why should it not apply to architecture?" Grinker also attacked Corbusier's 'house-as-a-machine', saying: "I, for one, do not believe this prophet, nor his bible! Do not for a moment think that I decry modernism- that is, the true spirit of the age." Jonas stoutly defended Corbusier and argued against material success or built projects as measures of ability. It recalled an earlier criticism made in the same journal by K. E. F. Gardiner on the RIBA London headquarters competition. He asked: "Must we ever remain parasites, feeding from the hands of foreign masters until satiated with thoughts not our own, we produce bastard abortions from the much-wronged off-springs of real intellects?" (SAAR July 1932:181) He is extremely critical of Grey Wornum's design calling "Mr. Wornum's architectural morals (if any) are appalling" and continues to ridicule the design, specifically the Portland Place elevation. Even the AB&E did not like the design:

It appears that the winner has an outstandingly rigorous plan in which apartments of strange shape and proportion are marked features. The less said about the elevation, the better. (AB&E June 1932: 1)

However, in a more conciliatory note they referred to the appropriately 'English' quality of the design. This still appeared to be the measure that was being adopted at the Cape well into the Thirties. The contestation of modernism holds sway in the Cape media throughout the Thirties, despite the gradually increasing number of modern buildings that were appearing in the city. So in the latter half of the Thirties it would seem that a schism begins to develop between the media and practice at the Cape.

Even by 1937, modernism was still being contested in the Cape media, and they refer to 'opposing schools of thought'<sup>4</sup>. However, a few months later there is the comment that

Design based on tradition does not always mean what it is claimed to mean. Traditions are not good ipso facto. Progress in architecture, as in everything else is only achieved by facing facts with an open mind and a critical eye (AB&E June 1937: 5).

By 1938 a note of reluctant acceptance creeps in. In an article headed 'Architecture of our Time', the unknown author argues the case for a Zeitgeist approach to architecture:

Now mark the reaction in the new horizontal architecture. It makes no pact or compromises with traditional forms. They are ignored...Call this new phase brutal and devoid of grace, if you like, you cannot deride it as fundamentally unsound if you accept the axiom that architecture should be a true index of its time (AB&E January 1938: 7).

By this year a number of buildings were being erected in Cape Town that reflect a Germanic modernism, derived in part from Mendelsohn, and also contemporary British designs such as Peter Jones department store in Sloane Square in London. The caption to an illustration of the new Ackerman's department store in Cape Town by Roberts & Small drew attention to the 'horizontal motif' that was demonstrated.

In a way somewhat foreign to the extreme modernist tendency, the first floor fenestration is two-fold, the lower portion consisting of show windows surmounted by a well-marked plane of ventilating windows wherein the contrast of mass and void is admirably accentuated by the bar treatment adopted (AB&E May-June 1938: 8).

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<sup>4</sup> "Our general impression of the Architects' Conference was that two opposed schools of thought are represented in the councils of the architectural profession at the present time, there being a marked contrast between the views of the older and more conservative members of the profession who base their practice upon stylar and stylistic methods and those- mostly of the younger school- who cannot see daylight for the so-called modernistic tendency which is now manifesting itself on every hand...Many of the parrot cries of today for sincerity of construction, functionalism and what not, are, to say the least of it, forced and unnecessary. In between those days and these, a movement called "new art" sprang up, flourished and died away, and there seems to be little doubt that the so-called "modernism," in its extreme form, will in due time suffer a like fate..." AB&E April 1937: 11

This was followed in July 1938 by an article on the Judge Clothing factory in Salt River by Max Policansky, which is called 'an outstanding example of expressive modernistic planning and elevational treatment'. (AB&E July 1938: 12-13) It is reported that: "The building strikes a distinctive note amidst the manifold expressions of modern factory design in the Cape Peninsula". The article is remarkably conciliatory adding:

If, to the old-fashioned practitioner, there appears to be a certain lack of relationship and scale between the major and minor portions of the building, and a somewhat violent change of form in the fenestration along the main road fronts, this may be put down to inherited prejudices, which the designer of this building has been successful in overcoming (AB&E July 1938: 13).

But by this stage the older architects of the city do not appear to have had any input into the journal, the AB&E which changed hands a couple of times before fading away in the opening years of the Second World War. From 1939 to 1940 another journal appeared in Cape Town called *The South African Architect*. The new magazine however tended to be more descriptive and well illustrated with very little written architectural comment. It was also to die after a short run. With this a strange silence descends on the Cape Town architectural scene, and this was to remain until the 1950s when *The Architect and Builder* appeared in 1951.

In the immediate post-war period there are periodic references to Cape Town buildings in the SAAR, but there is not the same clarity that there had been when there was a local journal. However, the only record of architectural development in the wartime is in the City Council's mayoral minutes, which charts the early developments of the fledgling City Architectural department.

Issues around the new focus of attention in this period- the redevelopment of the Foreshore were mainly debated in the local newspapers such as the Cape Argus and the Cape Times, although, given the significance of the scheme in terms of major modernist planning, it was extensively covered in the SAAR.

In locating modernism within a colonial context it can be seen that the media played a central role. It acted both as proselytiser and critic and the *Architect, Builder and Engineer* can be seen to have been significant as a mechanism through which the architects in Cape Town both contested and negotiated modernism. In the absence of any real forum for debate such as Darling (2007) indicates existed in Britain, and without a strong and progressive School of Architecture in the city such as existed in Johannesburg, (Herbert 1975) the media provided the only terrain of negotiation of modernism. After 1937, following the appointment of Leonard Thornton White to the Chair of Architecture at UCT, modernism formed the underlying philosophy behind the teaching programme and this then enabled modernism to become the mainstream movement among post-war graduates.

But although modernism as an architectural movement had a long gestation period and a difficult birth in Cape Town, it is evident that the underlying forces of modernism- in the form that Heynen (1999) describes as 'programmatically modernism'- had appeared in social practice in the city much earlier as the country emerged from being a British colony to becoming an autonomous state within the British Commonwealth. These changes laid down the foundations of modernism both in social and in political terms as well as certain manifestations of spatial practice that subsequently would be recognised as fundamental underlying elements of modernism.

It is critical to an understanding of modernism in a colonial situation such as existed in South Africa that the relationship between the city and the state is understood, as well contextualising the South African political terrain in terms of its relationship to Britain and the way in which this relationship had changed as the Cape changed from being a British colony to becoming part of the Union of South Africa, a dominion within the British Commonwealth. The framework of power and control thus established, it will be possible to examine the part played by the State and the City in the adoption of modernism, albeit programmatically modernism in the first instance. This will then be used to examine the multiple identities that emerged in this period and the increasingly separatist racist agenda of the State and the City that manifested itself in the planning of the city, its health and slum clearance as well as new structural changes demanded by technological advances.

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## CHAPTER 6

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### MODERNISM AND POWER RELATIONS: HETEROGENEITY AND IDENTITY

It is important to delve into colonialism's history "not only to document its record of domination but also to track the failures, silences, displacements and transformations produce by its functioning" (Prakash 1995:6). More than a unidirectional and successful imposition, the "export of notions, systems, and practices which displace(d) indigenous forms or recreate(d) them in the image of the colonial power" faced negotiation, contestation and re-constitution in colonial societies (Yeoh 1996:12). This negotiation and contestation...is enough in evidence...to say that the spatial project cannot be reduced to mere "self-expression." (Myers 1998: 7)

In order to locate modernism in Cape Town, it is important to consider the relationship between the city and the state and the state as a former British colony and Britain, as this sets the framework within which the modernist discourse was located. As a post-colonial regime with a uniquely racist constitution at the time, the significance of ethnicity and the role it played in the modernist project is very important. The concept of the colonial 'Other' forms part of postcolonial theory and explains the manner in which those people (the colonised) were dealt with as outsiders. In South Africa, in the early twentieth century, the simple division of people into an 'Us' who were White and an 'Other' who were not, multiplied into a much more heterogeneous cluster of sub-divisions, taking the racist discourse to new, intricately nuanced levels. It is also important to understand the place of Jewish people in this grouping as they were treated as a separate sub-group and, possibly as a result of their links to Zionism, became strong proponents of modernism. Afrikaner nationalism also developed considerably in this period as the Afrikaners took ever-stronger positions in the government of the country until, in 1948, they achieved outright control. Their desire to alienate themselves from anything British led to them taking on modernism at an early stage as it represented a more neutral basis for self-expression, much as Zionism was to do in Israel (vide Nitzan-Shiftan: 1996)

Colonial government was to lead to negotiated positions on many issues in South Africa and this process of negotiation reiterated the negotiation that modernism underwent in architecture. Political modernism was adopted at an early stage in the Union of South Africa and with it came the concept of racial segregation through the mechanism of slum elimination and town planning.

The State was at the forefront of modernity in programmatic terms; however in the architecture it created it was much more conservative, struggling to break from the Baker School influence. It generally adopted a form of stripped classicism in the 1920s and 30s and it was only after World War Two that it accepted modernism fully. At local government level the city also responded very tentatively to modernism in the period prior to 1937 when it finally appointed, after much hesitation, a City Architect. The architecture produced by the City Architect's department shows a wide

range of interpretations. These varied from traditional through a mediated modernism to modernist projects that were on a par with international modernism. A Town Planning Scheme also underwent a long gestation period and was only finally completed in 1947 following the Table Bay reclamation scheme that created a tabula rasa for the planning of a new modern city- a unique situation in South Africa.

As was the case in Britain (Darling 2007: 51) health and disease were concerns of the City from the beginning of the twentieth century and it led to the displacement of Africans from the city to a place on its periphery. They were subsequently to be moved as the city perceived changes to its industrial needs. The Medical Officer of Health played a pivotal role in the negotiation and implementation of modernism in the city as he controlled issues of both health and housing. The concern with health and the elimination of slums set the landscape of segregated living in Cape Town as residential areas for people of colour was planned on the Cape Flats, away from the White residential areas- long before the policy of Group Areas was promulgated by the post-1948 Nationalist government.

In attempting to deal with slum clearance the city of Cape Town embarked on an ambitious housing programme that was largely focussed on the Coloured population. They created a series of housing projects that focused on the provision of flats, both in cleared areas of the inner city and within new residential areas on the Cape Flats. For the African population, a new residential area, called Langa, was developed, with a focus on the provision of single quarters, as the Council sought to emphasize the notion that Africans were 'temporary' dwellers in the city. In the design of the housing provided, some were designed by architectural practices, while others were developed by the newly formed Housing Department of the City Council. The designs vary considerably in the way that they used modernism and it is evident that public housing formed a terrain of negotiation of modernism. This relates to what was happening in Britain, the USA and Turkey, thus reflecting an international tendency where the acceptance of modernism for housing was often contested.

### **The British Empire and its Dominions**

The Union of South Africa was a Dominion within the British Empire after it was formed in 1910 following the negotiations between the British government and the National Convention that was established in 1908 between the British colonies at the Cape and Natal and the former Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State that had been defeated in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. As the historian T.R.H. Davenport explains, "the National Convention was primarily concerned with the distribution of power" (Davenport 1977:165). He goes on to point out that: "needless to say, there were no Africans, Coloured people or Asians among the delegates".

The constitution that emerged was flexible like the British constitution, albeit written, in which sovereignty lay with the Union Government. The executive government was to be headed by a Governor-General as representative of the King, aided by an Executive Council composed of the current Ministry. Despite efforts by certain representatives, the political colour bar was entrenched, with no persons of colour being allowed to be elected to Parliament. The total voting population of the country was to be determined by the total white adult male population.

The National Convention completed all negotiations within a year. By comparison, the Australian federation had taken about ten years and Canada three. However, as Davenport points out, the Convention overcame difficulties by avoiding them rather than by dealing with them (Davenport: 168). Cape Town was to be the legislative capital and seat of parliament, Pretoria became the administrative capital and Bloemfontein was made the judicial capital. Far more important was the agreement to differ over the treatment of Black people. Their dissatisfaction over the South Africa Bill was widespread and well known, but the British Government chose to ignore the opposition and this despite pleas by delegations from South Africa and Mahatma Gandhi from India.

The South Africa Act gave the country the 'supreme national authority to give expression to the national will'. (Davenport: 168)

In 1910 General Louis Botha (1862-1919) as head of the South African Party, dedicated to conciliation between the English and the Boer factions, was appointed the first Prime Minister of the Union. J.B.M. Herzog (1866-1942) of the Nationalist Party and Sir Thomas Smartt (1858-1929), heading the Unionist Party, were in opposition. Herzog held the support of the Boers and the Dutch speakers and represented latent Afrikaner republican sentiments (Davenport 1977; Dunbar Moodie 1975: 75). Davenport says that there was little difference between the parties. All stressed the idea of a single (White) nation, a non-doctrinaire native policy, all wanted white but not Asian immigration, material development and Imperial preference.

We are going to create a nation- a nation which will be of a composite character, including Dutch, German, English and Jew, and whatever white nationality seeks refuge in this land- all can combine. (J.C. Smuts quoted in Dunbar Moodie: 75)

Thus the constitution of 1910 created a single state with a degree of sovereignty, and one that excluded all people regarded as 'non-white'. However, with respect to external affairs South Africa remained bound to the decisions of the King on questions of war and peace. The structure that developed politically at the formation of Union was to echo through the decades that followed and the power relationship that existed in 1910 was to become the basis for political contestation and negotiation. Concessions granted by Britain were to be written into the laws promulgated in South Africa with insufficient resistance to their colonial racist prejudices by a gradually weakening British Empire. As power was negotiated between South Africa and Britain, the theoretical ultimate authority lay with the sovereign, represented in South Africa by the Governor General. This structure

was to be reflected in all aspects of South African life, and ultimately in the architectural praxis in the country. Architecture did not serve as a catalyst for change, but rather reflected the shifting power relations in the country.

### **After the First World War**

In 1919 Louis Botha died and Jan Smuts (1870-1950) took over as Prime Minister. The political balance in South Africa was between the coalition of the South African Party that he headed and the Unionists headed by Sir Thomas Smartt on the one hand and the Nationalists headed by J.B.M. Herzog on the other. Herzog had said that Smartt was "not yet a true Afrikaner. Imperialism, in my view is only good insofar it is useful to South Africa" (Dunbar Moodie: 77).

Smuts had used his position in the War cabinet of Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, as a mechanism, to attempt, with Colonial Office approval, to extend the Union's political base in Southern Africa through the hoped incorporation of South-West Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Swaziland, Bechuanaland and Southern Mozambique. Both Milner and Churchill as Foreign Secretaries had supported Smuts' attempts to incorporate Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa, but refused to give up the so-called High Commission Territories. Smuts' motive was to create 'a great White Africa along the eastern backbone' (Davenport: 190) to safeguard the white south. Racial concerns dominated South African politics during this period and these were grounded in fears of Black resistance and uprising. This attitude was reflected in the treatment of the so-called *Bondelswarts* in South West Africa in 1921 who were attacked and suppressed, following their expression of their grievances. In 1923 the Union Government passed the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, which not only administered African residential areas but also policed them as segregated residential areas. Control on movement was also introduced and later became known as 'influx control'. The act was based on the principle that Africans should only be allowed to remain temporary urban dwellers. In 1922 the Stallard Commission had stated that

The Native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and then minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister (Col. Stallard quoted in Anderson & Field : 34).

In 1920 the Unionist Party was absorbed into the South Africa Party. This resulted in "a blending of attitudes towards the Commonwealth and world affairs by the leaders of the Afrikaans- and English-speaking communities. But this led to a new polarisation of outlooks, for it brought into the open again that clash of interests based on status and class" (Davenport: 192). For Afrikaners it appeared that Smuts had negotiated away their unity in favour of Imperialism. This did, however, bring greater support among English-speakers and the English press.

This was to be reflected in architecture as well and the architectural press took up the cudgels very quickly. In the *Architect Builder and Engineer* readers were urged:

With the increasing expansion of a truly South African national spirit, a more widespread interest is being taken up in these beautiful specimens...

We are realising more and more that in our indigenous architecture and in the fittings, which went with it, we have examples of noble yet simple treatment, which we will do well to follow as a general rule (AB&E July 1920:15).

The strong support given in the Cape-based architectural media to South African to a regional architectural expression speaks of the need for a South African architecture and addresses "A post-war and worldwide desire for the maximum development of a simple and sensible architecture of a South African character...from a consideration of our racial and historical inheritance". The unidentified author (probably Delbridge) is equally quick to bring in the negotiation of balance between English and Afrikaner when he adds: "The racial inheritance which South Africa has derived from Europe though of varied and cosmopolite character is no mean one: the surviving elements are both noble in origin and fusible in character". (AB&E November 1920:12) The conciliatory tone is unambiguous. There were also oddly obsequious references to the importance of Britain in terms of design at the Cape. In the following month the writer expounds enthusiastically (and incorrectly): "The "Kat" or balcony at the Castle has had a Dutch name bestowed upon it but it is undoubtedly the work of English designers and craftsmen and was not in existence when the first British garrison entered into possession" (AB&E Dec 1920: 11)

Equally strong is the powerful racist tone that reflects the State's view of white supremacy and a reinforcement of the Civilised/Primitive debate that was used to justify political decisions that impacted on people who were not white. As William Delbridge (1878-1946), architect and editor of the *Architect Builder & Engineer* in the early Twenties commented:

The Dominions of the Empire have their particular problems relating to architectural expression. If we take South Africa as a typical example we may safely assert that it has drawn its people from every quarter of the globe. The first settlers found a primitive race living in caves. (Microcephali and others) To these they brought civilisation, and in time, corrugated iron roofs...

The English were the last to settle and were renowned as being a nation of shopkeepers and thieves, who, however, had this to their credit- that they glorified all that they borrowed...

Mr. Delbridge submitted that in his opinion the architecture of South Africa up to the present time was all wrong (AB&E November 1921:15).

The extreme racist tenure of his comments, with its hint of irony at the role of the English, passed without comment and was followed by his assertion that "reflex action from the East has had its effect in racial mixture on the non-European side and the absence of any general prevalence of

miscegenation in earlier periods has tended to preserve a high degree of racial purity that has been permissive of a fusion of European nationalities..." a statement that was not borne out in reality, and he then continued:

The vicissitudes of exploration and existence in a land of great extent and the necessity for combined resistance by the civilized population of onslaughts by native barbarians have helped to discount the potential enervation of the European stock in a climate partially verging upon sub-tropical regions. A fine climate has added to the joy of living and a comparatively plentiful supply of servants from subject races has aided in the performance of rough work...

We are the stronger socially for this weaving of diverse racial qualities into the fabric of the settlement (AB&E December 1920:10-11).

There is also a strong centre/periphery thread that runs through the local architectural media that often strikes one as being quite contradictory. In the Twenties, for example, the AB&E had a regular column called 'The Old Country', which, as the name suggests, looked at architectural developments in Britain. This maintained a strong link for local architects with developments and architectural personalities in Britain, particularly since it appears that for most of the Cape Town architects the local journal was their prime source of architectural information- other than the Johannesburg-based *South African Architectural Review*, with few architects subscribing to English or American magazines. The journal also gave brief reviews of significant articles in the major English and a couple of the American magazines. Notably absent was any reference to the German or French press. This limited exposure to modernism significantly, and in the absence of any catalyst within architectural education in the city, hampered its introduction.

Smuts lost the 1924 elections and a so-called Pact government was to take power under Herzog, who had formed an alliance with the Labour Party of Colonel F.H.P.Cresswell (1866-1948). As Davenport points out, the Afrikaners, whose cultural needs had been played down by both Botha and Smuts, now found much greater recognition with Afrikaans as a language being recognised in the constitution when the meaning of 'Dutch' was extended to include Afrikaans. Herzog immediately took steps to introduce discriminatory industrial legislation to alleviate the position of 'poor whites', who were largely Afrikaans, reserving even manual labour in government institutions for white men (Dunbar Moodie: 91). Herzog had at first proposed that an alliance should be negotiated with Coloured people, but this never happened and as Goldin (1987: 166) points out: "the form of racial discourse broadly followed the patterns established at the turn of the century. Herzog's rule was associated with the vigorous enforcement of strategies of segregation which were developed by previous governments".

Herzog gradually introduced his belief in the right of secession from Britain, despite the negative impact that this would have on the British-born Cresswell. Some of these anxieties appear to be reflected in the architectural press as they reinforced the idea of Britain being the 'Old Country'.

Herzog warned the Imperial Conference in 1926 that lack of clarity over the position of dominions would lead to separatist movements and this resulted in the Balfour Declaration of 1926 recognising that Great Britain and the Dominions were autonomous countries whose common allegiance was to the Crown and whose bond was the Commonwealth (Dunbar Moodie: 91-92).

Another significant issue that dominated politics at the time, continuing well into the Thirties was the issue of so-called 'Poor Whites'. The problem had existed since the Anglo Boer War when the 'Scorched Earth' policy, followed by post-war drought drove tenant farmers or 'bywoners' off the farms and into the cities. They formed a significant underclass, poorly educated and largely unskilled. They competed with people of colour for labouring work, causing a great deal of tension. There is a constant debate in the press about working class whites and the Bolshevik movement. The impact of the October 1917 revolution in Russia rippled through the West and echoed in South Africa whenever issues of dissension occurred, particularly when this was coupled to dissension among Black workers. Already in 1918 the architectural press muttered about 'Native Upheaval'. They continue:

And if it is not a strike in the building trades it is a strike in some other trade. And all this time no one has been hung for it. So the ordinary common people have come to the conclusion that anybody can do what anybody likes with impunity. That might have been all very well so long as it was confined to the white people, but a certain type of white man conceived the peculiar idea of bringing the black man into it... The native trouble, the prosecution of the International Socialists, and the commission of enquiry into the whole thing are still with us (AB&E 1918:16).

The Pact Government began to address some of these issues, which had already led to a Miners' Revolt in Johannesburg in 1922 and prolonged the poor white issue, as there was little motivation to keep people on the land. Kemp, the new Minister for Agriculture used the Land Bank as a mechanism to provide credit for farmers. Its significance was to be marked by the ever-rising status of its buildings, and a modest, conservatively detailed building in Keerom Street in Cape Town in 1928 by Afrikaans architect Wynand Louw, was in the 1930s replaced by a much more prominent edifice on Queen Victoria Street by Brian Mansergh. There is a certain conciliatory note that also creeps into the architectural media: "It has been too much the fashion among technicians of English extraction to belittle the work of our Dutch confreres" (AB&E December 1923: 5). The article goes on to encourage bilingualism, which is clearly lacking in the architectural and building industry.

The white working class, were being looked after by a Department of Labour under Cresswell, and subsequently, Boydell. The government increased the protection of tenants against eviction and brought the Factories Act in line with current international standards. This had a major impact on factory design in the period before the Second World War. In 1925 a Wage Act was passed to help unskilled white labour, and this was followed in 1926 by the introduction of the 'Colour Bar' Act to

protect poor whites against Black and Coloured competition for semi-skilled and unskilled jobs. The Government set up a Wage Board in 1925 to make wage determinations in industries where there was no provision for collective bargaining. The Board operated on a 'rate for the job' principle, ostensibly completely fair, but as Hutt, cited by Davenport, point out: 'the most powerful yet most subtle colour bar that has ever operated' (Davenport: 361). The previously enacted Apprenticeship Act of 1922 had curtailed Coloured peoples access to apprenticeships and according to the Coloured leader Dr. Abdurahman was "the most potent weapon ever forged for the purpose of carrying on a callous and brutal one-sided war against the Coloured youth" (Abdurahman's 1939 address to the APO cited in Goldin: 166)

In 1924 Herzog had declared that the government had no 'native' policy. But what he was doing was to develop the principle of African development in rural settlements while permitting Whites to dominate urban development.

We still want some public man strong enough to realize and put into practice the truth that in the matter of native housing, the native is himself best qualified to give expression in construction to his racial needs dictated by many generations of ancestors and tribal environments (Comment in AB&E Jan 1928:3 on the need for African housing).

There was a constant complaint in the late 1920s and early 1930s about the inadequacy of existing legislation in dealing with the slum conditions in the cities of South Africa. The Minister for Health, in recognising the call of municipalities, promulgated the Slums Act No. 53 of 1934, which gave the Medical Officers of Health sweeping powers to expropriate property that they deemed to be a health risk. Scott and Soja both draw attention to the modernist programme of dealing with the poor of the world in a much more comprehensive way than had ever been undertaken before. Poverty, ethnic difference and slums represented a threat to a controlled colonial society.

The political framework of the 1930s can be seen to have adjusted the earlier colonial political relationships that existed between Britain and her colonies and saw the gradual imposition of legislated discrimination against those deemed to be 'other' as greater measures of control were being negotiated in the racial discourse that served as a meta-narrative shading and impacting on the introduction of modernism in South Africa. It is necessary to now examine this mechanism of discrimination and control that the state adopted as it sought to create a multiplicity of 'Others' including Jewish people. As Dunbar Moodie explains, anti-Semitism grew in the 1930s and he cites Professor Cronje's comment in 1936 that the Jews "were simply looking for trouble by loading off on our shoulders that element which Germany no longer wanted...flotsam from the national life of another country" (Dunbar Moodie: 166). Attitudes such as these set the scene for the development of greater heterogeneity as programmatic modernism created challenges in a difficult economic environment, throwing up conflict and divisive practices that were based on ethnicity.

## **The State and the City: Binaries and heterotopias**

Little by little the State is creeping in and seeking to control all human activities. Perhaps the complex conditions of our day demand the environment of such a tendency, but the degree to which it operates in our midst is, in our opinion, lamentable (AB&E December 1929:2).

### **The Colonial 'Other'**

Bhaba, Spivak and others have written extensively on the development of the Colonial 'Other'. In the nineteenth century, a hierarchy based on race (as had existed under the Dutch) was to be strengthened and reinforced, laying down the framework for the 'apartheid' policies of the mid-twentieth century.

British social structures had created a strong social hierarchy in Britain and as a British colony, it was natural that those people who either were British, or of English descent should form the upper echelon of government and local social structures. The Dutch farmers were relegated to a second tier and the wealthier burgers and farmers were quick to adopt English as a language and English social practices in order to advance their social status. Their movement into the commercial world had proved slower and only really took off in the twentieth century. Colonial societies are highly structured as a general rule, and this was particularly the case in the British Empire. The antagonistic view of any people who did not have Western European origin is clearly demonstrated in the example from the architectural press.

The Egyptian was a man of stunted intelligence who was content to worship reptiles. His social and artistic life remained practically unchanged for thousands of years, and his architecture and sculpture reflect his consummate dullness...

The Greek...had a much more active intelligence than had the Egyptian, and had an appreciation of form, which amounted to an additional sense (AB&E June 1922:7).

The indigenous population formed a completely subordinate class against whom all manner of prejudices and preconceptions were held. At the Cape the so-called Coloureds were seen as an intermediate grouping that held a position above that of the Africans- but below that of the Whites. These relationships always had a spatial fix in terms of people's residential spaces in the city, although there was a great deal more mixing, particularly among the poorer classes and this was generally tolerated in the nineteenth century.

This emphasis of the supposed superiority of the European settlers led to the justification of many decisions that were made regarding the role, living conditions and spatial segregation of those deemed 'Other'. The fear of mixing is a constant theme in the media and the concern is expressed about the potential outcome of Africans being allowed to live in the city.

'A striking proof is given by certain statistics that have been published by the Association for the Prevention of Consumption: these seem to show conclusively that as the Kafir dons the white man's clothing and lives under conditions proper to the European, he becomes increasingly susceptible to the white man's scourge, which is decimating his race and tends to discount the large increase of population that takes place within the native territories. It is manifest that the evils, which thus beget our native populations transferred from reserves to the towns, are bound to have a disastrous effect upon the white population also. (AB&E April 1923:17)

This extremely racist point of view would seem to link in with the outcome of the Stallard Commission and lend credence to its outcomes. Architecture was serving the political ends of government. This attitude to people who were not white informed decisions on slum clearance and housing, along with preferential labour policies and the exclusion of people from decisions regarding their living and working conditions.

### The Jewish Question

The twentieth century was to see what had been a fairly crudely divided binary structure from an 'us', who were white, and a 'them' who were not, into a complex heterogeneous social division. The colonial 'Other' was to be extended to include ethnic groupings such as the Jews and there is a racist note that creeps in to the modernist discourse in the twentieth century that worryingly reflected attitudes that became prevalent in Germany where the National Socialists espoused them.

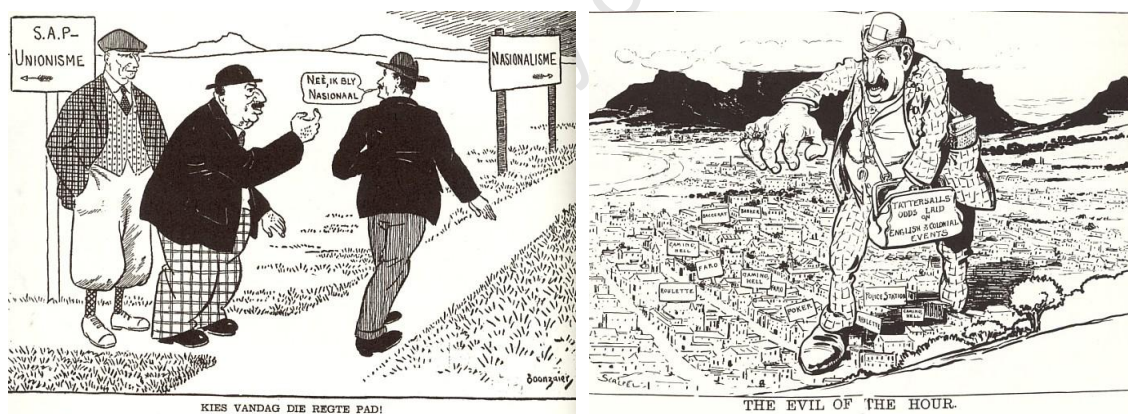


Figure 6: Anti-Semitic cartoons from the local press (Shain Fig 9 & 2)

One sees, for example, how, in South Africa, anti-Semitic sentiment grew in the twentieth century, prior to World War 2, and how Jews formed a significant sub-culture in the white society.

It is a matter for complimentary reflection upon the Jewish race that during the present times, when they are undergoing fierce political prosecution in certain quarters, they still calmly pursue the even tenour of their ancient ways and faith (A description of the new Synagogue in Sea Point in AB&E May 1934:29).

Shimoni describes the characteristics of South African society in the early twentieth century "*in which an ascriptive attribute, race, was the primary determinant of people's lives*". (Shimoni 1980:1)

Sociologically, South Africa, until the late twentieth century, had a mandatory plural society characterised by the existence of several socio-cultural segments within the same overarching political and economic system. Its primary segmentation was into racially defined castes. Its dominant white caste was further subdivided into Afrikaners and English-speakers. Jews were to an extent expected to acculturate with one of the dominant white groups. "It was thus the overall caste-linked pluralism of the entire society, which assumed primary significance for the Jews of South Africa." (Shimoni: 3) Shimoni says that, theoretically, Jews, as "an ethno-religious group placing high value upon preservation of its distinctiveness" (Shimoni: 2) stood to benefit from the plurality of South African society. He describes the Afrikaners as developing a militant national identity, steeped in Calvinism and a sense of grievance against British Imperialism. By contrast the English-speaking population did not develop a strong national identity of its own. They depended on British cultural and political bonds, in contrast to the Afrikaners, thus creating an asymmetry in terms of national identity. They remained closely linked by culture and kinship to Britain until the Second World War and beyond.

By 1910 the English had become the reference group for the Jewish community. This was as a result of a variety of factors: the Anglo-Jewish origins of the organised Jewish community, coupled with a high degree of urbanisation in a situation where urban culture was predominantly English. This predominance was not only in terms of class structures, but also education and commerce. But with the weak local identity of the English-speakers, coupled with the duality of white identity, the pull of acculturation was weaker than in Britain. This inchoate national identity was significant in preserving a separate Jewish identity and endowing it with an ethno-national dimension that was to find expression in Zionism.

In the 1911 census there were 46 926 Jews in South Africa. By the census of 1947 this number had increased to 104 156. Shimoni points out that, considering the effect of natural increase, it is evident that the core of the Jewish population was already present by 1910. The community has been described as 'a colony of Lithuanian Jewry' (Shimoni: 5). Lithuanian or *Litvak* is understood in Yiddish speech to mean certain pre-Czarist Russian provinces, particularly the Kovno province. Many came via England with numbers increasing dramatically after the czarist *pogroms* of 1881. The earliest Jews came from Germany, mostly after a period spent in England where they assimilated English customs. Distinctions were drawn between the two groups of Jewry until assimilation began to occur in the 1920s, with immigration coming largely from the poverty-stricken Litvak region. This raised an alarm for the director of census, J.E. Holloway in 1925, who considered that these immigrants who were involved in commerce were the sorts of category of immigrant not wanted then. This led, through media debate, to the continuation of often repeated negative stereotyping of Jewish people. But underlying it was the 'eugenicist-based fears of "racial mixing" and

"mongrelization"- primarily associated with South African Blacks-appeared to have influenced the perceptions of the eastern European. In other words, a new "race" discourse, in which "Russians" and "Jews" joined "Orientals," "Africans," "Europeans," "Anglo-Saxons," "English," "Nordics'" and "Mediterraneans" as racial groups...So-called "moral degeneracy" haunted South African eugenicists while "miscegenation" or "cross-breeding" was a fear voiced even by liberal social scientists and philosophers'. (Shain 1994: 119)

The introduction in 1930 by the Nationalist-Labour Government headed by J.B. Herzog, with D.F. Malan as Minister of the Interior, of the Immigration Quota Act, which came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1930, was a turning point in the development of the Jewish community. It reduced immigration from non-Western European countries (including Eastern Europe) to a trickle. Malan (House of Assembly Debates, 10.02.1930, cols.558ff quoted in Shimoni1980: 98) based this on three principles:

- The desire of every nation in the world to maintain its development on the basis of its original composition
- The need to avoid 'an undigested and unabsorbed and unabsorbable minority
- The perceived fact that 'we are called upon in South Africa to maintain Western Civilisation'. He regarded civilisation in Eastern Europe as being quite different to that in the west.

Malan linked this to 'an alarming rise of alien non-Nordic stock immigration'. These aliens, he described as being 'economically unsuited'. Shimoni ascribes the anti-Semitic sentiments as part of an underlying discontent that was closely linked to the socio-economic problems of the 'poor Whites'. The issue of these homeless people was exacerbated by their lack of work opportunities, often as a result of their perceived white superiority that precluded them taking up menial labour in the towns. Here they faced Black competition for labour and mainly English-speaking employers, within which the Jews, as Shain attests, were perceived as being powerful and manipulative. He describes the poor Whites as 'casualties of modernization'. (Shain: 114) By 1930, the Carnegie Commission determined that about 20% of the Afrikaner population could be classified as 'poor White'. This became a major issue in the consciousness of Afrikaner nationalism. 'Poverty, demoralization and subservience to the English language were causing the Afrikaner townsman to lose his *volk* identity and his religious values.' (Shimoni: 103) The Jewish population, often engaged in commercial activities, became the scapegoat for the problems of the poor Whites. Shimoni goes on to point out that the Act 'demonstrated the almost universal assumption, held by the majority of White society, that the Jews were in the final analysis not fully acceptable to the White core-groups, Afrikaner and English; that whatever their talents and contributions to South Africa might be...it still remained the host's prerogative to draw the limits of Jewish growth in its midst.' (Shimoni: 107) This anti-Jewish sentiment was further worsened by the infiltration of German National Socialism after Hitler came to power in 1933. By 1937 Malan, at a Nationalist Party congress in Bloemfontein

demanded that all German Jewish immigration be halted, as he perceived a mass exodus to South Africa and Palestine. He used the ability to be assimilated as the litmus of his policy and insisted that Yiddish should not be regarded as a European language (!). The Aliens Act of 1937 essentially stemmed German Jewish immigration. Between 1.02.1937 and 31.03.1940 only 500 Jews other than wives, minor children or aged parents entered South Africa, leaving an appalling majority to the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. Shimoni indicates that the Quota Act of 1930 reinforced the Zionist movement in South Africa, which already had an overwhelming influence on South African Jewry. It was normative for the Litvak immigrants to be Zionists and for the Anglo-Jews to join and lead Zionist organisations. (Shimoni: 27) 'To be a good South African one had to be a good Jew and to be a good Jew one had to be a good Zionist...The recreation of a Jewish national home in *Eretz Israel* (the Land of Israel) would normalize the position of the Jews'. (Shimoni: 32) Chaim Weizmann's visit in 1932 stimulated the Zionist movement in South Africa further.

Nitzan-Shiffan, in her 1996 examination of modernism in Mandate Palestine, compared the attempted regionalism of Erich Mendelsohn when he designed buildings in Palestine to the strong negative response to his approach that he received from the so-called Tel Aviv Chug. She identifies both modernism and Zionism as plural movements in the 1920s and 30s. She points out that in Palestine both architects and ideologists embraced modernism as an appropriate expression of Zionism. "They clung to its attributes of progress as well as its lack of identity with forms associated with European nations". She describes the way that the Nazis in Germany had rejected modernism after they seized power in 1933, because of its international nature. "Indeed this architecture denied the existence of a history describing a territorially bounded ethnic and linguistic community, a necessary prerequisite for the cultivation of national ideologies. It is not surprising that barely any of the post-World-War 1 national regimes of Europe, the birthplace of modern architecture, embraced this architecture as their form of built self-expression". (Nitzan-Shiffan 1996:151) She goes on to describe modernism as the visual mould of Zionism. This would also account for its immediate acceptance within the Jewish community in South Africa. She explains that:

The modern movement's rupture from the past was amplified in the Zionist context...modernism signified a break with the anti-Semitism of their subordinated life in exile. It symbolized the transition from centuries of being a stereotyped minority in Europe to the promise of constructing an autonomous Self (Nitzan-Shiffan : 154).

In this approach Zionism was to share a common approach to modernism with Afrikaner Nationalism, since both were cultural constructs that had to find and appropriate mechanisms to create tangible identities that would draw together disparate groups of people, in the one case all sharing a theological basis, and on the other a linguistic one.

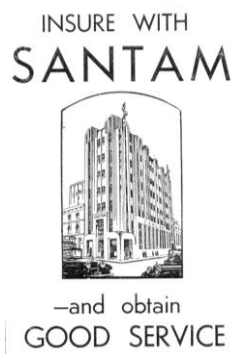
## Afrikaner Nationalism and modernism

Two events had changed the attitude of Cape Afrikaners towards the English. The first was the Jameson Raid of 1896, and the second, the Anglo-Boer War of 1898-1901. The war not only strengthened ties of kinship between the Cape families and those in the north, but was also the touchstone that heightened historical interest in the past. Within this framework the myth of the Afrikaner was created, imbued with powerful religious overtones, and heightened with memories of the periods of suffering of the 'volk'. Gustav Preller, who wrote on the Voortrekker Piet Retief, and then extended it into a full-scale dramatisation of the Voortrekkers, developed the serious elaboration of the Afrikaner myth. Preller developed the Voortrekkers into folk cult figures. His writings were colourful and emotional and he attempted to popularise Afrikaner history. Other writers who reincarnated other Afrikaans heroes from the past followed him.

The drive to create the myth of Afrikaner Nationalism required that the acceptance of the 'culture' be taken to all levels of cultural and social interaction. It needed to be infiltrated into every aspect of daily life. Afrikaner magazines such as *Die Brandwag*, *Die Boerevrou*, and *Die Huisgenoot* carried articles that reinterpreted every facet of people's daily lives as Afrikaners. These ranged from food to humour to landscape to architecture. The latter changed what had previously been merely thought of as a house into an Afrikaans house in an *Afrikaanse bouwstijl*. Hofmeyr describes this as being part of a broader movement known as *volkskunde* (folklore studies) (Hofmeyr: 111).

The articles in *Die Boerevrou* were interesting in the way they attempted to persuade their readers that they needed to shrug off the dead imperialist and European past so that they could establish a material Afrikaner identity. Fisher and Le Roux emphasize the leitmotiv in the articles on architecture and the visual arts, largely written by Jacob Pierneef –better known as an artist, and the architect Gerard Moerdijk: leaders in their fields. Both write of the need to establish a style that is derived, *de novo*, from the Afrikaner spirit. This was, to a certain extent, driven by a desire to find an architectural expression other than the Romantic Vernacular Revival of the British architect, Sir Herbert Baker. His appropriation of Cape Dutch gables and the elements of the Cape farmhouse to create his Cape style resulted in its rejection as a 'foreign style' by both Moerdijk and Pierneef. (vide Coetzer 2004). In an article written by Pierneef in the April 1920 edition of the magazine he says that: "The Cape Dutch style is not ours, no, we look for a pure Afrikaans (style) that will carry the stamp of our volk spirit" (Fisher & Le Roux 1989: preface).

He goes on to complain that whilst literature, sculpture and painting are progressing, architecture is very depressing (*treurig*) and says that "The Cape Dutch style is definitely un-Afrikaans, since it might be given any name. The art expression of a nation must display the *volk* character." Even the opinions of the English architects at the Cape are used to demonstrate the inferiority of English architectural style. He quotes the architect Arthur Reid as saying: "From the British Occupation of the Cape in 1806 until 1890, the less said the better!" (Fisher & Le Roux: 6)



**Figure 7: SANTAM Insurance Building by Louw & Louw (1930) & the Voortrekker Monument (author)**

All articles on architecture, which formed a regular feature of the magazine, refer to 'the Afrikaans dwelling'. This search, highlighted by the first Afrikaans architect, the Transvaal-based Gerard Moerdijk, was to be carried forward in the Cape by his contemporary, the Paarl-based Wynand Louw. Like Moerdijk, Louw was responsible for the design of numerous Dutch Reformed churches, commercial buildings and houses. Significantly, the Louw brothers were to design the first headquarters of SANTAM in Cape Town in 1932. The style chosen was Modernist. Was this part of the search for an Afrikaans architectural style that was not derived from the imperialist Romantic Classicism of Edwardian architects? Sir Herbert Baker completed the new Barclays Bank building in Adderley Street a little earlier (1931) and that was still in the grand British Baroque tradition. This was surely a precedent to be avoided at all costs as the expression of the emerging Afrikaner economic power. Louw's style was contemporary and forward-looking. The analogy was obvious.

Ultimately, another building was to become the apogee of Afrikaner Nationalism. The Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria, designed by Moerdijk, and consecrated in 1940 became the sacred site. It concluded the search for a tangible expression of identity.

But it was the result of a concern that had vexed Afrikaner politicians and clerics for a prior decade. Afrikaners had moved to the cities in great numbers during the 1930s, seeking employment. Here they joined the multi-cultural lower sections of society much to the chagrin of the Afrikaner middle classes, clerics and intellectuals. Afrikaner women were abandoning their traditional role as *Volksmoeder* to become factory workers, working alongside black and coloured workers. The dream of rural tranquillity and solidarity had vanished. A new ideology had to be invented. The symbols of the civil faith had to be integrated into the problems of urban life. As Dunbar-Moodie points out: 'at the Blood River centennial celebration, Dr. Malan succeeded in developing the theme of the "second Great trek" in a manner which set the urban migration of Afrikanerdom firmly in the context of the civil religion'. (Dunbar Moodie: 198) Malan's speech drew on all aspects of the great myth as he drew the analogy between the urban Afrikaner and the Voortrekkers.

There is an imperishable drive to freedom. There is an irrecusable ethnic destiny. ... Their task is completed... The struggle with weapons has passed. Your Blood River is not here. Your Blood River lies in the city (Malan's speech cited in Dunbar Moodie: 198).

Thus, the search for identity and the creation of the myth was reinforced and reiterated. It was to remain the most powerful tool of Afrikaner unity until the 1980s, when reality started to seep into the mythical world.

## The question of race

Perhaps the strongest differences that emerge in the twentieth century was linked to a racial discourse, and that which had been more loosely structured in the Dutch period, rapidly hardened in the nineteenth century to become a defining characteristic of modernism in Cape Town. As has been mentioned before, the earliest forced removals had taken place at the beginning of the twentieth century when urban Africans were moved out of the city to a new segregated area called N'dabeni.

The Cape Town City Council used segregation as a method of controlling the living spaces of those whom they wished to control- to remove them to places where they would be clearly visible. Foucault suggests that "all authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding...and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who is he; where must he be; how is he to be characterised; how is he to be recognised...)"(Foucault 1975:199) The colonial discourse on racism focussed heavily on differentiated assignment particularly with regard to the 'superior' characteristics and 'responsibility' of Whites in relationship to other ethnic groups. This can be linked to the misinterpretation of the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch*, as happened in Nazi Germany, by linking superiority with a particular ethnic group. The 'White Man's Burden', was the description used in 1927 to predicate a diatribe on other ethnic groups.

We find for instance that the native labour is unintelligent and unskilled, that the Coloured labour is only partly skilled, that the native labour though loyal is incompetent, and the Coloured worker, though partially competent, is untruthful and disloyal.

It is our duty and our privilege to render such service to the measure of our own capacity ourselves. That is the White man's burden.

It is the White man's burden to so minister to the weakness of subordinate races and so to utilise it even when to his own advantage, that no cruel injustices shall result. (AB&E June 1927:2)

Jeppie identifies "a powerful racial element in the discourse on housing and urban renewal... 'Slums' and 'Coloured' were almost interchangeable terms." (Jeppie 2001:117) Whiteing (2003) describes the intermediate or residual position held in the Cape by Coloured people, whose position is 'assigned' on the basis of them being neither White nor African. He goes on to describe

this identity as bearing negative and derogatory connotations. "At the core of these connotations was the idea that the Coloured people were the result of miscegenation and were racially impure." (Whiteing 2003) This reiterates Foucault's description of the identification and exclusion of the leper (Foucault 1975:198).

What are these centres doing for their non-European inhabitants, citizens, (and) ratepayers? Very little we are afraid. The local coloured press is getting quite heated up about it, and there is considerable justification...They are very law-abiding as a whole. They serve us well. We ought for their sakes and our own to see that they get what is their due. There is a sad lack in our centre of proper housing for them, decent amenities by way of playing fields, bathing pavilions, and the like...The sooner we realise that these folk do not wish to flout our prejudices (AB&E June 1936).

The somewhat patronising tone of the article clearly identifies 'Coloured' people as 'Other', thus underscoring Jeppie's identification of a racial discourse on housing. Their perceived role in society is also clearly stated: "They serve us well." The 'Coloured' category was further sub-divided in the prevailing colonial ethnic discourse. The 'Malay' section of the community was viewed quite differently to the 'Cape Coloured'. In the published assessment of the Schotsche Kloof housing design competition for Cape Town's Bo Kaap, they are described as: "As a race or caste or class or faith, call it what we may, ... noted as being intelligent, sober, law-abiding, cleanly, and in the vast majority of cases anything but unskilled." (AB&E April 1939:2) The writer of the article goes on to complain:

Our Malay people don't want barracks! They want homes! As a folk, they are fond of the open and of as much joy and freedom as they can get out of life, just as we are; and *in their degree* (emphasis mine) they are as much entitled to it as we are. (AB&E April 1939:5)

Dr. D.F. Malan, later to become the prime minister of South Africa, had already in 1924, in an address to the Cape Malay Association, described the Malays as being "unlike Indians... true South Africans with 'a distinct status'." (Bickford Smith et al: 83) This association had also been particularly susceptible to the 'invention' and promotion of their identity, by the Afrikaans writer, I.D. du Plessis in the 1930s, and this identification of a Malay tradition encouraged subsequent moves to preserve the Bo-Kaap as a 'Malay Quarter.' (Bickford Smith et al: 83)

The outcome of this differentiation and assignment of 'Otherness' to ethnic groups was used to map out the differing planning approaches that would be adopted by the City Council in the housing policies applied to different groups. In Langa, the Africans, removed as far as possible from family structures, were given mainly hostel accommodation. In District Six, modernism's 'clean knife' would be used to cut out the decay and to replace the existing living pattern with a 'modern' vision of urban housing, that laid open and visible the threatening alleys and spaces that potentially fomented revolution. The Canterbury-Bloemhof flat scheme in District Six was set in open spaces, clearly visible and controllable. In the Bo-Kaap, there was a reticence to adopt the same

approach despite the declaration of slum areas and the palpable air of decay. Schemes that had been prepared for replacing the existing urban fabric with a 'modern' alternative were shelved, and the Schotsche Kloof flats, the outcome of an architectural design competition, was prominently placed on a green field site above the historic area. Ambitious residential projects were proposed for the Cape Flats, far removed from White areas and the planning of areas such as Alicedale and Q-Town reflected modernist planning based on ideas emanating from Germany where the Frankfurt housing of Ernst May extended the modernist discourse in housing to create improved living conditions for the city's population. These concepts were to inform planning decisions in Cape Town as slum clearance schemes forced people of colour out of the city. The link between the modern housing and mechanisms of control were clearly apparent. The spaces were 'rendered visible' as Shamil Jeppie contended.

### **Architectural approaches to modernism: The State and the City**

And so we enter the City and see the Parade, famous in history for its colourful reviews of troops, shady walks and running water, but now a thickly packed mass of motor cars and tawdry shanties, dominated by a hideous City Hall and a still more hideous Government edifice, the Post Office extension.

...the charm of Capetown is fast disappearing writhing in the toils of harbour works and railways hideous to behold and characteristic of the engineer, whose great delight seems to be to utterly destroy anything that is beautiful in this world of ours.

...Capetown seems more disappointing with each visit...Few modern buildings if any are worth looking at and the hand of the Government is to be seen everywhere in its ruthless destruction and replacement by hard metallic buildings....the cumbersome red brick Magistrates' Court opposite are a terror to behold...

Why must we go on insulting our architectural heritage by meaningless representations of the past? (SAAR Feb. 1935: 32-36)

Professor Geoffrey Pearse, then head of the Architectural School at the University of the Witwatersrand reflects some of the palpable sense of disappointment and frustration that was felt about the public buildings of the city in the Thirties. There is a considerable difference in the adoption of modernist principles between the state and the city. Possibly, not surprising in view of the political structure of the government, government projects in the city are very conservative in their approach and continued to reflect the same aesthetic conservatism right up to the Second World War. Projects undertaken by the government included education, fiscal, parliamentary and health buildings and these range in scale from modest small offices to significant buildings such as the Groote Schuur Hospital and the General Post Office.

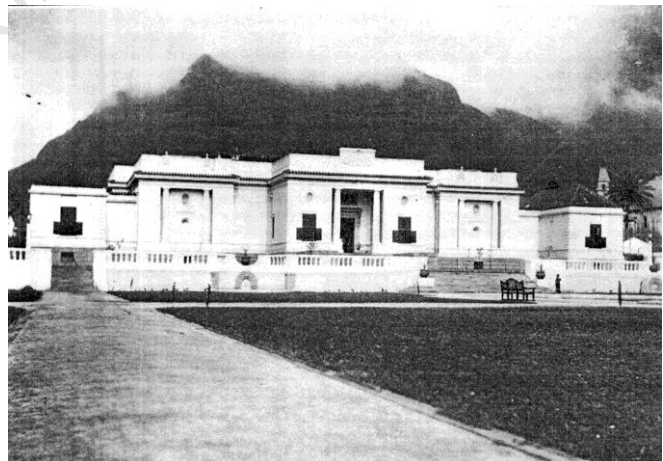
When we get a new railway station with proper office accommodation and a complete range of up-to-date Government offices we shall be better pleased' (May 1930: 2)

All state buildings of this period, without exception, are designed in a stripped Classical style that drew heavily on the architectural style that the Public Works Department had inherited from

Herbert Baker. This reflected the official attitude of the State as a conservative body and architects responded to this by designing equally conservative buildings- in doing this they responded to the source of political power and were their facilitators. Underlying the conservative approach taken for government buildings was a need to appear secure and strong and this resulted in an architecture that remained closely linked to past traditions, with only the most tentative nod to modernism. The mediation here resulted in a simplified classicism.

I suggest that the resemblance among public buildings in almost every Western country in the 1930s and 1940s were parallel developments, spurred by similar underlying political and social needs. These were depression years in every Western country. Each government felt the need to assure its citizens of its strength and durability, and each wanted a building style which was somehow both modern and somehow old. Each government also appreciated a building style which seemed both universal and national (Lane 1986: 307)

Therefore one finds it unsurprising that the major project of the period, the Groote Schuur Hospital, designed under JS Cleland, the Government Architect, is an extensive essay in late Classicism rather than in the more modernist approach being used in Britain for example, and considerably more conservative than private hospitals such as the *Volkshospitaal* erected in the Gardens. The other major project undertaken in the Twenties was the new University of Cape Town buildings, but since they continued the design philosophy of Solomon, done a decade earlier, could be forgiven for their conservatism.



**Figure 8: Groote Schuur Hospital & the National Art Gallery (SAB 1932)**

In 1928 the AB&E complained about the design of the new Art Gallery planned for a prominent position in the Company Gardens. "Frankly we don't like Cape Town's new Art gallery building...design of the hackwork penny a line is a tragic one It is uninspiring and dispiriting because uninspired as a design." (AB&E July 1928:2) But the media was constantly shifting position, and when the gallery opened two years later the journal commented that it reflected 'the best in modern art gallery construction' and they commended 'the absence of external ornamentation' which they suggested gave it 'a simple dignity'. (AB&E Nov. 1930:1) Professor Pearse in 1935 was

also very critical of the art gallery commenting: "Why must we go on insulting our architectural heritage by meaningless representations of the past? Overlooking it all is the South African National Gallery, a sad and sorry monument, again a travesty in plan of Lutyen's masterpiece in Johannesburg" (SAAR Feb. 1935:32-36). But comment in the media also changed in Johannesburg and by 1938 the SAAR reported: "In Capetown the new South African Art Gallery has recently been opened and South Africa has been thrilled by the thought that we are soon to have a magnificent loan collection of works of Art, the Robinson collection housed therein. Capetown is perhaps the most fortunately formed town in the Union". (SAAR Dec. 1938: 111)

In 1930 the journal had complained that 'When we get a new railway station with proper office accommodation and a complete range of up-to-date Government offices we shall be better pleased'. The article noted the work done on the Supreme Court Building, the new Magistrate's Court, Police Barracks and GPO Annexe. (AB&E May 1930:2) and in the July issue said that the red brick and grey stone Police Barracks in Buitenkant Street was 'the finest in the Southern Hemisphere' (AB&E July 1930:13) Needless to say, all designed in the same indifferent classicism.

At this point there was still no City Architect in Cape Town and architectural work was undertaken under the aegis of the City Engineer. In 1933 the AB&E commented: 'Since there is no City Architect here, or in any of the other of the chief centres of population, architectural design had of necessity been relegated to an undeservedly subordinate position.' (AB&E June 1933:7) Among the city projects undertaken in the Twenties and early Thirties, the most significant was the design of the Fire Stations around the city.

...the new Fire Station for Cape Town is approaching completion and we cannot comment upon it in any terms that are worthy of so aggressively and brutally ugly a creation, the plan of which is illogical beyond anything we have ever seen. We do not know what individual or persons are responsible for it, but we believe it to be a fit subject for pillory if it were worthy of serious comment as an essay in architectural design. It is not (AB&E Feb.1931: 7).

By 1935 there were further calls for the appointment of a City Architect.

Again and again in these columns we have called attention to the necessity for the employment of City Architects, in the larger Union centres, but apparently the suggestion has fallen upon deaf ears.

If we mistake not the present is a time wherein this necessity is markedly manifest.

One reason that points in this direction with special force at the present time is the changing attitude towards architecture as such and towards the construction on which it is based.

The change is called modernism, and its vagaries are such that some sort of public control by those expert in architectural design is a matter of grave public concern (AB&E Mar.1935: 5).

Finally, in July 1938, the City Council appointed a City Architect- W. Gregory- formerly head of the Architecture course- as well as a Chief Housing Architect- P. J. Mc Manus, and a City Architect's department as well as a housing department were set up in 1939. With these established, there was

a significant change in the architecture produced by the City Council. Although it is apparent that there was a range of people working on the projects, and the quality of the designs varied considerably, a body of innovative modern buildings were designed within the departments. These betray a broad range of influences, but with a significant impact of the work of both Le Corbusier as well as Alvar Aalto. There was also some difference between the designed and the executed projects, and the City Engineer's aversion to flat roofs was apparent. As the City Engineer pointed out in his assessment of the Bloemhof Flats scheme in District Six: "The Council has not been fortunate in the flat concrete roofs of several of its buildings and I am of the opinion that a pitched roof will give a better service and less trouble." (Acting City Engineer's Report dated 9 October 1935) In 1941 Max Policansky closed his practice for the duration of the war and went to work for the City Council in its Architectural Department. Although it is not known which projects he might have worked on, the work done for the Health Department during this period appears to reflect something of his design approach

## **The Planned City**

Cape Town had, after the initial Dutch planned grid layout of the central area of the town, grown organically in all directions. The expansion had accelerated significantly in the nineteenth century. The arrival of the railway line in 1850 had led to the expansion of residential development in a decentralised fashion along the railway line to the south, reaching the False Bay coast and continuing the development all along the coast as far as Simon's Town in the south.

To the west, development had occurred in the narrow strip of land between the mountain and the Atlantic, gradually moving higher and higher up the mountainside.

Within the City Bowl, residential expansion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had led to the gradual disappearance of the market gardens and small farms that climbed the side of Table Mountain above the city. To the east, the district numbered number six and known as District Six became a mixed working class residential area. In time, given the poverty level of the residents and the nature of the landowners, it became a slum.

The old Dutch central area also changed from being a residential area to becoming the commercial hub of the city, containing its shops and offices. In this metamorphosis, the city gradually assumed the appearance of a typical British colonial city. The proclamation of Union in 1910 had placed new pressures on the city to maintain its status as the premier city in the new British Dominion, and it had acquired a significant number of new public buildings in the early part of the twentieth century, prior to World War One. The changes brought about by technological advances such as, initially the railway line, followed by improvements in the harbour facilities and finally by the advent of the motorcar and its concomitant challenges in terms of roads brought still further pressures to bear on the city in the years after the First World War. There was no Town Planning

Scheme for the city and the city had no planning legislation in place. The gradual degradation of public spaces and the appearance of the city gave rise to the media responding negatively to the lack of initiative on the part of the city authorities. In 1923 The AB&E noted bitterly that the City Engineer had presented a report in 1916 on the future growth of the city, but that no action had been taken as a result. In December 1923 the journal carried an article on the architect Fred Glennie's visit to Britain and Europe. He commented:

And now for Cape Town...heaps required to be done to make our city worthy of its natural setting. Avenues planted, our public spaces and foreshore developed on proper lines, civic and street architecture controlled and the architectural students set on Adderley Street with sledge hammers to do away with the unsightly castings, to say nothing of the overhead live wires and other sources of public danger.

Following the theme of evolution to its logical conclusions, one is forced to realise that no set of conditions prevailing in Europe are suitable for our Cape conditions. We must work at our own salvation (AB&E December 1923:32).

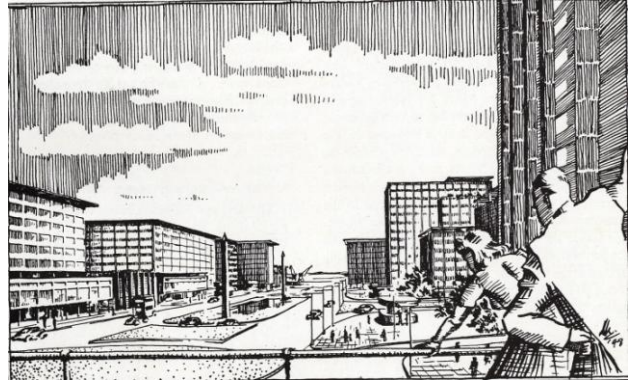
In March 1927 Sir James Rose-Innes was reported as saying:

Cape Town has spread without any regard to the layout of the Cape Peninsula. 'You have no powers; it is almost incredible that you have no Town Planning Act in this century, we are wasting one of the biggest assets ever given to man by want of foresight (AB&E March 1927:4).

Within two months the journal reports that a proposed Cape Town Provincial Town Planning Ordinance has been framed 'on modern and efficient lines' (AB&E May 1927:2) and by the end of 1927 a Town Planning Board was in place for Cape Town. By 1929 a call is made for better roads and more efficient transportation as well as cheap land to encourage the development of the city as an industrial hub.

### **The Foreshore Development**

By 1930, the Government department of Railways and Harbours had begun with the creation of a new dry dock and at the same time there are proposals for a new Foreshore Scheme. Initially this considered the existing land only but by 1937 it became clear that the new dry docks would result in a significant land reclamation project, which would add significant new land to the city. The new land would be in the hands of the government and would result in a political tussle to gain control over the development of this area. This took more than a decade to resolve with proposals and counter proposals being made. In 1931 a new Foreshore scheme, entailing the redevelopment of the existing city foreshore was being discussed in the architectural press with no response from the civic authorities so that by October of that year, the AB&E reported that no steps were being taken by the City Council to prepare a comprehensive town plan.



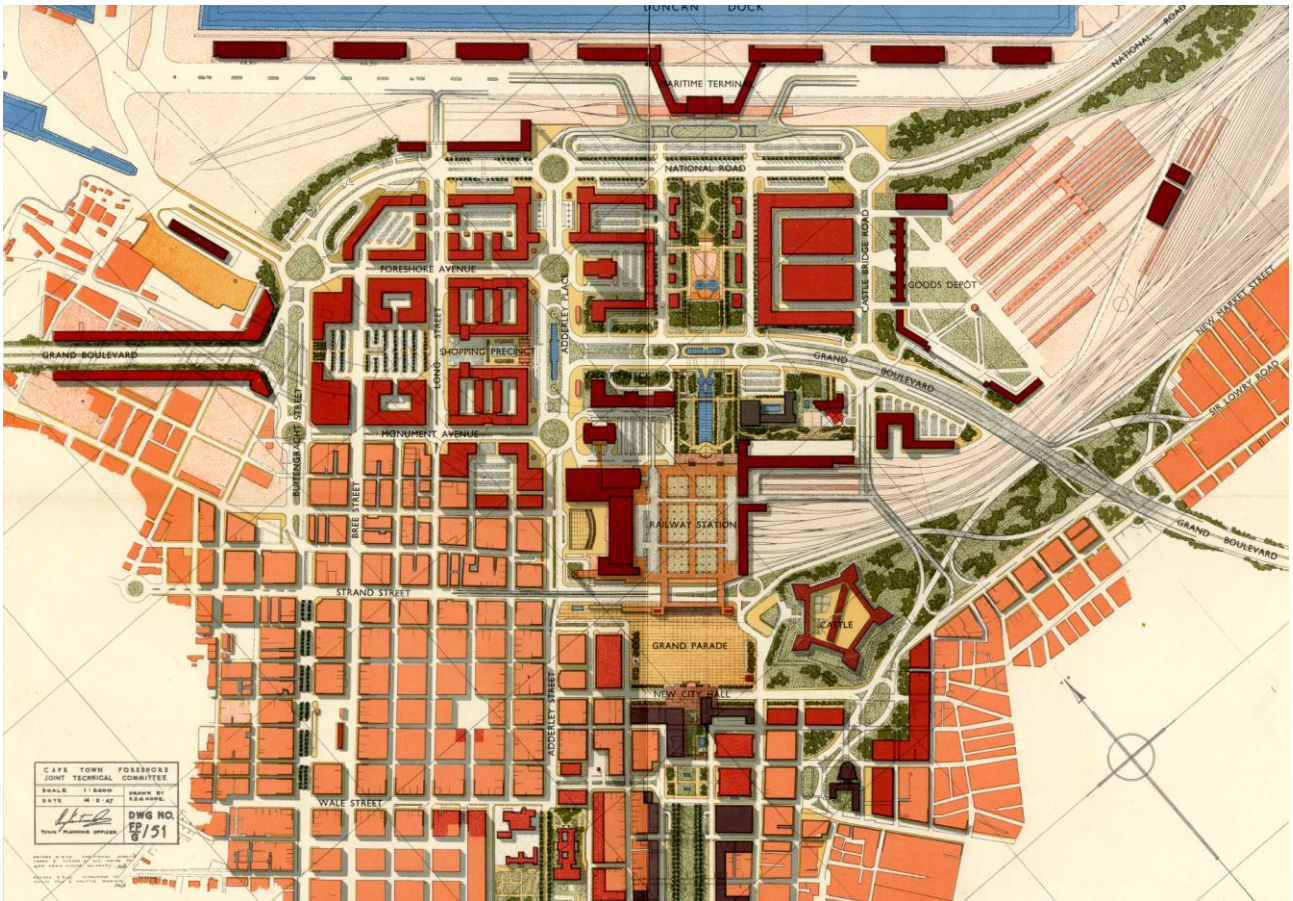
**Figure 9: The Foreshore & an artist's perspective of the proposed layout. (The Cape Town Foreshore Plan. 1947)**

The new professor of architecture, Leonard Thornton White as well as the British planner F. Longstreth Thompson were appointed as advisers for the SAR&H on the master plan, while the city engaged a French planner, E. E. Beaudouin, who was given special leave by the French Army to take up his appointment. His French Parisian background made him conjure up the ideals of Baron Haussmann and he thought that Cape Town 'lay on one of the pivotal points of the world's (sea) routes' which gave it a very special value among the sentinel towns of the globe. (Bickford Smith et al 1999:150) he went on to suggest that as the Mother City its status should be expressed in a monumental approach.

Cape Town is approached in two different ways- by sea and land- the lines of approach being at right angles to each other... The Monumental Approach from the sea- the 'Gateway to South Africa' (The Cape Town Foreshore Scheme 1947: 40)<sup>1</sup> and the monumental approach by land the Grand Boulevard. The design proposed demolishing the City Hall and replacing it with 'a new Civic Centre of which a new City Hall would be an important element' (Foreshore Scheme: 55) Thornton White had been critical of the architecture of the City Hall when he arrived in Cape Town: "Commenting on the City Hall, Prof. White said that it had apparently been built behind a facade, without very much reference to the real purpose of the building. The modern architect must get away from superficial copying and build up an architecture of the present day, considering the people of the present when planning." (Cape Argus, 19 June 1937)

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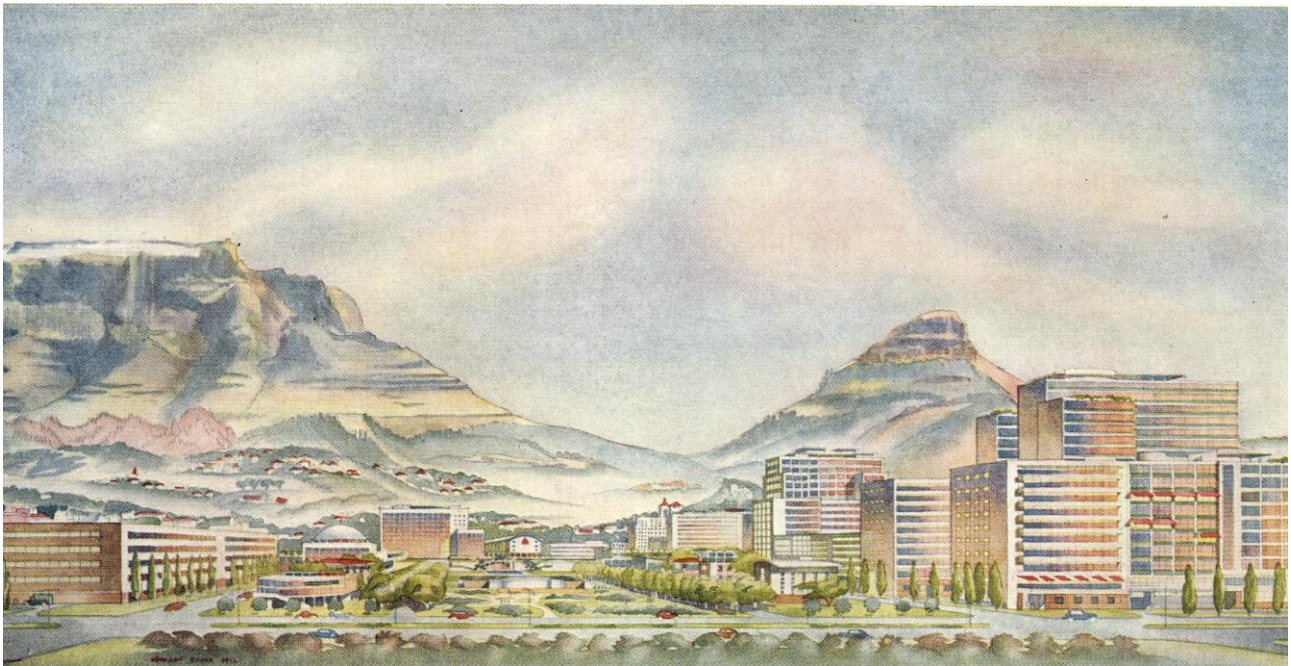
<sup>1</sup> It has been the aim and object of the planning to give tangible form to the Prime Minister's wish that the Foreshore Plan should provide a dignified gateway not only to Cape Town, but to the whole of South Africa. In achieving this objective, a balance has had to be struck so that the Foreshore should not be planned in such a grandiose manner that it would be out of harmony with existing Cape Town and the great mountain amphitheatre setting." (The Cape Town Foreshore Scheme 1947: 59)



**Figure 10: The Foreshore Plan (The Cape Town Foreshore Plan. 1947)**

The proposal lay down quite clearly that the architectural idiom of the new work would be modern.<sup>2</sup> The Foreshore scheme, significantly, provided a *tabula rasa* in keeping with le Corbusier's modernist approach of sweeping away the old form of the city and enabling a modern city to rise in its stead. Here was a new city with all the portent of Edinburgh's New Town of the eighteenth century. Town planning would allow Cape Town to adopt the mantle of modernism on a scale undreamt of anywhere else in South Africa. The Grand Boulevard that swept to the east destroyed the fabric of District Six, but this was seen as a benefit for the city as it would remove the blot of slumdom from the city that had blighted it from the nineteenth century. The slum inhabitants had no voice and modernist planning had also provided the means for their displacement from the city. The newly established 'coloured' dormitory suburbs on the Cape Flats were also part of the new plan for the city and followed German models such as those designed in Frankfurt.

<sup>2</sup> "An even more serious difficulty may arise over the establishment of the architectural idiom to which buildings must conform. Although the modern movement in architecture has, for the most part, ended the rather misguided predilection for clothing modern structures in the stylistic trappings of earlier architectural periods long gone by, the modern idiom itself is still in the process of crystallization; in fact, the continuous re-examination of its aesthetic tenets is a sign of its vitality and readiness to face new problems as they arise (CT Foreshore Scheme: 106).



**Figure 11: Perspective looking up the present-day Heerengracht towards Table Mountain. (Artists perspective by Bernard Cooke- The Cape Town Foreshore Plan. 1947)**

Ernst May's modernist planning proposal for Frankfurt was based on the concept of the *Trabantenstadt*, or satellite city, which consists of a core surrounded by a series of satellites (*trabanten*). It creates a system of spatial hierarchy and functional segregation that is based on the English planner Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model. These satellites appeared, as some critics suggested, floating in space to become what the Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri, as cited by Heynen, (Heynen: 52) describes as "islands" in an "anti-urban utopia." These negative characteristics were to be part of the defining elements of the post-war segregated cities of South Africa, and identifiable in modern Cape Town. Pinnock describes these open spaces in Cape Town that separated the new suburbs as buffer strips that were not "the new playgrounds of the urban proletariat but the horizontal walls of a defensive city." (Pinnock 1991: 159)

But the concept of separation was directly linked to the fear of contagion, inherent in the colonial racist discourse. This linked disease to race and sought to control issues of health through segregation.

## The Healthy City

'A city which will continue to allow conditions that were so fully and dramatically displayed during the 'Black October of 1918' is unworthy to exist. Some of us broke our heads against the stone wall of apathy exhibited by our local authorities (AB&E Aug 1929: 1)

The concern of the City Council with issues of poor living conditions and the concomitant health problems was paralleled by similar concerns in Britain. As Darling points out: "If there was one

preoccupation which, above any other, can be said to have underpinned the reformist agenda in inter-war Britain, it was the state of the nation's health and, in particular, that of its urban working class." (Darling 2007:51) She goes on to describe 'the way in which modernist reformers in complementary fields- health, housing, architecture- came together to form an alliance to create and promote narratives of change' (Darling: 53). This was echoed in Cape Town and the issue of health is examined here in relation to the provision of healthcare facilities. Possibly because of the functional requirements of these facilities, there is little mention or debate around the design approach and it would seem that in the aftermath of the Great Influenza Epidemic it was considered inappropriate to reduce it to issues of modernism versus tradition. Death had appeared to deal with the negotiation of health in a very decisive manner.

In the last week of September 1918 the first signs of influenza appeared among the troops arriving in Cape Town off troop ships from North Africa and the Middle East. The following month, which came to be called 'Black October', Cape Town found itself in the grip of a terrible influenza epidemic that left thousands dead. The Spanish 'Flu affected every aspect of life on the Peninsula. The death rate was such that the dead were often simply left on the pavement with no one to dig their graves. The statistics are quite staggering, for within a month six thousand people of all races had died in the epidemic in Cape Town and twenty million worldwide. (Brooke Simons 1995: 100) A fortnight later, the Great War was over. But for the city, this marked a new dimension in the relocation of people as the city council started to address the issue of disease in the town. The Medical Officer of Health assumed the most powerful position in the city, a position that was to be enhanced by legislation over the next two decades. It could well be argued that the Medical Officer of Health in the 20s and 30s, Dr. Shadick Higgins (MOH 1923-1944), was the single person who was instrumental in the implementation of architectural modernism in the municipal architecture of Cape Town.

His role in the housing programme of the city was central to the policies and planning decisions taken. The elimination of slums was central to the City Council's policy for controlling the health of its residents. Poor living conditions had been perceived to be at the heart of the health problems that beset the city. But the issue of health was to be a much more international concern in the inter-war period and this led to the development of health care facilities in countries such as Britain as well as in its dependencies. One of the major government projects of the 1930s was the new hospital on the Groote Schuur estate. The Public Works Department under Cleland, the Chief Architect, designed it. The design of Groote Schuur Hospital was also critically reviewed, and while it was conceded that it had been designed to take cognisance of changing technology, it was considered to be hopelessly too small with its 850 beds as there were insufficient hospitals to deal with the growing population. 'The Peninsula alone... has a population approaching 300 000 and has no present up-to-date hospital accommodation of a public character.' (AB&E March 1935:5)

No comment was made on the elevational treatment, which referred back to the architecture of the Union Buildings, designed two decades earlier.

The vast and ungainly hospital now taking shape and to be crowned, we are told, with a colossal reproduction of the Zimbabwe bird, that charming and yet unfortunate little work of art...This hospital, built at such great cost, is to be so lavishly ornamented, we understand, that instead of an atmosphere of repose, usually associated with such a building, a disturbing restlessness is likely to be produced (Geoffrey Pearse in SAAR Feb. 1935:32-36).



**Figure 12: Groote Schuur Hospital (Cleland papers University of Pretoria)**

The City of Cape Town also undertook an extensive range of healthcare facilities during this period and these ranged from clinics to sanatoria and the massive City Hospital for Infectious Diseases that was built behind the historic Somerset Hospital, with work commencing in 1923.



**Figure 13: City Hospital from the air & the dispensary at the hospital**

The private *Volkshospitaal* in the Gardens designed by Wynand Louw received favourable comment. It was noted that it accommodated 100 patients and had 'a large nursing home for poorer patients' and the article stressed that it would "in no way take away from the need of the large hospital on the Groote Schuur Estate". It went on to report "The hospital has a plan of butterfly shape to secure the full advantage of the sun and for open-air treatment. Each wing is flat-roofed.

Cape Town is a big medical centre for all parts of the Cape Province" and this hospital was designed "on the lines of the English Hospital at Constantinople" (AB&E Jan 1930: 24). A month later the journal explains that "the building is almost entirely devoid of ornament but is none the worse for that since ornament is out of place in a building which has been 100% efficient from a sanitary point of view" (AB&E Feb 1930: 2).



**Figure 14: The Dental Clinic, Gardens & the VD Clinic at the City Hospital by the City Architects Dept.(CTCC Mayoral Minutes)**

Many of the City's healthcare projects were undertaken during the Second World War and all are clearly designed using a modernist language that is as pure as early modernism was in Europe- in particular the TB sanatorium draws on the architecture of Alvar Aalto and appears to indicate the hand of an architect who was well versed in modernism. One is tempted to conjecture that the influence of the modernist architect Max Policansky- who was working in the City Architect's department at the time- was being felt but there is no documentary evidence to support such a theory. What is clear is that modernism within these healthcare buildings shows no 'negotiation' but are uncompromisingly modern. This is consistent with healthcare projects undertaken in Britain at the same time-it would seem that health was being re-assessed as a twentieth century concern without any earlier precedent. Even the conservative Cape Town-based architectural media appeared to respond positively to modern hospital facilities.

By the end of the war it was clear that the upgrading and modernization of healthcare in Cape Town was firmly aligned with modernism. As Darling identified in Britain

Such problems required new solutions and new forms of buildings to accommodate them, something which might entail a considerable degree of research into the potential programme. It thereby created, as Richards put it, the architect as pioneer of social progress (Darling 2007: 80).

Cape Town was on par in the design of healthcare facilities with that being carried out in Britain. This fell squarely into a modernist agenda with no need to compromise or negotiate. The Government hospital at Groote Schuur was much more of a negotiated compromise with a modern ward layout hidden behind a façade that referred back to the standpoint of the Traditionalists of the earlier part of the century.

What was the difference between the approach taken to the design of healthcare facilities and other building typologies in Cape Town? Here rational modernist design seems to have been accepted without argument-certainly there is no debate around it in the architectural press. In comparison to State and other municipal buildings that are clearly traditional and conservative in their approach healthcare buildings are in line with the modernist approach taken in city planning terms. These two fields seem to be the most clearly modernist in approach and execution and although there was some considerable negotiation involved in the re-planning of Cape Town, the negotiation appears more concerned with power and power relations between City and State rather than with any fundamental modern design issues.

## **Health & public housing**

After the First World War, the South African economy improved and another wave of urbanisation began. This resulted in overcrowding in both District Six, often the first place of call of new arrivals, and ultimately, in areas such as N'dabeni. By 1920, N'dabeni was filthy and derelict and described as "a place without a soul...a confession of the failure of civilisation" (Anderson & Field: 87) Most Africans had in fact abandoned the area and were living in District Six or else on the Cape Flats. "Who designed the huts for N'dabeni Location? Why is he still alive?" (AB&E Nov 1918:29).

In 1919 the City Council was asked by the Union government to take control over the township, but they were unwilling to take this on with little prospect of financial assistance from the government. Instead, they proposed building a new township that would also allow the land at N'dabeni to be used to meet the increasing demand for industrial land. The government granted the council 400 morgen of land at Uitvlugt in 1922 for the establishment of the new location. A Native Townships Committee recommended that the location should include both barracks for male migrant workers and married quarters for town residents. (Anderson & Field:1999) There was opposition to the proposed development both from within the City Council as well as among Cape Town residents, but this opposition was based on racist concerns rather than humanitarian grounds. By 1924 plans were well underway for the new township, while N'dabeni deteriorated. "Early this month tenders are expected for the new location. The housing problem for the Kaffirs in the Cape Peninsula is of paramount importance...The old location at Ndabeni was totally inadequate for the purpose and on antiquated lines, all the huts being constructed of corrugated iron" (AB&E Sept 1924: 27)

Despite opposition from the African residents, the Council went ahead with its plans and in 1927 opened Langa Township. They appointed the same Town Planner who had been responsible for the layout of Pinelands, Longstreth Thompson, to prepare the layout along Garden City principles.

Extensive work will shortly be commenced at the new native location just outside Cape Town. Mr. J. Thompson of Garden City fame is the architect and it is intended to erect markets, hostels, a police station and colleges. Of course, all of this work will be more or

less of a simple nature, but it is likely to run into a considerable figure: two of the hostels alone have to house two thousand natives each (AB&E Oct 1923:33).

The essential characteristic of Langa, despite the subsequent adoption of modernist design principles, was the acceptance of the principle as laid down by the Stallard Commission that Africans were only temporary urban residents and that any family life was to be discouraged- families remaining in rural areas- while men were accommodated in hostel blocks. Racism remained the underlying concern in the design of the hostels.

The largest hut contains 16 cubicles and the smallest 10 each; both have washhouses, lavatory etc. Generally speaking, each native will get a room 8'x9'. It is to be hoped that steel windows and doors will be provided owing to the habit in these locations for households using everything from the front door to the wc seat for the purpose of fuel (AB&E Jan 1924:15).

The temporary nature of African urban residence is highlighted in the comment in *The Architect, Builder & Engineer* (Nov 1924:27).

The estate has been laid out as far as possible on town planning lines, and with the idea that in the future the natives may possibly be cleared away and this may become an extension of the suburbs of Cape Town. It is a very beautiful site and it is a great pity that it has to be used for such a purpose.

A strange pride was expressed about the position and layout of this 'model' township and this attitude remains in the somewhat parochial comments that are made in the architectural press and highlights the concept of the Colonial 'Other' both in the sentiments about living practices of Africans as well as a smug sense of doing their civic duty.

The whole effect of the Langa location is park-like and it puts entirely in the shade any similar institution in South Africa.

The ratepayers have voted £250 000 for the scheme, but the investment promises to bring good returns in the years to come, not only in material values, but in the health, contentment and prosperity of the native community, which cannot but act favourably on the white population (AB&E June 1927:22).

But removal was only one aspect of housing in the city: it dealt with race issues by exclusion, recalling Foucault's concept of heterotopias and linked to the notion of ensuring easy surveillance. In 1927 Bishop Lavis, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town wrote a series of articles in the Cape Times calling for housing reform, adding his voice to a general concern about the living conditions of the poor who were condemned to live in squalor in a city that did not consider their lot to be an urgent priority. In September of the same year he also led a deputation from the Citizens' Housing League to meet with the Housing and Estates Committee of the Council to express their concern about the living conditions of the poor.

There was deep concern at the deplorable conditions prevailing in the city. Official reports issued by the Council during the last two years tell of 9000 people representing 2100 families living in 900 houses in the district under Signal Hill (The Bo Kaap), in many cases in houses unfit for human habitation. 78% of the population are living under conditions of overcrowding and no less than 2200 persons are living at the rate of four or more per room. There is a total shortage of 6200 houses and the erection of 900 annually would be required to meet the increase in the population estimated at 5000 per annum (Jeppie 2001: 120).

Comparing Cape Town with London, Bishop Lavis said that in 1921, 16.1% of the population of London were living under conditions of overcrowding, whereas in Cape Town, 78% of the Coloured people and 29.5% of the poor Europeans were living under such conditions. In London, with its millions, only 30 000 persons were living 4 or more to a room. In Cape Town, in the Coloured population of 92 000, no less than 22 000 persons were living four or more to a room. (Jeppie: 120)

But there remained an overwhelming urge in the city to do little about the problem and to adopt a laissez faire attitude to the provision of housing.

We still want some public man strong enough to realize and put into practice the truth that in the matter of native housing, the native is himself best qualified to give expression in construction to his racial needs dictated by many generations of ancestors and tribal environments (AB&E Jan 1928:3).

For the poorest sector of the city the only alternative to the overcrowded areas was to squat. The area known then as Windermere and Kensington was an open, sandy area of smallholdings that had been sold and rented to White, Asian, Coloured and African homeowners and squatters from the 1900s to the 1930s. The squatters were largely African or Coloured but there was a sprinkling of poor Whites. They were largely migrant workers and the census of 1923 claimed that there were 2000 people living in the area. (Field 2001: 30) The numbers gradually grew despite the problems of flooding and impassable, muddy roads. Living conditions were appalling and residents made do with timber and corrugated iron shacks that were constantly threatened by fire.

The position in Cape Town today is, that while Ndabeni is full, Langa Township, which is designed for 5000 natives, has a population of 1000! This is largely due to the fact that the natives are able to live for the greater part of the year in the bush on the Cape flats beyond the limits over which the Council has jurisdiction. (They) enter (the city) daily (and) cause unemployment (AB&E Mar 1930:17).

The increase in numbers of Africans on the periphery appear to have caused concern and levels of control were increased so that in 1931 the journal reports that "New orders require natives to report on leaving the township so as to simplify the position of their responsibility for rentals" (AB&E Apr 1931: 3).

## **The Slums Act No. 53 of 1934**

European slum conditions exist in certain of the poorer class districts...where Europeans are congregated in rooms and buildings, as often as not, in juxtaposition to Coloured persons, Asiatics, and a certain number of natives not as yet removed ( AB&E December 1933: 39).

There was a constant complaint in the late 1920s and early 1930s about the inadequacy of existing legislation in dealing with the slum conditions in the cities of South Africa. The Minister for Health, in recognising the call of municipalities, promulgated the Slums Act No. 53 of 1934, which gave the Medical Officers of Health sweeping powers to expropriate property that they deemed to be a health risk. (Jeppie 2001: 118) Slum owners would be served notices to repair their property, reduce the number of residents or face having the occupants evacuated. The legislation set out the process with rights of appeal. In cases of overcrowding it was required that the occupiers had to agree amongst themselves who would move out and lodge a list of these occupiers with the Council.

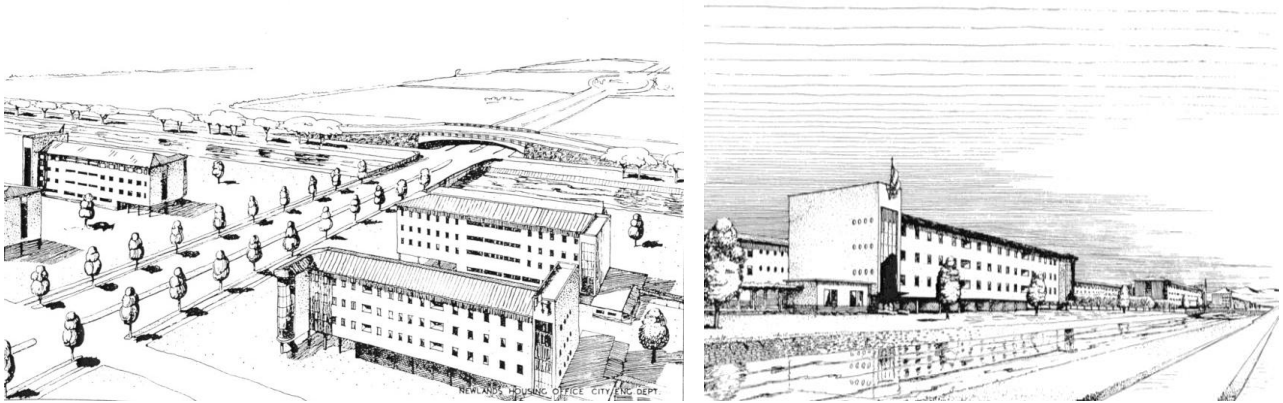
## **The Development of a Legislative Framework**

The Cape Town City Council used the Public Health Act of 1897 to move Africans from District Six to a colonial government camp at Uitvlugt forest station in 1901, which forming the basis for the location of N'dabeni. This was established in terms of the Locations Act of 1901, which is significant in that it was the first act in South Africa to legislate for racially segregated 'townships'. (Anderson & Field 2003: 34)

Further legislation included:

- In 1913, the Natives' Land Act limited land ownership by Africans.
- In 1923, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act laid down that all Africans should be segregated in locations. Control on movement was also introduced and later became known as 'influx control'.
- The Amendment Bill to the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923- the Governor General may, if he deem fit, prohibit the entry of natives into urban areas otherwise than in accordance with that to be prescribed by Proclamation in the Govt. Gazette.
- By Proclamation 60 of 1926 all natives within the limits of the urban area of Cape Town, other than those exempted under Sub-Section (2) of Section 5, are required to reside in a location, native village or native hostel.
- The Slums Act No. 53 of 1934 called for the identification of slum buildings and areas; notification of owners to repair or demolish the identified properties, or face expropriation. Expropriation could take place on the recommendation of the Slum Clearance Special committee if the slum land was considered 'necessary or useful...for satisfactory development...' (Slums Clearance Special Committee minutes: 8 Oct. 1934)

Natives form an integral part of the industrial life of the community, and the ratepayers are under a moral obligation to see that they are provided with efficient housing conditions (AB&E Oct 1932:20).



**Figure 15: 'Bachelor' Quarters at Langa by the CTCC Housing Department (CTCC Mayoral Minutes 1942)**

The outcome of this differentiation and assignment of 'Otherness' to ethnic groups was used to map out the differing planning approaches that would be adopted by the City Council in the housing policies applied to different groups. In Langa, the Africans, removed as far as possible from family structures, were given mainly hostel accommodation. In District Six, modernism's 'clean knife' would be used to cut out the decay and to replace the existing living pattern with a 'modern' vision of urban housing, that laid open and visible the threatening alleys and spaces that potentially fomented revolution. The Canterbury-Bloemhof flat scheme in District Six was set in open spaces, clearly visible and controllable. In the Bo-Kaap, there was a reticence to adopt the same approach despite the declaration of slum areas and the palpable air of decay. Schemes that had been prepared for replacing the existing urban fabric with a 'modern' alternative were shelved, and the Schotsche Kloof flats, the outcome of an architectural design competition, was prominently placed on a green field site above the historic area. Was this in response to the different attitude being shown to the Malay populace? Or as a result of the writer I.D. du Plessis' championing of their cause and his call for the preservation of the Bo Kaap? Official records are silent as to why this was done. But the link between the modern housing and mechanisms of control were clearly apparent. The spaces were 'rendered visible' as Shamil Jeppie contended.

### **Housing as a method of controlling the marginalised**

This array of housing legislation was used in Cape Town to implement the City Council's policy with regard to the identification, classification and rehousing of the city's poor. Scott and Soja both draw attention to the modernist programme of dealing with the poor of the world in a much more comprehensive way than had ever been undertaken before. Poverty, ethnic difference and slums represented a threat to a controlled colonial society. The legislation rendered visible the problems of the city's slum areas and, furthermore, created environments where the poor were either clearly visible, for example in the inner city schemes with their open spaces, easy access and hence controllable spaces; or removed to separate areas, isolated from the White populace and thus like

Foucault's leper, identified and excluded. The first level of the process of control was the dehumanisation of the problem. Thus, in the late 1920s, there is a call for "comprehensive housing schemes for various Classes". (Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 30 Aug.1927)

Already in September 1927 calls were made for a decision to be taken regarding tenement dwellings. However, the Mayor did not favour the erection of tenements saying: "conditions in Cape Town cannot be compared with those overseas where there is not a mixed population to contend with." (Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 6 March 1928) Once again modes of living were linked to ethnic prejudice with its assumed notions of morality and White superiority.

Reaction came from the mouthpiece of the local Institute of Architects, *The Architect Builder & Engineer* journal:

The Cape Town City Council has tackled the problem of providing housing accommodation for the people who live in the slum dwellings in and around the municipal area.

So far Cape Town has done nothing for the very poor people...In the slum areas the people unfortunately cannot afford to be housed in an economic housing scheme.

We hope however that some other method of solving the question of housing the very poor will be found without the introduction of tenement dwellings, which is to be deprecated as it gives rise to unsatisfactory social conditions (AB&E June 1929:3).

The pressure was inevitably mounting for increased powers to deal with slums and the debate at the time on 'slum elimination'. In January 1934, a meeting was held between the Johannesburg and Cape Town City Councils to discuss draft slum elimination legislation proposed by Cape Town. It was noted that the Minister of Health had decided that it should be adopted countrywide.

But dealing with slum problems was not only an issue in South Africa but one that was receiving attention and had become the focus of countries worldwide, as the pattern of urban migration, coupled with declining rural and agrarian societies in the inter-war years, affected cities globally. Thus the type of comprehensive housing programme described by Heynen in Germany was also being implemented in many countries throughout the world at this time.

The evidence thus suggests that the Slums Act was not as effective a tool as the Council had imagined it to be in the elimination of overcrowding and slums and that there was now a perceived need to tackle a much more comprehensive planning exercise that would create a modern city unencumbered with the problems of the past. These views, calling for a more comprehensive way of dealing with slums reiterates the views of Le Corbusier. Scott indicates the attitude of Corbusier who condemned the 'misery, confusion,' rot', 'decay', 'scum' and 'refuse' that he believed needed to be overcome. He regarded the slum inhabitants as "a dead weight on the city, an obstacle, a black clot of misery, of failure, of human garbage." He objected to the lack of discipline of these people, which he regarded as being against nature, which was all discipline.

He was also concerned about the potential revolutionary threat posed by these people. Scott says that Corbusier understood, as Haussmann had, that crowded slums were and had always been an obstacle to efficient policing. He goes on to say, "Le Corbusier proposed to clear the decks completely and replace the centre of Haussmann's city with one built with control and hierarchy in mind." (Scott:115) Foucault's description of panopticism is the underlying order of the modern city as proposed by the modernist vision of Le Corbusier. In the Cape Dr. Bremer concurred with Le Corbusier's point of view, saying: We know that the slum makes a healthy, ambitious outlook on life impossible. We know that insidious moral degradation and mental ineptitude develop in those living in the slums" (Dr. H. Bremer in AB&E Mar 1936: 13).

Apart from extensive unemployment among certain sections, and the general meagre earnings of the "lapsed masses," an important factor in the Union is the powerful attraction which "white" civilisation exerts upon the more primitive races. This attraction offers no analogy with the conditions in Europe, where simple curiosity on the part of rural inhabitants may occasionally cause a migration to towns.

Another factor in this country is the noteworthy ease with which natives usually adapt themselves to slum conditions. The simplicity of their needs promotes favourable comparison with the conditions of life in their own kraals and the ceaseless struggle with natural forces, which formed their early environment and tribal traditions.

While slums, therefore, constitute a problem of the poorest classes, irrespective of race or colour, it is incumbent on the white races to solve the problem (AB&E Jan 1936: 13)

It is clear that the agenda of the City was to overcome both overcrowding and racial mixing; characteristic of the inner suburbs, by establishing cheaply planned settlements on the Cape Flats, well away from White residents. The Provincial Administrator Fourie, in examining Cape Town's housing proposals for an area adjacent to Maitland Garden Suburb did not like

The scattering of non-Europeans from one end to the other of the city (which) was not in the best interests of Cape Town...The City should be completely zoned... so that certain sections should be set apart as European areas, others as Non-European areas and areas where noxious trades might be established (Housing & Estates Committee Minutes: 10 May 1928).

### **The Housing projects of Cape Town City Council**

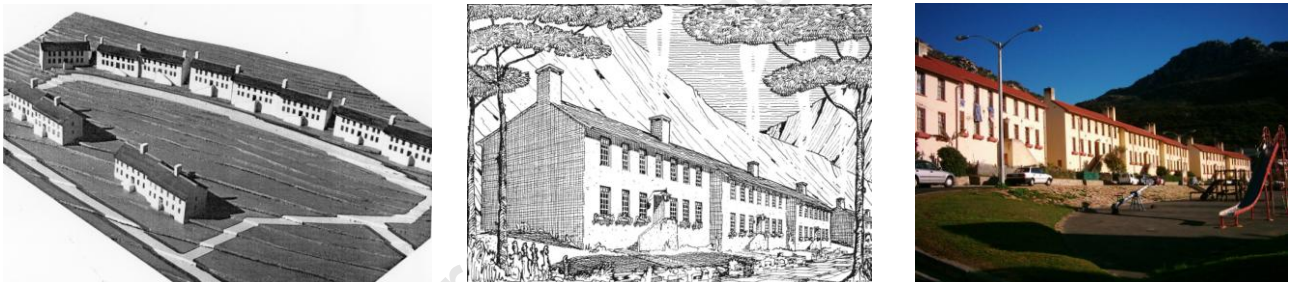
From the late 1920s on, the City Council had started to look at potential sub-economic housing sites both in the City and on the Cape Flats. A number of inner city sites were proposed, but they were, in the main, small parcels of land and not adequate for the large scale housing projects that the Central Housing Board wanted. Of the three slum areas that both Council and media attention had been focussed on, namely, District Six, Jerry Street area, and the Bo Kaap, only the two inner city housing schemes were carried out in the 1930s. They were the Bloemhof Flats adjacent to Canterbury Square, and the Schotsche Kloof Flats. The Jerry Street land was considered by the City Engineer to be too expensive. No other schemes were carried in the inner city. A proposal for a

competition on a site above Lion Street was, after detailed discussion with the Institute of Architects and the appointment of assessors, abandoned. (Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes: 15 February 1934)

Other housing projects were developed on the Cape Flats and in Kalk Bay. Of these, the divergence of approach taken is remarkable. The Kalk Bay Flats are designed in an extremely conservative way along 'traditional' lines. No indication is given in City Council minutes as to why this was done. The Q-Town scheme was the most ambitious modernist scheme undertaken and it is clear that all the modernist precedents were applied to the scheme, which, alongside the Foreshore Plan of 1947 mark the high water of early modernist planning in Cape Town.

### **Kalk Bay Housing**

In the late Thirties consideration was being given to the 'slum' area of Kalk Bay, which was inhabited by fishermen. Initial proposals to move them to near Retreat were strongly resisted. In March 1937 a Flat scheme was approved for them at Kalk Bay, with two storey buildings providing 48 units. (Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes: 30 October 1937; 6 Dec 1937; 7 March 1938; 6 March 1939; 2 Feb 1940)



**Figure 16: Kalk Bay Flats by CTCC Housing Department (CT mayoral Minutes)**

The architecture, designed by the City Council's newly formed Housing Department was much more conservative than any of the other proposals. The blocks have pitched roofs and vertical windows with a more traditional, conservative character, quite unlike the 'modernism' of the inner city and Q-Town schemes. But it must be remembered that, despite the focus on the work of modern movement architects in Weimar Germany, there were many architects even there, who believed that domestic architecture should follow vernacular models with pitched roofs and small windows as had been suggested by Muthesius. This so-called *Heimat* style gained support from the National Socialists and the extreme right as the modernists were marginalized and discredited in Hitler's Germany. (Colquhoun 2003:168). Even in Sweden, the new architecture of the late 30s and early 40s, although closely associated with social reform, mediated between modern and tradition to create social housing projects that were also typified by pitched roofs and small windows. (Colquhoun 2003:195-6). This is indicative of the contradictions that existed in modern architecture at the time.

## Kewtown Flats

On the Cape Flats, the Kewtown (Initially Q-Town) flats were being built with the first block ready for occupation in 1941. It had been suggested at the time that this would become "a town the size of Bloemfontein.... City Planners believed that all that was actually needed was actually putting together a few blocks of low-cost flats." (Jeppie: 123) Although this is Jeppie's contention, there are in fact extensive records in the City Council's Mayoral Minutes of the extensive proposals for this development and it would appear to have been an extremely ambitious scheme. By 1944, Kewtown had 224 flats with double that number out on tender. The layout ominously reflected Le Corbusier's planning layout as interpreted for central Cape Town in 1938, separated, not by parks, but by acres of concrete and tarmac.

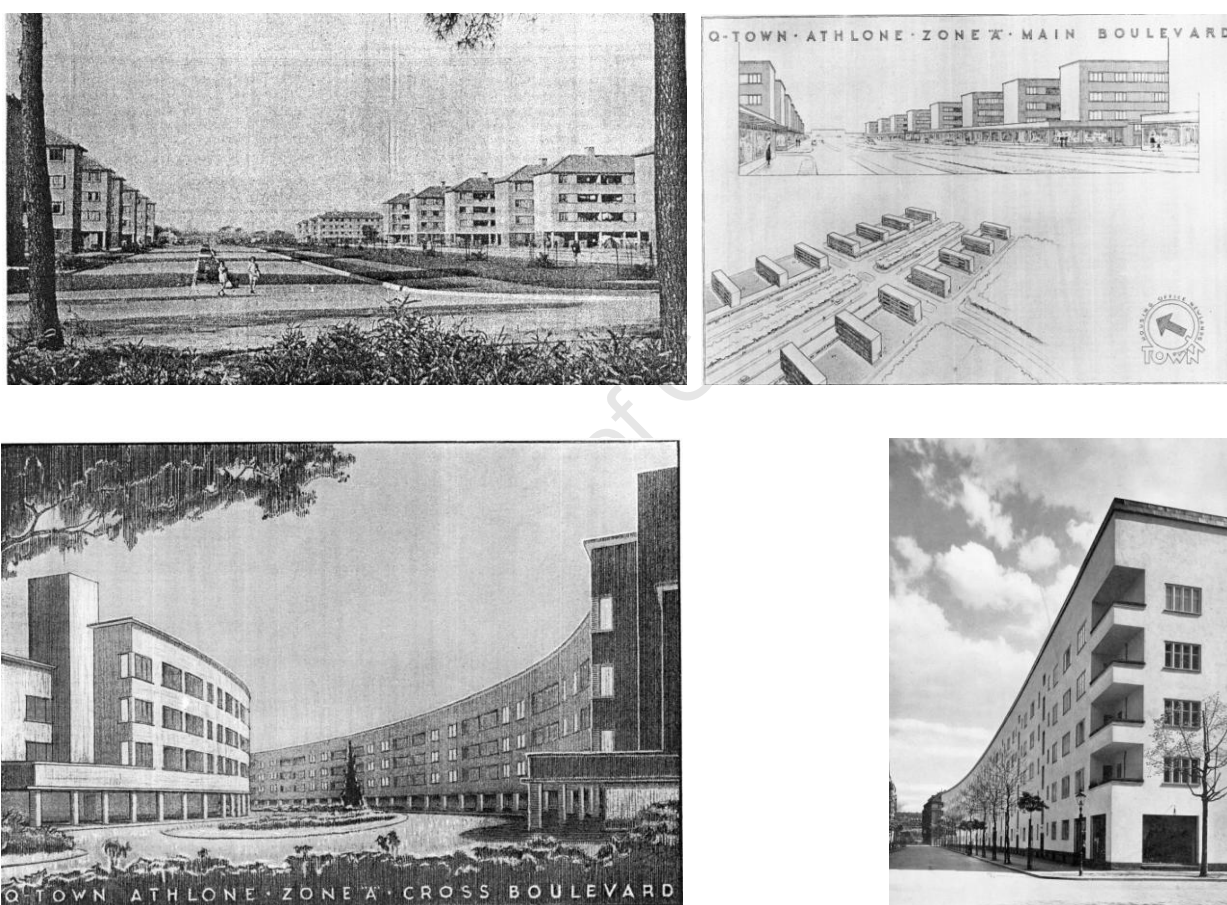


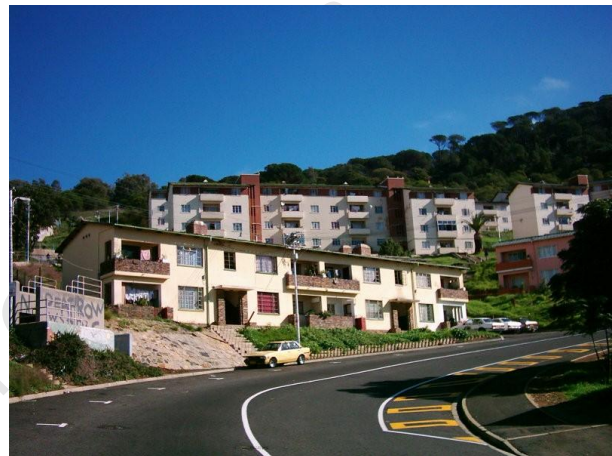
Figure 17: Kewtown layout by the CTCC Housing Department 1943 (CT Mayoral Minutes 1943)

The design of the cross boulevard shows marked similarities to Bruno Taut's *Baugesellschaft* housing project in East Berlin, and illustrated in his book *Modern Architecture*, while The layout of the blocks of flats has very strong Corbusian overtones. This project, although never completed, was possibly the most radically modernist public housing scheme in South Africa at the time, showing none of the traditionalist compromises evident in the Kalk Bay proposal

## The Inner City Housing Schemes:

### Bloemhof Flats, District Six & Schotsche Kloof, Bo Kaap

There were two inner city projects designed at the time: the Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats and the Schotsche Kloof Flats. The architects of the inner city schemes were appointed in quite different ways. The Canterbury Bloemhof architects, Chapman & MacGillivray, were appointed almost by default, whilst the architects of the Schotsche Kloof Scheme, Perry & Lightfoot, won an architectural competition for that project. Architectural competitions were used in South Africa for the design of public buildings that were considered to be very important. This was the first housing scheme for which this approach was adopted- an indication, possibly, of the importance attached to the high visibility of the scheme in the city. (van Graan: 2004)



**Figure 18: Bloemhof Flats, District Six & Schotsche Kloof Flats (Mayoral Minutes 1939)**

In both the Bloemhof and the Schotsche Kloof schemes the blocks are placed with regard to the orientation, contours and seek to avoid formalist layouts. They were designed to include community spaces and facilities. In both, the architectural character was regarded at the time as being 'modern'. The buildings use standard steel horizontal glazed windows and both schemes have facades that are strongly horizontal in expression, with plastered walls and both use their balconies and entrances as contrasts, a device found in a number of European prototypes. In both schemes the balconies are horizontal elements. Both also use the entrance staircase tower as a contrast to the horizontality of the blocks with a vertical expression. But there is essentially no ornamentation on the buildings, although ribs that would now be considered 'Art Deco' in character mark the entrances. The schemes were considered to be 'purely functional' in appearance, budgetary constraints leading largely to the more functional appearance.

The architecture of the *Neue Frankfurt*, Heynen asserts, "lacks a number of salient features that are fundamental to the work of other avant-garde architects. Flexibility, mobility and dynamism, for instance- essential elements in Giedion's concept of modern architecture- do not predominate

there." (Heynen: 64) Since there was not any intention to destroy the old but rather to create juxtaposition between old and new, nor is there any radicalisation of modernity, but rather a desire to build as much as possible within the shortest time, Heynen identifies this as a characteristic of programmatic modernism. Once again, this juxtaposition between old and new could be used to describe the architecture of both inner city schemes in Cape Town.

Bozdogan describes the Turkish architects who tried to dissociate modern architecture from cubic forms. The architect Abidin Mortas wrote in 1936 that "'modern architecture does not mean horizontal windows, flat surfaces and wide terraces. It is the most logical and aesthetically sophisticated solution to modern psychological and sociological needs'" She goes on to say that "he suggested that modern architecture was formally indeterminate, acquiring shape only in the specific circumstances at hand, thereby effectively negating the stylistic uniformity claimed by a more doctrinaire and canonic modern movement." (Bozdogan: 238)

The architecture of the city housing projects (other than the Kalk Bay Scheme) mediates between programmatic requirements and site. Possibly, the economic constraints of the projects led to a 'purer' form of modernism being applied. The schemes were clearly part of a comprehensive strategy for planning the city, thus proving the first of Jeppie's assertions to be correct. The strategies for the implementation of the housing schemes were extensions of social and political domination by spatial control of people by the city. Whether the architects were consciously part of the process or merely the instruments is hard to say from the available evidence. They appear to be applying norms that had been used in more egalitarian societies, but as Bozdogan points out, architectural form does not necessarily reflect only one political ideology. That the forms and layouts adopted make access, visibility and observation easier is apparent. Was this intentional or inherent in the design decisions taken? They seem to reflect a *Zeitgeist* that placed society above the individual, and the State above society. Individual identity is subservient to the needs of the authorities.

The last of Jeppie's assertions, namely, the use of housing as a laboratory for the promotion of modernity certainly occurred in the Schotsche Kloof flats with the introduction of new unit types that had not been used previously. Thus it would appear that the schemes corroborate the critique made by Jeppie. They strongly reflect the mediated modernism espoused by Bozdogan rather than the avant-garde modern movement ideals of Le Corbusier or the German architects.

The manner in which South Africa developed constitutionally in the early twentieth century set the stage for the introduction of modernism. The balance between English-speakers and Afrikaners was always in a state of tension in the period prior to the Second World War. The opposition under General Herzog and later Dr. D.S. Malan, whose Nationalist Party swept to power in 1948, was constantly challenging the government of Louis Botha and Jan Smuts and their South African Party. All issues were negotiated in the precarious balance of power that implemented programmatic

modernism within a colonial context. The colonial 'Other', a binary division between the White colonists and people of colour, considered as 'Other' also broke down into a much more heterogeneous grouping with sub-groups being created on both sides. Jewish people formed a sub-group at a time when Nazism was embarking on its programme of genocide in Europe and they responded differently to modernism compared to English-speakers who retained strong links to Britain. Afrikaner Nationalism grew considerably during this period as they developed into a powerful sub-grouping, again with their own interpretation of the modernist discourse.

The deliberate omission of people of colour from the political arena also further enhanced the colonial racial divide of the nineteenth century and embedded prejudices in legislation. As the country adopted modernist planning principles in the 1920s this programmatic modernism created racially segregated residential areas, thus separating people in the places where they lived, and the manner in which they lived as housing schemes were designed for people of colour removed from the older historically more integrated living areas of the nineteenth century. Both the State and the City were implicated in this process with legislation introduced by the State leading to an architecture of segregation and making segregation a lived reality long before the Nationalist government introduced the Group Areas Act in 1950.

Health and planning were instruments used to negotiate difference, politically and socially and affected the manner in which space was produced as the city changed from a colonial city into a modern city by the Second World War. The adoption of the flat as the basic residential unit for Coloured people and the bachelor quarter for Africans occurred during this period and was in stark contrast to the individual house that was preferred for Whites. State and City negotiated modernism through planning and architecture on a scale that was to re-create Cape Town as a modern city, the outcome of a process of social engineering.

In order to examine the relationship of modernism to private sector buildings it is necessary to first examine the manner in which architects were trained in Cape Town and to assess the impact that this had on the way that modernism was introduced and negotiated in the city. Controlled by conservative practitioners, the profession appeared reactive and resistant to change, but in order to fully comprehend the issue it is necessary to examine architectural education in South Africa in relation to that in Britain, as this was the model that was to be followed. Central to the negotiation of modernism in Cape Town, was the role played by individual architects, and the division between older and younger practitioners. Modernism was to be negotiated in different degrees for different building typologies, with the workplace being the least contentious, and the private house the most contested. The negotiation of modernism in the creation of architecture highlights the differences that existed and the role-players.

## CHAPTER 7

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### TERRAINS OF CONTESTATION AND NEGOTIATION

The State and the City set the framework of a meta-narrative of modernism related to power and power relations within a broad colonialist political terrain. Within this framework the process of negotiation looked to create an architecture that was synchronic with the changing political forces at play in South Africa. At city level the city council played a significant role in the development of a modernist planning framework that culminated in the Foreshore Scheme of 1947. This was the result of a negotiation between the City and the State to establish control of the new reclaimed land created when the new dry docks were constructed. The city was also instrumental in the development of an ambitious health scheme under the aegis of the Medical Officer of Health that sought through health management and planning to segregate the city on ethnic lines. This project of social engineering succeeded in restructuring the city in a completely new way that came to represent a high-water mark in the modernist project of racial segregation. This had, once again, been the outcome of a negotiation between the City and the State, with the inhabitants powerless to either resist or contest the changes and displacements of their living environment.

This chapter starts by examining the training of the architectural profession. In the early twentieth century it was restructured so that the university became the primary place of architectural education, replacing the older pupilage system. This was to lead to a state of tension between the older practitioners, products of the pupilage system, and younger architects who had qualified at universities.

The differences are also apparent in the architecture created by these groups. They can be classified using Hitchcock's model of the 'Traditionalists', the 'Modernists' and the so-called 'New Traditionalists' who occupied a mediated position between these two groups (Striner: 24). In examining the private sector architecture of the time these divisions can clearly be seen and the media records the debate that ensued as modernism was contested and negotiated by the architects of the city. The innovators and the followers are examined; since it was in the actual projects of the city that modernism was manifested. Differences are identified between the two groups and key players recognised. In order to understand the manner in which modernism was negotiated, it is necessary to examine different building typologies as the degree of negotiation varied according to typology. The first to be examined are industrial projects. Cape Town developed as an important industrial centre in the interwar period with the garment industry being the most significant. As an innovative industry with a highly organised labour union, it is perhaps not surprising that this is a field that shows the least negotiation. By comparison, the retail sector, which also grew and developed extensively in the period, shows the most divergent approaches, as it developed the concept of retailing as a fashion. This was also a period that saw considerable

growth in the commercial sector, with particularly strong growth in the assurance industry. Here the negotiation process will be seen to favour a modernist approach, possibly reflecting the forward thinking attitude that the industry tried to project- in contrast to the banking sector, that favoured a much more conservative approach. Private houses, key to the development of the Modern Movement in Johannesburg is not very significant in Cape Town, particularly before the Second World War as the private house was to be the last outpost of conservatism, while the flat, as a relatively new and hotly debated type of dwelling, was to adopt modernism largely as a style with none of the innovative planning found in contemporary flats in Johannesburg. Finally, building types that dealt with new inventions also reflect modernism to varying degrees. The cinema or 'bioscope' as it was called in South Africa was one of the most important forms of mass entertainment in the years of the Depression and its inherently escapist message was often reflected in the architectural style adopted. Motorcar ownership grew exponentially in this period as Henry Ford's methods of mass production changed the transport system internationally. Motorcar showrooms also became fashion statements that needed to reflect modernism albeit in an often-negotiated form, far removed from the purism found in Germany or France.

### **The profession: the university or the workplace as fields of study?**

Architectural education at the Cape was characterised by a marked division between those in favour of University-based training versus those who favoured the older pupillage system. This debate continued well into the Thirties despite the fact that a School of Architecture had been established more than a decade earlier.

The debate around architectural education had been considered in Britain in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and revolved around notions of 'Profession or Art'. According to Powers (1996) the pupillage system had favoured those with the financial means to secure positions in the better offices. Under the leadership of Charles Reilly (1874-1948) at Liverpool University, university-based training was to receive widespread approval and in 1902 their Degree and Certificate courses were the first to be recognised by the RIBA for exemption from their Intermediate exam. From this grew two of Reilly's pioneering ideas. Firstly, that architecture could become an academic subject in its own right, and that this would form a preferred route to professional qualification. Secondly, a university helped to lift the barriers of class and economics that then opened the field to poorer students and, after 1919, to women. (Powers1996: 4-5) The underlying assumption of Liverpool's two-year day course was the continuation of architectural pupillage as the main means of entry into the profession. Following Liverpool's example the Architectural Association in London introduced a day course in 1901 and Birmingham in 1902.

In structuring a course Reilly moved away from the Arts & Crafts approach that had been championed by architects such as W.R. Lethaby (1857-1931). He saw the inherent advantages that a classical training could bring. It offered a route to abstraction and a move away from the

eclecticism of the nineteenth century. Classicism was a defined body of doctrine that made architectural design a teachable subject that had standards of comparability. (Powers 1996:7) Reilly was attracted by the Beaux Arts approach to classicism that was being followed by the big American schools of architecture, and after a visit to the United States in 1909 set up a basis for work-experience placements for his students in New York practices.

In 1912 it was proposed to turn the British Academy at Rome into the equivalent of any other foreign academies, with the annual selection of a Rome Scholar. As Powers points out that "No knowledge of construction need to be displayed, and originality of detail was severely penalised. It was the triumph of drawing over building..." (Powers 1996:12).

There was a concern already in the Twenties about broad issues of education and the lack of proper training. Lethaby added his voice to concerns about education in the Cape.

Mr. Lethaby draws attention to the matriculation mania at the Cape, and refers to the danger of building up a white civilisation as a mere superstructure upon a basis of black labour. He deplores the pride, which makes it appear derogatory to be trained in trades as carpenters, builders, blacksmiths and market gardeners. He points out that the matriculation mania in South Africa is resulting in the most alarming flood of clerks: consequently the supply of clerks is hopelessly in excess of the demand. Youths despise artisanship because all kinds of labour are regarded more or less as Kaffirs' work. (AB&E April 1924: 13)

In 1936 the AB&E in an article entitled 'Modern Methods' attacked both modernism and architectural education. It started by denouncing the 'craze' for modernism that was finding "expression in gross breaches of good feeling, calculated to wound the susceptibilities of those accustomed to follow honoured and honourable traditions of the past." (Cited in SAAR April 1936:108) Much is made of the differences between 'junior practitioners' as opposed to 'senior architects' and the article accuses the younger architect of making "the public pay for his lack of practical experience...Is not the wail of woe from junior practitioners the direct outcome of the giving of too much significance to examination results rather than the performance of practical professional work?" The article goes on to attack the university system which, it maintains "is on trial and it has yet to be proved successful". It commended the old pupilage system saying: "Architects trained in this manner learned to control and direct the fulfilment of a building contract in a vital and effective way unknown to neophytes of today who are trained in a different fashion". It asks, "How many graduates from modern universities are capable of doing this?" In his letter to the editor of the AB&E, the Johannesburg-based modernist architect, Norman Hanson, retorted that the 'perennial dispute' regarding the training of architects at universities was a 'dead letter'. (AB&E April 1936: 16) He goes on to call the issue of the public paying for young architects mistakes "a scurrilous statement, and little less than libel", and accuses the AB&E of 'inertia and short-sightedness', and ignorance, "who will neither acknowledge a changing world, nor those who follow them in time, some of the respect which they give so freely to a ready-made tradition". His

views were endorsed by the Cape Town architect, P.H. Shillington (1909-?), writing to the Johannesburg-based SAAR. He added that "a large number of prominent architects trained in the old way are today in the hands of their senior draughtsmen" (SAAR May 1936: 170).

But the attacks did not stop there and in May 1936 the AB&E published a memorandum on architectural education in South Africa. In it they comment on the fact that architectural education in the Union is "in its infancy" and that "the European population is a small one of under two million" (AB&E May 1936: 4). The memorandum refers to the Architects' Act of 1927 and the conditions stated in the Act for the education of architects through the Board of Architectural Education. UCT and Witwatersrand University were the two recognised schools of architecture, with their examinations aligned with those of the RIBA. The memo goes on to criticize the large numbers of students who "far exceed in number the market capacity for absorption. The present position is that the professions concerned have reached saturation point". Following a reference to Thornton-White's paper in the RIBA Journal in 1934 on British architectural education, the memo, noting that the pupillage system had disappeared 25 years earlier commented:

The system, however, had many advantages, and in the hands of honest and capable masters and pupils was almost ideal. We are told that the system has gone, never to return. That is by no means certain (AB&E May 1936: 4).

This reactionary statement underlies much of the argument and counter-argument that one finds in Cape Town regarding modern architecture. Older practitioners had followed the pupillage system and looked with suspicion on the university-based training that undermined both their authority through its autonomy, and their conservative approach to architecture- an inevitable outcome of the pupillage system. It was as a result of the development of architectural education that any progress could be made and it is necessary to examine the development of architectural education in South Africa, and, specifically, in Cape Town and to locate this within the development of architectural education in Britain to which architectural education here was (and indeed still is) closely allied.

### **Architectural education and the introduction of modernism**

Architectural education was central to the introduction and development of modernism, whether in Germany's Bauhaus or in the conservative terrain of British architecture. The relatively slow development of modernism in Cape Town can be directly linked to the nature of architectural education in the city. The School of Architecture, although established before the First World War and revived in 1919, was an extremely conservative institution and it reinforced Beaux-Arts notions of architectural education. It could also not develop independent of the existing Institute of Architects who taught there and imposed a great deal of influence over its teaching and direction. It was moved and located within the School of Art, known as the Michaelis School, and was thus

influenced by developments in art. Even Herbert Brownlee, an early lecturer, was incensed by the move and resigned after its incorporation into the art school. A conservative school within an Art School was unlikely to breed modernism and instead it remained mired in the normative reinforcement of an archaic system of practice, thus stifling any potential for new directions in architecture. Neither Brownlee who ran the school in the early Twenties, nor his successor, Gregory, ever developed a school that reflected any form of modernism.

But this, of course, was reiterated in the approach of the Michaelis School of Art. The leading artists at the Cape in the Twenties and Thirties were people such as Edward Roworth (1880-1964) or Gwelo Goodman (1871-1939) - both British-born and regular exhibitors at the Royal Academy. Both were descriptive artists, who produced works that found ready acceptance among a viewing public who found their work easy to relate to and non-contentious. Professor John Wheatley (1892-1955), who had trained and lectured at the Slade School of Art in London, ran the Michaelis School of Art from 1925 until 1937 (Ogilvie 1988:746). Far more reactionary than anything done in the Michaelis School was the work of Irma Stern (1894-1966)- little understood, and even less appreciated in Cape Town where she came to live in the mid-Twenties, following a period of study at the Weimar Academy in Germany from 1913-1916. Her work represents the application of German expressionism, but it drew the same response as Jacob Epstein's work in Britain. Even in modernist Johannesburg, the editor of the Sunday Times described her work as "Irma Stern's Chamber of Horrors" (Berman 1975: 66). The AB&E had indicated, "We dislike Epstein's work. If it has a message, it is one, which we are constitutionally unfitted to receive..." (AB&E September 1935: 5) The parallels between modern art and architecture are interesting, particularly since there were such close bonds between the two fields in the Twenties and Thirties. Stern was of German Jewish extraction and her acceptance of modernism can be linked to the modernism of architects such as Max Policansky (1909-2003) who also worked within this genre.

I should like to inculcate in you, and in all students of architecture, a hatred of "drawing-board stylism," which is merely covering a sheet of paper with alluring pictures, "styles," or "orders"- these are fashions. But architecture is space, breadth, depth, and height, volume and circulation. Architecture is a conception of the mind (Le Corbusier: If I had to teach you architecture: SAAR Oct.1941: 335)

Architectural education and architectural schools, away from the catalytic epicentres in Europe were central to the introduction of modernism. In this section the role that was played by architectural education, including systems of education in the introduction of modernism is considered. Architectural education in Cape Town is then located and contextualised.

## The British Empire and its Dominion in Africa

As part of a colonial hegemony, it is essential to view architectural education in South Africa in relation to the development of architectural training in Britain as the two are inseparably linked in terms of structure, systems of education, and indeed, people. South Africans went to Britain to study architecture before returning to South Africa to practise and teach, and many educators came out to South Africa from Britain.

In his examination of the modern movement in Britain, Alan Powers identifies the importance of the architecture schools, not necessarily for teaching modernism, but rather as a forum for students who were independent thinkers and who challenged existing beliefs. He quotes R.A. Duncan, who taught at the AA, explaining how, after the First World War, the ex-servicemen students questioned things on an unprecedented scale. "The atmosphere was extremely stimulating but unsettling...I defy anyone but a hidebound dogmatist to have passed through the ferment without having his ideas reduced to a state of flux" (Powers 2005: 15).

The School of Architecture at the Architectural Association (AA) in London was founded in 1890, starting with evening classes to prepare students for the RIBA examination. Sir Howard Robertson (1888-1963) was the Principal of the AA between 1920 and 1935. He was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, but like Geoffrey Pearse at Witwatersrand University, regarded modernism with 'benevolent curiosity'. (Powers 2005: 15) Leonard Thornton-White (1901-1965- the first Professor of Architecture at UCT) was appointed Vice Principal of the AA in 1933. He commented at the AA exhibition of student work for 1933-34, referring to the closure of the Bauhaus by the Nazis who had come to power in Germany, that:

The past year has witnessed extraordinary and unique incidents in the world of architecture, incidents which have interrupted the even flow of development and even called to question the direction of the flow. A stamping and fantastic boot in Germany treads heavily in the chilly waters of the scientific-intellectual approach, almost emptying the pond and splashing liberally the surrounding countries. (Thornton White papers)

HS Goodhart-Rendel (1887-1959) was the Director of Education, but could not accept modernism and came into conflict with staff and students in 1937-8. E.A.A. Rowse moved to the AA from the Edinburgh College of Art in 1933 and took over as Principal in 1935 when Robertson retired, remaining there until 1938. Rowse remained as Principal until the crisis with the programme reached a showdown with Goodhart-Rendel. Rowse instituted the 'unit' system to replace the one course of study per year; a system that Goodhart-Rendel opposed. The students were vociferous in their support for the changes that were then implemented. Thornton White had commented on Architectural Education in 1933 saying:

If one may criticise the Schools now it is from the view that they are becoming too coldly practical, that their present methods are capable of over-development (signs have already appeared!), that they are in danger of stultification by over-organisation, and that by an over emphasis of the scientific and analytical approach, architect-critics in place of creative designers may be produced (Thornton White papers).

Thornton-White applied for the post of Chair of Architecture at UCT in 1936 and took up the appointment in 1937. Rowse moved on to the AA's School of Planning and Research for Regional Development and Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-1996) took over as Principal.

## **The Liverpool School of Architecture**

In examining the development of architectural education in Britain, the Liverpool School of Architecture under Charles Reilly is central to the development of architectural education in Britain. A consideration of this School is also significant as a number of architects who practised in Cape Town in the Thirties studied at the School in the late Twenties and early Thirties. Indeed it is interesting to see how influential the School was to be on the introduction of modernism into Cape Town through its graduates in the period prior to the establishment of a Chair in Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1937. The Liverpool School of Architecture and the Architectural Association in London appear to have had the greatest influence on early modernism in Cape Town. (See Appendix 2)

The school looked to France and Paris in its early days. Liverpool was the first school that marked the end of the pupilage system. Then the American example was followed. "These varying phases of French and American were necessary for our comprehension of the modern problem". (Budden 1932: 27) Even Lethaby, when he retired, commented "The absence of architectural enthusiasm is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the present day...A superficial imitation of Parisian methods affects the modern schools...a revival is, I think, only to be found in some sincere effort to express modern conditions in modern construction, with a scholarly reference to historical ornament, decoration and proportion..." (AB&E November 1921: 22). Reilly attempted to find an alternative approach to teaching architectural design that would break with the historicist model.

He (Reilly) is at the present moment with Prof Budden and his other colleagues initiating ...what purports to be a very important- and not less important because local and peculiar- contribution to 'Modern' architecture. I am here using the word 'modern' to mean the beginning of a new epoch as something distinct from the traditional- and yet, even as I write, my words beguile me with a subtle mockery, for, after all, is not this latest phase of architectural education as traditional as all else that preceded it! Behind these fresh and sometimes startling presentations of designs for modern buildings, is the quiet force of a traditional culture, which is essentially Latin.

It is this undercurrent of Latinity, that appreciation for measured and exact beauty, for decorum, for fitness of purpose and above all for balance and sanity, which has been the special characteristic of the peoples of the Mediterranean throughout the ages, that I feel underlies the new modern note at Liverpool. It is modern with a difference. It

is, if I may so phrase it, 'Modernism with ancestry' (Stanley C Ramsey in Budden 1932: 28).

Reilly had been searching for an appropriate way of meeting the challenges of the new century and after the First World War he became increasingly interested in the American adaptation of the French Beaux Arts system as a way out of the perceived cul-de-sac of the Arts & Crafts Movement that still found favour with people such as Lethaby. Yet, as Powers points out: "Reilly became aware that aspects of 1920s classicism were becoming untenable, either through the trivialisation of imagery or through the mismatch between structure and applied facing" (Powers 1996:15)

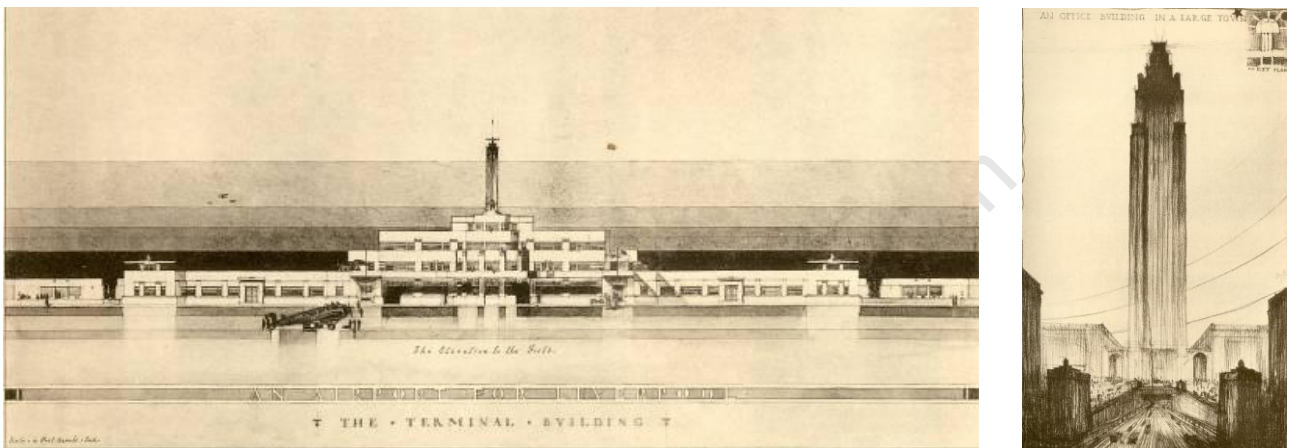


Figure 19 Students' work at Liverpool in the early 1930s (Budden 1932)

Reilly favoured his students going to America in their year out in order that they might assimilate more of the influence of American Beaux Arts practice. William Gregory (1895-1972), who headed the Architecture Design course at the Michaelis School of Art from 1928-1937, studied architecture under Reilly from 1914-1916, and again from 1919 to 1921. He spent some time in the New York offices of Carrère & Hastings in 1920. (Gregory Papers: UCT) Modernism gradually became integral to the course at Liverpool without there being any major adjustment to the teaching programme (Powers 1996: 19).

Possibly as a result of Gregory's background at Liverpool, Max Policansky, the pre-eminent Cape Town modernist architect, went on to continue his architectural studies at Liverpool from 1929 to 1933 after commencing his studies at the Michaelis. So too did the architects Adriaan Louw and David Naudé (1929-1932). But in addition, a number of Cape Town architects, who practised period between the two world wars, had graduated from Liverpool.

Liverpool thus forms a significant component in the development of modernism in Cape Town, with the incorporation of its somewhat pragmatic approach to modernism into architectural praxis in the city.

## **Architectural Education in South Africa**

In South Africa early architectural education was based in Johannesburg and Cape Town with a certain degree of competitiveness and mistrust between the two schools which were both recognised by the RIBA. Some of this mistrust, which on occasion spilled over into animosity between the two centres, had a long history. A number of South African-born architects were trained in Britain right up to the Second World War. As the media suggested:

There is no doubt that for a time we shall have to train our men partially overseas since we have not in this country those remains of antiquity which are bound to be the study and inspiration of well-equipped architectural practitioners". (AB&E February 1927: 3)

### **Witwatersrand University School Of Architecture in Johannesburg**

The SA School of Mines transferred from Kimberley to Johannesburg in 1904 and was renamed The Transvaal Technical Institute. Classes in architecture commenced in 1905. In 1906 the name was changed to the Transvaal University College. In 1920 it became the Johannesburg University College and in 1922 became the University of the Witwatersrand. (Herbert 1975)

Classes in architecture were, at first, part-time. In 1911 the SA School of Mines started giving courses and holding exams. Teachers were drawn from the ranks of the practising architects. These included Gordon Leith who had trained at the AA in London, but he left in 1912 to take up the first Herbert Baker Scholarship. Architectural education practically ceased during the First World War, and it was only in 1919 that evening classes under Gordon Ellis resumed again. H.W. Spicer followed him when he left South Africa later that year. In 1920, the principal of the Johannesburg University College, J.H. Hofmeyr, agreed to the establishment of a Chair in Architecture. In 1921 Geoffrey Pearse (1885-1968) was appointed to the position. Pearse, who was born in Natal, studied architecture at the Regent Street Polytechnic and under A.E. Richardson. Pearse's attitude to architecture, according to Herbert was based "on two pillars: the love of history, and a strong practical bias." (Herbert: 8) R.J. Heir, H.W. Spicer and F. Williamson- who was a protégée of Reilly of Liverpool and whose work featured in Lionel Budden's commemorative book on the Liverpool School supported Pearse's teaching in the evening classes. In 1925 Stanley Furner (1892-1971), an English architect was appointed as senior lecturer. He had studied at the AA and at the Slade and had completed a three-year studio mastership at the Bartlett School. Furner wrote a paper entitled 'The Modern Movement in Architecture' that was published in December 1925. This marks the watershed, as Herbert describes it (Herbert 1975:18) for the introduction of modernism. The input of Rex Martienssen (1905-1942) who started studying architecture in 1923 at Wits, and who travelled to Europe at the end of 1925 where he became passionate about modernism, was to be central to the development of modernism at Wits. The first architectural degree to be conferred in South Africa was awarded to a student from this university in 1927 (AB&E Feb 1927: 9).

In 1932 Martienssen, having completed his studies, began teaching at the University and 'the gale-force of revolution hit the Witwatersrand University School of Architecture with traumatic impact.' (Herbert: 66) The energy generated by the introduction to the Modern Movement, the development of the so-called Transvaal Group of architects, their interaction with Le Corbusier and the widespread adoption of modernism is covered in Herbert's 1975 account Rex Martienssen and the international style.

It is significant to note that modernism in Johannesburg was initially largely residential and never concerned with social issues or with planning. The death of Martienssen in 1942 led to the end of the first heroic phase of modernism in the city and in the university.

### **Architectural Education in Cape Town**

South Africa needed a new and intimate style of architecture and that well-trained architects should carry it out...In our school we have the beginnings of what might one day develop into a new and better standard of architecture implementing proper social and domestic conditions.

Following the theme of evolution to its logical conclusions, one is forced to realise that no set of conditions prevailing in Europe are suitable for our Cape conditions. We must work at our own salvation.

AB&E December 1923:16

Architectural classes started at the School of Art in Cape Town in 1912 with C.S. Groves (1878-1964), a Royal College of Art-trained fine artist, as Principal, but were suspended in 1914 following the outbreak of war. In 1919, under Groves, and with the support of the Cape Institute of Architects (CIA), classes were resumed. F.K. Kendall (1870-1948) and W.J. Delbridge (1878-1946) gave the lectures. In 1921 New Zealand-born H.J. Brownlee (1885-1947), who had experience of architectural education in Australia, joined as professional coach for the RIBA examinations. He had worked in London for Sir Bannister Fletcher and studied there from 1910-12. (See Appendix 1 for Brownlee's profile)

The Cape School of Architecture was established in 1922 under the aegis of the CIA, once it became clear that there was little prospect of UCT creating a chair of architecture in the near future. Brownlee was appointed Principal, assisted by Groves, who retained his position as Principal of the Cape Town School of Art. In 1923 the CIA appealed to UCT because it perceived threats of dominance from Wits as the only University School of Architecture in the country. Prof. Snape, an engineer who lectured at the Cape School, argued in favour of its establishment at an architectural education conference held in Durban in July that year saying that "the Cape has a certain right to institute a School of Architecture; the city has about it the only colonial style of architecture-indigenous style- which is in many ways suited to this country." (Herbert: 14) Prof Beattie, the UCT principal, suggested incorporation since this would be relatively inexpensive as the only paid teacher of the school was HJ Brownlee- the rest of the teaching staff were honorary.

At the end of 1924 the AB&E reported the move away from a Beaux Arts approach commenting that the Cape School of Architecture has 'decided to call the 'Atelier' the 'Studio' and the 'Esquisse' the 'Preliminary Sketch'- better to adhere to grand old English words that are not tied to Beaux Arts'. (AB&E December 1924:27)

The School was formally incorporated on the 1st January 1925. Remuneration problems soon occurred, with teaching staff demanding payment and new equipment that cost £1000. Since there were fewer than 30 students it simply was not viable.

In early 1926 the School was incorporated into the Michaelis Art School with Prof Wheatley at the head. Brownlee resigned in protest and the advertisement for his post called for 'an Assistant in Architecture'. The AB&E found the advertisement for a lecturer in architecture at the Michaelis School 'vaguely worded. The reference to 'original work' 'might be construed as an indication that the lecturer would be required to devote himself to the composition of architecture in personal and original ways' (AB&E December 1927:1) which they thought most unfortunate. Such was the narrowness of attitude among established Cape Town architects who always seemed to look askance at the School.

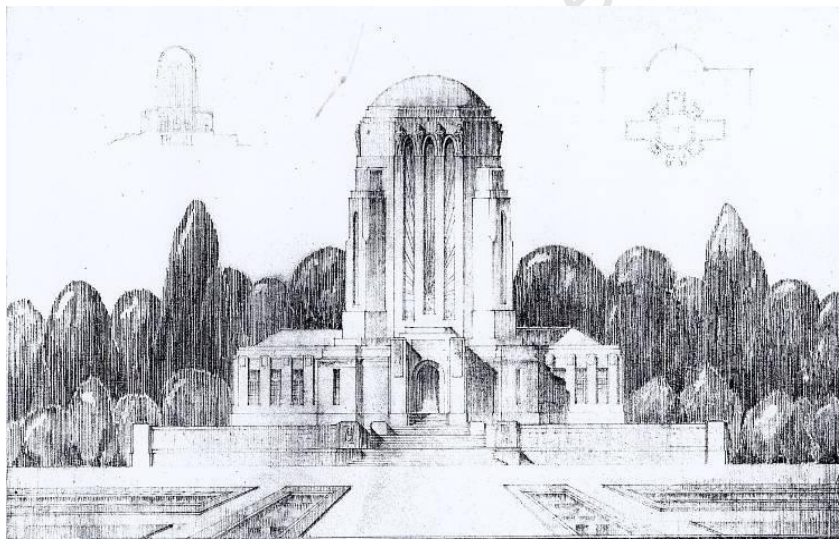


Figure 20 2<sup>nd</sup> year Student project at UCT (HAP Kent- AB&E Aug 1930:6)

The teaching focussed mainly on design and components of the art course were included. The courses were 5-year courses linked to the RIBA exams. In 1928 UCT and Wits were made the supreme examining authorities for architecture in South Africa by an Act of Parliament. However UCT still sought RIBA recognition for its courses. Construction and Design were taught along with Art, and Studio work was central to the course. From the second year a student worked during the day and attended classes at night. All the part-time lecturers were practising architects; consequently the early training was architecturally conservative. Brownlee had stressed traditional techniques of architectural design. W.J.H. Gregory (1885-1972) succeeded him in 1928. He had come out from

England to take up the appointment. (See Appendix 1 for Gregory profile) Although his approach was seen as conservative, it would seem that he was applying the design approach of the Liverpool School under Reilly, but, being away from Britain, was unaware of the changes that were happening in British schools as modernism crept into the programmes. He had been a top student at Liverpool and also entered the RIBA building design competition. With his training in Reilly's American Beaux Arts approach, reinforced by his American experience with Carrère & Hastings, as well as his work for Lutyens, his approach was entirely consistent with his training and experience and, one suspects, would have been well received by the conservative practitioners in Cape Town who were extremely sceptical of the university approach to architectural training. They had after all reopened the debate on architectural education when Delbridge attacked the schools in his article in the Architect Builder and Engineer. This had drawn a sharp response from the academics in Johannesburg.

The number of graduates gradually increased so that the AB&E commented in 1930 "we venture to think that the number on the roll is rather more than the local market is able to absorb..." (AB&E March 1930: 3) (There were 22 full-time and 18 part-time students.) This was repeated the following year when the periodical cautioned: "students of architecture are being trained as 'paper architects'" and also noted that "published drawings tend to show that the average level of creative ability is distinctly low, while the inspirational value of most is almost non-existent" (AB&E December 1931: 5). They concluded, once again, that too many students were being trained. The following year they felt that there was a "need to talk less of rendering and more of modelling in our schools" (AB&E August 1932: 5)

Finally, in 1937, the School became independent, with the English architect and academic, Leonard Thornton-White (1901-1965) being appointed to the Chair. ( See Appendix 1 for Thornton White profile) Thornton White was the former Vice-Principal of the Architectural Association in London; and he overhauled the syllabus and replaced the BA in Architecture with a narrower Bachelor of Architecture degree. Gregory left to become Chief Architect for Cape Town.

Thornton-White's most significant innovation was the introduction of Modernism. Functional and utilitarian architecture was to be the focus, rather than what prevailed, which he described as "the dilettante art of dressing carelessly devised and inappropriately planned buildings in the frills and fancies dictated by passing whims of fashion." He also described the students as being 'ravenous as wolves' for modernism. (Phillips19: 311)

From 1934-36 Thornton White wrote a weekly commentary on current architectural affairs for the Architects' Journal. He was appointed vice-principal of the Architectural Association in London in September 1934 where he remained 'with a steadily growing practice in Bedford Square' (Cape Times 25 Feb 1939) when he applied for the post of the chair in Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1936. As referees he gave, among others, the names of Goodhart-Rendel and Grey

Wornum, the latter saying that "his well-balanced mind has enabled him to understand and lead the younger students in a most admirable way, curbing their excesses without discouraging their initiative or enthusiasm". (Wornum letter dated 5.09.1936- Thornton White papers) L. H. Bucknell, an external examiner at the Regent Street Polytechnic and Professor R.C. Carrington, head of the Classical Department at Dulwich College completed the number, the latter writing glowingly, that he was "struck with his great capacity for lucid exposition and his ability to put the modern architectural viewpoint with conviction and good sense". (Letter dated 12 September 1936- Thornton White papers). He was interviewed at South Africa House on the 9th December 1936, and received confirmation on the 29th December that he had been awarded the post.

TW's status in Britain is interesting, and he appears to have been well known amongst modernist architects. Following his appointment, he received letters of congratulations from among others, Grey Wornum saying that it was a "great advantage to many AA students to have you in Cape Town, forming a link between Bedford Square and South Africa". (Letter dated 31st Dec 1936- Thornton White papers). Ernő Goldfinger wrote to congratulate him in the name of "the International Reunion and myself". (Letter dated 6th Jan 1937- Thornton White papers ) and Serge Chermayeff, who was at that stage practising as 'Erich Mendelsohn & Serge Chermayeff' according to his letterhead, wrote saying that he would "miss certain familiar Astragal notes and our pleasant and all too rare meetings at the RIBA- but still, you are less likely to be gassed in Cape Town". (Letter dated 7th Jan 1937- Thornton White papers). William Holford wrote:

As one of those damned colonials myself I am awfully glad that they had the sense to appoint someone who will demand a high standard and work to get it. I know Cape Town well, and its balmy climate, and its cups of tea, and its procrastinating burghers and all the lovely surroundings. And now I shall look forward to a gradual improvement in its architectural conscience- which has not been lively for the past two centuries. (Letter dated 7th Jan 1937 - Thornton White papers)

Thornton White arrived in Cape Town to take up his chair in 1937. It was a post for which there had been some competition, from Rex Martienssen among others. His inaugural address was published in the South African Architectural Record in June 1937 (SAAR June 1937: 267-75) and, as Herbert remarks (1975:178) his "attitude was essentially straightforward, reasonable, and sensible. It was not inflammatory of students' hearts or minds, nor did it pander to the nostalgic prejudices of the traditionalists".

In this inaugural lecture (SAAR June 1937: 267-275) he spoke of the "great architectural movement (that) has nothing to do with the colour of one's tie or the hue of one's shirt or the shade of one's skin. It is as international as was classical architecture... And within the major movements there is unlimited scope for local or national developments... Not simply because one should try to force local distinctions artificially, but simply because local differences in men's mode of life slightly vary the building problem, practical and spiritual, and therefore the architectural solution". He went on

to identify 'a few fundamentals' of the new architecture. Firstly he argued that space had become more important than the means of enclosure. It required "a careful study, first-hand if possible, of how people actually used various spaces. The architect and the sociologist and the psychologist should be of considerable mutual help in this respect, for the architect, with his trained imagination, frequently visualises new distributions of space to enhance the art of living". The second fundamental concerned the enclosure of space, choosing materials appropriate to function rather than to use materials to create 'certain effects'. He criticized the newly built top cable station on Table Mountain, saying it was "another example of the misuse of concrete as a facing material". His third fundamental was that of "space relationship and appropriate enclosure for use". The final fundamental involved "further study and adjustment in form, tone, colour, texture, until the final work takes upon itself a character, which is expressive in some balanced degree of a rational use of the materials, and structural methods that made it economically possible. An architecture based upon fitness for purpose and with some spiritual content". He goes on to say that he had not mentioned 'modern style' and states pointedly: "We believe, of course, that good architecture can never be produced by superimposing a so-called architectural style, historical or modern, upon a building, as a sort of fancy dress. There is unfortunately a great deal of bogus architecture masquerading under the catchword of modern architecture". (Thornton White 1937) The views he expressed would form the basis for training in the School of Architecture including civic design and planning 'in the broadest sense'. The break with the Beaux Arts training of the past was profound and far-reaching.

He proposed part-time classes for students employed in architects' offices who were unable to take full-time courses and a refresher course for practising architects and their assistants. He was responsible for moulding the structure and spirit of the Cape Town School of Architecture, the second school of architecture to be founded in South Africa after that at the University of the Witwatersrand. (Phillips 1993) Unlike Rowse at the AA he would appear to have supported the direction taken by Goodhart Rendel (who also supported his application to UCT) since there was never any mention of a shift to the unit structure that Rowse introduced at the AA.

In 1939 Thornton White presented a paper on Architectural education at an Architectural Congress held in Johannesburg. In it he introduced the idea of a co-ordinated architectural education that would 'extend throughout the whole building industry and, indeed, throughout the whole population of the Union, the people for whom our architecture is an essential social service'. (Thornton-White 1939:283) He considered that it was necessary for the length of study to be recognised by giving diplomas after four years of study and one year of office experience and reserving the degree for five years of study plus one year of office experience. He also proposed the development of additional architectural schools or facilities in other centres in South Africa, such as Port Elizabeth where a need had existed for some time. He proposed the establishment of maintenance scholarships such as existed in many European countries. "All architects in Great

Britain, for example, subscribe the small some of three shillings and fourpence annually to a maintenance scholarship fund". In his consideration of the needs of the building industry he was critical of the fact that no collated educational policy existed between the profession and the industry. The industry could, he suggested, "be pulling in one direction and the profession in another...By all ordinary luck we may be converging in outlook in some matters but drifting well apart in others. The country's architecture, its planning, is too serious a matter to allow even this element of chance". (Thornton White 1939: 287) Finally he considered the education of the public who he suggested had no idea of what architecture was, assuming it to be synonymous with a series of styles and that they were unaware "that the architect is primarily a planner, an organiser of space for use, a planner of economic structure, an organiser of appropriate character and finish for a variety of specific purposes". He proposed short courses in architectural appreciation, particularly at secondary schools, as well as being offered to BA students at universities as a qualifying course. He also suggested the setting up of regular press conferences. He concluded by stressing that "wherever I have used the word architecture...I mean the whole of architecture...the buildings themselves and their relationship one with the other and to the street, the town and the country as a whole". Although taken for granted as normative practice now, at the time this approach represented a significant move away from stylistic debates and Beaux Arts systems of design. Even Rex Martienssen approved of his approach adding that "The people must realise the possibilities of a universal architecture". (Thornton White 1939: 293) There was also some discussion on Gropius' broad-based approach to architectural education at Harvard through 'cultivated research', to which Thornton White commented that "Gropius happens to be an old friend of mine" and he pointed out that "in spite of the extremely good ideas, his efforts, both at Dessau and later at Chicago, have failed. His American school has, quite frankly, very recently failed".

One senses that Thornton White was dealing with architectural education on a much broader and more progressive basis than was happening elsewhere in the country. His London experience had given him a much wider range of experience and it comes out in the pragmatic way that he approached architectural education in the late Thirties, bringing architectural education in Cape Town in line with that proposed at the Architectural Association. In his comment on a paper by Powers on the architectural profession at the same congress, Thornton White noted that in their training in South Africa, students received a high standard of engineering education; "higher in this country than in any school in England..." (SAAR Sept 1939:346) He tartly commented:

I feel that a part of the present confusion is due to engineering and architecture being completely misunderstood. For example, if we treat structural engineering as a skeleton, which is to be trimmed with architectural trimmings, which are not an integral part of the scheme, then we are getting architecture into an entirely useless position. We are not teaching that sort of thing now; we are teaching architecture and structural engineering as an integral whole; architecture as a structural conception- not decorated by the columns and cornices and what-not, which have no structural reason. (SAAR Sept 1939:346)

In this comment he aligned himself with an earlier response in the AB&E where, under the heading 'Alarming manifestation' the editor noted that: "Until now an architect was regarded as one who conceived of his design in plan, elevation and section; now it is the fashion among certain leaders of our tribe to dub themselves 'elevationists'" (AB&E August 1932: 5). In 1940 the School of Architecture Partnership was formed among the lecturers and they were to design a number of UCT's new buildings. Again, this was a new and progressive direction to be taken at UCT and the school continued to grow despite the impact of the outbreak of war and the mobilisation of potential students. By 1948 there were nearly 70 graduates from the School.

Thornton-White handpicked his staff, bringing over Owen Pryce Lewis, a colleague from the AA in 1938, FL (Jock) Sturrock, who trained at the AA from 1932; and Denis Rowsley Harper, a product of the other leading English school at Liverpool University- all with a modernist approach. Jock Sturrock (1913-1991) was part of Unit 15 at the Architectural Association, whose actions following the MARS' New Architecture exhibition of 1938 is analysed by Darling (Darling 2007:179-182) He studied there from 1933-38. These students had declared that 'we were born in the war' (Darling:181). Pryce Lewis was appointed Assistant Director in 1947. Of the 11 men and one woman who served as junior studio masters and lecturers between 1945 and 1949, five were trained at UCT and three in London.

### **The architect and the profession: the innovators and the followers**

The Cape is fortunate among other parts of the Dominions of having a fine traditional architecture of its own. It is an architecture of great breadth and humanity, strong and unaffected, yet showing evidence in the richness of its baroque detail of a hearty appreciation of the good things in life. It is a tradition which should make, and we know does make over there, for comfortable, sane, and happy new work. Charles Reilly quoted in SAB Dec 1923: 19

In his study of the modern movement in South Africa, Gilbert Herbert commented that 'beyond the Transvaal, in the rest of South Africa, there is little or nothing to report of significance'. (Herbert 1975:153) He goes on to say that there were few landmarks in Cape Town prior to the establishment of the Chair in Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1937. He describes a house in Oranjezicht by Alan Johnston (1907-1970) as 'modernistic'. He also identifies two blocks of flats in Sea Point by the practice, Roberts & Small (The practice existed between 1929-39) as part of what he describes as 'Tentative probings of the modern spirit of an anonymous nature' (Herbert:154) He alleges that the block of flats known as 'Avalon' was the first modern South African building to be published in the conservative pages of the Architect, Builder & Engineer. This is not correct as the magazine uses the description much earlier. In 1932 the AB&E reported that "Modernism in design almost "in excelso" – has come to Cape Town. This pleasing example of the new school is the headquarters of the Commercial Union insurance Company..." (AB&E Sept 1932:3) He goes on to identify a house by Shillington, which was published by the SAAR as also being tentatively modern. Shillington had written to the SAAR, published in May 1936, "On behalf of architects trained at the

University of Cape Town" pointing out that "a large number of prominent architects trained in the old way are today in the hands of their senior draughtsmen (or any imaginative draughtsman they can get a hold of)". He goes on to suggest that the University educated architects were better able to deal with structural mechanics and thus better able to collaborate with engineers (SAAR May 1936: 170).

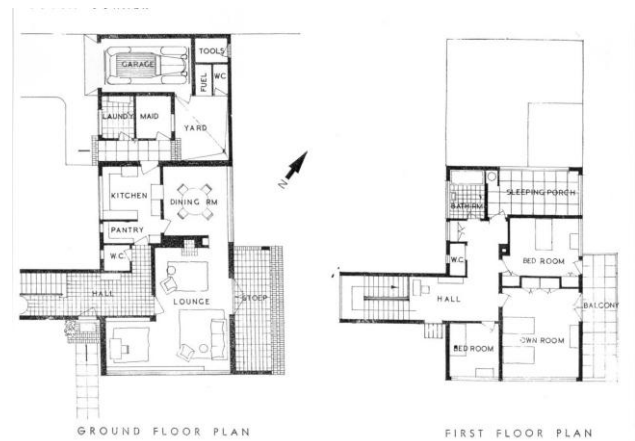


Figure 21 House Wagener by P. Shillington (SAAR Dec 1937 534 & 531)

Finally he identifies Max Policansky (1909-2003), a Liverpool graduate, whose architecture he sees as 'highly personal' and suggests that 'Of the early period, up to 1937, his is the only name to emerge which will grow in stature, and will come to rank with the more important architects of the Modern movement in South Africa'. (Herbert :154)

I would tend to agree with this assertion and this is borne out by the research. The absence of any real direction in the development of modernism in Cape Town prior to the arrival of Thornton White meant that the city lacked the sort of catalyst that was found in Johannesburg at the School of Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand and in the people who championed it there such as Rex Martienssen, John Fassler, Cedric Hanson and Bernard Cooke among others. Cape Town simply had no focal point. However, if one examines the work in the city in Thirties, in particular, some of the work of Roberts and Small shows great originality in the use of modernism. E. Douglas Andrews (1910-1987), who studied architecture at UCT between 1928 and 1932, is attributed with the design of two blocks of flats in Sea Point and Farber Motors in Dock Road while he was working there. By 1933 Andrews was their chief draughtsman (Roberts thought highly of Andrews), leaving in 1936 to become an assistant in Max Policansky office where he remained until 1939. The 1935 motor car showroom and workshop for Farbers, flat-roofed, white walled and well articulated, is probably one of the best of the early modern buildings in the city, and suggests that Andrews is probably the pioneer locally born and trained modernist in the city. The two blocks of flats, Dorchester and Avalon, are possibly rather more 'tentative' in terms of their modernist aesthetic.

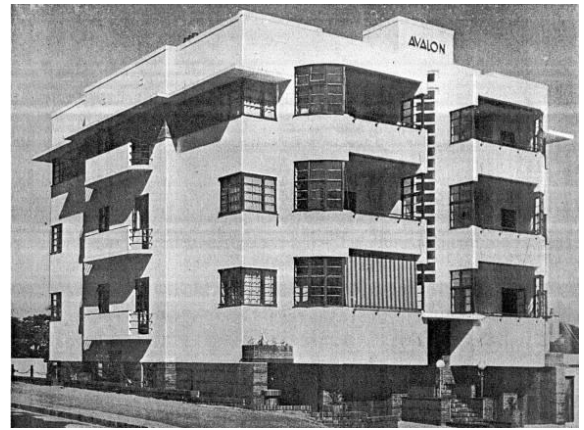


Figure 22: Farber's motor showroom in Dock Road (E. Karol) & Avalon Flats in Sea Point (AB&E Oct 1936:10), both attributed to Douglas Andrews.

The work of the practice of Roberts and Small is very eclectic and ranges from Art Deco to Arts & Crafts. One is therefore uncertain of the commitment of architects such as Hubert Roberts to modernism. Within the oeuvre of the practice there are, however, some exemplary modern buildings that draw strongly on the European modernism associated with Erich Mendelsohn. These would include their garages for Holmes Motors in Salt River (1937) and Paarl as well as the extremely well handled design of Ackerman's department store in Parliament Street (1936), with its strong 'horizontal motif', which shows a strong affinity with Mendelsohn's design for the Schocken Departmental Store in Chemnitz and the Petersdorff Store in Breslau. It is also strongly related to Peter Jones' in Sloane Square (As is the adjacent CTC Bazaars by Policansky in the same year.) The design of the Atkinson Building in Loop Street is particularly noteworthy and clearly designed by the same hand.



Figure 23 Ackerman's store –1936 (E.Karol) Atkinson's building-1936 (Cape Provincial Institute of Architects 1978: 16) and Poelzig's Petersdorff Store in Breslau-1912) (Charlton et al 2007)

The design of Hershel Court in Claremont (1936) is more Art Deco in design with its use of axial symmetry, although the use of staircase towers to cluster flats and thus avoid the access corridor is good. The layout of the flats is however very dated with none of the inventiveness shown by

Johannesburg modernists. All rooms open off a passage and no attempt is made to develop an open plan layout. Finally, after the dissolution of the practice in 1939, Roberts' architecture becomes very conservative as his low-rise apartment building, The Cotswolds (1940), in Kenilworth attests. It is designed in a quasi-Arts & Crafts style that draws on Cotswold vernacular architecture. One is left wondering to what extent Roberts was the author of the executed designs of the practice and to what extent they drew on the expertise of the employees.

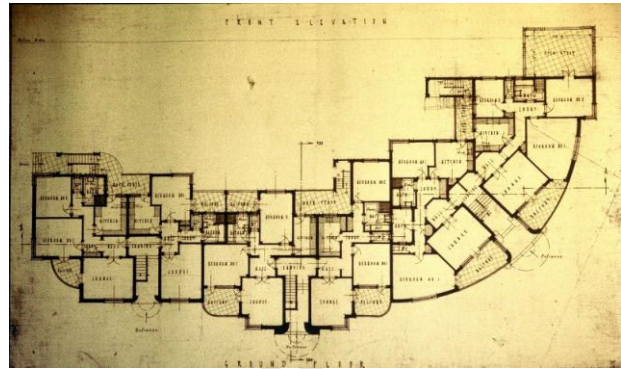


Figure 24: *Hershel Court* by Roberts & Small (E. Karol)

The Witwatersrand –trained Julius Lonstein (1895-1954) designed the synagogue in Sea Point, designed in 1931 and completed in 1933 and this is probably the earliest modernist building in Cape Town, in stark contrast to the conservative design of contemporary synagogues in Britain and elsewhere. “For the first time in the history of this paper there is opportunity to illustrate an up-to date synagogue...” the AB&E reported in 1934, adding “But a modern synagogue has nothing in common with the original Temple...Mr. Lonstein, the architect of this synagogue, has previously expressed his attitude towards design in many ways, both simple and ornate...” (AB&E May 1934: 29)

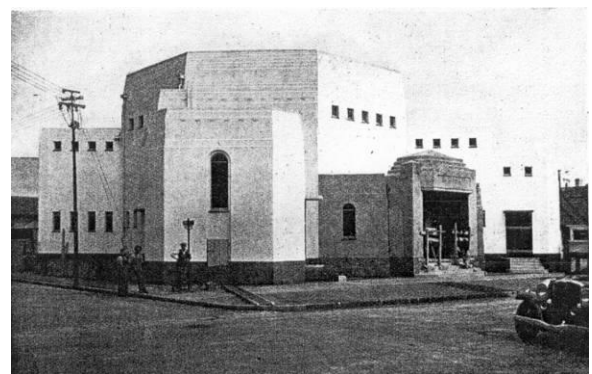


Figure 25: *Synagogue in Benoni* (1932) by Kallenbach & Kennedy and in *Sea Point* (1931) by Lonstein (AB&E May 1934: 29)

The blocks of flats designed by Lonstein in Sea Point are more tentative, with the 1938 ‘Knightsbridge’ Flats on the Sea Point sea front still rather conservative with its use of axial symmetry

on the façade, although the flats were large and regarded as 'well-designed'. The Strathcona Flats of the following year are much more modern in their design and relate to the designs by Tecton in London.



Figure 26: Strathcona (1939) by Lonstein (SAB Aug 1940:173) & Highpoint Flats in Hampstead, London (1938) by Tecton ([www.essentialarch.com](http://www.essentialarch.com))

Day & De Wet designed the award winning building for Starke Ayres, the nurserymen and seed merchants, in Mowbray in 1939. Although it won an award from the Institute of Architects it is a rather conservative design that strongly recalls British design of the period, particularly in its use of face brick. This is possibly not so surprising as Raoul de Wet (1909-?) studied architecture at London University under Professor AE Richardson from 1927, graduating in 1932. There is, however, no evidence of the influence of Richardson's work in the output of the practice.

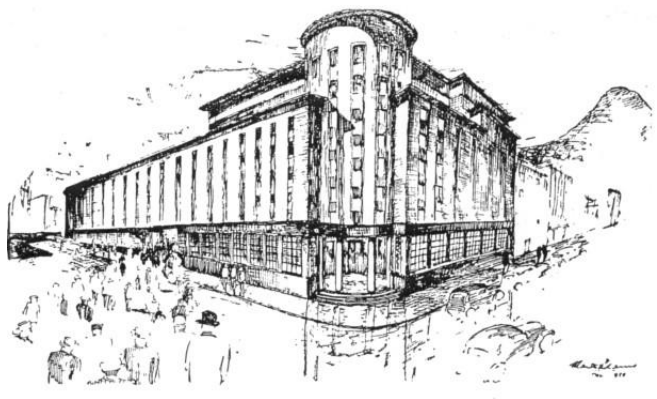


Figure 27 Starke Ayres building Mowbray by Day & de Wet & Building Trades Bldg (AB&E Sept 1938:11 & 17)

To be sure, the threat of impending historical catastrophe affected both radical modernists and twentieth-century traditionalists. While the radicals sought to pre-empt disaster by a bold departure from the chaos of the past and present to a future world of order (as envisioned by Bauhaus philosopher designers), the traditionalists sought to stave off disaster by maintaining the continued vitality of classical order.

...This simultaneous reaching out to the past and future was highly symptomatic of concerns of the inter-war period. Here was a design that sought to "locate" itself symbolically- and by extension to offer a commentary on its times and its cultural milieu (Striner 1992: 22).

Of the older architects, the road to modernism was a difficult one. Uncertain of the underlying principles on which it was based, I believe that they resorted to the technique that they had learnt as pupils. Then architectural styles had been the direction taken and practices would have considered stylistic devices that were deemed appropriate to the problem at hand. The rejection of the avant-garde modernism of the International Style was countered with an acceptance of a more mediated notion of what 'modernism' was. The South African architectural historian Chipkin describes the reaction by commercial architects in Johannesburg to the modern movement: "The commercial architects were able to take this in their stride...including the stylisms of the modern movement. This surrogate modernism was labelled at the time 'modernistic'". (Chipkin 1993: 89) Chipkin describes this as borrowing "Indiscriminately from the disciplines of the modern movement (but it) remained nevertheless tied by an unsevered umbilical cord to Edwardian and Beaux-Arts classicism." He goes on to note that: "It is surely ironic for a style so obsessed with innovation and newness that behind the surface stylisms stand the four-square axial symmetry, vestigial orders and heaviness of earth-bound Edwardian classicism" (Chipkin: 94-95). The 'transitory modernist' architecture that was prevalent in Cape Town in the 1930s largely reflects an 'English compromise' as suggested by Greenhaigh:

The key feature in English modern design was the space between form and content, a gap which first opened up at the end of the nineteenth century. It would be a mistake to attribute this simply to aesthetic failure on the part of the designers. Indeed, many of them showed great ingenuity in responding to the briefs they were faced with. Perhaps structured compromise is a more accurate way of describing their approach. This suggests that the bringing together of progressive form with regressive content was not a fault of incompetence but an inevitable expedient in an ideological climate which rendered any other approach to modernism economically, politically, and even socially unacceptable. (Greenhaigh 1995: 136)

The Cape Town architectural ethos of the 1930s largely followed this precept of compromise. Like English design of the time, there was incomprehension of the underlying principles of modernism. The modern movement was seen as a style to be assimilated into the architect's design vocabulary. One can see this in the work of a number of the older architects such as W.H. (Billy) Grant and Fred Glennie. (See Appendix 1) Glennie, for example, had been articled to Baker & Masey in Cape Town from 1909 until 1911. In about 1912 he won the Cape Institute of Architects' prize for measured drawings. In 1917 he set up an independent practice in Cape Town. In the early years of practice Glennie executed a number of ecclesiastical works, houses and small-scale commercial buildings. He quite soon obtained some major commissions; the first of these large works was the Exchange Building for Mann, George & Co in St George's St (1927), a sophisticated design with corner feature recessed for emphasis rising through all six floors.

Glennie went on to design many well-known commercial buildings in Cape Town, His approach to design wavered between tradition and modernism. As Striner points out:

A knowledge of the interwar period's apocalyptic moods (notwithstanding its equally important visions of technological utopia) provides a much-needed basis for assessing the urgency suffusing the modernist, traditionalist, and middle-range responses to the period's design agenda (Striner: 22).

In 1933 Glennie made an extensive overseas visit, studying buildings in England, Holland, France and Italy with a further year's travel and residence in England, America, Holland, Germany, Sweden and Italy. He returned to Cape Town, continuing to practise until his death in the Fifties. He acted as senior associate architect on several schemes, a number in association with JZ Schuurmans-Stekhoven with whom he worked, for instance, on the Provincial Buildings (Wale St/Queen Victoria St/Long St/Dorp St) in 1940. Other late buildings by Glennie include Court Chambers for Syfrets Trust in Wale St (c1950). There is a clear break in Glennie's designs for buildings in about the mid-Thirties and this is possibly as a result of what he had seen on his travels in 1933.

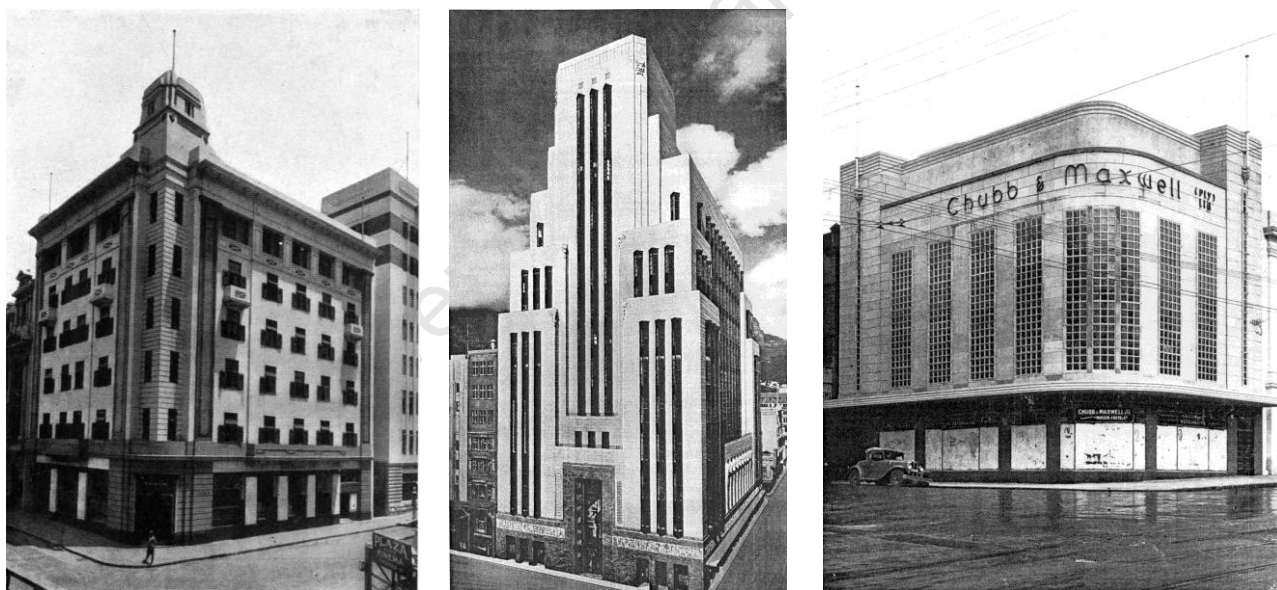


Figure 28: Exchange Bldg 1927 by Glennie; South African Mutual building (SA Arch Jan 1940: 364) & the Chubb & Maxwell building, both by F. Glennie in assoc. with Louw & Louw (AB&E June 1936: 9)

The design of the Old Mutual building in Darling Street, designed in 1935 clearly shows strong American influence with its emphasis on vertical expression using v-shaped windows and the stepped outline of the building. The commission was one that was shared with the Paarl-based practice of Louw & Louw. This collaboration brought the older practitioners, Fred Glennie and Wynand Louw into a design collaborative with Louw's younger brother, Hendrik, who had studied

at the AA from 1920 to 1925 and had worked for both Sir John Burnet and Partners as well as Easton & Robertson, Howard Robertson's practice. (See Appendix 1) In addition, working for Louw & Louw were David Naudé and AL Meiring, who had both studied at Liverpool University between 1928 and 1932 under Charles Reilly. Meiring was to go on to heading the Architectural School at the University of Pretoria. Also collaborating on the Old Mutual project was the sculptor, Ivan Mitford-Barberton. The two practices also design new premises for Chubb in Wale Street at the same date. The design of the Old Mutual project, although innovative in terms of being a new 'skyscraper' was rooted in the stepped symmetrical form popular for high-rise buildings in America.

The work of W.H. Grant reflects a similar shift from the Twenties to the Thirties. In the immediate post-war era he adopted a Mediterranean style that can be seen to in part derive from Herbert Baker's exploration in this area. Baker had considered this to be a suitable style for South Africa given the climatic similarity. In establishing his Rome scholarship he had said:

This was to give students the opportunity of studying the great architectural and artistic traditions of classical art in the Mediterranean countries which have a similar range of climatic conditions to those which prevail in South Africa...I am far from advocating a strict adherence to classical styles in modern architecture...The secret for which the adventurous search is nothing new, as the Modernist thinks, but is there awaiting the industrious explorer (Baker: 1944: 36).

The Mediterranean style was also adopted in California at the same time and can be seen in the work of Addison Mizner in Los Angeles and in Palm Springs. Grant used this Mediterranean style and architects such as Douglas Hoets also used it. It forms an intermediate stage in the development of architecture from Edwardian classicism towards modernism and was particularly favoured for residential buildings including the imposing 'Watergate' in St. James by WH Grant.



Figure 29: Argus Bldg by WH Grant (SAB Jan 1923: 16), New Zealand Chambers by Douglas Hoets in Cape Town & Addison Mizner in Palm Beach, Florida([www.floridanabob.huement.net](http://www.floridanabob.huement.net))

By 1930 Grant had begun to move away from this style in favour of a style that could best be described as Art Deco. Frederico Freschi's 2004 article *Form follows façade* describes the development of Grant's work in this period. This approach was also found in Johannesburg where

older architects, such as Cooke & Cowen, found the new modernism incomprehensible as anything other than a new style to be applied to the facades of buildings planned exactly as before. The desire for ornamentation led to the adoption of decorative motifs that were derived from Aztec architecture through to cubistic geometric forms. Grant's architecture gradually became simpler with a greater emphasis on verticality linked to a simplification of forms.

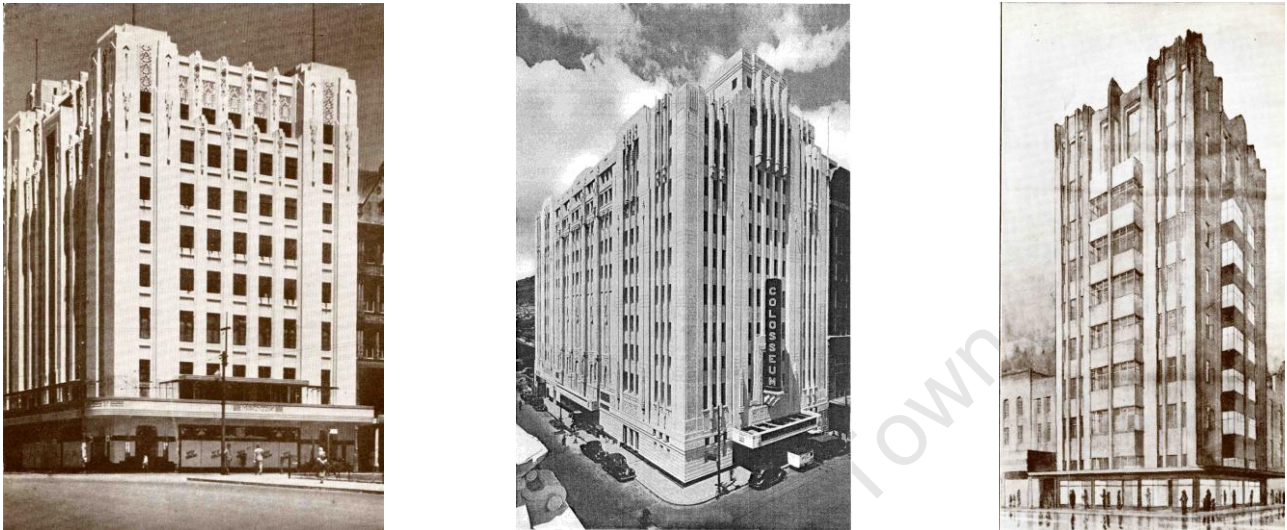


Figure 30: Commercial Union, Greenmarket Square 1930 (Cummings George 1933), Colosseum 1936 by WH Grant (SA Arch Mar 1939:11) and Dunvegan Chambers, Johannesburg 1932 by Cooke & Cowen (Cummings George 1932)

Grant's Coliseum Building of 1936 shows strong similarity in its massing to Glennie's Old Mutual Building and shows the pattern that was adopted by older architects as they adapted their architecture towards modernism. They appear to generally negotiate a compromise between a cellular, essentially Edwardian, plan form that is often symmetrical, and a modernist elevational treatment. The symmetry of the elevation betrayed this compromise. Grant adopted an architectural form that reinforced the corners and then contrasted this with a simple spandrel rhythm that, in his later buildings, emphasized the vertical fins between the fenestration.

The greater body of work that was produced prior to World War 2 would fall into a similar categorical and chronological framework to that described above for Glennie and Grant, with a great deal of work done in a more conservative manner that attempted to resolve the style dilemma by adopting a nondescript simplified 'modernistic' approach that was denigrated by Kurt Jonas in the SAAR. Striner notes "the search for a reconciliation in the modernist-reductionist war was an abiding theme with certain architectural commentators in the 1920s and 1930s. It took on more urgency when the full-blown manifestations of totalitarianism were ascendant by the mid 1930s..." He goes on to point out the position of noted American architects seeking a negotiated position.

In 1930 (Frank Lloyd) Wright- although known for his own frequent intolerance- delivered a powerful appeal in which he argued that neither the “sentimentality of the ‘ornamental’” nor the newer “sterility of ornophobia” could satisfy the needs of modern society (Striner: 27). That there was a rift between younger and older practitioners is reflected in Shillington’s letter to the SAAR (SAAR May 1936: 170) where he implied that older architects were out of touch with modern architecture. He suggests that:

the University educated men have better training in structural mechanics and, therefore are better equipped for intelligent collaboration with engineers (a point which is becoming increasingly important) than the older office trained men.

The architect Richard Day had attempted to reconcile the different approaches somewhat earlier in his article entitled ‘The so-called Bolshevik architecture’

Simple lines are modern... and tend to cover up the complexity of the machine age.

There are certain other characteristics that help to make a thing modern besides simplicity... (like) continuity of line. To be modern one must also incorporate a definite sense of rhythm.

We must evolve a new world in which to house our new constructive forms, and cease draping our buildings with modernised precedent.

Richard Day-‘The so-called Bolshevik Architecture’ (AB&E Oct 1930: 7)

The shift in architectural attitude, prior to the creation of an independent School of Architecture under Thornton White, came largely from architects who had trained abroad, particularly at the Liverpool School of Architecture under Charles Reilly. There was only a limited influence from European-trained architects in Cape Town in this period, reflecting the essentially English character of Cape society. Foremost among the English-trained architects was Max Policansky (1909-2003).

Policansky was the most innovative of all the architects in Cape Town at the time and is certainly the most significant modernist in the city. He was born in Cape Town. He attended the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town for a year (1928-9), whilst Professor Gregory headed it, before leaving for the Liverpool School of Architecture, England from where he graduated in 1933. This was also Prof. Charles Reilly’s last year at Liverpool. Before he left Cape Town he received some office experience in the office of Julius Lonstein. Whilst studying at Liverpool University he also worked for several months for the Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Spain, in 1930 (Madrid Municipality). While overseas he spent four months travelling in Egypt and Palestine (1931) and four months visiting Germany, France, Switzerland and Spain (1932). Before returning to South Africa he spent six months working in the office of H.Th. Wijdeveld in Amsterdam. The Cape Town architect Henk Niegeman also worked for Wijdeveld who was a member of the Dutch modernist school. He also spent two months at Cavalière in the south of France at the Academie Européenne Méditerranée. This was started in 1933 with Wijdeveld as the Principal and Erich Mendelsohn and Amédée

Ozenfant as co-directors. (Thornton White 1934) According to Powers (1996), Mendelsohn lectured at Liverpool three weeks after his arrival in England in 1933 and it is possible that Policansky met him at that stage. Powers quotes Wesley Dougill's remarks on the end of year show in 1932 that:

...much of the success of the Liverpool School depends on the thorough grounding in traditional forms that the students receive in the earlier years of the course. It is not until they have reached the latter half of the third year that their work is preponderatingly modern (Powers 1996: 17).

Policansky returned to South Africa in 1934 and worked in Johannesburg for more than six months in the offices of Cook & Cowen and of Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner. He returned to Cape Town in 1935 where he set up practice. Among his first buildings was the CTC Bazaars in Plein St, Cape Town (1936), won in a limited entry competition, his design being described by a contemporary source as streamlined. The following year he was engaged on several buildings. These buildings were the first of a series that, in the years to follow, were to include some of the finest works of modern architecture at the Cape.

Policansky evolved a style, which, although recognising overseas inspiration, was in many ways highly personal; its smooth surfaces and generally rounded forms constitute an architecture softer than the crisp angular buildings of the Transvaal. (Righini 1977: 45)

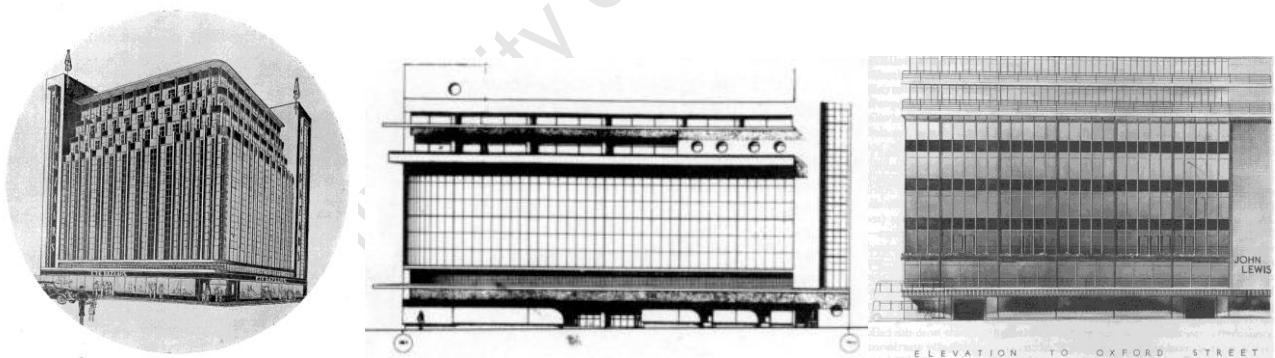


Figure 3: Policansky's initial design (AB&E Feb 1938: 12) & elevation of CTC Bazaars(Righini) and John Lewis' London by Reilly (Powers 2007)

Of the early period up to 1937 in Cape Town, Policansky is the only one to rank with the more influential architects of the modern movement in South Africa. From his actual drawings, it is apparent that the Dutch-born architect Henk Niegeman worked for him from the time of his arrival in South Africa until he set up practice with Douglas Andrews at the start of World War 2. (Policansky drawing collection-UCT) Andrews also came to work for Policansky in 1936. Policansky can thus be seen as the initiator of progressive European-based modernism that drew inspiration from, among other, the work of Mendelsohn, particularly in the semi-circular staircase tower used by Mendelsohn

at The De la Warr Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea for example, and in his Schocken department stores, and incorporated into Policansky's Judge Clothing factory.

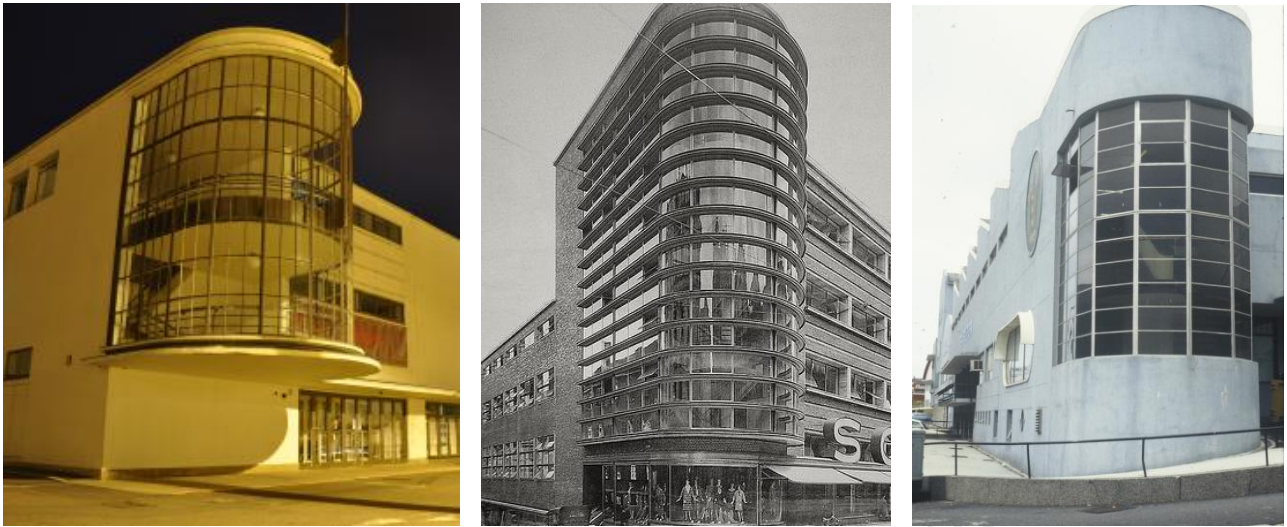


Figure 32: Mendelsohn's DelaWarr Pavillion at Bexhill ([www.essentialarch.com](http://www.essentialarch.com)) & The Schocken department store ([www.Arch,Virginia.edu](http://www.Arch,Virginia.edu)) and Policansky's Judge Clothing (E. Karol)

fresh in its method of functional expression... the author of the design is obviously indulging in that architecture of adventure which is dear to the hearts of all those who have respect for the imaginative and constructive capacity underlying all creative work. (AB&E Jul 1938:12-13).

Policansky was foremost among the avant-garde architects working in the Cape Town in the 1930s and 1940s. However, in 1941, early in the Second World War he closed his office and worked for the Cape Town Municipality. He re-opened his practice after the war and among his post-war work executed House Policansky, Bantry Bay (1947) and the synagogue, Schoonder St, Gardens (1947) as well as some of the most innovative industrial buildings in the city.

Policansky's uncompromising modernism as well as that of Andrews & Niegeman remained at the one end of the spectrum of modernism in Cape Town. Much more common was the adaptation and negotiation of modernism that characterised the work of architects such as Grant and Glennie as the older practitioners dominated the architecture of the city until after World War 2. Then people like Thornton White began to lead a much broader based modernist front that gradually supplanted the work of the establishment architects. The impact of the negotiated modernism depended on building typologies and it is necessary to examine these separately.

## **Industry: modernism and functionality**

The morality of industry has been transformed: big business is today a healthy and moral organism. If we set this new fact against the past, we have Revolution in method and in scale of the adventure.

(Le Corbusier Towards a new architecture: 284)

Cape Town experienced significant industrial growth during the study period. The manufacturing industries focused on food, drink and tobacco, clothing and paper and printing. The local economy according to Bickford Smith et al (1999:64) favoured whites, Africans and women as employees above coloured men. During the Depression the demographics of the workforce changed. The number of blacks declined in relation to whites. According to Bickford Smith (1999) by 1936 over half the white working population of Cape Town was Afrikaner. During the inter-war period, the clothing industry grew in importance. The legislation enacted by the Pact Government in 1924 protected workers and removed customs duty on imported raw materials, which resulted in the growth of the clothing industry. The AB&E indicated that "If negotiations are successful at least 10 new textile factories will be built" (AB&E Mar 1939: 20).

### **The Garment Industry**

The development of the garment industry in Cape Town is closely linked to the introduction of modernism in its purest form in Cape Town architecture. This is probably related to the 'form follows function' maxim that determines industrial development. The question remains- who were the garment manufacturers and was the wide scale adoption of modernism merely co-incidental?

According to Kaplan (1986) all the earliest garment manufacturers in South Africa were Jewish. There were two groups: the first group of manufacturers moved their established tailoring businesses from Britain to South Africa, and the second were Lithuanian and Polish Jewish immigrants who began garment factories here.

Kaplan points out that in the 1920s the industry had problems remaining competitive with British goods because of the lower wage structure there. At the time, the workers here were all White and the Garment Workers Union was one of the first to be established following the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924. Coloured workers only began to be employed during the Second World War. An exception was the employment of 'Malay' tailors from the earliest days, as tailoring was considered a traditional occupation. The machinists were White from the 1920s until the war.

M. Bertish & Co. was a Jewish firm of tailors from Bristol in England who came to Cape Town in 1909. So too were the Jacobs family who had been their next-door neighbours in Bristol. The Jacobses founded Monatic-Alba in 1921. Their full surname is Monat-Jacobs who were originally of Spanish

origin, hence the derivation of the company name. Edgar Jacobs started the Monatic shirt company in Wynberg in 1926 before moving to Salt River. The company was taken over by I.L. Back in 1960. Kaplan (1986: 240) observed that the erection of a 'luxurious new factory' (designed by Max Policansky) led to them getting into financial difficulties and that the same problem happened to several clothing manufacturers.

Hyam Bertish opened the first Bertish factory in Kloof Street in 1912. He returned to Britain in 1929, leaving the running of the factory to his 20-year-old son, Albert, which led to financial problems as a result of his inexperience. In 1931 Alex A. Millar - a non-Jew joined the company. Andrews & Niegemann designed the company's factory in Salt River. The success of Bertish and of the House of Burlington, led to the establishment of Rex Trueform in the 1930s.



Figure 33: Bertish factory by Andrews & Niegeman (E.Karol)

People with experience and capital founded all these companies. The newer immigrants followed them. They all suffered from the prejudices of the English-speaking South Africans who regarded the garments imported from Britain to be superior to any local product. One of the first was a Lithuanian, Israel Louis Back, who established the first viable shirt factory in South Africa in 1909. The newer immigrants with their Lithuanian backgrounds found allies among the rising Jewish wholesalers who also owed no allegiance to Britain. As they had been salesmen of Jewish soft goods, they had useful contacts. In Cape Town, Futeran was the most notable Jewish wholesaler. From the 1920s, the emerging chain stores, all of which were Jewish owned, also provided markets. These included CTC Bazaars, OK Bazaars, Ackermans and Woolworths.

Edgar Jacobs, coming to the Cape from Johannesburg encouraged the formation of a workers' union at the Cape. Once the union had been established, an industrial council was set up - of benefit to the employer in setting wages. The unions both in the Cape and in the then-Transvaal were non-racial. Jacobs was noted for his leadership qualities and his good relations with his factory

staff. Jacobs' son, as quoted in Kaplan (1986) considered that the garment industry's policy of employing white employees helped to 'clear-up' the poor White problem. (Kaplan : 239)

The Pact Government of 1924 encouraged the local garment industry by providing much-needed tariff protection. Two further factors helped the industry to flourish in the period from 1929-1939. The first was the chain store movement, which began with Ackermans. The second was the influx of skilled labour from the garment industry in Germany.

## “J U D G E” Clothing Factory

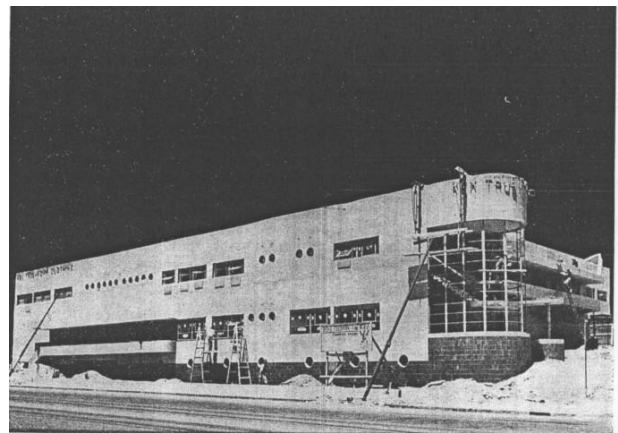
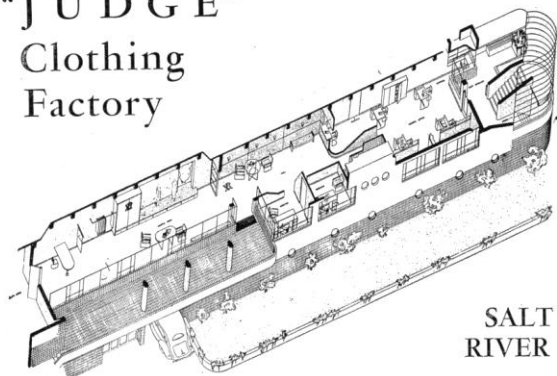


Figure 34: Judge Clothing Factory (1936) by Max Policansky (AB&E July 1938: 12&13))

Two Lithuanian-born Jews, a tailor, Philip Dibowitz and a salesman, Bernard Shub, started Rex Trueform. Their first factory was called Judge Clothing and the factory in Salt River, designed by Max Policansky, was opened in 1936 by Senator Fourie (Kaplan : 246). In 1947-48 a large new factory was erected (Andrews in 1986 said that it had been designed in 1939-40: [www.artefacts.co.za](http://www.artefacts.co.za)). This consisted of a six-storey block with new offices and was designed by Andrews & Niegeman. The design of the factory followed the principles adopted by European modernists for factories such as the van Nelle tobacco factory in the Netherlands by Brinkman & van der Vlugt. These include the use of glass curtain walling to bring light into the working spaces.



Figure 35 Rex Trueform Clothing Factory (1939) by Andrews & Niegeman (E. Karol)

Mauerberger & Shrire, who decided to convert their wholesale business in to a chain of retail cash stores in 1924, first started Bergers in Kimberley. It remained a family business, carried on by Israel Mauerberger's son, Theodore, who went on to become a mayor of Cape Town. Policansky designed their premises in Cape Town.

Industry remained at the forefront of modernism. Of all the 'sites of encounter' as Darling (2007) describes it, it is in the industrial development of the city that modernism took hold in its most direct form. Here there is the least sign of any negotiation and the imperative to ensure that form followed function was strongest.

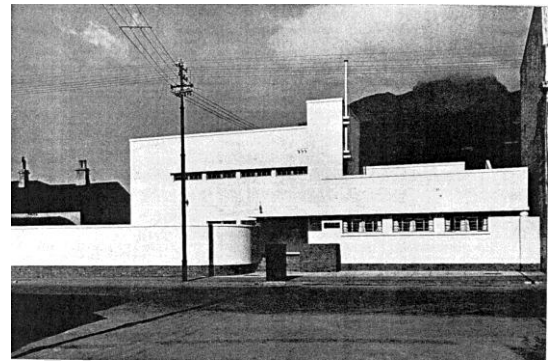
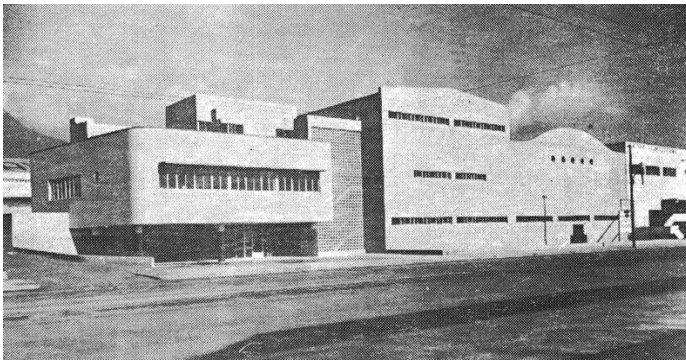


Figure 36: Cavalla Cigarette Factory Salt River (1936)(AB&E May 1939) by Policansky & the Tea & Coffee factory, Woodstock by Chapman (SA Arch Feb 1940: 419)

Policansky's work was largely concentrated in this field and his early buildings for both Judge's Clothing as well as the Cavalla Cigarette Factory clearly express their function in the external appearance of the building. Economy and the influence of Fordist principles of mass production ensured that aesthetics were derived from function and not from pure aesthetic considerations. In no other field, excluding possibly the healthcare buildings designed by the City Architect's Department was this as clear. In the industrial architecture of Cape Town, the city was the forerunner of modernism in South Africa, ahead of similar work in Johannesburg, which did not show the same innovative approach.

### **Commerce: modernism as mechanism of progress**

If one examines the fabric of the city to identify those building types that came to employ –and demand- modernism, then it is in the commercial office building and the department store that one finds the most significant signs of modernism. Modernism was associated with progress and a positive attitude to a better future and this created a potent initiative for its introduction in the commercial city centre. In addition, the limited plot sizes that had been developed as domestic erven by the Dutch created specific limitations on both building size and led to an early demand for increased building height. A concern emerged in the Thirties over the introduction of

'skyscrapers' that were seen as an undesirable American import. The AB&E commented on the proposed new Old Mutual Building:

America is essentially a country of transitions, where the people seek for a tradition, which may be known as American. The latest phase is expressed in what is known as "the American style of Architecture, which really is an attempt at the unification of building designs throughout the country. When, however, it is remembered that the prevailing customs in one locality differ entirely from those of another, it will readily be recognised how difficult it is to prevent these masses of building material, which raise their ugly heads, and which we know as skyscrapers, becoming other than more hideous in one section than another...

Recently the disciples of "everything American for America" have complained that the skyscraper has lost its individuality by being adorned and embellished by ornament of European origin. This implication of individuality to these monuments of excessivism is at least naïve, the only claim to distinction being their utter and indescribable ugliness...

(SAB July 1929: 89)

### **Assurance and Insurance companies**

With the development of Cape Town as a commercial centre in the late nineteenth century, the assurance and insurance industry seemed to have adopted Cape Town as their administrative base. (This remains true in the twenty-first century) Unlike the much more conservative approach taken in the banking sector, the assurance and insurance companies seem to have deliberately taken a more progressive approach to their architectural image. Baker's original design for the National Mutual Life Assurance Company of Australasia (1899) followed on from his Guardian Assurance building of 1898. It was designed in a style that reflected Baker's use of Dutch domestic stylistic elements- in contrast to the Baroque Revival that would have been standard for the period. This innovative approach to assurance company buildings seems to have remained during the inter-war period, with WH Grant's General Insurance building of 1923 continuing in much the same tradition.

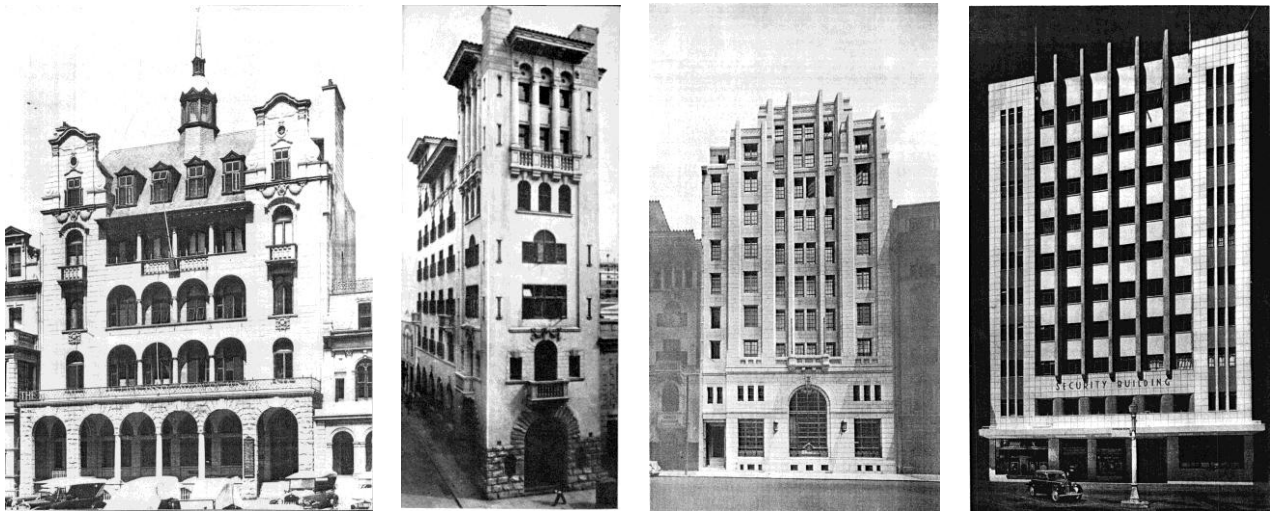


Figure 3: The development of insurance company buildings. *National Mutual Life of Australasia* by Baker & Masey (SAB July 1924); *General Insurance* (1923) by WH Grant, *United Buildings* by J. Lubinsky (SA Arch May 1939: 47) and *Security building* by Roberts & Small (SA Arch Mar 1940: 453)

...This balance is precisely the quality by which the British- subconsciously as a rule, one may presume- try to widen the range of expression accessible to modern architecture...One way to make balance visible is symmetry, although not necessary the rigid symmetry of classic canons. By building up a façade symmetrically in the main, one of the most significant elements of restlessness in continental architecture is at once removed. (Pevsner quoted in Charlton et al 2007: 35)

The first insurance legislation in South Africa was the Life Assurance Act, No 13 of 1891, which was passed by the Cape of Good Hope parliament. The act aimed at "encouraging persons to insure" and at "protecting persons assured", and called for an investigation into the financial conditions of a company by a qualified actuary every five years. Companies operating locally did not employ resident actuaries. Data for actuarial valuations was sent abroad, usually to the United Kingdom, for processing by actuaries there. William Marshall, AIA, arrived from Australia in December 1883 to found the Cape Town branch of the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society. (Brooke Simons 1995: 64) This event may be seen as the birth of the actuarial profession in South Africa. Various actuaries came to South Africa, a British colony at the time, under contract for a fixed period during the 1890s and early 1900s. This established strong links with the UK profession, but also meant that the local number of actuaries remained very small. It appears that this late founding of the profession led to a rapid expansion in insurance and hence to the establishment of a number of insurance companies.

The Great Flu epidemic of 1918-19 brought record business to insurance companies in the city. In addition, with post-war commercial expansion, insurance companies like Old Mutual's business increased phenomenally. (Brooke Simons: 102-3) In the 1920s with considerable growth in this sector, Old Mutual enlarged their offices with an additional- much-criticised- floor designed by Fred Glennie in 1926. The stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression had the reverse

impact on assurance and insurance companies and their business improved considerably. This would go some way to explain the expansion this field.

The consolidation of South African insurance legislation under the Insurance Act, No 37 of 1923, formalised the need for actuarial services in South Africa, providing useful publicity for the profession. The establishment of the Afrikaans- and notably South African- SANLAM and SANTAM companies reflected growing Afrikaner commercial development. The first half of the 1930s was a period of increased actuarial activity in South Africa, due to a general business revival and a new spirit of competitiveness among some of the major overseas life offices that were operating in the country. The impact of the growth in the insurance industry was clearly reflected in the built fabric of the inner city, with much of the new high-rise offices being designed for them. Their need to promote a concern for the future is reflected in the choice of modernism for their buildings and formed one of the fields in which modernism was adapted in Cape Town.

## **Banks**

By contrast to the attitude taken by the insurance companies, the banking sector remained resolutely conservative and there is no move towards modernism in any work undertaken by this sector. It seems as if the words of the British American architect, Alfred Bossom, who became the leading bank architect in the USA in the Twenties, was heeded here.

The external appearance: 'this should be made inviting to convey the desired impression of conservative enterprise, which alone will inspire confidence'. In design and materials 'the most important requirement is that the building should be devoid of anything appearing tawdry, vulgar or cheap' (Bossom quoted in Sharp 1984: 28).

Thus we find that all banks erected in Cape Town clearly remain rooted in classicism, although WH Grant takes a slightly more adventurous path in his design for Barclays Bank in Salt River, which applies Art Deco detailing to its stripped classical form. It is interesting to find that Rex Martiessen comments in the SAAR

A prominent architect in Capetown had been invited to contribute an article on what is generally considered to be one of the finest buildings recently erected, but with no success (SAAR Dec. 1934: 309).

This was a reference to the new Reserve bank building by James Morris.

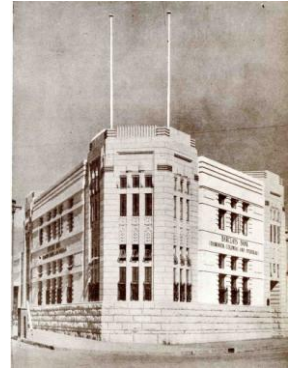


Figure 38 Reserve Bank by James Morris, Barclays Bank by Douglas Hoets (SAB Jun 1933: 21) & Barclays Bank Salt River by WH Grant

### Commercial Development: Shops And Entertainment

Among the major developments of the Twenties and Thirties, shopping seems to have grown significantly and with it the growth of the chain store.

In no other area of retailing has the Jewish South African played a more important role than in the genesis and development of the chain store. The chain store began with drapery and clothing, which developed into a different sort of department store from the long-established Stuttafords, John Orr, Garlicks and Cleghorn & Harris (Kaplan: 307)



Figure 39: Ackerman's -Roberts & Small (E. Karol); original Ackerman's by John Perry and WH Grant's OK Bazaars (Cummins George)

Among the most significant and successful of the new stores was Ackerman's, which opened its first store in 1921. By astute sourcing of goods, closely linked to the growth in the textile and clothing industries, chain store were able to develop a niche market separate to that held by the traditional department stores. The latter were all to see expansion and rebuilding in Cape Town during this period although their approach was generally much more conservative than the chain stores.

Marketing strategies were adopted and adapted by the founder, Gus Ackerman, from those found abroad. Ackerman followed the marketing concepts of the so-called Penny Bazaars in England- FW Woolworth and Marks & Spencer. Pricing was based on the 1/11 principle- always less than a round figure. Another was to have constant sales. The strategies paid off and business expanded rapidly in the Twenties. (Kaplan: 321)

The second chain store, which sold 'mixed merchandise' was C.T.C Bazaars, and was the first of the 'Tickey Stores', opening its doors in about 1920. It was started by two Jews, Sol Ginnes and Sam Kaplan, and was the pioneer of the mixed goods chains. In 1927 competition in the form of OK Bazaars arrived. This shop was started by another couple of Jewish entrepreneurs, Sam Cohen and Michael Miller. In 1941 OK Bazaars bought out C.T.C. Bazaars. (Kaplan: 333) Aimed at a poorer cash market, the stores grew significantly in the Depression years. A new phenomenon, they adopted a new architectural style that was based on European and American trends. It is likely that with a European background, there was a familiarity with the German department stores as this was strongly influential in the chain stores that were built in the mid Thirties. The other major influence was American consumerism and this brought a strong American character to the OK Bazaars stores.

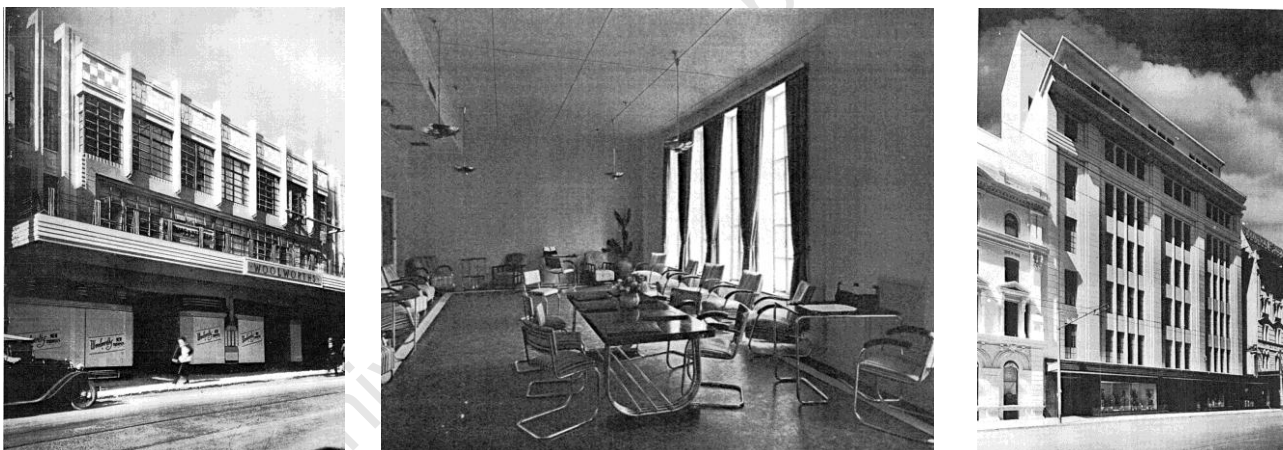


Figure 40: Woolworths (AB&E July 1936:10); the modernist tea room and the exterior of Stuttafords by Louis Blanc (SA Arch June 1940: 102-3)

The traditional department stores had also made adjustments to their stores in the Twenties and Thirties, but the architecture tended to be somewhat more sober. Stuttafords department store employed the British architect Louis Blanc to design their new building on the site of the original store. Blanc had designed the new D. H. Evans department store in Oxford Street, London shortly beforehand. Blanc's design uses a motif that Pevsner described as the 'Messel-motif' which used a sequence of strong uprights to form bays. The bays are in turn broken up by a series of narrow windows.

The advent of the chain store as a new typology led to the early adoption of modernism as an appropriate form for the building. Although once again the contrast between the modernist approach taken by Policansky for CTC Bazaars and Roberts & Small for Ackerman's is in marked contrast to the design approach of an older architect such as Wm. Grant's design for OK Bazaars which makes extensive use of surface decoration.

The position of housing was much more contentious and during this period flats came into prominence as the city expanded on a hitherto unparalleled scale. But in Cape Town the issue of how to deal with an expanding population was highly contested. The individual house was seen as the preferred model, both for private dwellings as well as those erected by the City Council to deal with the re-housing of people as a result of slum clearance schemes.

### **Flats or Houses?**

From the 1920s there was a strong resistance to the introduction of flats, which were often referred to as a 'menace'. There are strong moral undertones in the comment made in the media on the increased development of flats:

One of our chief causes of trouble in this country appears to be the restless habit of the day which makes potential home builders satisfied with the loathsome and unthinkable flat which, in a land of wide spaces hungry for home builders such as ours, must be an offence to every thoughtful man. (AB&E Jan 1927:3)

It is striking that the same tenure was not adopted in the media when housing was proposed for people of colour although church groups were also opposed to the erection of flats. The Citizens' Housing League was strongly opposed to the erection of 'tenement buildings'. "The feeling is universal among the poor. Privacy, individuality and home feeling cannot be obtained except in a separate house." In greater Cape Town they pointed out "there is no argument by reason of scarcity of land, either for tenements or terraces", adding, "if a Scheme is set forth which will remedy present evils, responsible opinion here, as in England, would allow a reasonable sub-economic element in such a scheme" (Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 22 September 1927). This point of view recalls Heidegger's view of the dwelling as a utopian rural structure, inextricably linked to the concept of *heimat* or home. This was to be the thrust of the proposals considered for Cape Town, with the aforementioned Garden City model as the preferred housing mode for all sections of the inhabitants. There was at first no support for any other form of dwelling despite the recognition that this could not be achieved in the inner city areas.

It has to be admitted that the flat or apartment dwelling has become one of the most striking features of modern domestic architecture, but before making any suggestion why its future development should be discouraged in South Africa with special reference to the Cape Province...evil effects of flat dwelling (AB&E Mar 1927:3)

In 1929 it was suggested "the time has arrived for the Council to face the position and to say to itself that the best results can be obtained in tackling the overcrowding question by concentrating principally on workmen's flats in old Cape Town, and also in one or two places in the Suburban areas." In the ensuing debate there was strong opposition expressed to the erection of flats, saying that the Council was shirking its responsibility and "putting off the evils to a future date" (Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 18 September 1930). The flats erected twenty-five years earlier in the Docks area, were called a "hopeless failure." Further flats erected at that time were described as having become the biggest slums. Any form of densification of housing was linked to slums; such was the strength of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model of urban planning. And the question of morality and poverty is constantly raised.

Not only was there concern about housing issues at professional level, but the voice of capitalism was also heard, as it perceived a threat to property investors in any form of subsidized housing. In May 1931 the Peninsula Property Owners' Association requested permission to inspect the Constitution Street flats as they wished to learn all about the flats "as it affected their members considerably both by way of the flats being a burden on the ratepayers and a competitor of housing ownership" (Housing & Estates Committee minutes 1 May 1931). The designs of blocks of flats were to become an integral component of the modernist project in the city. They are linked to Le Corbusier's non-negotiable modernist design principles. He had stated that

In terms of town planning the flat may be considered as a cell. Cells, as a consequence of our social order, are subject to various forms of groupings, to co-optations or to antagonisms, which are an essential part of the urban phenomenon... It is possible by a logically conceived ordering of these cells to obtain freedom through order (Le Corbusier 1929: 211)

This authoritarian viewpoint can also be linked to Foucault's assessment of the Panopticon "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault: 361). The English architectural historian Colquhoun identifies an anti-liberal, anti-democratic attitude amongst the modern movement architects of Europe who were looking for a position that mediated between Marxism and capitalism, and who consequently adopt authoritarian design principles (Colquhoun: 183). Scott goes on to point out that for Corbusier the doctrine of the 'Plan' was based on centralisation. "Functional segregation was joined to hierarchy. His city was a 'monocephalic' city" (Scott: 111). He also shows that "Le Corbusier had no patience for the physical environment that centuries of urban living had created. He heaped scorn on the tangle, darkness and disorder, the crowded and pestilential conditions of Paris and other European cities..." (Scott: 106).

Heynen asserts that in Germany "The architects of the New Building were not only interested in the program of housing for the underprivileged classes for extrinsic, social reasons. They also saw it as an opportunity to realize an ascetic ideal- housing reduced to its essence, pure, minimal and

authentic" (Heynen: 48). She goes on to describe the modern movement architecture of Ernst May's Das Neue Frankfurt as "calm and not at all extreme. The contrast with tradition is striking but not totally pervasive. The rejection of all forms of ornament and the use of flat roofs and large balconies point to a deliberate tendency toward innovation..." (Heynen: 64)

Bozdogan argues that in Turkey:

Nowhere is the ambiguity of modernism more evident than in the architecture of the house... On the one hand, it was a theme that symbolized the democratic potential of the New Architecture, whereby architects could claim service to "the people" rather than wealthy patrons, states, and institutions. On the other hand, the perception of the house as a means for reforming lifestyles epitomized the penetration of the state through experts, architects, and planners, to the traditional resistant domain of privacy, family life, and domestic order (Bozdogan: 14).

These contradictions together with the striving for a simplified aesthetic expression characterised the grappling with modernism in South Africa. The Cape media remained central to the debate. The journal supported, for example, the 'modern' architecture shown in Roberts & Small's two blocks of flats in Sea Point; Dorchester and Avalon Flats built in 1935 that were very tentative experiments with Modernist forms, both with symmetrical plans, rounded balconies, white walls, and horizontally glazed windows, the latter, it may be noted, is the first South African modern building to be published in the conservative pages of the *Architect, Builder and Engineer*, and is called "this block of flats, which is treated on modern lines..." (AB&E, Nov 1936: 11). Pevsner describes the 'horizontal motif' that was popularly used in modernist flats. He alludes to its less successful application:

There are buildings, blocks of flats above all, where a more complex system of openings is required. Sometimes the case can simply be met by using individual windows instead of bands. Here the architect can either pretend that the horizontal theme can yet be applied- this done by over-emphasizing the horizontal bands of solid, white wall between the windows- or he must think of another solution combining traditional fenestration with a contemporary effect (Pevsner quoted in Charlton 2007:28).

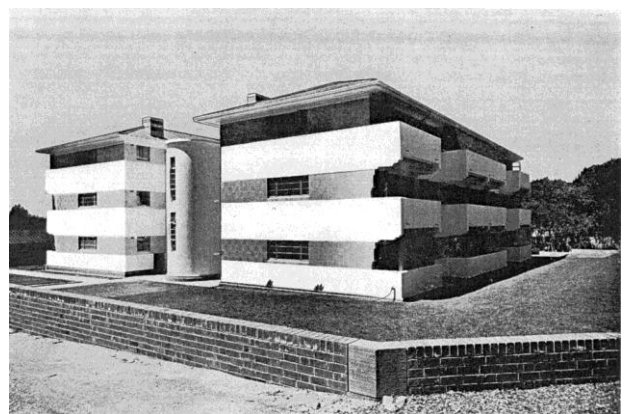


Figure 41: Dorchester Flats in Sea Point by Roberts & Small (E. Karol) & Kingston Court by Douglas Hoets

Both Roberts & Small at the Dorchester Flats in Sea Point and Douglas Hoets in Rosebank favoured the use of this horizontal device to create a 'modern' aesthetic. In the case of the building by Hoets, this is pure facadism with little difference between the form of the building and that of architects such as Grant's simplified classical blocks of flats that he designed in the 1920s. Both are examples of the approach taken by older architects in Cape Town as they attempted to negotiate a modern approach to aesthetics. In the 1930s the tempo of flat building by private speculators increased significantly. In areas such as Vredehoek, a 'Developers Modernistic' style is prevalent as small blocks of flats were erected that adopted art deco stylisms in an effort to appear modern.

Much more certain were the smaller blocks of flats, designed by architects such as Max Policansky and Douglas Andrews. Policansky's Brooklyn flats are clearly a much more confident modernist expression. In the period immediately after World War Two a number of blocks of flats were erected in older suburbs such as Kenilworth. Douglas Andrews' Exeter Park Flats in Indian Road Kenilworth are also clearly done in a modernist manner by an architect who understood the tenets of modernism. In the design of flats there is little difference in the aesthetics of rich and poor. Modernism was the preferred aesthetic although there was none of the innovative planning that was found in Johannesburg.

The modernistic, often symmetrical façade hides a conservative plan form derived from Beaux Arts precedent. The public housing schemes, in fact, used more innovative unit layouts, that the historian Shamil Jeppie described as 'experiments in modernism'.

Modernism in Cape Town, unlike Johannesburg, was not significantly manifested in private houses as described by Herbert (1975). This could be ascribed to the innate conservatism of the Cape's middle and upper classes that preferred a much more conservative approach when it came to their houses. The house designed by WH Grant for the Garlick family, owners of the eponymous department store typified this trend. Fred Glennie's house, The Fort, for the Count Labia at Muizenburg was equally traditional.



Figure 42: Garlick House Kenilworth by WH Grant & House Mann, Rondebosch by Magda Sauer (Cummings George 1933)

Much more typical of the private house was that designed by Magda Sauer and illustrated in Cummings (1933), which continued the Baker tradition of Cape Dutch Revival.

When we come to believe, for instance, that our houses are machines for living in rather than shrines for our domestic gods; when we are led to believe that our success is to be judged by the quantity of work we do, rather than the quality...then our pedestals fall and we with them. (AB&E May 1932:5)

The house by Johnston in Oranjezicht (below left) is typical of the rather more 'modernistic' approach to modernism taken in Cape Town. The flat-roofed house, complete with horizontal-glazed corner windows, is contrasted with a distinctly Arts & Crafts interior, as Cape architects struggled to make sense of domestic modernism.

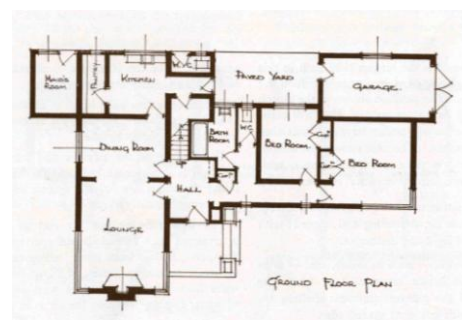


Figure 43: House by Johnston (Cummings George 1932)

This house, was discussed in Chapter 2, where Cummings George described it as: "Cape Town has proved rather conservative in following the modern trend in domestic architecture. While this is not an ultra modern residence, it shows the most contentious development, the flat roof, with a reasonable amount of modernity". (Cummings-George 1934: 87)

The work of Policansky is a much more confident essay in modernism although the project for House Stolly was never executed. Strangely enough, Policansky and Johnston were contemporaries at the Liverpool School of Architecture (Johnston from 1929-1930, and Policansky from 1929-1933).

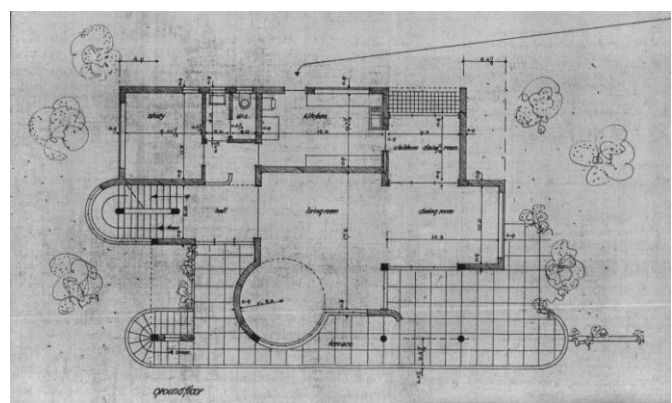
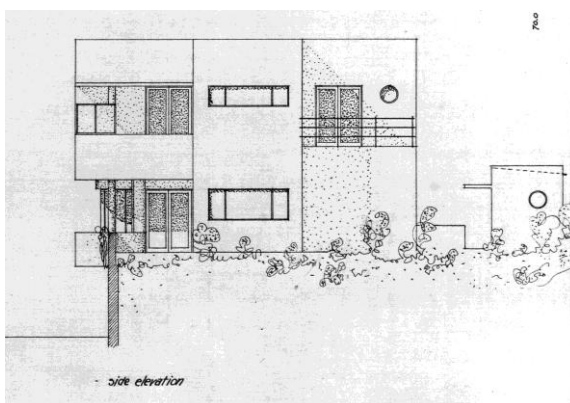


Figure 44: House Stolly, Sea Point (project) by Max Policansky (UCT Mss & Archives)

Many an old-fashioned practitioner of architecture has been apt to wonder during recent years, whether there was anything really vital and inspiring in so-called modernistic design...

The spirit that lay behind that New Art movement became for a while dormant but it has been revived today and the modernistic movement is strong upon us. With many of its affectations we may well quarrel. Its loud talk about 'functionalism', its cant about dwelling houses as "machines to live and work in", its insistence on cutting corners out or off, upon ...methods, cubism and so forth are only variations of old and well-recognised convictions stated with different and sometimes more intense, if offensive, emphasis. That phase will pass and a good aftermath- some contribution to the sum of our design knowledge- will be left behind...Progress must necessarily be hindered by lack of reverence for the past. As also by a lack courteous consideration for the strivings of the present...It does not really seem to matter a bit whether we design in the old ways or the new, but we would be much less the wise if we neglected to learn what we can from both ways. (AB&E May 1933:11)

It can be seen that with few exceptions, the inter war private houses of Cape Town do not show the same degree of experimentation that was occurring in Johannesburg. The houses are largely much more conservative, and where modernist forms are adopted; they are generally fairly tentative in their use of forms. Policansky, in his own house at Bantry Bay, built in 1947, adopts a purist modernist aesthetic, much more closely allied to the work undertaken in Johannesburg a decade earlier by Martienssen, Fassler & Cooke as well as Hanson's houses in Houghton.



Figure 45. House Policansky (1947) in Bantry Bay (Demolished 2005)

Thornton White's post 1940 domestic architecture introduced an American modernist form that was closely allied to the work being undertaken by architects such as Marcel Breuer in the United States at the same time. Low pitched roofs with simple fenestration and more innovative plans, they shared a common bond with the Johannesburg houses of Douglass Cowin such as Casa Bedo in Waverley which set a new direction for the South African house.

The same approach can be seen in Henk Niegeman's own house at Hout Bay with its open plan layout and in the houses by Hugh Floyd at the same time.

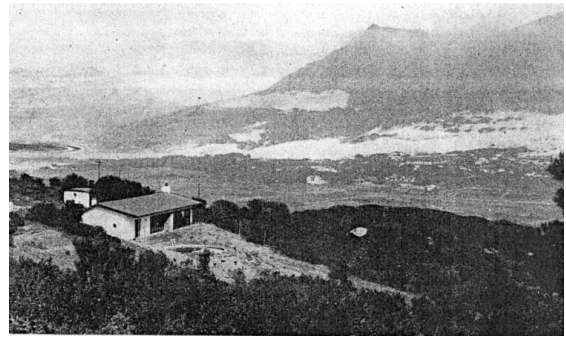
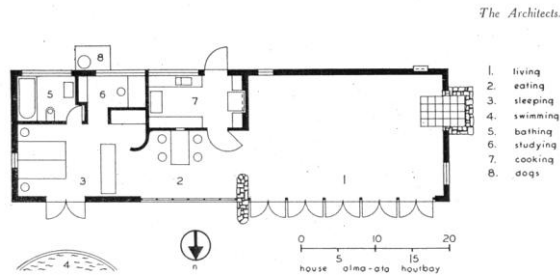


Figure 46: Henk Niegeman: Own House'Alma Ata in Hout Bay 1943 (SAAR Nov 44: 277 & 279)

The house in Rondebosch by Shillington is the only modernist Cape Town house that was ever illustrated and described in the South African Architectural Record. There is a difference generally between the confident modernism of the Johannesburg architects of the period, in comparison to the tentativeness of those in Cape Town. The middle ground is thinly covered and many more houses were designed in traditional style than were ever design in a modernist aesthetic.

As a terrain of negotiation of modernism, flats and houses in Cape Town do not demonstrate much innovation, particularly in the 1930s, at a time when modernism was being explored vigorously in the Transvaal. Both flats and houses tend to be largely conservative, undertaken by older practitioners, who, dealing with the tastes of private clients, were essays in traditionalism with little negotiation being evident. There were architects, such as AC Johnston, whose work could be described as 'mediated modernism', but his body of domestic work is relatively small, and it was left to architects such as Policansky, Shillington and Thornton White to lead the way in th introduction of residential modernism in Cape Town.

### Entertainment: The Development Of The Cinema In Cape Town

The advent of the cinema or bioscope as it was colloquially known brought a new building typology that in many instances resulted in specific modern buildings. The local architectural journal commented: "There has come into existence the creation of buildings specially devoted to this new departure and these are developing characteristics and a style of expression that appear likely to act and react upon modern architecture in no uncertain way" (AB&E Oct. 1929:5). The form adopted for the cinemas varied from the simple to the ornate excesses that emulated Hollywood. The style chosen was often either florid revivalist (such as the Alhambra) or Art Deco, in keeping with the trends for cinemas both in Britain and in the United States.

Designers of the picture theatre of the present and the future have great opportunities for properly ensuring the best that such places of entertainment have to offer and for many the worst look incongruous with the dignified surroundings that are appropriate to a great modern movement, having much of the magical quality of our stirring age. (AB&E Oct 1929:7)

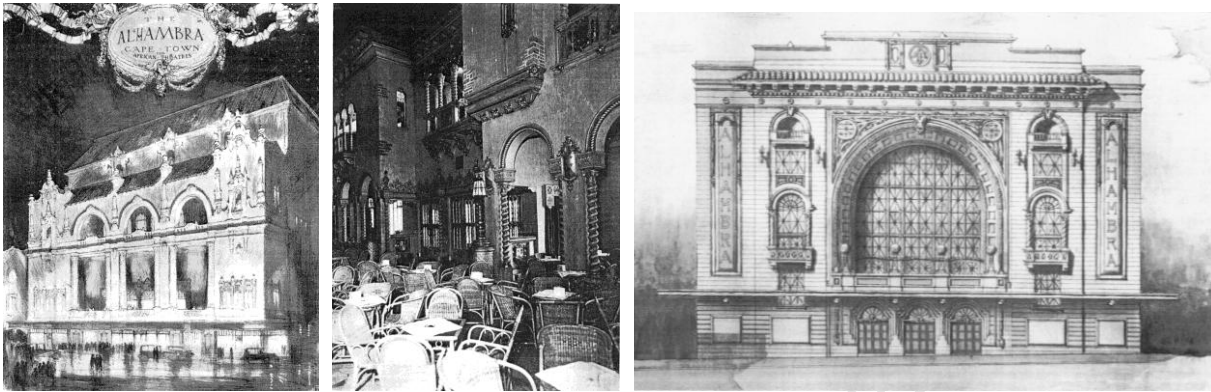


Figure 47: The Alhambra Cinema (SAB Mar 1929), the Del Monico (AB&E Aug 1936: 9) & the Cinema de Luxe by P. Rogers Cooke (SAB May 1927)

The early proposal – the Cinema de Luxe- by the Johannesburg-based P. Rogers Cooke shows an extremely elaborate design based on Beaux Arts precedents, while the Alhambra, built in 1929 was in the Spanish style, then much in vogue- as seen even in commercial office buildings in Cape Town. The fantasy interiors were by the architect/artist, William Timlin, who also designed the cinema interior of the Colosseum in Johannesburg. The cinemas were designed for African Consolidated Theatres, which controlled the major cinema houses in South Africa. The American, I.W. Schlesinger, had founded the company. According to Chipkin 'Schlesinger became the engine for the Americanisation and modernisation of Johannesburg'. (Chipkin 1993:103)

The Plaza Cinema in Cape Town was designed by the Johannesburg architects, Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner. According to Chipkin (1993), the Plaza Cinema in Johannesburg was designed by Stanley Furner. Furner had arrived in Johannesburg in 1925 to join the University of the Witwatersrand and shortly thereafter wrote the seminal paper, 'The Modern Movement in Architecture', published by the SAAR. Furner had joined the practice in 1928 and both Rex Martienssen and Bernard Cooke were working in the office as juniors at this time- both of who were to become major protagonists of modernism in Johannesburg. The Cape Town Plaza shows a similar vertical treatment that would suggest that Furner also designed it.

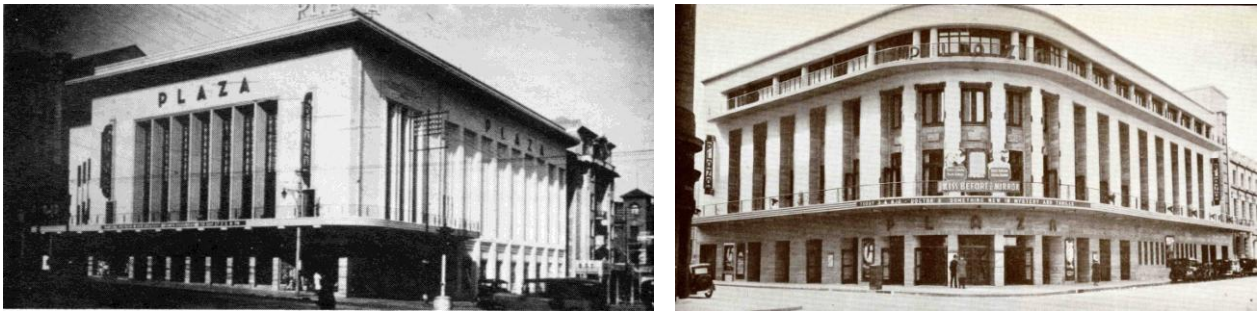


Figure 48: Plaza Cinemas, Johannesburg & Cape Town by Kallenbach Kennedy & Furner (SAB May 1933: 17)

The 20th Century cinemas (for 20th Century Fox) were far more innovative in their design approach. Both the Cape Town and Johannesburg cinemas were designed at the same time (1938). Both adopted a very similar planning approach. In Cape Town the auditorium was linked to an apartment block, Thelma Court, which formed a slab block on the north side. In Johannesburg, the auditorium was linked to a narrow office block cum showroom. Policansky designed the Cape Town Cinema, while Hanson, Tomkin & Finkelstein and Cowin & Ellis designed the Johannesburg building. Even the aesthetic adopted is very similar, with a facebrick façade to the auditorium offset by a gridded plastered slab block, separated by a vertical stairwell.

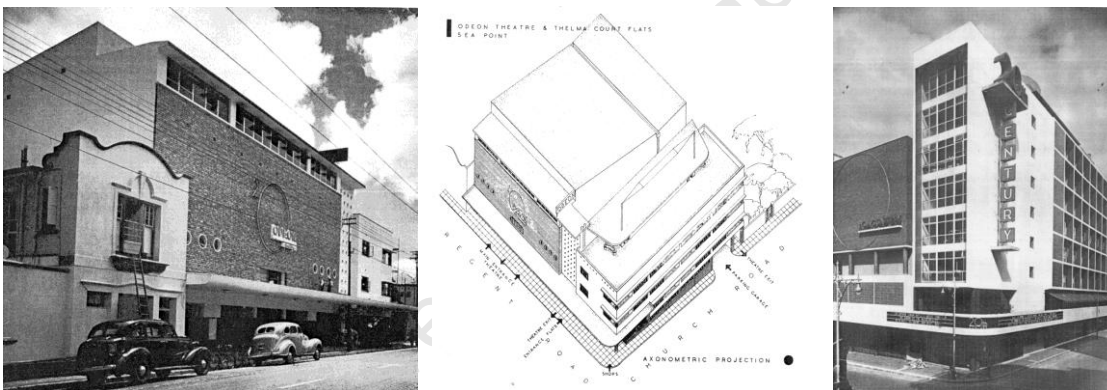


Figure 49: 20th Century Cinema, Sea Point by Max Policansky (SA Arch Dec 1940: 329-300) & the 20th Century in Johannesburg (SAAR Aug 1940: 295)

Martin (1994) identifies three forms of cinema design that emerged in the 1930s- "the Modern Movement cinema, the slick deco cinema, and the atmospheric movie palace" (Martin: 27). She concludes her paper on art deco by saying:

Whether one regards this architecture for the masses as rich and opulent or as garish and vulgar, the fact remains that it was light years removed from the ideas promulgated by Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and their disciples in South Africa. To many, the precepts of these architects were too purist for comfort. After the Depression, those occupying egg boxes had to be offered escape, and here art deco architecture and design became one with the people (Martin: 37)

So despite the innovative approach taken by Policansky, it was W.M. Grant who designed the most cinemas in Cape Town and his approach was much more in line with American and British cinemas which adopted a strongly Art Deco form, lavishly finished on the inside in a very decorative manner. Grant never abandoned decoration on his buildings and instead used modernist form and popular decorative motifs as signifiers of his modernism, which always was a compromise between traditional layout, symmetrical form and a 'modernistic' architectural language. This escapist aesthetic proved to be very popular for entertainment structures such as cinemas and the aesthetic also matched the design approach taken in popular American films of the period. As such this negotiated modernism represents the populist face of modernism and was denigrated by modernist purists, as Martin suggests.

Antagonism appears to have been inherent in all fields as modernism manifested itself in the period after World War One. It fundamentally affected all aspects of life, throwing up a vision, often alienating, of a fundamentally changed world. In architecture as Striner points out: "A knowledge of the interwar period's apocalyptic moods (notwithstanding its equally important visions of technological utopia) provides a much-needed basis for assessing the urgency suffusing the modernist, traditionalist, and middle-range responses to the period's design agenda" (Striner: 22). This range of responses shows the natural outcome of a process of encounter, contestation and negotiation before acceptance- albeit in a mediated form.

Modernism was a contested terrain and there are many sites of encounter and negotiation of modernism. It was not equally adopted for all building typologies. As can be seen in this chapter, on sites such as the industrial workplace, there was little need for negotiation, as modernism with its focus on functionality and efficiency was accepted without dissension and the media seems acquiescent of modernism as the normative language for the factory. In Cape Town, the garment industry with its progressive view of manufacture and the role of the trade union in this industry seems to have created a space for the most innovative and modern industrial architecture in South Africa at the time.

Commerce responded to modernism as a mechanism that reflected contemporaneity. In Cape Town, the insurance industry, by its very nature was concerned with the future, and hence, modernism was considered to be an appropriate language for its architecture. Banking, on the other hand was inherently conservative. Thus in this field, architecture was also conservative and continued to employ the language of the Edwardian period- although often in the form of 'Stripped Classicism' as a sop to modernity.

Housing, both public and private, was a highly contested site of encounter of modernism. Whilst public housing seems to have been least contested as a site of negotiation and experimentation in modernism, the same cannot be said of the private house, which, in Cape Town, remained largely conservative and made the least concessions to modernism beyond technological modernism.

As a reflection of the economic uncertainty of the time, the problems of unemployment and a world vision that many people viewed with considerable trepidation, it is perhaps not surprising that in the environment of the cinema, a place of escape from harsh realities, that architecture wavered considerably in its adoption of modernism. It responded to the idea of modernism as a fashion but tended to shy away from concepts of functionality and efficiency. Escapism demanded a modernist fantasy where modernism could be controlled and tempered, to present itself as a vision of a utopia that could not exist. The experience of the cinema, away from reality, in an imagined reality, created a heterotopia such as that described by Foucault:

The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space (Foucault 1967).

In examining the terrains of contestation and negotiation of modernism, it can be seen that the introduction of modernism in Cape Town had a profound impact on all aspects of architecture from the training of architects through to the profession itself. Practice in the city was dominated by the old, well-established architectural practices. In the absence of strong leadership from the university school of architecture, as was the case in Johannesburg, architects looked to their local journal for leadership. The north-south divide in South Africa ensured that the links between practice and media reflection on architecture would be parochial and insular.

This state of dynamic tension between the Cape and the hinterland, in the case of the architectural journal, paralleled that which existed in education. The rivalry, which existed, stemmed from hostilities on both sides, traditional in nature. Neither side was guiltless, when it came to putting provincial partisanship before the broader issue of national unity. But the upshot of these separatist tendencies was to isolate the Cape from the mainstream of development, and to consolidate the Transvaal in its dominant position, as the centre of influence, and the focus of initiative in the architectural world (Herbert: 179).

Although Herbert's assertion is largely true, it is also true to say that there was considerable contestation of modernism in Johannesburg that is not reflected in his thesis. The Cape-based Architect, Builder and Engineer was a site of negotiation of all aspects of architecture and it reflects the reactionary tendencies of older architects whose authority was felt to be undermined by changes in the education and practice of architecture. The change from a practice-based system of articulated training to a university-based system, based on British practice, challenged the authority of older practitioners, particularly when this was coupled with a new approach to architecture. The School of Architecture remained a conservative institution until the arrival of Thornton-White, who had formerly been teaching at the Architectural Association in London. Thornton-White's significance as an introducer of modernism has been underplayed in the past, and Herbert gives a lukewarm response to his choice as professor of architecture at UCT in preference to Rex

Martienssen from Witwatersrand University. But it seems clear that Thornton-White was very well-considered in Britain and brought a well-grounded approach to architectural education that was better structured than that adopted in Johannesburg and he had a significant influence on architectural education in South Africa. Architectural education was negotiated between the academy and practice with each trying to locate the discourse in their terrains.

The difference between older and younger practitioners is more self evident with, predictably, older architects generally unable to comprehend modernism as spatial production, but rather reducing it to a stylism that they could assimilate and use as an appliqué on a simplified classical plan form, often resorting to the use of ornamentation to create the mediated form of modernism known as art deco. Cape Town did however produce high calibre modernist architects such as Max Policansky and Andrews & Niegeman who were on a par with the best of the modern movement architects in Johannesburg, possibly more consistent in their approach and setting the stage for the post-war graduates who took modernism to more innovative levels. In establishing the roles of innovators and followers the actual architecture that was created must be interrogated for, as Richardson points out:

The secret of the capacity to make meaning lies in the artefact. Beginning as an object that is out there, embedded and indistinguished from the rest of nature, fixed first by sight and then touched by the magic of the hand, the artefact, in its artifice, becomes a 'collapsed act', a structure whose response is given in advance (Mead 1972: 121-2, 368-70). Thus more than a geological specimen and more too than a technological device, the artefact is a document that describes our past, an image that reflects our present, and a sign that calls us into the future (Richardson 1989: 174)

Thus the examination of building typologies is necessary in order to evaluate the extent to which modernism was contested, negotiated or adopted in architectural praxis in Cape Town. It is evident that in the industrial architecture of the city there are no signs of negotiation and it would appear that the imperatives of Fordism and related issues of production efficiency, linked to the nature of industries such as the garment sector led to the unequivocal adoption of modernism. In the commercial sector this was not as clear-cut. Modernism was either fully incorporated, such as the CTC Bazaars by Policansky, or else a more negotiated form such as the approach adopted by W.H. Grant in his OK Bazaars, although this could have as much to do with the architect's own approach to modernism as with the populist approach of the inexpensive bazaars. The insurance industry appears to have needed to present itself as modern and forward looking and thus needed a modernist architectural expression- unlike the banking sector that saw itself as conservative in its practices. The different approaches adopted in these building types reflects an aspect of material culture that was identified by Tilley (1989):

Material culture is a framing and communicative medium involved in social practice. It can be used for transforming, storing or preserving social information. It also forms a symbolic medium for social practice, acting dialectically in relation to that practice. It

can be regarded as a kind of text, a silent form of writing and discourse; quite literally, a channel of reified and objectified expression (Tilley 1989: 189)

So it is then in the examination of dwelling particularly where there was some freedom of choice, such as in the middle-class flat or the individual house that this aspect of social practice is best manifested. The difference between dwelling of choice and enforced patterns of living are manifestations of what Heynen speaks of when she elaborates on the nature of Heidegger's *Heimat*. His notion of dwelling "does not stem from building, but the other way round: true building is grounded in the experience of true dwelling" (Heynen: 16). True dwelling must lie in freedom of choice and in this respect Cape Town proves to largely conservative- quite unlike Johannesburg and it is only in the period after the Second World War that modernism gains a significant foothold in the design of the individual house. In the negotiation of modernism the flat building seems to have been a more fruitful ground for the adoption of modernism. Although there is little evidence of the spatial implementation of modernism and it was generally adopted as a stylistic device to create a simulacrum of modernism that cloaked a conservative and often symmetrical plan form.

These findings relate to the standpoint of Elizabeth Darling, in her evaluation of the nature and practice of architectural modernism in inter-war Britain (Darling 2007), where she describes a series of 'narratives of modernism' and considers both what she terms 'sites of campaign' and 'sites of encounter'. This matrix she then applied to the terrains of modernity, both social and cultural. In this examination of the education of architects at the Cape, one of the sites of campaign in Cape Town is highlighted, while the study of architectural innovators and followers would correspond to her field of encounter, as would the identification of building typologies in which the narratives of modernism were expounded. De Certeau had considered the negotiated narrative of the walker in the city and this would resonate with the manner in which architects negotiated their own interpretations of the narrative of modernism, interpretations that remain in the architectural artefacts that bear silent witness to the contestation, mediation and negotiation process. Modernism created hybrid identities in a city that reinforced this hybridity through political process as well as spatial production and material culture.

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 8

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### CONCLUSIONS

The meaning of the past has to be inserted into the present through the medium of the text. This meaning has to be argued for and against. The act of writing always presupposes a politics of the present, and such writing is a form of power. It cannot escape power. Any kind of writing about the past is inevitably simultaneously a domestication of the difference of the past, an imposition of order. Writing the past is not an innocent and disinterested reading of an autonomous past produced as image. Writing the past is drawing it into the present, re-inscribing it into the face of the present (Tilley: 193).

The first chapter described the setting for the research, identifying the project of modernism that Habermas considered to be unfinished, and which emerged in the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century as Harvey describes it being the “*objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic*” (Harvey 1989: 12). Although, within a colonial context, its manifestation is often associated with Foucault’s notion of the exercise of power and control, and in an architectural context is seen in the creation of architectural monuments that chart its gestation and development, in Cape Town modernism has been considered as an occult practice that only emerged in the period after World War Two. But as the introduction points out, the physical fabric of the city after the Second World War reflected a transformed ‘modern’ city in comparison to images of the city taken at the conclusion of World War One.

#### **Negotiation and control**

The research sought to find correlations between the physical evidence and social practice in the city that led to the manifested changes. Central to the research has been the way in which the project of modernism was negotiated by civil society as it was adopted, firstly as a political construct, and then as the central determinant in social practice within a colonial society that used modernism as an instrument for discrimination, separation and control and ultimately emerging in the architecture of Cape Town. The role played by the local media as a forum for debate on the issue of modernism, and ways of reaching a negotiated position between avant-garde modernism as a project of rupture as identified by Heynen, and the colonial project as recognised by post-colonial theorists such as Bhabha and Spivak, is central to the research. This negotiated response to modernism in the city corresponds to Bhabha’s concept of a ‘Third Space’, as a space of compromise and synthesis. The local media was a terrain of negotiation as issues around modernism were debated, contested, yet, ultimately accepted.

The research emerged out of my earlier studies of the impact of the Slums Act of 1934 on the architecture of housing projects undertaken by Cape Town prior to World War Two. Here it had become apparent that not only was modernism a significant mechanism used as way of controlling the living and social pattern of what Spivak called the Colonial ‘Other’ through the

ostensibly humanitarian device of slum elimination and re-housing, but it also was a significant factor within a nexus of often contradictory elements that controlled development at the time. It was apparent that the housing projects could not be understood purely in architectural terms, or in purely socio-political terms but that they seemed to be the result of complex inter-relationship generators.

### **Negotiating modernism to create 'other' living environments**

Some of the significant elements of modernism, such as the development of coherent political mechanisms of control of the 'Other' emerged before the end of the nineteenth century, and these were encapsulated within a legal framework that set the stage for the full-blown implementation of modernism. Concerns about living conditions in the city and the control over residential areas began with the establishment of N'dabeni as an African residential area in 1902. Housing concerns and slum control were, as elsewhere in the world, a concern in the Twenties, culminating in the Slums Act of 1934. All of these issues fell under the Medical Officer of Health and the development of strategies dealing with the health of the population informed much of the architectural output of the City Council. Once again these concerns and the role of health are on a par with worldwide contemporary trends.

### **Negotiating modernist planning**

Modernist town planning issues emerged in the late Twenties and early Thirties as the city became concerned about both the image of the city; traffic movement through the city, and the creation of residential areas on the Cape Flats as the population of the city grew significantly. The debate around the reclaimed land in Table Bay deflected attention away from large scale restructuring of the city centre and led to a protracted modernist planning exercise that culminated in the Foreshore Plan of 1947. This plan, produced by planners informed by modern planning principles engaged some of the leading modernist planners of South Africa and thus became the most radical and significant modern urban planning scheme in South Africa at the time.

It is clear that the early proselytisers viewed modernism as an iconic trajectory and the early historiographies clearly eulogised the rupture with the conventional contemporary architecture. Starting with Le Corbusier and his seminal *Vers une Architecture*, written in 1923, and reinforced nearly a decade later by Hitchcock & Johnson's *International Style* in 1932 that set out stylistic characteristics for modernism, changing it from an approach to architecture into a style, modernism was defined through form specificity. Tounikiotis' *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (1999) categorizes the historiographies of modernism using three analytical hypotheses. Firstly there is a historical dimension, establishing the relational structure between present, past and future, and that creates a genealogy. Secondly, there is a social dimension that links concept to a social programme. Finally, there is an architectural dimension whereby "a position about the essence of architecture" (Tounikiotis: 14) is projected onto the text. He also identifies the theme in early writings of prescriptive criteria, aesthetic as well as technological, that

defined modernism in architecture. Along with this, the introduction of cheap printing of photographic material led to the importance of the image of modernism in the media, more persuasive in conveying the message of modernism than the text. In a city like Cape Town, the absence of a strong school of architecture until the late Thirties, led to the media being the prime source for the introduction of architectural modernism.

Historians like Pevsner and Gideon, who promoted modernism in their writings, wrote the genealogy of modernism, using sources that drew it back to an earlier 'true' period. Pevsner also, significantly, located the development of modernism in England, which is closely linked to the introduction and development of modernism in Cape Town. The city appears to be more closely linked to British architectural developments than to what was happening in the then-Transvaal where Le Corbusier's modernism was introduced through the endeavours of architects and academics spearheaded by Rex Martienssen in the late Twenties and early Thirties and nurtured in the Witwatersrand School of Architecture.

### **The role of the media**

The media is central to the development and dissemination of architectural modernism. In the same way that the translation of Le Corbusier's *Vers une Architecture* by Etchells in 1928 as *Towards a New Architecture* as well as Bruno Taut's writing on *Modern Architecture* was central to the introduction of European modernism to Britain, so too, the role played by the architectural media is acknowledged by historians such as Darling (2007) and Higgott (2007) to be very important sites of campaign as Darling describes them. In this regard the Cape Town-published *Architect, Builder and Engineer* can be seen to be a significant reflection of the local response to modernism.

In the Twenties the journal reflects the concerns and prejudices of local practitioners faced with an ever-changing world. There remains a hankering back to the certainty of the pre-war era. References continue to be made to its continuing relevance as a basis for a new architecture. The search for a relevant architecture is also reflected in the periodical's pages as the debate around an appropriate direction for architecture was being considered. The notion that the new architecture should be based on a simplified classicism follows very closely on the direction being advocated by educationalists such as Charles Reilly at Liverpool University. He had considered that the American Beaux Arts approach to architecture would, by its inherent discipline and order, be able to lead to a new architecture. Gregory, a student of his, seems to have taken the same direction in his teachings as head of Cape Town's school of architecture and student work of the time reflects this. There was also a concern expressed in the pages of the periodical to the changes that were happening both socially and technologically. Concerns over the impact of Socialism on segments of the colonial society, specifically those considered to be 'Other', was expressed in much the same way as architects such as Le Corbusier expressed concern about slums being breeding grounds for uprisings.

Equally, there was an interest in the impact of technological changes on the form and nature of the city. Professor Snape, an engineer who lectured to architecture students, questioned the impact of structural steel on architecture and called for the recognition of the inherent honesty of expression found in the automobile, the ship and the aeroplane. In the article, written in 1923, he was expressing the same sentiments that Le Corbusier was writing about in *Vers une Architecture* of the same year. Can his views be ascribed to coincidence? That would seem doubtful. It seems clear that what Le Corbusier was doing was reflecting the *Zeitgeist* of the time. The factors of change were becoming increasingly apparent and there was a certain 'ripeness' for the schism with traditional architecture to occur.

It is the manner in which Le Corbusier and the architects of the Bauhaus handled this schism that was to become the point of separation and negotiation for architects in Cape Town, as expressed in the pages of the *Architect, Builder & Engineer*. The need for a new architecture is clearly enunciated from the 1920s. However, there is an inherent conservatism that made the architects seek a middle ground that represented a negotiated form of modernism. They sought to find a solution that would bridge the divide between the earlier, classically derived architecture and the emerging modernist architecture. It is clear that their position was uncertain and they also felt threatened by an approach that they did not comprehend. The lack of a forum in Cape Town such as could be found in a progressive School of Architecture could be one of the underlying factors in explaining the approach taken in Cape Town. This was in stark contrast with the situation in Johannesburg where the School of Architecture at Witwatersrand University, with architects led by Rex Martienssen, provided a strong base for the introduction of modernism. This situation remained until the appointment of Leonard Thornton White to UCT in 1937.

So too is the location of the city, geographically isolated at the southern tip of a colonial South Africa- too far to engage in meaningful debate with those changes that started to be considered in Johannesburg. The so-called 'North- South Divide' also played a role here. Cape Town, as the oldest city in South Africa held a deep mistrust of the economically dynamic Johannesburg., and this is also reflected in the pages of the *Architect, Builder & Engineer*. Uncertain of its position in the economic growth of the country it seems to have taken refuge in its historical links with Britain- the 'Old Country'.

In developing a compromised approach to modernism in a milieu such as this, it would seem understandable that many of the underlying concepts of modernism were not understood in the city. The more popular media, emanating from Britain and the United States, was relatively thin on rhetoric but rich in photographic imagery. It seems that this became the reading of modernism that was assimilated into architectural praxis in Cape Town. Modernism was read as a *form* rather than a coherent, inclusive approach to design. This led to a much more superficial approach being taken to modernism and elements, such as the expression of structural bays and the handling of fenestration, was seen as a stylistic approach to architecture rather than a new approach to architecture.

This was also linked to the building types that predominated in this period. The expansion of industry led to many new factory buildings. The massive movement from rural areas into the city led to an expansion of housing- specifically flats as a new form of urban dwelling that found expression in a new architecture. The growth of a retail market led to the expansion of the department store as a modern architectural typology with a new 'modern' approach to its architecture. The growth of leisure activities led to the expansion of new technological forms of entertainment such as the cinema that demanded new architectural responses. All of these were reflected in the *Architect, Builder & Engineer* as it sought to find a mediated approach to the demands for new expression.

The work in the Cape represented both a victory and a defeat for the architecture epitomized by the International Style. It was a victory, because here the modern spirit established a bridgehead in the hostile soil of the conservative Cape, and the new architecture began to supplant the nostalgic historicism so characteristic of this Province. It was a defeat because the strength of the International Style was diminished, its vitality vitiated, and its purity sacrificed to the gods of compromise (Herbert: 227)

Herbert's somewhat negative view of Cape modernism reflects a search for the identifiable schismatic modernism of the early modern movement. In the Cape, Tafuri's suggestion of laying out often-contradictory strands that represent the heterogeneity of architectural approaches seems apposite. The buildings illustrated clearly show this approach. In the commercial projects, inevitably done by established older practitioners, one sees the approach to modernism being incorporated in a highly derivative way. The facades of the city office buildings are, invariably, symmetrical, with expressed end bays, treated in a more solid fashion than the central section. There is a great deal of emphasis given to vertical expression in most of the buildings despite- or possibly, because they were generally not more than eight or nine storeys. The spandrels are generally flush with the fenestration that is, invariably, narrow and vertical in form and separated by vertical fins. In the architecture of W.H. Grant one finds the clearest reflection of this approach to design. His work exemplifies the negotiated approach taken to design. As an older architect he drew inspiration from the work of British architects such as John Burnet as well as American Art Deco skyscrapers. It seems that his use of highly decorative element in his buildings, based clearly on American precedents, represents an attempt to bridge the divide between modernism and earlier classicism. The use of ornamentation, albeit geometrically derived, clearly reflects a concern for a decorated architecture. While some of his buildings, particularly those designed circa 1930 show a wide range of responses ranging from a stripped, simplified classicism to strongly geometrical forms such as employed on Boston House (derived in turn from Burnet's Adelaide House in London) to emphatically Art Deco decoration on the Commercial Union building in Greenmarket Square. His approach seems to have found favour with the editors of *Architect, Builder and Engineer* and his buildings are frequently illustrated and lauded. Why? Nepotism or empathy? I suggest that his approach to design was one that was clearly understood by older practitioners trying to make sense of the new architecture. The compromise he proposed would make sense to them. It did not abandon the underlying precepts of classicism but rather emphasised a negotiation of modernist

form as a stylistic cloak on traditional planning. What emerged was a simulacrum of modernism without its underlying *raison d'être*.

It is during the Thirties that the unwavering attack on modernism in the *Architect, Builder & Engineer* begins to waver. The powerful invective against Le Corbusier that is so strongly and emotively expressed in 1929 and in the early Thirties starts to falter, although the strong xenophobic tendencies remain. British comment on European modernism is given full expression and quoted extensively. A strong dislike of what was seen as outside meddling was countered albeit from British architects or planners.

### **Relationship of findings to conceptual framework: Utopia and heterotopia**

The description by Foucault (1982), and re-stated by Porphrios (1982) of juxtaposition of differences that underlies heterotopic contexts can be clearly found in the social and political environment that existed in South Africa in the late colonial period. Not only was the society divided into a broad range of different identities that were ethnically determined, but this appears to follow through in the spatial practices and the built environment as planning created a framework based on differentiation both of people and of activities. This resulted in the development of the heterotopic category that Porphyrios described as *discriminatio*- the mental activity that does not attempt to draw things together, but rather that which investigates difference. (Porphyrios 1982:3)

It would seem that the South African colonial interpretation of a utopian environment drawing on modernist principles was one that would create heterotopias of crisis. Different social and ethnic groupings demanded different attitudes to modernism and the application of this difference was inherent in the negotiation process that occurred. The housing concerns of the White elite were quite different from that considered to be appropriate for so-called 'Coloured' people. And this differed from those thought appropriate for so-called 'Malays', while Africans were considered to be temporary residents of the city. Thus it was thought that the most appropriate spatial practice was to separate them from other groups and then house them in bachelor accommodation as the development of permanent family living environments was considered to be inappropriate. Modernism as a powerful tool of racist ideology is evident both in residential and in industrial projects in Cape Town. Modernist concepts were being adapted and amalgamated, which reinforces Pefanis' (1991) consideration that the 'dynamic of amalgamation' replaced the dialectic of rupture that is inherent in *avant garde* modernism – an architecture of rupture- as described by Heynen.

These all form elements of a narrative of negotiated modernism that concur with Darling's (2007) consideration of terrains and narratives in her examination of the introduction of modernism in Britain. The emergence of a debate around an appropriate architectural language that emerged in the Twenties was part of a *Zeitgeist* that sought alternatives to the existing situation. Once Le Corbusier's radical alternative became known in Cape Town it became the focus of the contestation and rejection of modernism. This then led to the negotiation of modernism- a

negotiation that could best be understood when modernism was seen as a stylistic movement as suggested by Hitchcock & Johnson in their book *The International Style*, published in 1932.

## Synthesis

Time alone will show whether the very mechanistic and scientific approach to architecture of the more modern school, will prove to have been in the line of real progress. Will mankind be satisfied for long to live in the cold logical machines of Corbusier? There are indications already of a reaction- no aesthetic idea remains indefinitely popular (Stanley Furner in SAAR Mar. 1945:43).

When Hitchcock & Johnson (1932) developed the notion of modernism as an international style, they radically shifted the emphasis from that taken by Le Corbusier and aspects of the Bauhaus' approach to design as a new approach to the way in which space was produced. This shift from spatial production to formalism can be seen to have had a major impact on the way that architects removed from the epicentre of change saw modernism. Instead of being a discourse relating to spatial practice, it was reduced to a formalist language and it was this approach to modernism that enabled a negotiation process to take place where Cape Town architects, unable to comprehend Le Corbusier's hypothesis, were able to relate modernism to their previous approach to architecture and adopt modernism as a negotiated form that represented a synthesis between their traditional approach to the architectural design process and the new architectural language as they perceived it. Modernism was read as form. Ornamentation was to be re-presented in forms that were derived from sources other than classicism, and this helped to create a synthetic modernism that in Cape Town, prior to the development of a modernist approach in the UCT School of Architecture by the late Thirties. After the war, there is a significant shift in the architecture of the city as modernism became mainstream.

## Conclusion

The architecture of this post-war period like all others must follow the dominant ideals of the future peoples and their government... A people get the architecture they deserve, and architects are of the people. We can only hope that the brave new world will be one of vigour and vision, for without vision the people will perish (Stanley Furner in SAAR Mar. 1945:43).

Modernism did not come to Cape Town as a cataclysmic revolution that changed attitudes to architecture. Johannesburg had been subjected to such a radical process when modernism was spread through the Wits School of Architecture. In the Cape there was no catalyst until the late Thirties. Thus the negotiation of modernism has to be traced through the work of individual architects and various agencies of change that lead to the uneven introduction of modernism. Terrains where there was no classical precedent, or where the demands of social practice or Fordist production were strong, adopted modernism easily. These included healthcare and industry, and when the social needs as manifested through the control of disease were paramount, even the

local authority played a leading role in the adoption of modernism. The demands of housing for the poor led to the full-scale adoption of modernism, particularly when those for whom the housing was provided were excluded from participating in the process. But even in city council housing there are many inconsistencies that need further investigation. The housing of fishermen at Kalk Bay and Hout Bay was done in an extremely conservative manner while the Q-Town scheme developed a Corbusian planning approach- with no apparent reason for this inconsistency. Industry seems to have adopted modernism with the least degree of negotiation. In the residential sector, the middle class housing schemes inevitably took the middle ground, a negotiation between modernist forms and construction technology on the one hand, and planning that was still firmly grounded in early twentieth century practice. The private house in Cape Town- unlike Johannesburg- was essentially ultra-conservative and there are hardly any modernist attempts until the Forties, and then, more often than not, for the architects' own use. This could be linked to the difference in the social structures of the two cities and opens fields for further investigation.

This thesis has covered a broad epoch in the development of Cape Town. It has attempted to show the influence of the local media as a location for the particular form of negotiated modernism that emerged in the city in the inter-war period, as well as reach a broad understanding of the forces of change that were manifested at this time in order to identify the equivalents of the 'sites of campaign' and 'sites of encounter' Darling (2007: 9-10) identified in Britain.

The thesis has focused on a field that demands further exploration in order to reach a fuller understanding of the complex conditions that informed the 'Third Space' that manifested itself so clearly in the built environment of the city. The changes that occurred as the Arts and Crafts approach of architects prior to World War was modified through experimentation with Mediterranean influences needs to be examined in more detail and located in global architectural practice, as does the highly significant proto-modernism of a number of Cape Town-based architects. The oeuvre of the important early modernist architects such as Max Policansky and Douglas Andrews, now underrated and threatened with inappropriate alterations and demolition, also needs further study.

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University of Cape Town

## **APPENDIX 1**

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### **PROFILES OF SELECTED CAPE TOWN ARCHITECTS**

The profiles and biographical details of the architects and practises in this appendix are taken from data on the website <http://www.artefacts.co.za> expanded in certain cases and including images of their buildings. The biographical data was originally submitted by Joanna Walker to the HSRC.

**Andrews & Niegeman**

**Cape Town City Council Architect's Department**

**Cape Town City Council's Housing Department**

**F.M. Glennie**

**W.H. Grant**

**W.H.J. Gregory**

**Max Policansky**

**Roberts & Small**

**L. Thornton White**

**H.J. Brownlee**

University of Cape Town

## **ANDREWS & NIEGEMAN**

**Started:** 1939

The partnership between ED Andrews and HTO Niegeman from 1939 in Cape Town. Both were protagonists of the modern movement and they were responsible for some inspired designs in Cape Town. The war interrupted the practice, which, however, flourished in the years following. Post-war buildings include three blocks of flats, Exeter Park, Ajax and Achilles, named by the client in tribute to the destroyers that sank the battleship Graf Spey. In spite of the commitment to the modern movement the partnership undertook a significant amount of restoration work. They were also responsible for a number of industrial buildings such as a clothing factory for M Bertish. Rex Trueform's Salt River factory and Tafelberg Hospital was their biggest single commission (1956-1976) for which unit they also designed a separate dental department.

### **PARTNERS:**

#### **1. ANDREWS, Edwin Douglas**

**Born:** 14.04.1910

**Died:** 1.08.1987

He was born in Cape Town where his father worked in the Surveyor's Office. He started his training in 1926 in the office of **Hubert L Roberts** attending evening classes in architecture at the **Michaelis School of Fine Art**, University of Cape Town. In his senior student years he was given a reasonably free hand on some jobs, designing two blocks of flats in Sea Point and a motor showroom for Farber on the corner of Dock Road and Bree Street in Cape Town. As a fifth-year student he won the Architect, Builder and Engineer's prize and qualified in 1932. By 1933 Andrews was chief draughtsman with **Roberts & Small** in Cape Town (Roberts thought highly of Andrews), leaving in 1936 to become an assistant in **Max Policansky's** office where he remained until 1939. In 1939 entered practice on his own account and then entered into partnership with a Netherlands trained architect, HTO Niegeman. The greater part of Andrews's career took place after 1940 in Cape Town. His knowledge of the older Cape architecture enabled him to carry out important restoration work among which was the restoration of the Anreith pediment at the Groot Constantia wine cellar. Andrews practised in Cape Town from 1939 until his retirement as a partner of the Cape Town firm of **ANDREWS & NIEGEMAN** .

#### **2. NIEGEMAN, Henk Theodorus Otto**

**Born:** 24.12. 1905

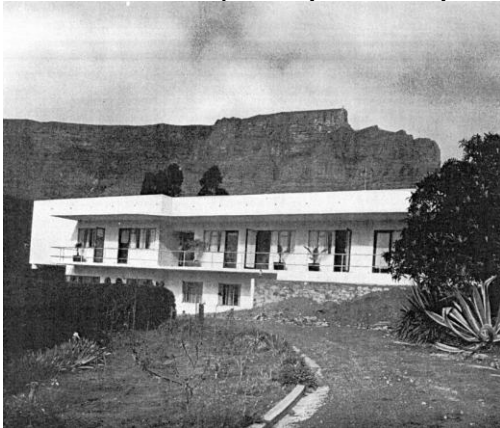
**Died:** 19.12.1972 12 19

Studied architecture at the **School of Architecture, Haarlem**, Holland from 1923 to 1926. He was assistant to **T Th Wijdeveld**, Holland; **Hopp & Lucas**, Germany; **Entreprise Co Francaise**, France; **Fred Forbat**, Germany and **Erich Mendelsohn**, Germany. He spent a further year in America where he had his own practice and six months in Mexico City in town planning. He then went to the **USSR**, where the Government there employed him. During this time he lectured further in France for one year after which he proceeded in turn to Los Angeles, San Diego, Encinitas, Kansas City, Vienna, Moscow, Leningrad and finally the **University of Cape Town**. He acted as a consultant architect in Chinese South East Turkestan, in Afghanistan and in the Belgian Congo. Among Niegeman's overseas buildings were a motor tyre factory in Jarosawl, USSR, a ranch house in California, a hide warehouse in Chinese South East Turkestan and apartment buildings in the Belgian Congo. He was also responsible for various designs for tubular steel furniture. He came to Cape Town in about 1939 where he worked for Max Policansky. (Some Policansky drawings at UCT are signed by him.) He was 'a protagonist of the modern movement in Cape Town' (Herbert 1975:226, 227); Niegeman entered into partnership with ED Andrews in 1941 (although Herbert (1975:226) says the partnership was formed in 1939). In 1954 Niegeman was nominated for Fellowship of the RIBA in 1954; he retired in 1972 and died in the same year.

**List of buildings**

<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Province</u>
I. Abrahams: Semi-detached houses Church St. Athlone	1941	Cape Town	Western Cape
Binkhorst House, Gatesville Road, Kalk Bay	1941	Cape Town	Western Cape
House for Sir Alfred Beit at Gordons Bay	?	Gordon's Bay	Western Cape
House for Sir Alfred Beit at Tulbagh (later called Mon Bijou)	?	Tulbagh	Western Cape
House Mrs Marais, Klein Nektar, Hout Bay	1939	Cape Town	Western Cape
Klein Plasie at Worcester for Jimmy Malan	?	Worcester	Western Cape
Lancaster House Main Road, Green Point (AD Andrews)	1940	Cape Town	Western Cape

**Leeuwendal Maternity Home (AD Andrews)**

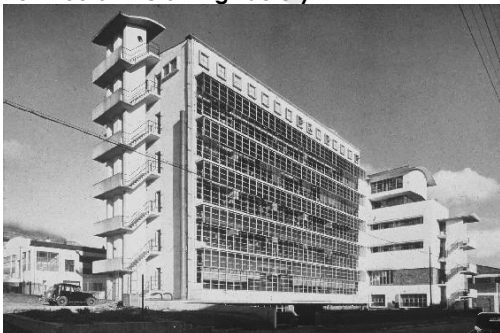


1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Rex Trueform Clothing Factory**



1939

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Klipfontein Road Stable**



1939

Cape Town  
Western Cape  
Building still exists but some alterations

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1940

**Rondebosch Scout Hall**

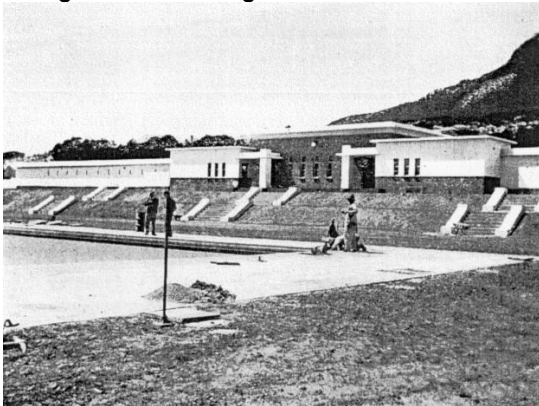


1940

Cape Town  
Western Cape  
Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1941

**Trafalgar Park Swimming Pool**

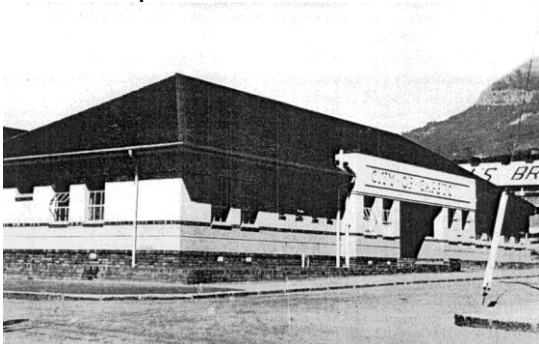


1940

Cape Town  
Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1941

**TB Clinic Chapel St**



1940

Cape Town  
Building still exists

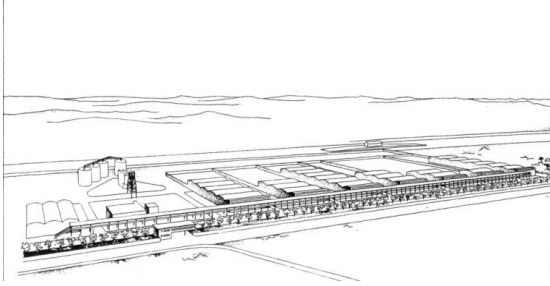
CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1941

**Central Market**

1943

Cape Town  
Proposal not built

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1944

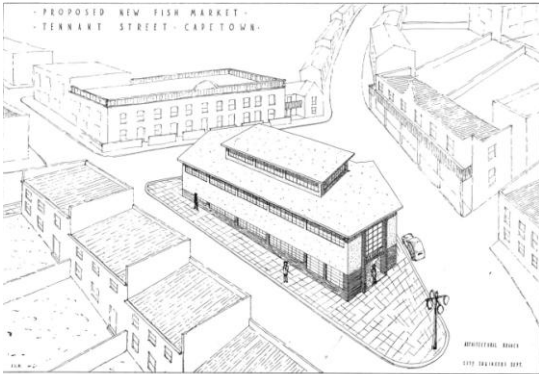


**Fish Market: Tennant Street**

1947

Cape Town  
Proposal not built

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1948



**Mayoral Offices**

1946

Cape Town  
Building demolished

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1947



**Traffic Department**

1947

Cape Town  
Building still exists- but not built as sketch proposal

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1948

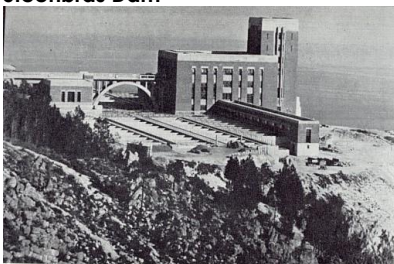


**Steenbras Dam**

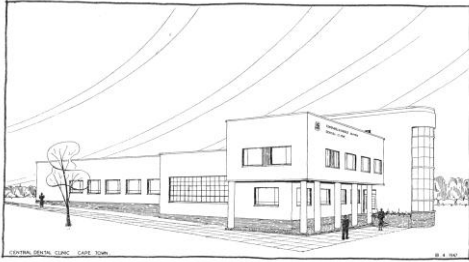
1941-43

Cape Town  
Designed by Gregory

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1942



**Dental Clinic:**



1943  
(1944- est. cost  
£22500)

Cape Town  
Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1944

**Wemmershoek Dam**



Cape Town  
Designed by Gregory

**City  
Hospital**



Significant  
additions prior to  
WW2

Cape Town  
Demolition proposed (2011)

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
1944

**City Hospital Dispensary**



Dispensary still exists but  
demolition proposed  
(2011)

**VD Hospital & Clinic City Hospital**

1943  
 88 beds  
 clinic for 15000 pa  
 (1944 proposal to  
 cost £40500)

Cape Town  
 Building still exists- but  
 demolition imminent (June  
 2008)

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
 1944

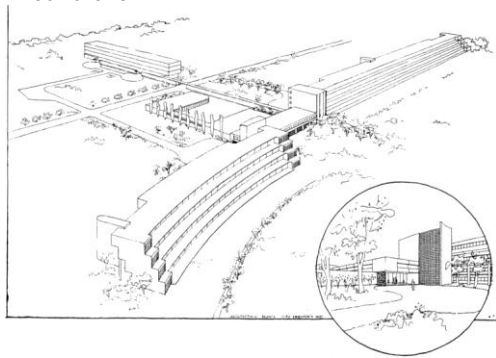


**TB Sanatorium**

1943

Cape Town  
 Not built

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
 1944



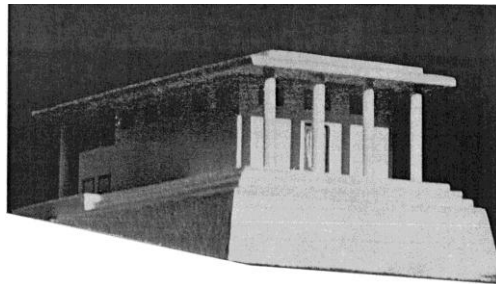
PROPOSED TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUM, DURBANVILLE.

**Schotsche Kloof Sub Station**

1940  
 Completed 1941  
 (CTMM 1940:27)

Cape Town  
 Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
 1941



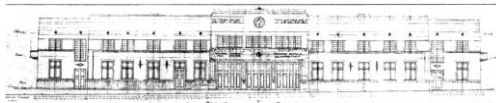
Schotsche Kloof: Sub-station Model.

**Wynberg Fire Station**

1944- alts to flats

Cape Town  
 Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
 1945



**Muizenberg Fire Station**

1947

Cape Town  
 Building still exists

CTCC Mayoral Minutes  
 1948



**Camp's Bay Civic Centre**

1948

Cape Town  
 Designed by Gregory

Gregory Papers UCT

**CAPE TOWN CITY COUNCIL: HOUSING DEPT.**

**Formed: 1939**

**First Chief Architect:** P.J. Mc Manus; WHA Linnington, Senior Housing Architect; GDS Holmswood, C. Rabie, G.M. Willis, Arch. Assistants.

Staff in 1948:

Anderson, RWP                      Municipal housing  
 Jones, A Harold                    Municipal housing  
 Linnington, WHA    Municipal housing (Dip. Arch UCT) worked for Jas. Morris  
 Rabie, C                                Municipal housing  
 Thomson, EH                        Municipal housing AIAA, MIA (Worked for Hoets; Reid & Delbridge.

In 1937 there were calls made for a Housing Architect (CTCC Housing & Slum Clearance Committee mins. 5.11. 1937) In June 1938 interviews were held. Applicants included Douglass Cowin from Johannesburg and William Gregory from UCT. McManus had qualified in Architecture in Edinburgh and had previously worked for the Durban Municipality (CTCC Housing & Slum Clearance Committee mins 6.06. 1938)

BUILDING	DATE	LOCATION	REF.
<b>Alicedale Township</b>	1939	Cape Town First design probably by Angelini 258 houses erected in 1939	



<b>Schotsche Kloof Flats</b>	1939-40	Cape Town Designed by Perry & Lightfoot 460 flats. 'Plans amended after consultation with Housing Dept.' (CTCC Mayoral Mins. 1940:28)	(van Graan: 2004)
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<b>Bloemhof &amp; Canterbury Sq. Flats</b>	1939	Cape Town 324 flats Designed by Chapman & MacGillivray 74 flats completed 1939 138-1940	(Van Graan: 2004)
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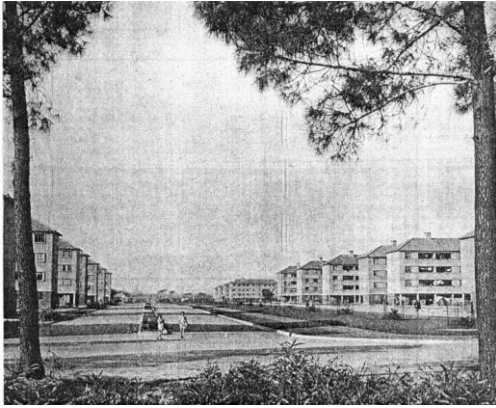


**Q-Town**

1939-40

Cape Town  
8000 dwellings  
326- 1940

Mayoral Minutes 1940-  
1941

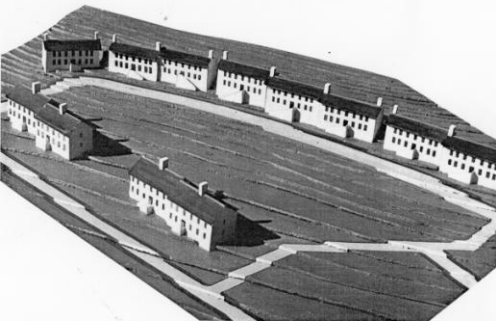


**Kalk Bay**

1939

Cape Town  
48 flats

CTCC Mayoral minutes  
1940

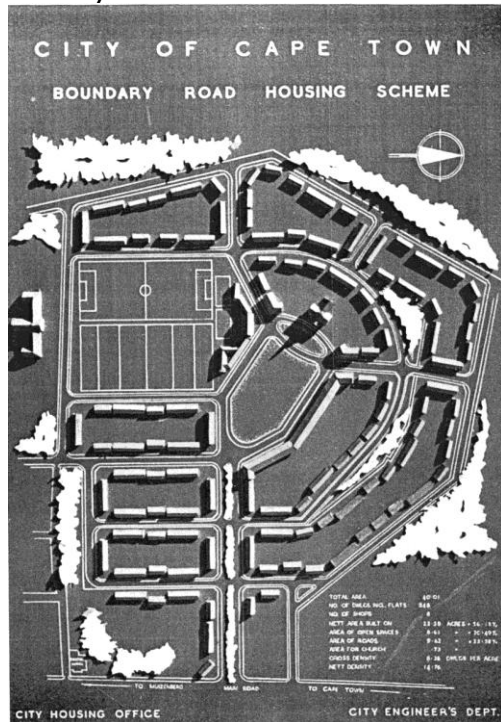


**Boundary Road Rd**

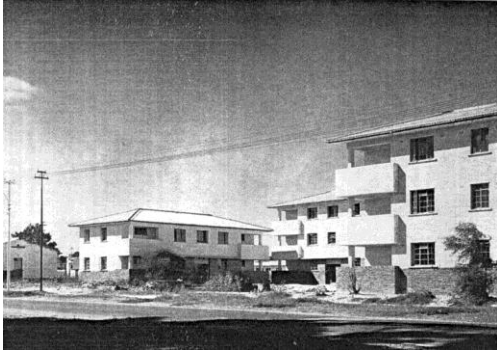
1939

Cape Town  
Preliminary layout

CTCC Mayoral minutes  
1940



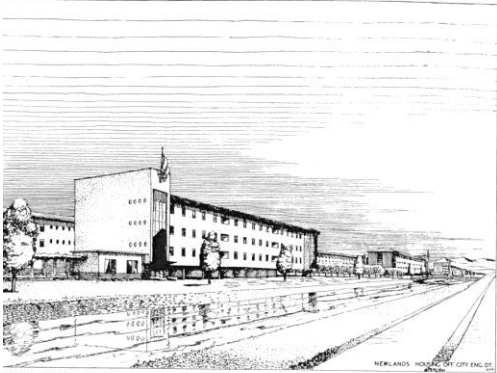
**Gabriel Rd**



Cape Town

CTCC Mayoral minutes  
1940

**Bachelor Quarters Langa**

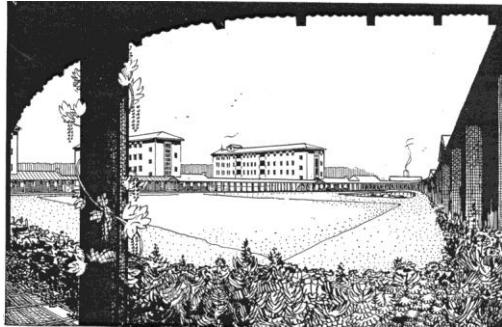


1942  
5000 bachelors  
670 dwellings for  
couples

Cape Town

CTCC Mayoral minutes  
1943

**Bachelor Quarters Retreat**

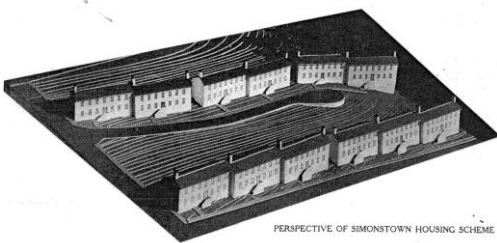


1942  
1000 bachelors  
500 dwellings for  
couples

Cape Town

CTCC Mayoral minutes  
1943

**Simon's Town Housing**



Cape Town

CTCC Mayoral minutes

**Glennie, Frederick Mcintosh**

**Born:** 1889 12 10

**Died:** 1954 04 26

Glennie executed a large number of buildings in Cape Town, having begun to practice in Cape Town in the early 1920s. A prominent Catholic, Glennie designed and executed many buildings for the Roman Catholic Church and was commissioned to design the Catholic University of Pope Pius XII at Roma, Basutoland.

Glennie was educated at Wynberg Boy's High School, Cape Town. He was articled to **Baker & Masey** in Cape Town from 1909 until 1911 but remained in the office working as an assistant. In about 1912 he won the Cape Institute of Architects' prize for measured drawings. In 1917 he left Baker & Fleming to set up independent practice in Cape Town. In the early years of practice Glennie executed a number of ecclesiastical works, houses and small-scale commercial buildings. He quite soon obtained some major commissions; the first of these large works was the Exchange Building for Mann, George & Co in St George's St (1927), a sophisticated design with corner feature recessed for emphasis rising through all six floors. Glennie went on to design many well-known commercial buildings in Cape Town, such as the Reserve Bank in Wale St (c1928) and the Commercial Union Assurance building, St George's St (1930). He also designed the Royal Hotel at Beaufort West (1931).

Glennie was an enthusiast of old Cape buildings and one time secretary of The National Society for which he did many drawings of historic Cape buildings. A number of these were reproduced in Dorothea Fairbridge's *Historical houses of South Africa* (1922) and in GE Pearse's *Eighteenth Century Architecture in South Africa* (1933).


In 1933 Glennie made an extensive overseas visit, studying buildings in England, Holland, France and Italy with a further year's travel and residence in England, America, Holland, Germany, Sweden and Italy. He returned to Cape Town, continuing to practise until 1953. He acted as senior associate architect on several schemes, a number in association with JZ Schuurmans-Stekhoven with whom he worked for instance on the Provincial Buildings (Wale St/Queen Victoria St/Long St/Dorp St) in 1940. Other late buildings by Glennie include Court Chambers for Syfrets Trust in Wale St (c1950).

Glennie's office was a popular place for students in training; LF McConnell was among those who gained office experience in Glennie's office. Glennie was also a co-founder of the South African National Botanic Gardens at Kirstenbosch.

In 1944 he entered partnership with TE Egan, joined by H Sikkel in 1946 (Glennie, Egan & Sikkel). He retired in 1953 and died in Cape Town.

FCIA; MIA; ISAA 1927; FRIBA 1936. (Cumming-George 1933; FRIBA nom papers (1936) 3364; Greig 1971:100; Rennie 1978b; Rennie 1983; RIBA Jnl Apr 1955:271 obit; SAAR Oct 1954:43 obit, port)

**List of buildings - 47**

<b>Building</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Province</b>
<b>Alliance Assr Co Bldg</b>	1933	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Barclay's Bank</b>	1930	Worcester	Western Cape
<b>Cape Provincial Bldg, with JZS STEKHOVEN</b>	1939	Cape Town	Western Cape
			
<b>Christian Bros College, with HA McQUEEN</b>	1936	Cape Town	Western Cape

**Chubb & Maxwell, with LOUW & LOUW**

1935

Cape Town  
AB&E June 1936: 9, 11

Western Cape  
Plans passed: (AB&E)  
June 1935: 29  
£5000



**Church of the Sacred Heart**

c1918

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Commercial Union Assr Bldg**

**1930**

**Cape Town**

**Western Cape**

**Convent of the Good Shepherd, bldg**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Die Oude Kerk, restored**

Pre-1936

Tulbagh

Western Cape

**Dominican convent & schools add**

Pre-1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Exchange bldg for Mann, George & Co Ltd**

1927

Cape Town

Western Cape

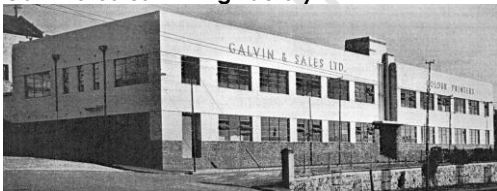


**Galvin & Sales Printing Factory**

1934

Cape Town

Western Cape



**H Polliack & Co bldg**

1926

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Hostel, Nazareth House**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

House Glendale Rondebosch 1930



Cape Town

Western Cape

House 1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

House Capt Watson: Rothburg 1920

Cape Town

Western Cape

The Fort (now Casa Labia) 1928

Muiznberg

Western Cape

House I Wolf 1920

Cape Town

Western Cape

House JB Taylor: Rodwell 1934

Cape Town

Western Cape

House Justice Curlewis 1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

House S Sacks 1927

Cape Town

Western Cape

Houses, for A Purnell 1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**J Sedgwick Bldg, alt, with JZS STEKHOVEN** 1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Liberal Insurance bldg, alt** 1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**London Assr Co** c1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Old Supreme Court bldg, 'cut back & rebuilt facade'** c1930

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Reserve Bank Bldg** 1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Royal Hotel** 1931

Beaufort West

Western Cape

**SA Mutual Assr Co, with LF McCONNELL** 1930

Pretoria

Gauteng

**SA Mutual Life Assr Co** c1930

Aliwal North

Free State

**SA Mutual Life Assr Soc** 1930

Beaufort West

Western Cape

**SA Mutual Life Assr Soc, with LOUW & LOUW**

1936

Cape Town  
AB&E Feb 1935: 12-13; 21

Western Cape



**Sacks, Futeran & Co warehouse**

1932

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Sacks, Futeran & Co warehouse**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Sacks, Pateson & Co bldg, add**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Salesian Inst, extensive alt**

1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Sedgwick & Co bldg adds**

1932

Cape Town

Western Cape

**St Agnes's School**

1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**St Joseph's Hospital**

1938

Cape Town

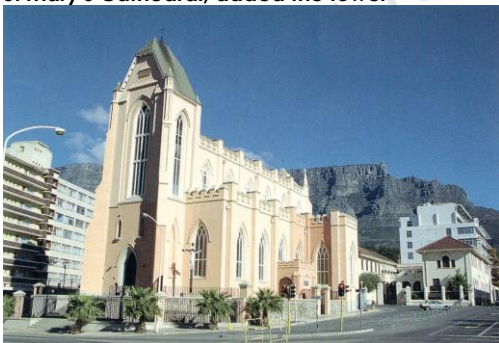
Western Cape

**St Mary's Cathedral, added the tower**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape



**St Mary's Convent, remodelled**

1920

Cape Town

Western Cape

**St Michael's Parish Hall**

1932

Rondebosch

Western Cape

**Sun Insurance Co bldg (Sun Bldgs)**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Teacher's Training College**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Van Ryn's Wine & Spirit Co Ltd**

1919

Cape Town

Western Cape

**GRANT, William Hood**

**Born:** 1877  
**Died:** 1957

An architect who worked in Cape Town from about 1903, Grant became a principal in the Cape Town firm of MacGillivray & Grant. Grant was born in Dundee, Forfarshire and educated at Dundee High School. He remained in Dundee spending two years at the Dundee school of Art, where he studied architecture and art, and won a National Bronze Medal in 1896. He came to South Africa in 1901 and practised on his own account in Cape Town. In 1903 he and D MacGillivray entered for the competition for the Southern Life Assurance Building in Durban. Winning the competition they formed a partnership with an office in Cape Town. According to Hillebrand (1975:173) Grant opened and ran an office in Durban for the partners from 1904 until 1908. In 1908 he returned to Cape Town and continued to practice as MacGillivray & Grant. When MacGillivray left for Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1923 (?) he continued the practice on his own account in Cape Town where he was responsible for a number of buildings, among them the OK Bazaars Building in Darling St (1932).

Much of his work of the late 1920s and the 1930s has since been described as Art Deco; a contemporary comment on the Commercial Union Insurance Company Building, Cape Town, noted his contemporary use of decorated building that 'some bird forms on St George's St front are very pleasing and also reminiscent of Aztec decorative motives with much charm and discretion' (AB&E Sep 1932:3). Grant had a productive career. Many of his buildings still survive. Later he admitted partners and became WH Grant & Partners. Among buildings for which they were responsible was African Guarantee House, now Ovenstone House (St George's/Riebeeck Sts) in Cape Town (1951). It was illustrated in the December 1954 edition of Architect & Builder.

ISAA 1927. (Hillebrand 1975; ISAA mem lists; SA Archt May 1939:49; SAWW 1908, 1909, 1910, 1916, 1935)

**List of buildings**

<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Province</u>
<u>Argus Co Bldg, add</u>	1933	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Argus Printing &amp; Publishing Co Ltd, offices</u>	1923	Cape Town	Western Cape



Argus Printing & publishing works

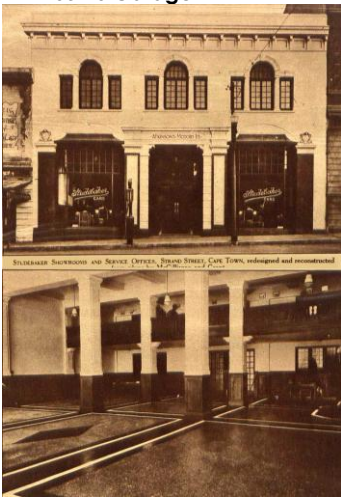


1934

Cape Town

Western Cape

Atkinson's Garage



1919

Cape Town

Western Cape

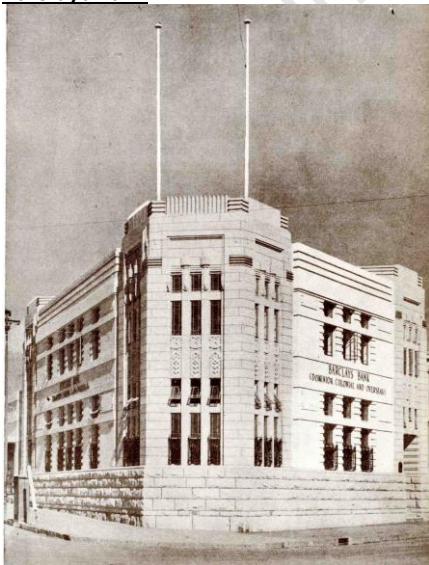
Barclays Bank

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

Barclays Bank



1933

Cape Town  
Salt River

Western Cape

**Bathing Pavilion, won in competition**

1927

Muizenberg

Western Cape



**Benjamin & Lawton Bldg, remodelled**

c1925

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Bldg for 'the Schlesinger Sunday Newspaper'**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Bldg for LP Vadas**

1931

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Boston House**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Bijou Cinema**

Lwr Main & Cole St, Salt River

1941

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Cinema (Atkinson's cinema)**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Coghill's Hotel, rebuilt**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Commercial Union Assr Co Ltd**

1930

Cape Town  
Greenmarket Square

Western Cape

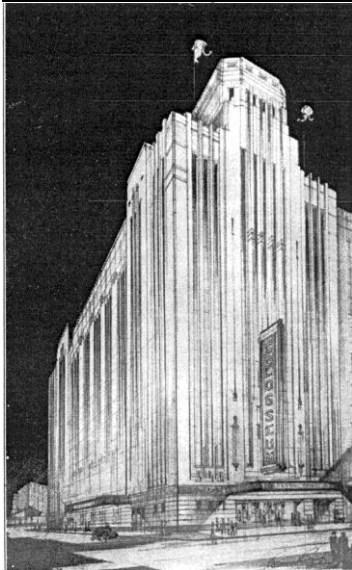


**Commonwealth Bldgs and Colosseum Theatre**

1936

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Flats for BJ Kinsella**

1928

Muizenberg

Western Cape

**Flats for M Kurman**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Flats/Theatre**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Garlick's Bldg**

1928

Cape Town

Western Cape

**General Assr Co Bldg**

1923

Cape Town

Western Cape



University of Cape Town

<b><u>Hotel Majestic, extensive alt</u></b>	1926	Kalk Bay	Western Cape
<u>House AR Phillips</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House Arderne: The Hill</u>	c1916	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b><u>House DG Garlick</u></b>	1930	Cape Town	Western Cape



<u>House E Power</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House H Ansaldi: Stonehenge, alt</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House Hingle</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House K Jesse</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House P Wolmarans</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House PM Liddle</u>	1931	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>House Roy Garlick</u>	c1930	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b><u>Jackson's Ltd</u></b>	1930	Cape Town	Western Cape



<b><u>King's Hotel</u></b>	1931	Kalk Bay	Western Cape
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**Mitchell Cott's Bldg, add three storeys,  
Exchange Place**

1926

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Mr Barling's Bakery, add**

1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Norwich Union Building (remodelling)**

c1924

Cape Town

Western Cape



**OK Bazaars**

1938

Wynberg, Cape Town

Western Cape



**OK Bazaars**

1932

Cape Town

Western Cape



**OK Bazaars Ltd.**

1937 (attributed)

Parow, Cape Town

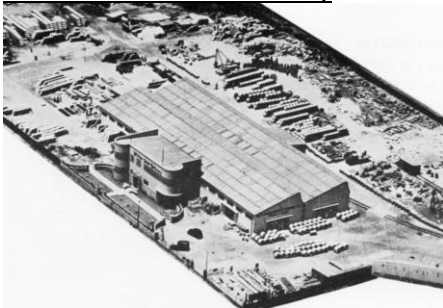
Western Cape



<u>Parry, Leon &amp; Hayhoe, warehouse</u>	1928	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Poole's Hotel</u>	1927	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Printing Works for African Theatre Ltd</u>	1937	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Proposed theatres/cinemas at Muizenberg, Salt River, Kalk Bay, Paarl</u>	1939	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Protea Cinema</u>	1939	Paarl	Western Cape
<u>Queen's Hotel, extensive add</u>	1923	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Radio Broadcasting Studios</u>	1937	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Radio Transmitting Station</u>	1933	Cape Town	Western Cape



<u>SA Milling Co Ltd, add</u>	1939	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Salt River Cement Works factory</u>	1937	Cape Town	Western Cape



<u>Secondary School</u>	1936	Cape Town	Western Cape
<u>Shell South Africa (final stage)</u>	1938	Cape Town	Western Cape



<u>Shell SA Offices-stage 1</u>	1928	Cape Town	Western Cape
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**St Clair Court**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Tivoli Building**

1932

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Tobacco Factory for Kramer's Trust Investment Co.**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Town Hall**

1927

Paarl

Western Cape

**Unie Volkspers Bpk Buitengracht St**

soaks what it is, a good industrial



1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Waygood Otis, alt**

1930

Cape Town

Western Cape

**White House, add**

1927

Cape Town

Western Cape

**GREGORY, William John Henry (Gregs) & CTCC Architects' Department****Born:** 1895 08 22**Died:** 1972 08 23

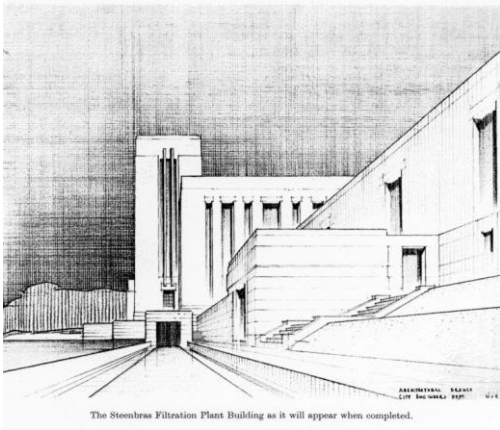
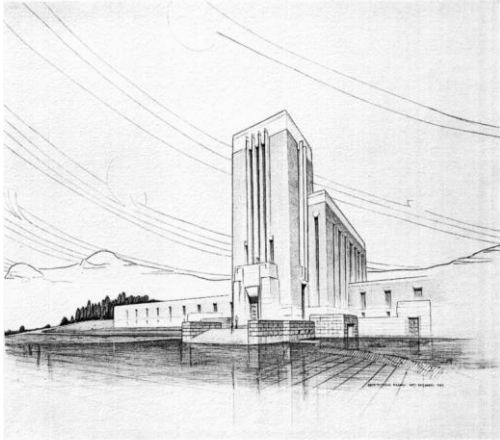
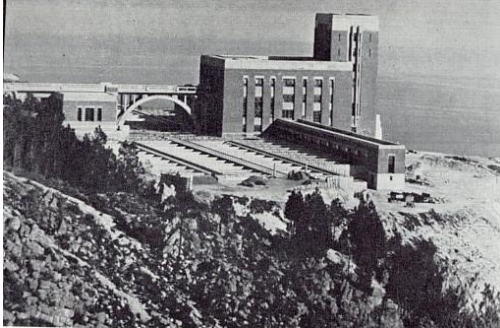
Born in London, the son of William Arthur Ryder Gregory, Gregory was articled to **Stanley Ellison** of Liverpool from 1914 to 1916, attending classes in architectural construction and design at the **School of Architecture, Liverpool** under **Charles Reilly**. From 1916 to 1918 he served in the Royal Flying Corps. He spent three months in America in the office of **Carrère & Hastings** in 1920<sup>1</sup>, New York. On his return from New York he became chief assistant to **Sir Edwin Lutyens** 'and worked on the Viceroy's Palace, New Delhi; the Cenotaph, Whitehall and the War Memorial, Ypres' (Mrs. Gregory 1973). The latter two works suggest that after the war as well Gregory worked in Lutyens's office.

In 1919 he returned to the **School of Architecture, Liverpool** to continue his interrupted studies, and where he was awarded a number of prizes, a finalist in the Rome Scholarship in Architecture (1921), winner of the Lever Prize (1921) and a Victory Prize finalist. He received a Certificate in Architecture from the School in 1920, and was elected an Associate member of the RIBA in 1921. Gregory exhibited for three consecutive years at the Royal Academy, displaying drawings of the Chicago Tribune Tower competition (1924), the National Theatre (1925) for which he was awarded third prize and the Manchester Art Galley (1926).

In 1928 he arrived in Cape Town, appointed head of Design at the **Cape School of Architecture**, then at the **Michaelis School of Art**, and registered as a member of the Institute of South African Architects in 1929. By 1934 he apparently had an office in Cape Town, since HE Twentymen-Jones worked there for a few months as a student from December 1933 to July 1934. There appears to have been a partnership between **Gregory & Mansergh** as they prepared plans for a swimming bath and gymnasium at UCT (nd). He first applied for the post of Chief Housing Architect when that was advertised, but that post went to P.J. McManus and he then applied for the Chief Architect's post. From 1938 until 1957 Gregory held the office of **Chief Architect for Cape Town** Municipality and was, inter alia, responsible for the Steenbras Filtration Plant and Camps Bay Civic Centre. He restored Holy Trinity Church, Belvidere, Knysna. He married Winifred Hoogf in London in 1935 and they had no children. He died in Cape Town.

**List of buildings**

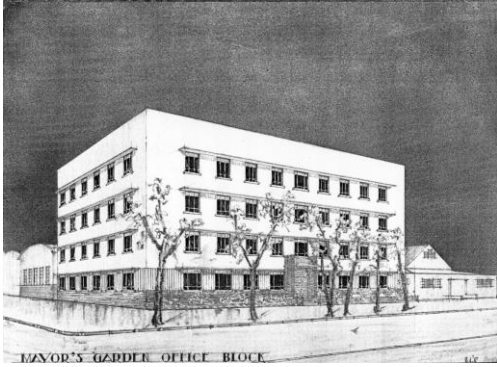
<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Province</u>
House Mrs Kent	1930	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Steenbras Dam</b>		Cape Town	Western Cape



The Steenbras Filtration Plant Building as it will appear when completed.

<sup>1</sup> Liverpool Post, 10 November 1920

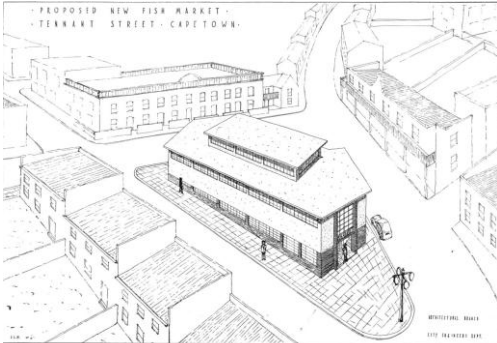
**Mayoral Offices**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**Fish Market**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**Wemmershoek Dam**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**Stukeris Street Workshop**



Cape Town

Western Cape

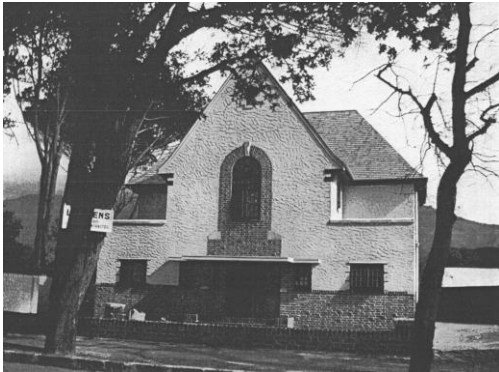
**Klipfontein Stables**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**Rondebosch Scout Hall**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**Muizenberg Fire Station**



Cape Town

Western Cape

**City Hall additions**



Cape Town

Western Cape

## MAX POLICANSKY

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6.12.1909-2003(?)

"South Africa has a long and heterogeneous architectural history resulting in a lack of consistent, representative South African architecture. Just as there is no unified South African culture there is no unified South African style of building. In typical colonial fashion, indigenous traditions were neglected and models from the country of origin- Holland and Africa- were copied..."(Righini1977:45)

Although Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand School of Architecture led the way with the adoption of modernism under the aegis of Stanley Furner and Rex Martienssen. Cape Town at that stage, did not have a separate department of architecture and it was taught in the Michaelis School of Art. The course, headed by William Gregory was very conservative and Beaux Arts in approach. Yet in this unlikely terrain we find one of the most significant modernist architects to emerge in the mid-Thirties- Max Policansky.

Policansky was born in Cape Town and matriculated at Grey High School in Port Elizabeth. He attended the School of Architecture, University of Cape Town for a year (1928-9) before leaving for the Liverpool School of Architecture, England from where he graduated in 1933. Before he left Cape Town he received some office experience in the office of Julius Lonstein. Whilst studying at Liverpool University he also worked for several months for the Ayuntamiento de Madrid, Spain, in 1930 (Madrid Municipality). While overseas he spent four months travelling in Egypt and Palestine (1931) and four months visiting Germany, France, Switzerland and Spain (1932). Before returning to South Africa he spent six months working in the office of H.Th. Wijdeveld in Amsterdam and two months at Cavaliere in the south of France at the Academie Européenne Méditerranée. This was started in 1933 with Wijdeveld as the Principal and Erich Mendelsohn and Amédée Ozenfant as co-directors. (Thornton White 1934) Policansky returned to South Africa in 1934 and worked in Johannesburg for more than six months in the offices of Cook & Cowen and of Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner. He returned to Cape Town in 1935 where he set up practice. Among his first buildings was the CTC Bazaars in Plein St, Cape Town (1936), won in a limited entry competition, his design being described by a contemporary source as streamlined. The following year he was engaged on several buildings. These buildings were the first of a series that, in the years to follow, were to include some of the finest works of architecture at the Cape. Policansky evolved a style, which, although recognising overseas inspiration, was in many ways highly personal; its smooth surfaces and generally rounded forms constitute an architecture softer than the crisp angular buildings of the Transvaal. Of the early period up to 1937 in Cape Town, Policansky is the only one to rank with the more influential architects of the modern movement in South Africa.

The Judge Clothing Factory at Salt River (1937) attracted more attention, *'fresh in its method of functional expression ... the author of the design is obviously indulging in that architecture of adventure which is dear to the hearts of all those who have respect for the imaginative and constructive capacity underlying all creative work'* (AB&E Jul 1938:12-13).

Policansky was among the avant-garde architects working in the Cape Town in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1941, early in the Second World War he closed his office and worked for the Cape Town Municipality. He re-opened his practice after the war and among his post-war work executed House Policansky, Bantry Bay (1947) and the synagogue, Schoonder St, Gardens (1947); the Van der Stel Building, Berg St (1953); Wynberg Shopping Centre, Main Rd, Wynberg (1954); the Nedbank Building, Buitenkant St (1962); Westlake Technical High School for Public Works Department (1968) and amongst his last works building(s?) for Country Fair Foods at Fisantkraal. He appears to have retired in 1975. Drawings donated to UCT School of Architecture in 1986.

ARIBA 1935; ISAA 1934; FRIBA 1945. (ARIBA nom papers (1935) 5774; FRIBA nom papers (1945) Herbert 1975; Isilili samsise Afrika 1(1) Oct 1977:45-63, article by P Righini; Rennie 1978b

### BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

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1909	Born Cape Town on the 6 <sup>th</sup> December
1927	Matriculated Grey High School, Port Elizabeth.
1928	Worked under J. Lonstein, the supervising architect of the Alhambra Theatre.
1929	School of Architecture, UCT, 1st year- Prof. Gregory
1930	School of Architecture, Liverpool, 2 <sup>nd</sup> year- Prof. Reilly
1931	School of Architecture, Liverpool, 3 <sup>rd</sup> year- Prof. Reilly
1932	Worked in Spain for the Madrid Municipality
1933	School of Architecture, Liverpool-5 <sup>th</sup> year- graduated B.Arch with Honours in Design.
1934	Worked in Amsterdam for HTh Wijdeveld & at Cavaliere in the S of France at the Académie Européenne Méditerranée. Returned to South Africa Worked for Cooke & Cowen in Johannesburg for 4 months Worked for Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner for 3 months
1935	Opens own practice in Cape Town

After he retired he moved to Adelaide in Australia. He had two daughters living there. His wife Doreen died in 1990 and he remarried thereafter. He developed Alzheimer's disease and died at the age of 93 in 2003. (Information received from his daughter Sandy Policansky)

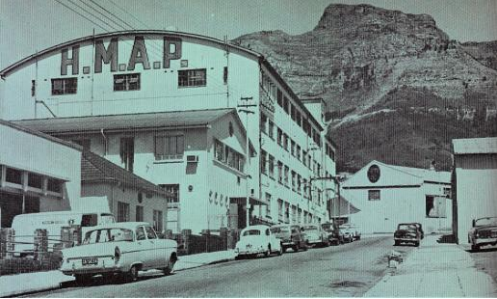


### PROJECTS

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- 1936
- Standard Bakery, 58 Canterbury St. District 6 (demolished)
  - Won competition for CTC Bazaars, cr. Plein & Longmarket St. Worked in association with P. Rogers Cooke.

- CTC Reserve Store, Commercial St. (demolished)
  - 12 Flats for Nathan, Cr. Main Rd & Stellenberg Ave. Kenilworth
- 1937
- Project- Flats for Dr. AH Gool, Buitenkant St
  - Judge Clothing Factory, Victoria Road, Woodstock
  - Elite Printing Works, 60 Roeland St. (demolished)
  - Hotel Irene, Main Road, Rondebosch (Project)
- 1938
- Cavalla Cigarette Factory, Victoria Road, Salt River
  - Corrugated Cardboard Factory, Maitland
  - Odeon Cinema & Thelma Court Flats, Regent St., Sea Point
  - Alterations to Jewish Orphanage, Montrose Ave., Oranjezicht
  - Garage for Stern, Getz & Joffe Lots 87/89 Hope St.
- 1939
- Bergers Warehouse, cr. Green & Keerom St.
  - Messaris Warehouse, 70 Sir Lowry Rd Woodstock
  - Mortuary Building, Pinelands Jewish Cemetery
  - Offices & flat for Cape Town Jewish Congregation, Hatfield St.
- 1940
- Cliffside Flats, Victoria Rd., Bantry Bay (completely changed)
  - Herzberg Mullne Ltd., Alts & Adds to Factory: woodlands Rd Woodstock
- 1941
- Herzberg Mullne Products, New Factory, Mowbray Rd. Maitland.
  - Alts. & Adds. for M. Cohen: 92 Main Rd Mowbray
  - African Underwear Manufacturers, Barnet St. (Fees dispute in April 1941: Ref:CA/A1659/1/8)
- Closed offices to work for the City Council
- 1944
- House for Mr. Daitsh, Avenue Francaise, Fresnaye
- 1945
- Invincible Furniture Factory, N'dabeni
  - House for HH Liebreich, Durbanville.
- 1946
- Jaymore Factory, Brickfield Road, Salt River
  - Factory for IL Back (Club Shirts), Voortrekker Rd., Parow
  - Lamson Paragon offices, Main Road, Observatory
  - Ackerman's Department Store, Parow
- 1947
- House Policansky, Bantry Bay (demolished 2005)
- Synagogue, Schoonder St., Gardens (demolished)
- 1948
- Holiday Camp for Cape Jewish Orphanage, Muizenberg
- 1949
- Reduction Plant, Saldanha Bay
- SBH Cotton Mills, Evans Avenue, Epping
- 1950
- Silver Leaf Bakery, Maitland
- Abelsohn Offices, Sir Lowry Road, Woodstock
- Invincible Factory complex, Malherbe St, Elsie's River (now Jordan Shoes)
- Flats for Ackermans in Claremont
- Shop for Mink Bros., Victoria Road, Woodstock
- Adelphi Garage, Sea Point
- 1951
- Leaf Store for Cavalla Cigarettes, Kensington
- Harper Builders Factory, Salt River
- Western Steel Factory, Epping
- 1952
- Atlantic House, Longmarket St., CT
- 1953
- Holiday House, Hermanus
- Van der Stel Building, Burg St.
- 1954
- Wynberg Shopping Centre, Main Road, Wynberg
- SAA Distributing Warehouse, Albert Road, Woodstock
- 1957
- Store & depot for Helfet Tyres, Salt River
- Shell Filling Station, Fish Hoek
- 1958
- Extension to Nugget Shoe Polish, N'dabeni
- 1959
- Warehouse & distribution centre for Fig Bros., Beac Road, Woodstock
- 1962
- Nedbank Building, Buitenkant St., Cape Town
- AE Barlow Factory, 7 Bark St., Steenberg
- 1963
- Silver Leaf Bakery, Windermere
- 1968
- Westlake Technical High School, Westlake Drive, Westlake
- 1969
- IL Back Factory complex, Parow Industria
- ACA Threads Factory, Old Paarl Road, Brackenfell
- Mercantile Centre, Port Elizabeth
- 1972
- Lefic Centre for Foschini, Voortrekker Road, Parow
- 1973
- Country Fair complex, Fisantekraal.

List of buildings - 19

Building	Date	Town	Province
<b>Ackerman's Department Store</b> Parow	1946	Cape Town	Western Cape
Herzberg Mullne 	1940	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Berger's warehouse</b> cr. Green & Keerom St.	1939	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Cape Jewish Orphanage</b> Montrose Ave., Oranjezicht	1938	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Cavalla Cigarette Factory for Policansky</b> 	1938	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>Corrugated cardboard factory</b>	1938	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>SBH Cotton Mills</b> Epping 	1949	Cape Town	Western Cape
<b>CTC Bazaars Reserve Stores</b>	1936	Cape Town	Western Cape

**CTC Bazaars, won comp, with PR COOKE & Ptnrs 1936  
Plein Street**

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Elite Printing Works**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Factory for H Berwitz**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Jaymore Factory**

1946

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Flats Dr AH Gool**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Harris Cotton Mills**

1939

Harrismith

Free State

**Hotel Irene**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**House: Tahara**

1940

Cape Town

Western Cape

**L Messaris warehouse**

1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Lamson Paragon, Observatory**  
(Subsequently altered by Day & De Wet)

1946

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Mortuary Temple, Pinelands**

1939

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Odeon Cinema and Thelma Court flats**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape



**St John's Mansions**

1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Standard Bakery,  
58 Canterbury St**

1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

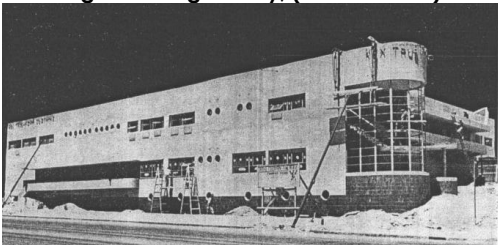


**The Judge Clothing factory, (Rex Trueform)**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Additions to ex Cavalla Cigarette bldg**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape



**House Policansky**  
Bantry Bay

1947  
(Demolished 2005)

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Invincible Factory complex, Malherbe St, Elsie's River (now Jordan Shoes)**

1950

Cape Town

Western Cape

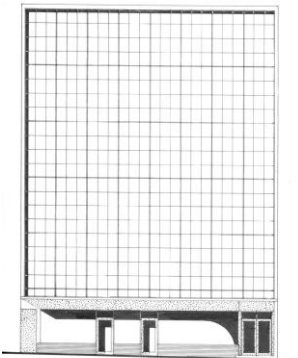


**Offices for Mr. Cohen (Project)**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape



ELEVATION TO CASTLE STREET

**Club Shirts Parow (Subsequently altered for Foschini)**

1946

Cape Town

Western Cape



**ROBERTS & SMALL**

**Started:** 1929

**Ended:** 1939

The partnership between HL ROBERTS and LL SMALL in Cape Town from 1929 to 1939; by 1939 they were in the forefront of modernism in Cape Town but an early building by them, such as Namaqua House (1930), demonstrates the compromise between tradition, in the form of Cape Dutch motifs such as the wooden-framed windows which originally had half shutters, and modern construction. A brief description of a bathroom interior for a house at Kenilworth (c1939) illustrates the interior design of the times: 'sand blasted and acid etched design representing a fountain and pool on peach-pink mirror' (SA Archt Nov 1939:289).

(Cumming-George 1933; Herbert 1975; Rennie 1978b; SA Archt Aug 1940:180, 181; SA Archt Nov 1939:289)

**SMALL, Leslie Louis**

**Born:** fl. 1927

**Died:** 1959

When Small registered with the Institute of South African Architects in 1927 he was working in the Drawing Office at the City Hall in Cape Town; he lived at Linwood, Avenue de Berrange, Fresnaye. In about 1927 he entered into partnership with HL ROBERTS, the partnership lasted until 1939 (cf ROBERTS & SMALL). He was in association with FM GLENNIE in 1940 in Cape Town. Nothing has so far been ascertained about his training. He resigned from the Institute of South African Architects in 1959.

ISAA 1927. (ISAA mem list; SAB Dec 1940:45)

**List of buildings**

Building

Date

Town

Province

**Ackerman's store**

**9 Plein St.**



1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Atkinsons Bldgs (now Brinks) for Atkinson Motors**



1933

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Avalon Flats**



1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Brimble & Briggs bldg**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Brits Investment, bldg for?**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**C Morgan & Co Bldg**

1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Cape Province Tattersall Club**

1937

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Carson & Co Bldg, alt  
cr Long & Riebeek St**

1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Chas Morgan & Co, add  
48 Wale St**

1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Dark & Howes store**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Delville Garage  
48 Kloof St**

1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Dorchester Apartments  
271 High Level Road, Sea Point**



1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**F Robb & Co bldg**

1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Farber's Garage for H Farber**  
**Dock Road**



1935

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Flats for Mrs G Probit**

1934

Cape Town

Western Cape

**GA Barnes store**

1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Herschel Court, flats**  
**Bowwood Rd. Claremont**



1936

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Holmes Motor Co**



1937

Cape Town-Salt River

Western Cape

**Holmes Motor Co Garage**  
**84 Strand St**



1934

Cape Town

Western Cape

**House Grant**

1939

Camps Bay

Western Cape

**Argyle Road, Camps Bay (last project)**

House A Tredega, alt, add

1939 Muizenberg Western Cape

**House F Sandell**

1930 Cape Town Western Cape

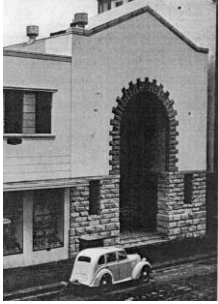
**House Machanack**

1938 Cape Town Western Cape

**House Mrs E Pilcher**

1930 Cape Town Western Cape

**Metropolitan Hall**



1938 Cape Town Western Cape

**Namaqua House**  
**Greenmarket Square**



1930 Cape Town Western Cape

**Oskop's Fertilizer Factory**

1938 Cape Town Western Cape

**Proposed flats & garages for Dr JD Wicht**

1934 Cape Town Western Cape

**Proposed flats for W Kairowsky**

1928 Cape Town Western Cape

**Royal Baking Powder Factory**

1932 Paarl Western Cape

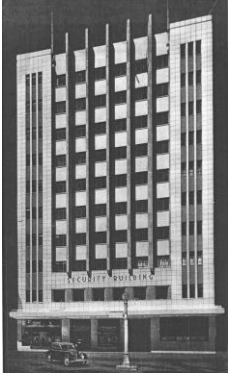
**Seacliffe Hotel, alt**

1936 Cape Town Western Cape

**Secondary School, add**

1936 Touws River Western Cape

**Security Bldgs, Exchange Place**



1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Shops, offices for Methodist Church of SA on site of Metropolitan Hall**

Burg St



1938

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Standard Bldg Soc, Exchange Place**



1939

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Williams, Hunt & Johnson**

77 Strand St



1936

Cape Town

Western Cape



**ROBERTS, Hubert Luscombe**

**Born:** 1896 01 27  
**Died:** 1961 11

Was born in Johannesburg and educated at St Andrew's College, Grahamstown. He was the son of Hubert John Roberts, 'late Imperial Government auditor' (South African Who's Who 1931-32). He was **articled** to **Baker & Kendall** in Cape Town in 1914 and also studied on his own, attending the **Michaelis Art School** in Cape Town. Later he attended classes in architecture organised by the **Cape Institute of Architects**. During his articles he enlisted and went on active service, serving with the 5th SA Infantry in German East Africa as a corporal. He completed his articles after the First World War and became a member of the Cape Institute of Architects in 1920. Roberts worked in the office of Baker & Kendall for a total of six years, two of which were taken up by war service. From about 1920 he was employed by **FM Glennie** as an improver; he was later promoted to chief draughtsman in this office. He married in April 1925 and in 1926 entered practice on his own account in Cape Town. He was in partnership with LL **Small** (cf **Roberts & Small**) from 1929 until 1939 when this partnership was dissolved. Roberts continued in practice on his own account in Cape Town; he was elected President of the Cape provincial Institute of Architects in 1940 and was nominated a Fellow of the RIBA by the RIBA Council in 1948. He died at Fish Hoek in the Cape.

ISAA 1927; FRIBA 1948. (AB&E Feb 1926:21; FRIBA nom papers (1948) 4348; ISAA mem list; SA Archt Aug 1940:180 port; SAWW 1931-32)

Publ:The Cape Provincial Institute of Architects, SAAR Mar 1941:127-30

The following list of buildings appear in his FRIBA nom papers (1948): Security Bldg, offices; Liberal Life Bldg; Namaqua House; Kimberley House; Brits Investment Showrooms/offices; Ackerman's store; Methodist Hall and offices; Seaman's Institute; Sunshine Home for TB Children; Metal Box Co (Maythams Ltd); Vereeniging Milling Co; Nugget Polish Co (in course of construction, 1948); Tiger Oats; Holmes Motor Showroom; Farber's showroom; Austin Service Station; Beaumans Ltd (in course of construction, 1948); Inshore Fisheries Ltd; Surfcrest Flats; Dorchester Flats (all in Cape Town).

A list of works accompanied the profile on Roberts on the occasion of his becoming President of the CPIA in 1940: Liberal Life Insr Bldg, Security Bldg, Michelsen's, Empire Steam Laundry, Holmes Motor Service Station, Villa Capri Flats, Milton Court.

[Entry extracted from electronic document lodged by Joanna Walker in the archives of the Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria]

**LIST OF BUILDINGS -**

<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Province</u>
<b>Flats: The Cotswolds Cr. Indian &amp; Salisbury Roads, Kenilworth</b>	1940	Cape Town	Western Cape
			
<b>House</b>	pre-1940	Cape Town	Western Cape

**Michelsens**

1926

Cape Town

Western Cape



**SA Liberal Life Assr Co Ltd Bldg**

1926

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Scottish Tube & Co of SA Head Office**

1939

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Steenberg, reconstruction**

pre-1940

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Sunshine Home**

1940

Cape Town

Western Cape

**Villa Capri flats**

pre-1940

Cape Town

Western Cape



## WHITE, Leonard William Thornton

**Born:**

1901

06

16

**Died:** 1965 10 25

Thornton White was appointed the **first professor of Architecture at the University of Cape Town** in 1937. He was born in Uppingham in Rutland, England to Robert Thornton White & Agnes C. Barker, and educated at Uppingham School in Rutland where his father was teaching. In 1916 his father's ill health and death in 1917 precipitated TW (as he was later known) into his training as an architect. From 1916 he was articled to Dr **John Bilson**, FRIBA, FSA, FSI in Hull where he remained until 1920. 1922 accepted by RIBA as student. Placed first in the RIBA Intermediate Examination & placed first in the RIBA final examination, and Ashpita! prize 1927. He was successively an assistant to **Horth & Andrew** for 2½ years, **Blackmore Sykes & Co** for 3½ years, and Dr Bilson, all of Hull, between 1920 and 1927. It was Bilson who seems to have had the most formative influence on TW's approach to his profession: *'the standard of my master, who I learned to respect highly, was inhumanely high ... made a big impression on me'* (Cape Times 12.2.1939). TW was placed first in the intermediate examinations for the RIBA and first in the Empire in his final RIBA examination; he commenced practice in 1926 in Hull, designing several houses in Hull and at Hessle and Kirkella in Yorkshire. Later in 1927 he left to work in London where he was responsible for the design of several houses in Hampstead, Putney, Chelsea and Gidea Park and for the reconstruction of a fourteenth century cottage at Lavenham in Suffolk. For two years (1927-1928) he studied as a postgraduate student at the **Bartlett School of Architecture** at London University, studying under **Beresford Pite** and was awarded the **Soane Medallion** and **Rome Bursary** as a Henry Jarvis student in 1928. He married at about this time and studied in Europe from his base in Rome from 1928 until 1930 when he returned to London.

He was an honorary lecturer at Hull College of Art in 1930. He was advised to try for a lecturing post at the **Regent Street Polytechnic School of Architecture, Surveying and Building**. Having obtained the post in September 1930, he, under D. Humphrey, brought the unrecognised school up to recognition standards of the RIBA, embarking on his own practice in London at the same time. He carried out a variety of designs during these years including the RIBA stand at the Schoolboys' Exhibition (1936) and the RIBA stand at the Anti-Noise League Exhibition (1935) and was responsible for the decoration scheme for the final dance held at the RIBA Building at 9 Conduit St before the move to the Institute's new building in Portland Place. He also designed the sports pavilion at King's School, Canterbury, a hotel at Weybridge and various ghosting works. He contributed *'about 75000 words a year to various professional papers: the RIBA and Architectural Association crits, review and weekly commentary, current Architectural Affairs'* (FRIBA nom papers 1937). From 1934-36 he wrote a weekly commentary on current architectural affairs to the *Architects' Journal*. He was appointed vice-principal of the Architectural Association in London in September 1934 where he remained *'with a steadily growing practice in Bedford Square'* (Cape Times 25 Feb 1939) when he applied for the post of the chair in Architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1936. As referees he gave, among others, the names of Goodhart-Rendel and Grey Wornum, who said that *"his well-balanced mind has enabled him to understand and lead the younger students in a most admirable way, curbing their excesses without discouraging their initiative or enthusiasm"*. (Wornum letter dated 5.09.1936) L. H. Bucknell, an external examiner at the Regent Street Polytechnic and Professor R.C. Carrington, head of the Classical Department at Dulwich College completed the number, the latter writing glowingly, that he was *"struck with his great capacity for lucid exposition and his ability to put the modern architectural viewpoint with conviction and good sense"*. (Letter dated 12 September 1936). He was interviewed at South Africa House on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1936, and received confirmation on the 29<sup>th</sup> December that he had been awarded the post.

TW's status in Britain is interesting, and he was well known amongst modernist architects. Following his appointment, he received letters of congratulations from Grey Wornum saying that it was a *"great advantage to many AA students to have you in Cape Town, forming a link between Bedford Square and South Africa"*. (Letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1936). Erno Goldfinger wrote to congratulate him in the name of *"the International Reunion and myself"*. (Letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> Jan 1937) and Serge Chermayeff, who was at that stage practising as Erich Mendelsohn & Serge Chermayeff, wrote saying that he would *"miss certain familiar Astragal notes and our pleasant and our all too rare meetings at the RIBA- but still you are less likely to be gassed in Cape Town"*. (Letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1937). William Holford wrote, *"As one of those damned colonials myself I am awfully glad that they had the sense to appoint someone who will demand a high standard and work to get it. I know Cape Town well, and its balmy climate, and its cups of tea, and its procrastinating burghers and all the lovely surroundings. And now I shall look forward to a gradual improvement in its architectural conscience- which has not been lively for the past two centuries"*. (Letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> Jan 1937)

Thornton White arrived in Cape Town to take up his chair in 1937. It was a post for which there had been some competition, from Rex Martienssen among others. His inaugural address was published in the South African Architectural Record in June 1937 (pp267-75) and, as Herbert remarks (1975:178) his *'attitude was essentially straightforward, reasonable, and sensible. It was not inflammatory of students' hearts or minds, nor did it pander to the nostalgic prejudices of the traditionalists'*. TW approached his task with enthusiasm. He proposed part-time classes for the benefit of students employed in architects' offices who were unable to take full-time courses, and a refresher course was projected for practising architects and their assistants. Both courses were no doubt proposed in response to enquiries. He was responsible for moulding the structure and spirit of the Cape Town School of Architecture, the second school of architecture to be founded in South Africa after that at the University of the Witwatersrand. TW made himself acquainted with South African architecture very soon after his arrival and the collection of photographs of modern buildings of the Transvaal, taken by him in about 1940 and now preserved among his papers in the University of Cape Town library, shows his selective and appreciative eye for the architecture of his time.

Many of these photographs have notes on the back and would probably have been used for teaching. He continued to practice, a necessity upheld by the RIBA to keep architects abreast of developments and avoid degeneration into textbook teaching. A lover of good living and a keen teacher, he would assure his students that life was more important than architecture; his energy and enthusiasm was appreciated by several generations of architecture students. He frequently spoke out in the journals about educational matters in architecture and was particularly concerned with the lack of public awareness of the urban environment. His interest in town planning, a topical concern, led to the foundation of

the Town Planning course at the School of Architecture, at the University of Cape Town and before long (c1947) the School of Architecture was renamed the School of Architecture and Town Planning.

In 1947 he was invited to design a layout for Nairobi, Kenya. The plan was accepted and forms the basis of the current layout of Nairobi. It seems that VS Rees-Poole collaborated on this work. The British Government also requested Thornton White to act as Town Planner for Mombasa, Kenya, and for Port Louis, Mauritius. In South Africa he advised on the layout of the Cape Town Foreshore plan, which was strongly criticised by the architect Francis Lorne at the time, and was concerned with a number of other projects. He practised on his own and also in partnership with Owen Pryce-Lewis and Jock Sturrock. (Thornton White, Pryce Lewis & Sturrock until 1955). His final practice was Thornton White & Dyzel, when he was in partnership with his son-in-law.

Among the private works undertaken by TW was a house for the sculptor I Mifford Barberton at Bantry Bay (c1939) and TW's own house, Green Valley in Constantia c1940. The latter was reviewed in the South African Architectural Record (Dec 1943:301-4) and was mentioned by Herbert (1975 229 ill) as a noteworthy modern building in Cape Town. Other buildings with which he was concerned in Cape Town were the Wool Board Building (1949?) and the Centlivres Building (1952?) for the University of Cape Town, intended to provide accommodation for the Faculties of Sociology and of Architecture.

Thornton White suffered from poor health from the early 1960s and retired from the School of Architecture early in 1965. He was appointed architectural consultant to the University by the University Council, but died in Cape Town after a period of severe illness late in 1965.

Thornton White assisted in establishing international recognition of the School of Architecture.

**List of buildings - 32**

<u>Building</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Province</u>
<b>Conwright House, Kenilworth Cr Gibson, Marlowe &amp; Sheerness Rds.</b>	1938	Cape Town	Western Cape



**Green Valley, Constantia (Own house)**

Cape Town Western Cape

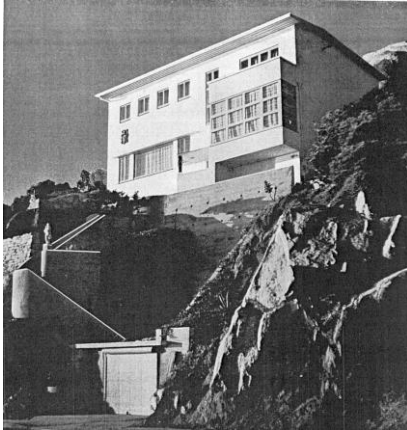


**House I Mifford Barberton**  
**Rocky Malcoff, 67 Victoria Road Bantry Bay**

1940

Cape Town

Western Cape



**Cape Town Foreshore Scheme** (with F. Longstreth Thompson)

1940

Cape Town

Western Cape

**SASKO Flour mill**  
**Rondebosch**

1945

Cape Town

Western Cape



Plywoods offices Parow

Cape Town

Western Cape

Liberty Cavalcade

1944

Cape Town

Western Cape

Belle Rive farm Stellenbosch for R. Murray

Cape Town

Western Cape

House: Prof. Baxter  
 Mount Pleasant Rd., Newlands

1941

Cape Town

Western Cape

House Hill, Cr. Glencoe & Molteno Rds.

Cape Town

Western Cape

House Horwitz, Constantia

Cape Town

Western Cape

Zanddrift Industrial Est. Daljosaphat

Cape Town

Western Cape

UCT nursery buildings

Cape Town

Western Cape

Sturrock Dock

1945

Cape Town

Western Cape

Marine Terminal

Cape Town

Western Cape

Garage & Showroom Mowbray for Thompson &

Cape Town

Western Cape

Clark		
Murray House	Cape Town	Western Cape
Royal Cape Yacht Club	Cape Town	Western Cape
Bellville Town plan	Cape Town	Western Cape
Kirby House	Cape Town	Western Cape
Flats Silverman	Saldanha Bay	Western Cape
House Stern	Cape Town	Western Cape
Training College	Mauritius	
Government School	Mauritius	
Fish Hoek Town Plan	Fish Hoek	Western Cape
House Hardman	Cape Town	Western Cape
Shops & Flats for Church Board	Knysna	Southern Cape
House Rosteuscher	Cape Town	Western Cape
House Lamchen	Cape Town	Western Cape
House Kramer	Cape Town	Western Cape
Norwich Union	Cape Town	Western Cape
House Gossip Cannon Kopje	Blanket	Southern Rhodesia
Deciduous Fruit Board Offices	Cape Town	Western Cape
House Kurman	Cape Town	Western Cape
House von Eckenbrecher	Cape Town	Western Cape
House Coley	Cape Town	Western Cape
General Botha Naval College	Gordon's Bay	Western Cape
Prof. Brack Coaching house	Cape Town	Western Cape
Scottish Tube Co.	Cape Town	Western Cape
Derustit Cape Pty Ltd.	Cape Town	Western Cape
McFarlane House	Somerset West	Western Cape

## **BROWNLEE, Herbert John**

**Born:** 1885

**Died:** 16.06.1947

He was born in Christchurch, New Zealand. His family had Irish origins. He became an architect despite his father's wish that he should become a teacher. At the age of 21 he was already practising on his own in Gisbourne, New Zealand. In 1910 he went to London where he entered the offices of **Sir Bannister Fletcher**. Here he also continued his studies and was elected as an Associate of the RIBA in 1912. He then went to Australia where he set up practice in Sydney and was appointed architect to the state of Queensland during the 1914-1918 War.

Brownlee was very interested in architectural education and when he came to Cape Town in 1921 to recover from a severe nervous breakdown, was persuaded by the Cape Institute of Architects to become Principal of its School of Architecture that it established in that year. He remained there for three years;

setting up in practice in 1926. In that year he was appointed a Fellow of the RIBA in recognition of his services to professional education. He served on the committee of the Cape Institute of Architects and was elected President-in-Chief of the Institute of SA Architects in 1937.

## APPENDIX 2

### LONDON TRAINED ARCHITECTS IN CAPE TOWN

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1. Ronald **Day** b1904, studied AA 1925-28
2. Raoul Lindsay **de Wet** b. 1909, studied London University (AE Richardson) 1927-32
3. Owen **Pryce Lewis** b. 1909, studied AA 1931-1933
4. Frederick (Jock) **Sturrock** b. 1913, studied AA 1933-1938
5. Leonard **Thornton White** studied at the Bartlett, 1927-8
6. Charles **Walgate**, b. 1886, studied at the Royal College of Art, 1907-09

### LIVERPOOL TRAINED ARCHITECTS IN CAPE TOWN

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1. William **Gregory** b.1895, studied 1914-16, 1919-21
2. Alan **Johnson** b1907, studied: 1929-30
3. Brodrick **Lightfoot** b. 1905, studied: 1925-29
4. Brian **Mansergh** b. 1897, studied 1921-22
5. AL **Meiring** studied 1928-32(?)
6. Ian **McGillivray** b. 1901, studied: 1922-27
7. David Francois Hugo **Naude** b.1905, studied 1928-3
8. Max **Policansky** b.1909, studied 1929-33