

URBANFARMVILLE: AN EXHIBITION OF IMPERFECTION

Nosiphiwo Mgoduka

The walls were lined with three weeks' worth of progress in the space Workshop 1 occupied. One could see the tireless effort and hard work put into the process of taking ideas, conceptualising them on paper and then finally creating models that depicted those very ideas.

NMMU's own architecture lecturers Ronald Flint and Barry Bradley as well as graduate Simon De Vries assisted Raul Pantaleo and found the experience enriching.

Bradley portrayed Pantaleo as 'very big on participation'. He said they managed to get the students to participate; clearly, since all the work on display was created by them. Bradley believed the students learned a lot through the process.

Flint described the Italian architect as respectful of the NMMU staff and students he worked with. "He is a very experienced architect and teacher, and he has lots to offer honestly," Flint said. Pantaleo took the time to learn about South African architecture- from the shacks to the city halls.

De Vries said getting to work with award-winning Pantaleo was a big honour and an experience of a life-time. His duty was to assist the students in the designing and to be their guide. Through this project he scored future international opportunities in the field. Together they led the group of students to the exhibition of their labours.

Titled 'Urbanfarmville', the objective of their project was to integrate micro-farming into everyday life and communities. When asked how the idea came about, Pantaleo simply said it was a brilliant idea of thinking how a city could develop and a manner to reflect on our lives and thinking of the future. He went on to say that going back to small sized communities that were self-efficient was the grand idea of living in the future through urban farming, therefore creating a different kind of society.

Participant and student Christopher Branfield said he found the weeks spent in the workshop very exciting. In his own words, he felt their group did well "to redesign a city with a different aspect of the mind".

4th year architecture students patrolled the area, inspecting and praising the work of their juniors.

By the time the welcoming speech was made, the room was already abuzz with excitement at the models being exhibited. The invited architects were given a turn at the podium. Pantaleo told the crowd of his endeavour to share the experience of a participatory process which included teaching his students the importance of public speaking abilities. With that, a few students came forward to summarise the aim of their workshop.

After the ceremony of words, everyone shared a bite, a drink and thoughts. In the words of Raul Pantaleo, it truly was an 'exhibition of imperfection'.



The NMMU School of Architecture International Workshops 2014 was a collaboration between the international architects and the NMMU Architecture lecturers. It was organised by Arch. Ernst Struwig.

Workshop 1: Arch. Raul Pantaleo, Tamassociatti, Venice, Italy; Arch. Donald Flint, NMMU; Arch. Barry Bradley, NMMU and Simon de Vries, NMMU.

Workshop 2: Prof. Arch. Renato Rizzi, University luav of Venice, Italy; Arch. Ernst Struwig, NMMU; Arch. Jean-Pierre Basson, NMMU and Theodor de Goede, NMMU.

Workshop 3: Prof. Arch. Stephen Read, Tu Delft, Netherlands; Arch. John Andrews, NMMU, Dr. Arch. Magda Minguzzi, NMMU and Mamohau Khemi, NMMU.

Workshop 4: Prof. Arch. Ora Joubert, University of Free State, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa; Arch. Stephen Lear, NMMU and Arch. Mark Hardman, NMMU.

DIGGING DEEP TO CONSTRUCT

Marc Jacobson

Workshop 2 executed the little time they had remaining in their international workshop programme in which they completed the project phase. Students worked in their groups on Wednesday 19th February to build the design model components of both the wide spectrum of land and the building structures involved.

This project dealt with a lot of natural earth and the concentration of ground for plans in extreme excavation and construction. This complies with the actual museum, greenhouse and tunnel-way structures that need close focus, accuracy and precision in the designing. The contour layer models presented a full physical grasp of the entire surrounding environment of the valley and the elevated plateau that resides it.

Architecture student, Tapiwa Gune commented that, "[t]he models that we have built from the start of the workshop had formed a transition from a far view and then gradually zooming in", "[f]irst we built the contours, which was a far view of the landscape, now we building specifics within the area – the buildings, parks and tunnel-ways," he added.

This transition creates a sustainable approach to the project of embedding an applicable grasp of the surroundings when dealing with excavation, extending building space and design layouts.

An example of such specifics showcases that there are plans for a certain perimeter of land surrounding the museum which is going to be dug out and excavated, 18-metres into the earth, along with 18-metre trees and vegetation planted in this deep concave. The objective is to make the gallery look like its floating in mid-air when viewing the structure from the road, whilst the excavated area is aimed in creating extra exhibition space for the art gallery.

There are also designs of open-air ramps stretching from the greenhouse on the one side of St. Georges Park to the museum on the other side of the park. Another open-air ramp is then planned to stretch from the museum to the edge of the Baakens Valley, overlooking the bowl landscape.

"Each group is building a design model that has different components, but all of these components link together and join together at the end to form a single project or idea," said Tapiwa.

The contours that were initially built were referred to as contextual models (to give thorough context of the area) and the models that they are currently busy with are referred to as the design models. The design models are singular parts, sections and/or sub-sections of an overall structure/building or piece of land that have been broken down in order to regurgitate the pure 'building blocks' and resources that have moulded these formations.

Gaining the knowledge of these concealed inner formations will educate designers as to how the structures should be built and how obstacles can be planned around it.

"There are four different design models that the class is building, all focusing on different aspects," said Karel Prinsloo, First Year Architectural student. "The different models do not physically reflect exactly how the structure will be built on land, they reflect parts of it," he reiterated.



Prof Renato Rizzi explains the results of workshop 2 to an intrigued crowd with Dr. Melanie Hillebrand and Ms. Emma O'Brien from the NMM Art Museum.

ACROSS

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NMMU SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS 2014

Special Edition | 28 February 2014

ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION SHOWCASES IMPRESSIVE TALENT

Thembakazi Mbobela

On 21 February the School of Architecture hosted its final day of the international workshops and the final models exhibited were the culmination of three weeks of hard work.



Donald Flint (Top Left) and three students from Raul Pantaleo's workshop admire the completed model that took them three weeks to plan and build.

Prior to the start of the event which was scheduled to begin at 12pm, students, NMMU professors, the visiting professors and assistants walked around the Architecture studio putting final touches to models and discussing some of the work already on display. The room was filled with excited murmurs from mostly the students as they proudly showed off the work they have been working on with the school's lecturers and visiting professors.

Just before noon more people arrived including the Head of Department of the School of Architecture, Mr Boban Varghese who looked at the models, projects and even a video clip in Prof Stephen Read's workshop detailing the transport situation in Port Elizabeth.

During the event, many of the speakers expressed how the workshops were a tremendous success and that the whole experience was magnificent. "My mind is a blank, this has been a remarkable experience", said Mr Boban Varghese. He thanked the international architects for engaging the students and hoped to make the workshops an annual event.

The president of the Eastern Cape Institute of Architects, Tim Hewitt-Coleman, praised the students and the workshops on their hard work and said these workshops helped students with their depth of critical thinking and strategizing.



Dr. Arch. Magda Minguzzi, Prof. Arch. Stephen Read, Arch. John Adrews and Mamohau Khemi.

Before declaring the exhibition open, he said these workshops produced ideas that were a way to rebuild Africa. He left students with a final question: "As a student, would you like to be recognised as the person who made a difference? Or by the difference you made?"

All of the visiting professors were asked to say a few words on their experience of working with the students of NMMU and their presence in Port Elizabeth. Prof. Ora Joubert spoke about the mess of the past and trying to fix the mess of the future today. Prof. Renato Rizzi did not have much to say but thanked the Architecture department and his students for the opportunity to work with them.

Raul Pantaleo let his group of students explain the vision of their workshops which was uplifting the PE community and providing security for areas by using the community itself. There was also a lovely surprise performance by second year students Luvuyolwethu Mjulen and Angezwa Ngudle.

The final visiting professor to speak, Prof. Stephen Read said the school of Architecture needed to be thanked for an impressive project. "It has been a privilege and top experience being at NMMU", he added.

He also spoke about the important factor of knowing one's territory; he had no knowledge of PE, but the opportunity to go out and speak to people helped the mobility workshop. Prof. Read also congratulated his students on doing a sterling job and said the public work they did is something they should really be proud of and said he hoped to come back again.

The Acting Director of architecture Nicola Darke said she hoped to make the workshops an annual event and thanked everyone for their dedication to the project and handed the visiting professors gift bags from the department.



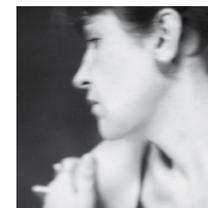
A collage of everyone who participated in or contributed to Raul Pantaleo's workshop.

The final speaker of the exhibition Mr Ernst Struwig thanked NMMU, the visiting professors, the staff and students for making the workshops possible.

LAST WEEK TO EXHIBITION PROMISING

Mary Jane Mphahlele

Workshop 4 focusing on the development of Port Elizabeth Life Saving Club House was held by Prof Ora Joubert from the University of Free State.



Prof. Arch. Ora Joubert.

This workshop attended by second year architecture technology students focused on adding final touches to their model of the PE Life Saving Club House which was presented at the final exhibition on Friday 21 February.

Prof Joubert encouraged students to make minor changes to their model and also use different materials. The model inspection was intended to accurately examine if student's models were ready for exhibition. Prof Joubert also encouraged students to use materials such as tinsel instead of concrete, stating that concrete is cheap and less attractive whereas tinsel is beautiful and also of good quality.

Kay-leigh Tobbell, a third year master's architectural technologist student who is working on the model of the PE Life Saving Club house at King's Beach, said these workshops have taught them a lot: "they (the workshops) are sort of an ice breaker because they prepare us to work with clients and work for them. They also get us experience of designing and how to deal with clients and group ethics."

It All Comes Together

Angelique Hawes

After many late nights and early mornings, excitement filled the air within the architecture building where students scrambled to complete projects they had been working on these last few weeks. Looking around you could see an abundance of talent. Boys and girls of different ages all so passionate about their work and what they hope to one day create.

As the week comes to a close, unfortunately so do our international workshops here at NMMU. It has been almost three weeks since the ceremony which welcomed our international visitors, who came to South Africa to transfer their knowledge to young architect students willing to learn and communicate in return.

20 February was the day before everything came to end and busy students filled the hallways and rooms of the architecture building where they were all working on projects to showcase at the final exhibition.

The student's work seem to be of a very high standard and it appears that all the different workshops have indeed paid off.

These workshops were the first of their kind here in South Africa and we here at NMMU are so proud to have been able to introduce them and look forward to many more to come.



A Scale model of the project the students have been working on.

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International Architecture Workshops 2014 Draw to a Close.

Amir Chetty



Arch Donald Flint (Left) and Arch Raul Pantaleo, giving students context.

Last week saw the final days of the 2014 International Architecture Workshops as they edged closer to their end. Nearly a month ago this event started with hundreds of excited students from the School of Architecture raring to go and learn from some of the best professors in the field of architecture from all across the world.

Wednesday, 19 February, was the last official day afforded to students to work on their models for the IAW 2014. This was the final stage of production for this project. Students had been working tirelessly over the past fortnight to ensure that everything was ready for the exhibition, which took place on Friday, 21 February. Workshop one, led by Arch Raul Pantaleo and assisted by Arch Donald Flint focused on specific site upgrades on the Mermaid's Precinct area.

This particular area is steeped in history as this is the area from where the city of Port Elizabeth had its humble beginnings. It is for this reason that this area is considered a very important part of the city. This area incorporates a portion of Central Hill as well as being joined to Donkin Street, Belmont Terrace, Russell Road and Chapel Street. It is here where the city's heritage is rooted on the coast of South Africa. The very essence of Port Elizabeth is uniquely captured in this specific area thus making it unique from any other city in the country. This area also has an extremely important role to play in attracting tourism to the Bay and thus there is a need for the urban conservation of this area.

The upgrades planned for the Mermaid's Precinct area are intended to make living conditions in the affected area better for society to co-exist in and prosper.

Students of workshop one had begun the day putting some final touches to their models in preparation for Friday's exhibition. According to Arch Pantaleo, "one never really succeeds in achieving a completely perfect model, but rather the objective is to maintain the accuracy of all elements of the model."

Groups were formed and each given a section of the planning to handle. One of the areas that needed planning is known as the 'Sustainable Mobility Model'. In this model groups were tasked with planning and mapping out transportation routes, i.e. Bicycle routes and also Convergence routes which will aid in connecting the precinct to other parts of the city. A heritage trail will also be designed and implemented within the precinct, this route will also run through and around the heritage site The Donkin Reserve. The aim of this project is to improve facilities in the area through urban conservation by looking at various factors in the area which are in need of an upgrade.

In creating this model, students needed to determine which resources were already present in the area and then divide these between 3 categories: Physical, Natural and Social resources. Students who had completed their models then had to have their plans of the project printed in A3 format and stuck on the display wall in the design studio where the workshop was being conducted. The ground floor of models also had to be put in AutoCAD form for printing purposes. Students were in a mad rush to finish their models as they had to start setting up for the exhibition.

According to Arch Pantaleo, spray-painting of models would not be done for two reasons; firstly because it does not promote the notion of being environmentally friendly and secondly because using spray paint would highlight even the slightest imperfections on the model.

The final task of this workshop will be to create a booklet of all the work that has been done in this workshop. This booklet will contain everything from the early planning stages of each model, to pictures of each model throughout the production of the models as well as printed versions of each drawing used to design those models and finally pictures of the finished product.

"One never really succeeds in achieving a completely perfect model, but rather the objective is to maintain the accuracy of all elements of the model."

And the real work begins.....

Babalwa Mtenganya

After countless hours of intensive lectures, talks from international delegates, site visits and architectural theory, students from the school of architecture at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University taking part in the International Workshops had the opportunity to put what they learnt into practice by creating their own architectural pieces.

Architectural students ranging from first to third year were placed into groups of two and had to work together to create their own big project.

After completing their own projects, these students were tasked with presenting their work to one of the professors in-charge of each workshop.

After all the hard work endured by the students, they will practice what they have been taught in the past few weeks by the Professors from abroad including; Prof Renato Rizzi and Raul Pantaleo.

Italian Architect Raul Pantaleo with one of the Architecture students during the presentation phase.



port elizabeth: going forward