

Chapter 3: “A Better World Through Creativity:” Interiors without Walls and Design

Indaba, South Africa

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The possibility of creating an interior without walls first came to my attention whilst researching material on informal settlement. It took the form of a new museum initiative, the, subsequently, highly acclaimed Design Museum Dharavi, a mobile museum for a “slum” area of Mumbai.¹ (Fig. 3.1) That such a space might be an example of a new – and legitimate – typology was confirmed by becoming aware of New York’s +POOL which, to quote its website is “a plus-shaped, water-filtering, floating swimming pool... making it possible for New Yorkers and its visitors to swim in clean river water.”² (Fig. 3.2) Both the Mumbai and the New York spaces create an “interior” in the exterior, or open air. As someone thinking and writing about design on the African continent, and in South Africa in particular, however, there was another compelling connection between what appeared to be different initiatives: both had been highlighted for commentary by the Cape Town-based digital platform, Design Indaba (DI).³ While the following discussion demonstrates the complexity of architectural design issues in the equally complex country that is South Africa, it examines the significance of various sites in which “the wall” is either made permeable or dispensed with altogether, why this should be a valuable trope for a generation-old democracy, and DI’s significance in this context. The discussion relies on the premise that it is possible to adopt

¹ The brainchild of Amanda Pinathi and Jorge Mañes Rubio, the museum was specifically designed to showcase local craft-design skills through providing an accessible exhibition space. A key aim was to highlight the power of design as a tool to promote social change and innovation. See J. Mañes Rubio, A. Pinathi et al, *Design Museum Dharavi* (Amsterdam: The Future Publishing and Printing, 2016).

² + POOL was conceived in 2010 by four friends: Archie Lee Coates IV and Jeff Franklin of the design firm PlayLab and Dong-Ping Wong and Oana Stanescu of the architecture firm Family. Future Architecture, +POOL, accessed 16th October, 2019, <http://futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/323fe17e-b041-4b8b-b4fd-a61fb861d3ca/>

³ The isiXhosa / isiZulu word *indaba* means gathering or meeting and, throughout this chapter, it is also used to suggest a meeting of minds.

the neologism “roomness” to describe spaces that are not traditionally walled interiors. The designs chosen to exemplify roomness are based upon how well they convey a sense of being *contained within and enclosed by* a space.

The founding of DI and its subsequent activities are both reflective of and responsible for a reappraisal and revivifying of South Africa’s art and design landscape. Furthermore, in championing South African art, architecture, and design, alongside its positioning of South Africa at the forefront of pan-African creative energy, DI has contributed much to fostering a new national creative psychology in which - in contrast with the political, economic and social past, barriers both physical and metaphorical, might be removed.

In an effort not to repeat the problematic descriptions of South Africa according to the outsider’s gaze (first colonial, now more global, but still colored by the local and recent past), much of the information pertaining to the case studies presented here has come, at least in the first instance from DI’s own pages, from conversations with the DI team in their Cape Town office, and from those involved in instigating or designing the initiatives highlighted.⁴ In their chapter in *Designing Worlds*, University of Pretoria, Visual Arts Department academics, Jacques Lange and Jeanne van Eeden remark:

There is to date very little published research and writing about South African design history.[⁵] One of the main obstacles has been dealing with the legacy of forty years of apartheid censorship (1950 to 1990) that banned and destroyed a vast array of visual culture in the interests of propaganda and national security...This paucity of material is aggravated by the general lack of archival and documentary evidence, not just of the

⁴ My discussions are also experiential in that commentary on each site arises from having spent time there and are offered (at the risk of returning to a view according to an outsider’s perspective) as an attempt to provide a richer description and to observe DI’s vision for each site in action, matching expectation against consumption taking place “in the now.”

⁵ Dipthi Baghat’s work provides an exception; see for example, *The Poetics of Belonging and the Performance of White South African Identity, 1886-1936* (London: London University Press, 2002) and “Designs on/in Africa,” in *Designing Worlds: National Histories in and Age of Globalization*, eds., Kjetil Fallan and Grace Lees-Maffei (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016). The British Museum’s exhibition *South Africa: The Art of a Nation* (October 2016 – February 2017) also offered a rare discussion of the subject.

struggle against apartheid, but also of the wider domain of design in South Africa.⁶ Indeed, precious little academic work has been produced around South African creative practice, an idea also forcefully addressed in Deirdre Pretorius' questioning "Does South African Design History Exist?"⁷ Seeds of conversations which offer to redress this situation have been sown. Lange and van Eeden, for example, note that conscious attempts to redress this hiatus in scholarly enquiry are becoming more noticeable as academics seek to revise historiographies and start to articulate previously silenced narratives. Nonetheless, this sea-change will take a long time before it is adequately widespread outside the academy.⁸

All too frequently, the words "Africa" and "Design," never usually considered in the same sentence, still appear to be read as being oxymoronic despite best efforts to reverse this assumption both on the African continent and abroad. One of these best efforts has been made for nearly two decades by the Cape Town-based organization Design Indaba (DI) via its journalism, collaboration, awareness-raising, business support, and education initiatives. Founded by CEO Ravi Naidoo in 1995, the organization's origins were rooted in the desire to "brand" South Africa and foster new creativity just at the moment when the country was actively reinventing itself as it emerged from the apartheid era. In 2019, DI continues to operate as a multifaceted platform with an annual conference. Through designindaba.com, an online design publication featuring "the best of the world's creativity," the organization attracts over half a million visitors each year to its website.⁹ In seeking to discuss interiors without walls, the exploration undertaken here focuses on DI's importance in terms of

⁶ Jacques Lange and Jeanne van Eeden, "Designing the South African Nation from Nature to Culture," in Fallan and Lees-Maffei, eds., *Designing Worlds*, 60

⁷ Deirdre Pretorius, "Does South African Design History Exist?," in Fallan and Lees-Maffei, eds., *Designing Worlds*, 42

⁸ Lange and van Eeden in Fallan and Lees-Maffei, *Designing Worlds*, 60

⁹ Design Indaba, "About Design Indaba", accessed 1 September 2019, <https://www.designindaba.com/about-design-indaba> .

broadcasting news about an area of interior design and architecture that deserves greater acknowledgment for its potential for inventive design, that is the “outside” interior.

Spaces without solid, tangible borders but with a strong sense of interiority exist as much in sites constructed *external* to the main framework that buildings provide as within them,¹⁰ a point also made in Penny Sparke’s *Flow* and Schneiderman and Campos’ *Interiors Beyond Architecture*.¹¹ The underlying claim here posits the potential for freedom, empowerment, creativity, and exploration within the wall-less “interior” space that eliminates the constraints of formal architecture and design. A sloughing-off of traditional structures allows for new ideas to flow. Or is it that new ideas of interior design need to flow more freely than the delimited walled-building allows?

Through providing a launching pad for conversation, DI highlights the unconventional and, according to its self-identified remit (and strapline) to help foster “A Better World Through Creativity,” it does so significantly. Many of the projects DI focuses upon are South African, from the wider continent, or in so-called developing-world communities but all are demonstrative of architectural and design-innovation for social good. In the South African context, design without boundaries could also be considered to be a metaphor, as already suggested, for post-apartheid, new and untrammelled creativity of the kind that was subject to censure and control, its practitioners literally walled-in through imprisonment, or even murdered, should they be seen to be associated with activism prior to democracy.¹² The unwalled interior, then, becomes an important trope through which to

¹⁰ The classes I teach to the Interior Design, Interior Architecture and Interior Decoration students at The Cass School of Art, Architecture and Design, London Metropolitan University argue that it is perfectly possible for an “interior” space to exist out of doors. An example is provided by the English Country Manor’s walled garden, as at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, for example, or by the Hampton Court Palace maze outside London, in Surrey.

¹¹ Penny Sparke et al, eds., *Flow* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), Deborah Schneiderman and Amy Campos, eds, *Interiors Beyond Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹² For example, Afrikaner anti-apartheid activist poet and artist Breyton Breytonbach was imprisoned between 1975 and 1982 on charges of terrorism. The activist arts collective the Medu Art Ensemble, founded in 1978, was subject to the murder of a number of its members by the South African Defence Force in 1985.

describe the power of innovation in a relatively new state which, in 2019, is only a generation into living out its new, post-apartheid constitutional agreement that all citizens should have equal freedom of political, social and creative expression.

Rather than address the historiography of design in South Africa, however, this introduction to DI and to new initiatives associated with the organization will explore the contemporary and possibilities for the future through two recent examples of “unwalled” interiors: Arch for Arch (Snøhetta, Local Studio, and Design Indaba, 2018) and the Masekela Pavilion Memorial (Adjaye Associates, 2019). The chapter closes with an exploration of the work of one of DI’s former Emerging Creatives, Max Melville, and his partnership with Ashleigh Killa through their architecture studio theMAAK.¹³ In doing so, it will argue three key points: firstly, that it is valid to examine the outdoor or external space as capable of possessing a strong sense of interiority; secondly, that Design Indaba is a vital forum for the creation and expression of contemporary South African Design; and, finally, that rising from the ashes of apartheid, South African art and design is able to free itself of conceptual and practical design constraints that might exist elsewhere, a freedom that is being championed by DI. Each of the examples mentioned has been promoted, considered, and discussed by DI. The building of Arch for Arch, for example, was organized by DI; similarly, an impetus for the creation of the Masekela Pavilion came from DI, Hugh Masekela having been a friend of both Ravi Naidoo’s and of the wider the organization, even speaking at several DI conferences.¹⁴ Having been “discovered” by DI, Max Melville and Ashleigh Killa of theMAAK remain in conversation with DI and are developing work which promises to make a significant impact on Indaba’s future reach and accessibility.

¹³ “Maak” means to make, create, do, fabricate, in Afrikaans.

¹⁴ For example, Masekela discussed his career at the 2011 DI conference with American record producer and long-time friend Stewart Levine.

Without historical context the significance and reach of Design Indaba (DI) and its role in the construction of imaginaries of the new South African creative landscape cannot be fully appreciated. Coming to power as the result of a small general election win in May 1948, the right-wing Afrikaner National Party formalized and institutionalized a political, social and economic structure of racially divisive rule - apartheid - which was to continue in this essentially one-party state until 1994. Derived from the Afrikaans word for “separateness,” a key Nationalist policy was the doctrine of racial segregation, disenfranchisement, and discrimination enforced by successive white minority governments over South Africa’s majority, black and Indian populations. As is well-known, under apartheid, the nation’s social structure was based upon a hierarchy of race and color enforced by a merciless system for the imposition of regulations.¹⁵ These affected every sphere of ordinary life, domicile, relationships, work, and education, including art and design.¹⁶

Professor Nyasha Mboti, Director of Apartheid Studies at the University of Johannesburg claims that if under apartheid, “black South Africans were being educated to become ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’ then an education in art and design was wasted;” in other words manual laborers did not need to be aesthetically informed.¹⁷ Similarly, Mboti comments that it was considered dangerous by the National Party to educate this same demographic in an intellectual engagement with aesthetics and style lest criticality and an expansive mindset develop amongst a population assumed, and quite definitely preferred, to possess neither. Professor Mboti’s reflections have academic antecedents. In a

¹⁵ The history of apartheid, is a vastly complex subject and begins long before the being institutionalised and written into the South African constitution in 1948. Nancy Clarke and William Worger’s text *South Africa. The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (New York: Routledge, 2010) remains one of the most thorough and accessible texts on the subject. Peter Henshaw and Ronald Hayman’s history of the problematic relationship between South Africa and Britain, *The Springbok and the Lion: Britain and South Africa Since the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) provides a study of post-colonial relations against the backdrop of the gathering force of the apartheid regime.

¹⁶ Harriet McKay, “Accommodating the Passenger: Design for the Union-Castle Line, 1948-1977,” PhD Thesis, Kingston University, London, 2011, British Library, EThOS DRT54267.

¹⁷ Nyasha Mboti, interview by the author, Melville, Johannesburg, 2 August, 2019.

2001 lecture, Johan Van Wyk, the director of the Johannesburg graphics and animation studio Delapse, noted the way in which access to higher education in South Africa was also subject to apartheid's racial laws: "The government also manipulated the demographics of the design profession by controlling access to tertiary education according to race. By the mid-1980s, [a mere] twelve public higher education institutions offered design education, but these were segregated according to race with few granting access to people of color."¹⁸ Moreover, where, design was practiced in South Africa prior to the advent of democracy in 1994, it could hardly be seen to be reflecting "*Africanness*" and thus refer to what was banned, exiled, and despised. Instead the global (white) north was used as a model: "The virtually exclusively white design fraternity kept their eyes firmly trained on ...Bauhaus Modernism and its attendant philosophy of form following function dictated training and practice as designers strove towards the western aesthetic."¹⁹

None of this is to repeat the all-too-often adopted suppositions (born largely from the many western colonial projects across Africa) mentioned above that little in terms of formal design ever emanated from "the Dark Continent" and that only the anthropological products of "craft"-based skills were within the "African" capabilities of its many nations citizens.²⁰ Rather, it highlights the significance of the position DI has held since its mid '90s inception in a country whose majority population was formerly deliberately excluded from engagement in design praxis.

¹⁸ Johan van Wyk, "Bladerunner Aesthetics: Order, Disorder, and the South African Graphic Image" (lecture presented at the Icofrada World Design Convergence Congress, Johannesburg, South Africa, 12–13 September 2001), 7.

¹⁹ Johan van Wyk, quoted in Lange and van Eeden, 68.

²⁰ Whilst much more flexible in approach nowadays, certain of these suppositions can be found reflected in two key national museums in the UK: the V&A and the British Museum. Founded in the 19th and 18th centuries respectively, the V&A (though it is actively seeking to redress the situation nowadays), as a museum of art and design – the designed object here meaning an object. Produced according to a plan or drawings- all but excluded "Africa;" whereas the British Museum, traditionally dedicated to the "ethnographic," has always included artefacts (that is objects not produced according to any drawings or plans) from across the African continent.

It was not simply black South Africans who were denied an art education. Doreen de Waal, former stylist at *Elle Deco South Africa*, remembered her first witnessing art education as a normal, quotidian school-related activity in 1981. “We went on our honeymoon to Holland and went to the Rijksmuseum and the Stedelijk and I remember being so envious of all those groups of students who were receiving an art education. I was from a small town of course don’t forget, but it was the same in the larger cities. Art and design just wasn’t seen to be important. Sport was *the* absolute priority for extracurricular activities.”²¹ The paucity of provision an education in art and design, even for middle-class, white children, as lamented by Doreen, stands in direct contrast and becomes all the more significant, when viewed against the present-day view of the South African government’s Department of Arts and Culture which proclaims that it: “ aims to contribute to sustainable economic development and enhance job creation by preserving, protecting and developing South African arts, culture and heritage to sustain a socially cohesive and democratic nation.”²²

With the arrival of democracy in 1994 practitioners were now free to express even political ideas without fear of reprisal. New visual languages were needed both to help shape and brand the New South Africa and also, as a corollary, to reflect its demographic diversity. As van Wyk points out, “...through the mid 1990s Colonial legacies of visual stereotyping in terms of race and national identity were found to be wanting, and a new, more inclusive and representative visual vocabulary was established that reflected and possibly helped to construct this emerging new society.”²³ Following the dismantling of the apartheid regime, the need for a new, democratic art and design vocabulary cited by van Wyk accorded entirely with the broad political leitmotiv(as being a time in which to rebuild and create) of Nelson

²¹ Doreen de Waal, interview by the author, Gardens, Cape Town, 8 August, 2019

²² South African Government, Arts and Culture, <https://www.gov.za/about-sa/arts-culture> accessed 29 December 2019 .

²³ Johan van Wyk quoted in Lange and van Eeden, 75

Mandela's five-year Presidency (1994-1999) as well as efforts towards conciliation and social inclusivity that would break down racial barriers. Although sometimes criticized for not going "far enough," this approach and the attendant amnesty opposed to retribution and retaliation against those who had upheld apartheid law also provided the cornerstone of the ethical approach of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) chaired by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (1931-).²⁴

Intended to celebrate Archbishop Tutu's 86th birthday in October 2017, Arch for Arch (as the monument is now known, named according to the fond South African nickname for the Archbishop Emeritus) (Fig. 3.3) was born of an invitation made by Cape Town Mayor Patricia de Lille to Design Indaba to help realize the monument. The interior-without-walls that is the new Cape Town monument to Tutu is appropriately, then, both an open and inviting piece of architecture and an homage to the Archbishop as leading struggle activist and peace-builder at the same time.

At its opening, Ravi Naidoo noted that:

Through the Arch, we hope to do three things: we want to celebrate the legacy and contributions of struggle hero Desmond Tutu... Secondly, we want to erect a physical monument that is not only representative of what it means to be South African, but also representative of the Constitution. Last, we hope to drive home our mission that a better world can be created through creativity.²⁵

²⁴ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up "to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The conflict during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. No section of society escaped these abuses." Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Welcome to the Official Truth and Reconciliation Commission Website", accessed 1 September, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>. Other committee members included Dr Alex Boraine (Deputy Chairperson), Mary Burton, Advocate Chris de Jager, Bongani Finca, Sisi Khampepe, Richard Lyster, Wynand Malan, Reverend Khoza Mgojo, Hlengiwe Mkhize, Dumisa Ntsebeza (head of the Investigative Unit), Wendy Orr, Advocate Denzil Potgieter, Mapule Ramashala, Dr Faizel Randera, Yasmin Sooka and Glenda Wildschut.

²⁵ Ravi Naidoo, "Celebrating the Legacy of Archbishop Desmond Tutu," accessed, 18 July 2019, <https://www.designindaba.com/articles/point-view/celebrating-legacy-archbishop-desmond-tutu> .

Tutu's Arch is situated next to St George's Cathedral. It stands at the center of the Archbishop's former Cape Town Diocese and in a space often used for public speaking – including by Tutu himself in his combatting of apartheid - at the city center entrance to the Company's Garden park.²⁶ Commissioned by DI following de Lille's overtures and sponsored by the Liberty Group South Africa (also the backers of the DI annual conference), the design for the Arch was created by the New York and Oslo-based architectural firm Snøhetta, already well-known for their creation of the 11 September Memorial Museum, New York (2011). To ensure South African input, DI linked Snøhetta with the Johannesburg firm, Local Studio. The latter's explanation of their "architecture and urbanism practice" claims a "unique perspective on the developing world," which can be seen as working in tandem with DI's vision to provide innovative, inclusive spaces appropriate to the social and constitutional ethos of the "New South Africa."²⁷

With a 9 meter-high wooden structure reminiscent of a large upturned basket, the Arch's dome, Local Studio explained, was created "...through the opposing forces pushing against one another, held together by a keystone. These structural properties emerged as a core concept for the design, where the Arch stands as a metaphor for the integrity of the country's democracy whose conceptual keystone is the Constitution of South Africa."²⁸ Rather than a metal structure that might have appeared too cage-like, a forgiving soft, warm wood that, like the Archbishop himself, would age gracefully was employed; it offers a tactile quality that invites people to interact with the structure and its 14 intertwined strands of bent wood representing the 14 chapters of the South African constitution, the preamble to which is also engraved on paving stones at the Arch's entrance. Although open to the skies,

²⁶ The cathedral is Archbishop Tutu's spiritual home, and the point from which he launched many of his anti-apartheid marches and campaigns during the 1970s and 80s.

²⁷ "Local Studio," accessed 26 August, 2019, <http://localstudio.co.za/> .

²⁸ "Arch for the Arch," accessed 26 August 2019, <http://localstudio.co.za/arch-project-post/arch-for-the-arch/> .

Arch for Arch provides a room-like space through its large enclosing, dome-shaped structure. The sense of interiority of this open structure as outdoor room is strengthened by the availability of internet connectivity within the Arch's interior, facilitating a gathering of WiFi-users in a city where not everyone has access to electricity, let alone the internet. Equally, while not providing any physical shelter, its open-lattice woodwork structure offers a protective and (because this is the much-loved Tutu's "room") comforting reminder of a democracy predicated upon racial equality and new opportunity. In this sense, the Arch recalls both DI's clarion call for design to create a better world and represents a democratization of opportunity - indicative of South Africa's willingness to push at boundaries - in terms of providing a space which is part architecture, part sculpture, and part interior. In every sense - political, social and creative - the Arch is a monument to freedom.

In a short speech at Arch for Arch's unveiling, Tutu thanked DI and the City of Cape Town for their tribute, saying how touched he and his wife Leah were by the construction of the monument. He briefly recalled local history and, importantly, his memory of being a leader of the September 1989 Peace March to which 30,000 protestors from all sectors of the community had come to the Arch's site to join forces in their aim to collapse what Tutu, pertinently, in terms of the arguments of this chapter, referred to as the "walls of unfreedom."²⁹ "Thank you, thank you, thank you," Tutu ended, "We are who we are because of you," reminding the audience of his lifelong championing of the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*.³⁰ The leading proponent of *Ubuntu*, a cornerstone of TRC ethos, Tutu has always asserted that its characteristics are embodied by any individual with the self-assurance to be affirming of others and acknowledge themselves as being part of a greater

²⁹ CD Anderson, "The Arch for the Arch: The Story Behind a Tribute to Archbishop Tutu," Brand South Africa, accessed 1 August, 2019, <https://www.brandsouthafrica.com/people-culture/people/the-arch-for-the-arch-the-story-behind-a-tribute-to-archbishop-tutu> .

³⁰ "The Arch for the Arch," Brand South Africa.

whole. These are sentiments that also describe the DI culture: in particular, its value of accessibility and its promotion of design that fosters social amelioration and inclusivity. Hopes for the structure included the desire to build a place-maker and a space where people might stop to reflect on the country, the South African Constitution, as well as whatever might be influencing their lives at a given moment. Use of the Arch is not simply seen in terms of passers-by, however. In a recent interview with the author Bev Cupido of the DI team, she mentioned how the organization initially was uncertain as to how the Arch's space might be used but was gratified to see crowds of school-children sitting under the Arch to do homework or to use their phones.³¹

On my most recent visit to the Arch (in August 2019) a choir of teenagers were busking (Fig. 3.4), with an apparently free undirected, yet unified ease and strength of energy. The volume of their voices filled the dome and hung in the air, even as they scooped up their earnings and piled into a minibus taxi. Thorsen's wish that the enclosed, protective canopy provided by Arch for Arch should occupy a place that reflects South Africa's new constitution has been realized both through representation and the aforementioned engraved quotation. More than that, it has become a space for the quotidian comings and goings of democratic South Africa.

Where Arch for Arch creates the sense of an enclosed room and nurturing interiority for Capetonians, the memorial monument for Hugh Masekela at Westpark Cemetery (David Adjaye Architects, 2018) in Johannesburg creates a space that is even more complex in that it provides interiority and a sense of "roominess" while offering literal, poetic, and metaphorical vistas. (Fig. 3.5) Acting simultaneously as both unwallled and a discreet, one-room space, the building also refers to the wider continent and the world beyond that. "Bra"

³¹ Bev Cupido, interview by the author, DI Office, Gardens, Cape Town, 3 June 2019.

(Brother) Hugh Masekela (1939 -2018), best known as a trumpeter and champion of pan-African Jazz, was also an anti-apartheid activist, great friend of the arts, and recipient of one of South Africa's most prestigious awards, the Order of Ikhamanga.³² Created through a project by Masekela's friend Ravi Naidoo (CEO, DI) the memorial to Masekela is constructed from five pre-cast concrete columns, whose differently shaped profiles support the perforated roof. The Pavilion roof is supported by four columns, one of which is triangular, one shaped like a plus sign, and two of which are triangular. Each column anchors the building's corners and roof. A central cylindrical column in the middle provides an "internal" focus for this room without walls and can be read as the "soul" of the building. This central column's recollection of a tree-trunk is echoed by the organic patterns on its perforated roof and the shadows cast from it, which create the same dappled light as the branches of a tree in leaf.

The ability of Masekela's monument to be out-of-doors and yet convey a sense of "room" is furthered by the presence of seating. Its five granite benches represent the separate African states (Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana, Guinea, Nigeria, and Ghana) where Masekela spent time in forced exile as a political refugee during apartheid.³³ Whilst visitors to the Pavilion might, of course, sit on these benches facing outwards, the natural inclination is to face into this open "room." The space is crafted through design of such a poetic nature - conveyed through the cadence of its shapes and colors - that to look inward and admire the nuanced detailing of the enclosed nature space also prompts one's gaze and contemplation to move beyond the immediate space. Adding to the Pavilion's notion of interiority-as-poetry, are the memorial words engraved into its floor:

³² Named after South Africa's Bird of Paradise flower, the Presidential Order is conferred upon citizens who have excelled in the fields of arts, culture, literature, music, journalism and sport.

³³ Tom Ravenscroft, 'David Adjaye creates simple memorial pavilion for South African trumpeter, Bra Hugh', *Dezeen*, 19th June 2019, accessed 16 January 2020

His legacy is complex and has no boundaries. The ripples of his life force are yet creating new facets of his nature. Those will remain unchained causing ever new vistas. Only change and the tantalizing promise of a new future were his muse. He was not afraid, and his rage and daring was searing, but his love for his family, friends, children, women and Africa is the unifying theme of his opus.

In its references to the new, the unrestricted and through its hymn to Africa it is also possible to read this building as an epitaph for Bra Hugh as well as a celebration of DI, an organization he admired. Adjaye's memorial to Bra Hugh reflects the reach and significance of DI in measures that far transcend art, architecture and design praxis. At the unveiling of the monument, Masekela's sister Barbara spoke of the way both the Pavilion and her brother himself were part of the "complex and transcending boundaries not just of Africa but the entire world."³⁴ Masekela's final album, released in 2016, was fittingly titled *No Borders*.

The success of the Masekela Pavilion lies not just in the quality of its detailing, quiet simplicity or purpose of its message but also in its establishment, at one and the same time, of both a heroic monument and a calm interior, its scope to allow viewers to reflect inwardly within a contained environment yet to also gaze into the distance of this vast cemetery. The memorial building has created a space that, in line with DI's promotion of expanding creative possibility, regards definitions of "interior" as both finite and infinite.

That DI was behind the creation of the extraordinary space that is the Masekela Pavilion is not surprising given this chapter's discussion of the organization's willingness to support new typologies. A testimony to its vision of encouraging and supporting a "limitless" design approach also appears in the variety of practitioners DI engages with. Alongside, indeed over and above, its drive to celebrate well-known champions, the organization is also concerned with recognizing quiet design bravery, the yet-to-be sung design heroes across South Africa,

³⁴ Tom Ravenscroft, 'David Adjaye creates simple memorial pavilion for South African trumpeter, Bra Hugh', *Dezeen*, 19th June 2019, accessed 16 January 2020

the wider continent and abroad. Through its Emerging Creatives program, DI provides a platform for new, often student-led talent. TheMAAK architecture studio in Cape Town is one example. Unlike large firms such as Snøhetta or world-acclaimed architects such as Adjaye, this is a small, two-person practice formed by Max Melville and Ashleigh Killa in 2016. Just as sure-footedly as Arch for Arch and the Masekela monument, however, the studio's work ably proves, in an art and design culture keen to develop new modes of design expression, that it is possible to design spaces redolent of "roominess" and enclosure without relying upon any normative expression of "wall." The MAAK's work also demonstrates DI's willingness to back new visions for interior architecture as a total rejoinder to the lack of creativity permissible during apartheid. It does so particularly therefore in instances which offer to re-envision the relationship between "interior" and "exterior" since in offering a departure from normative, or conservative architectural expression, this speaks of the freedom to be new.

Melville and Killa self-identify professionally according to an inclusive, user-centered *modus operandi*. They state their ethos as follows:

The MAAK is a creative led architecture/ design studio that specializes in public buildings. We choose to work in challenging urban environments in order to help deliver world-class projects to those who need it the most. As a social enterprise we work with our non-profit wing the MAAK foundation to channel external donations, grants, and CSI money to help realize tangible and long lasting social impact. By investing in buildings we are investing in people!³⁵

Significantly, the MAAK has been recognized and approached by the city of Cape Town in terms of an ability to co-design with clients through active conversation. Even with the backing of the city government, however, encouraging sponsors to invest in their work is challenging. This is particularly so since the MAAK concentrates its work in low-income

³⁵ The MAAK, accessed 27 August, 2019, <https://www.themaak.co.za/> .

areas; communities become clients and, via workshop engagement, converse with the studio about how best to tackle the various spatial challenges of Cape Town's townships in what they insist must be "a relevant and useful way." Thus the studio's output corresponds with DI's "Better World" ethos of fostering design which offers to improve people's lives.³⁶ Killa notes that to do this takes "pushing, and trudging and continually pushing against boundaries and walls... our youth is on our side this way; we haven't gone through the systems that be and instead of working "top down" can go out into the communities."³⁷ In attempting to work in this way, the MAAK are clear advocates of user-centered design, believing in working with communities as clients as much as the organizations who have commissioned them. For example, this approach was adopted in the studio's 2019 building of a new HIV testing clinic for the Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation in Masimphumelele, outside central Cape Town, the garden-courtyard of which interestingly provides an exterior "room", Melville and Killa adopting this approach in order to provide a garden with a sense of safe, discreet enclosure for users of the clinic.

Elsewhere, ideas centered around the social importance of their work are also expressed in the MAAK's concept work. In particular, their "Roll Up," a moveable enclosure system designed around the use of flexible walls in the form of 6-foot long water pipes provides a highly innovative wall-no wall approach (Figs. 3.6 and 3.7). Roll Up is an initiative which aims to provide sites and venue spaces for audiences of all sort of performance and cultural activity across all Cape Town's demographic groups. In doing so, the design creates an interiority, familiar to middle-class Capetonians, associated with the

³⁶ Melville identifies these low-income areas as spaces "which aren't going away." He, then, adds that "the sooner we invest in them the more they can become social assets as opposed to breeding grounds of social ills," in Max Melville and Ashleigh Killa, interview by the author, Woodstock, Cape Town, 5 August 2019.

³⁷ Interview by the author.

ease of informal, casual, communal open-air entertainment and enjoyment in a city benefitting from a warm climate.

As an example of potential deployment, the Roll Up is conceived by Melville and Killa as being set up on the forecourt of a disused petrol station near their studio. Its walls made of pipes linked “like sushi mats” allow the creation of screened-off but still public spaces that can be – as the name indicates - completely rolled up and secured. As Melville and Killa explain, “You then unroll it into a public venue and the spatial resolution is completely flexible according to the event. This sort of thing could activate [presently unused] spaces in a meaningful way, the material itself returns to being used for water flow.” Significant as this use is in a city which was severely affected by drought (2015 – 2018), its offering of mobile community space provides support for an even longer-term and more difficult problem: that of lack of spaces in which mixed demographic groups might participate in shared cultural events.³⁸ As such, the MAAK’s Roll Up / petrol station enclosure creates an interiority redolent of the creative initiative and youthful, “fun” aesthetic but carries far more serious messages about sustainability, both familiar and new.³⁹

The imaginaries of a socially democratic urban landscape for Cape Town that the MAAK captures through its projects align with the DI ethos. In fact, one of the most valuable and significant roles that DI as a design platform provides to South Africa is to act as ethical compass for the nation’s creatives. The organization has played, and is likely to continue to play, a crucial role in fostering young creative practitioners across South Africa and the wider continent. How much more powerful will the “un-walled” design output become once the organization’s message of creating a better world through design reaches freely across the

³⁸ Interview by the author.

³⁹ The RollUp offers temporary “room” space in a city familiar with a culture of adaptive reuse (seen for example at the Old Biscuit Mill once a factory and now a restaurant, shopping and studio space). Whilst, an increasingly important architectural approach at the wealthier end of Cape Town’s economic scale, the value of recycling of all kinds, even of buildings, has long been a necessity amongst disadvantaged communities.

spread of South Africa’s demographics? As Lange and van Eeden remark, this process is by no means over, since “the imperatives of globalization continue to inform the contemporary South African ‘imagined community’ and challenge the need for indigenous and inclusive histories of the visual.”⁴⁰

Writing from the perspective of the Western North, it is less the threat of globalization against which DI and the sites discussed here stand as bulwarks; more important in this context is their capacity to create “openness” in every sense of the word. Beyond South Africa, the world is witnessing a move to create more walls, more boundaries. In the UK, under the Premiership of Boris Johnson at the time of writing, we witness the push towards a “no deal” Brexit and the possible return of a hard border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland; against this background anything that can be done to advance design and, with it, a “Better World” without borderlines and limitations is to be lauded. As Max Melville remarks; “If we unlearn the narrative of the wall... we enable organizations to participate in public planning.”⁴¹

This brief journey through a small but important sample of contemporary South African architectural design, as highlighted by the work of Design Indaba, contrasts the colonial approach to discussion about South Africa. It offers a more decidedly democratic and exploratory examples of the myriad possibilities for African design; these are apparent in the thinking around new “interior” typologies, such as Arch for Arch, Hugh Masekela’s Memorial Pavilion and the MAAK’s Roll Up moveable venue. More than simply providing “roomness” in permeable, or unequivocally “outdoor” spaces, the sites chosen prove that inscribing enclosed but open spaces instills a strong sense of interiority.

⁴⁰ Lange and van Eeden, 60

⁴¹ Interview by the author.

Although severe economic apartheid continues in the country, the charge of the “State of the Union of South Africa” of summer 2019 can be seen in new visual languages manifest in interior design and architecture. These languages present a confident design identity that responds to the multivalent nature of 21st century South African identities. DI is a vital platform for facilitating and broadcasting the creation of new, “unwalled” and thus unlimited “interior” realms. DI’s role and its striving for a better world is particularly significant as South Africa continues to emerge from the endless restrictions of apartheid, replacing these with a strong impulse for challenging received architectural design norms and doing away with boundaries both physical and metaphorical, the current description of a creative mindset as, “thinking outside the box” might be equally well expressed in terms of “thinking outside the room.” “Africa Your Time is Now” proclaim the t-shirts on sale in the seminal interior created by Thomas Heatherwick in 2017 at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art, in Cape Town. That this is much more than testimony to the socially inclusive constitution of a new nation and the enormous creative energy of present-day South Africa is in large part due to the vision captured through the nation’s discussions, meetings, and gatherings -*indaba*- around contemporary design.⁴²

⁴² I am grateful to Bev Cupido and the Design Indaba team for their support of my research as well as Max Melville, Ashleigh Killa, Nyasha Mboti and Doreen de Waal. This chapter is dedicated to Doreen.

Illustrations



Fig. 1 Design Museum Dharavi, 2016. Image courtesy of Amanda Pinathi and Jorge Maños Rubio, Design Museum Dharavi.



Fig. 2 +POOL, New York, Designed by PlayLab and Family New York. Image courtesy [Friends of + POOL.](#)"



Fig. 3 The Hugh Masekela Memorial Pavilion, Westpark Cemetery, Johannesburg.

Photograph, Harriet McKay, August 2019



Figs. 4 and 5

Arch for Arch and busking choir, photograph, Harriet McKay, August 2019

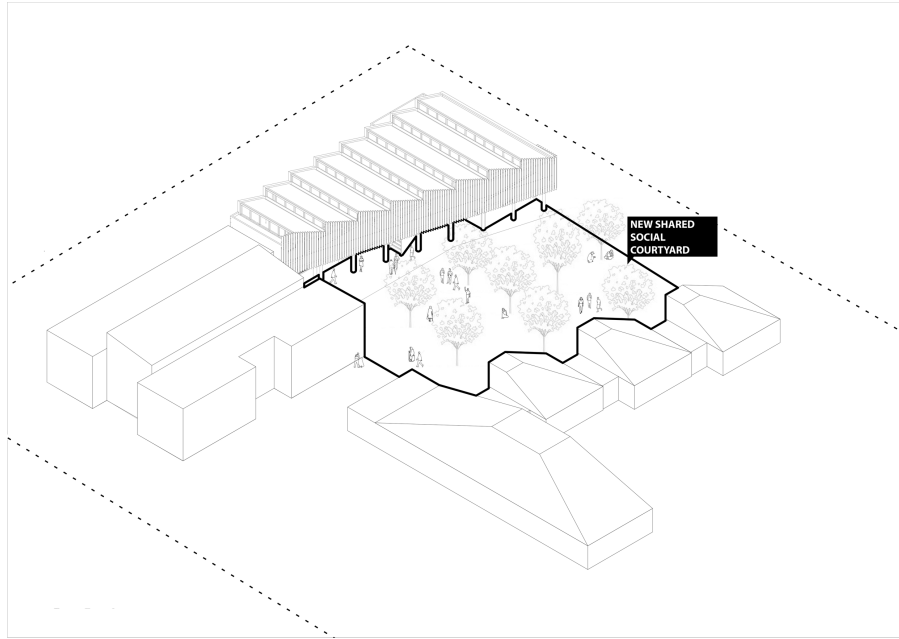


Fig. 6

Drawing of the Desmond Tutu Foundation Testing Clinic Courtyard, Cape Town. Drawing by theMAAK, image courtesy of theMAAK

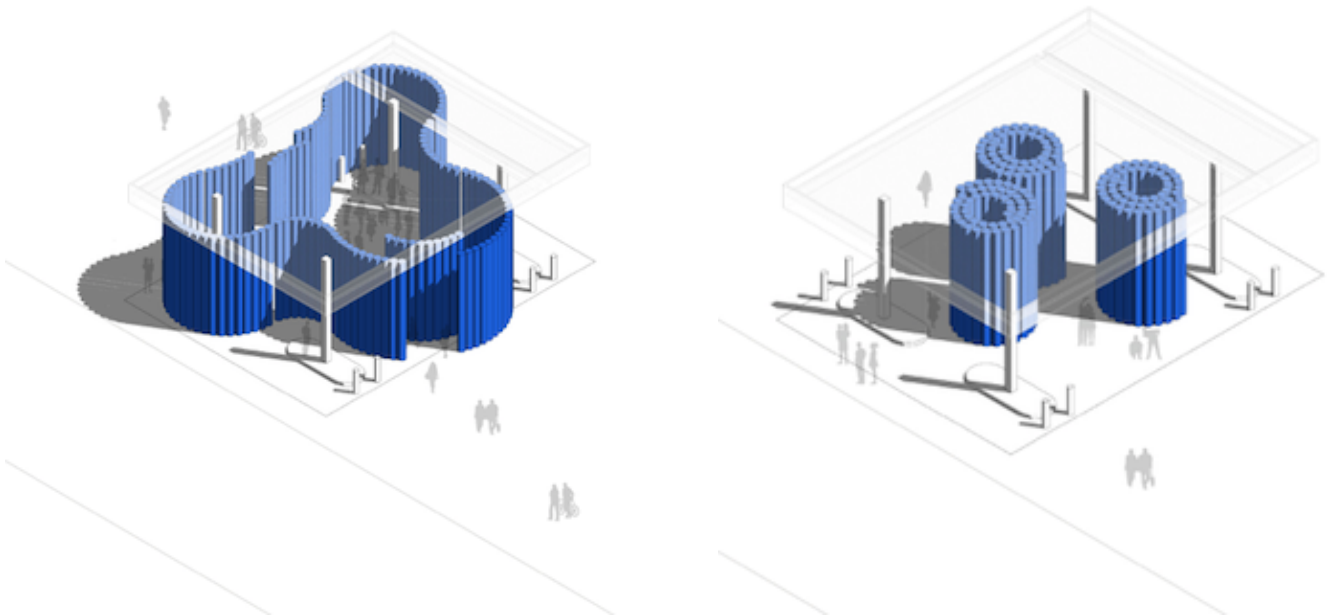


Fig. 7

Drawings of the 'Roll Up' being used and when stored. Drawing by theMAAK, image courtesy of theMAAK

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