



## **ALEXANDER FORBES HEADQUARTERS TAKES THE AFRISAM-SAIA AWARD FOR SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE 2014**

9 October 2014: The Alexander Forbes Headquarters in Sandton, Johannesburg, designed by Paragon Architects and Paragon Interface, took top honours in the built work category at the 2014 AfriSam-South African Institute of Architects Award for Sustainable Architecture, announced on 9 October at Johannesburg City Library.

Commendations in this category went to a further four projects; UNISA Phase 2 in Parow, Cape Town, designed by Michele Sandilands Architects; the Seed Library in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, designed by Architects of Justice; Monaghan Farm near Lanseria, Gauteng, submitted by Claude Bailey Architecture & Design on behalf of Clewer Development Trust, and House Jones in Hurlingham, Johannesburg, designed by ERA Architects.

A second award, in the category of works of social importance, including research, went to Vukuzakhe by Koop Design in Durban, which examines urban development in the Municipality of eThekweni, while Collis & Associates received a commendation for research into concrete recycling in Cape Town.

Employing a total of 2,500 people, the Alexander Forbes Headquarters has already been confirmed as a Four Star Rated Green Building. Occupied for two years, the accommodation impact was designed to reduce any negative impact on water, energy and waste. Reduced power consumption, re-use of water and recycling initiatives have contributed to lower water consumption by 70%, waste generation by 50% and energy consumption by 40%. The role of louvres, skylights, glazing and scallops assists with light whilst reducing the impact of heat and, at street level, the building edge is softened with xeriscaping, indigenous trees and plants.

"In acknowledging this building as the recipient of the AfriSam-SAIA Award for Sustainable Architecture for 2014 in the built category, it is hoped that the Alexander Forbes Headquarters will provide a beacon of inspiration, not only as a place to work, but also as a worthwhile contribution to the urban fabric of Johannesburg and human experience in the area," said Stephan Olivier, AfriSam's CEO.

Vukuzakhe by Durban's Koop Design, which took the AfriSam-SAIA Award in the research category, acknowledges the rapid urbanisation taking place in Durban, common to most cities in the developing world. The study also understands the need for harmonisation across a series of approaches to solve the challenges

that are faced, including social interaction with communities, combined with infrastructure development by local authorities.

“Vukuzakhe is a brave attempt to record, evaluate and propose systems for urban construction in South Africa. The litmus test remains for the document to be implemented and robustly challenged which, if successful, could offer realistic opportunities for urban development in South Africa,” said Olivier.

In commending the UNISA Phase 2 building by Michele Sandilands Architects, the jurors particularly noted that, although the building is located in an industrial area, the architecture uplifts an otherwise dispirited part of Cape Town. The building reflects its workings - rainwater tanks and wind towers become powerful elements of the architecture and draw the visitor’s eye to their function, while intriguing attention to detail has been included around lecture room entrances and bathrooms.

Commented Sindile Ngonyama, President of SAIA and chair of the adjudicators panel, “In celebrating this building, the awards programme hopes to draw attention to the powerful impact that educational buildings can have on our society. UNISA Phase 2 reveals a thoroughness by the architects and an indication that the joy of architecture need not be compromised in the pursuit of responsible design.”

Architects of Justice confronted a different aspect of sustainable architecture – one beyond construction - when asked to design library facilities for a school in Alexandra, Johannesburg. Their solution, the Seed Library, is an intervention that addresses the wholesale recycling of buildings in society and offers a possible prototype using shipping containers. This commended project may also be adapted in other contexts across South Africa where similar conditions exist.

“A facility for children, which by virtue of its function offers an opportunity for insouciance and colour, the Seed Library explores the balance between providing much needed facilities and investigating other avenues of architecture which recognise that, sometimes, not building more may be the best solution,” said Ngonyama.

A lifestyle estate of about 500 hectares immediately north of Lanseria, Monaghan Farm, submitted by Claude Bailey Architecture & Design on behalf of Clewer Development Trust, is a gated community based on food security which is aligned to nature conservation rather than golf-estate principles. In contributing to the sustainability of the community, the approach is wide ranging, from exploring alternative architectural principles, building methods, house services and animal husbandry. The project offers a thorough and comprehensive investigation of alternatives that exist to the status quo of contemporary urban living. While it could be countered that the proposal is exclusive, there are many principles offered that can be considered for broader adaptation.

Commenting on this commended project, Olivier said, “Monaghan Farm speaks to societal issues and explores a unique opportunity in an anthropologically sensitive area. It is celebrated for its ability to analyse an existing situation and

offer a variety of solutions for sustainable lifestyles, while still keeping close to a suburban experience.”

The fourth commended project in the 2014 AfriSam-SAIA Award is House Jones, located in Hurlingham, Johannesburg and designed by ERA Architects. It has a multitude of systems to generate and store energy, save water and reduce waste, which make it possible for the house to exist entirely off any municipal grid. Beyond the architecture, this project has been extended into a small wetland which greatly enhances the site. In addition to the facilities offered, a rigorous programme of recording data is in place, allowing for analysis which will provide valuable information for future developments in housing.

“The determination of the owner of this house to free his family from the vagaries of local authority energy and water supplies resulted in a building whose equipment may be unattainable to most, but offers empirical solutions, in part to all,” said Ngonyama. “House Jones should be lauded for standing up and being counted and the passage of time will evaluate its contribution to alternatives in this era of over-consumption.”

Commended for his study of concrete recycling in the Western Cape, the jurors noted how Vernon Collis of Collis & Associates combines a passion for the subject of concrete recycling, a record of the dire sand shortage in the Western Cape, and possible solutions for this situation. His submission reveals the breadth and depth that needs to be explored in the subject of sustainable architecture, from testing a client brief, to accommodation schedules, architectural design and materials.

Commented AfriSam’s Olivier, “The subject of materials and their various impacts on the earth is hotly contested by individual industries, so rigorous independent research is welcomed. The author has also extended this research into local universities so that students can benefit from his endeavours and includes CPD training for fellow professionals.”

The prestigious bi-annual AfriSam-SAIA Award for Sustainable Architecture was first introduced in 2009 and recognises outstanding achievement in sustainable architecture as well as creating public awareness and debate on architectural issues. There are two entry categories - one for built work and the other for works of social importance, including research. Entries are evaluated against a range of criteria including people upliftment and planet rejuvenation.

Joining Ngonyama on the adjudicators panel for this year’s awards were Gita Goven, one of South Africa’s foremost sustainability thinkers, Llewellyn van Wyk, principal researcher in the built environment at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Daniel K. Irurah, senior lecturer at Wits University, Philippa Tumubweinee, senior lecturer at the Department of Architecture at the University of the Free State, Vincent Blackbeard and AfriSam’s Mike McDonald.

This year, for the first time, the AfriSam-SAIA Award has mounted an exhibition to showcase both the winning projects and finalists, which includes a curated educational programme. The exhibition, which runs from 10 – 30 October at the newly renovated Johannesburg City Library, is also free to the public during the library’s normal opening hours.

Sponsored by AfriSam, Grade 6 and 7 learners from across Johannesburg have been invited to participate in an interactive session of exploration, designed to highlight the importance of sustainability and how it affects their personal lives. Sessions comprise a hands-on workshop with interactive activities and take-home crafts and include a walkabout of the exhibition to illustrate the concepts learnt in each workshop.

The exhibition has been designed to take into account its location and to reflect the underlying ethos of the awards and is constructed entirely out of paper and cardboard, including Rebul modular packaging, originally designed to protect fragile goods. Set against the backdrop of the historic library, the design elements become a miniature city-scape within the building, complemented by living green walls and a range of trees laser cut from second hand books. All design elements for the exhibition are 100% recyclable.

The two-hour educational sessions will be hosted twice per morning at Johannesburg City Library, from Monday 13 October to Thursday 30 October, at 9:00am and 11:30am respectively. Each session can accommodate 30 - 40 learners. For bookings, on a first-come, first-served basis, please contact [batya.bricker@gmail.com](mailto:batya.bricker@gmail.com)

The exhibition is open to the public from Friday, 10 October to Thursday, 30 October during Johannesburg City Library's normal opening hours, Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Films on all fifteen finalists in the 2014 Award can be seen at [www.4tmrw.co.za](http://www.4tmrw.co.za)

(ENDS)

NOTES TO EDITORS

### **Awarded Project – Built Work Category**

The Alexander Forbes Headquarters, Sandton, Johannesburg  
Paragon Architects and Paragon Interface

- <http://youtu.be/RC-qUsPeick>

### **Awarded Project – Works of Social Importance, including research, Category**

Vukuzakhe, Durban  
Koop Design

- <http://youtu.be/ex0maqCBA0M>

### **Commended Projects – Built Work Category**

#### **UNISA Phase 2, Parow, Cape Town**

Michele Sandilands Architects

- <http://youtu.be/iqxEKCZOUgw>

## **The Seed Library, Alexandra Township, Johannesburg**

Architects of Justice

- <http://youtu.be/V55Ru5ILcLM>

## **Monaghan Farm, Lanseria, Gauteng**

Submitted by Claude Bailey Architecture & Design on behalf of Clewer Development Trust

- <http://youtu.be/SWTwWKyFUuA>

## **House Jones, Hurlingham, Johannesburg**

ERA Architects

- [http://youtu.be/u8fWmHLTk\\_8](http://youtu.be/u8fWmHLTk_8)

## **Commended Project – Works of Social Importance, including research, Category**

### **Use of Recycled Construction Waste in Concrete, Cape Town**

Collis & Associates

- <http://youtu.be/8AWZwAOA3AU>

## **AFRISAM**

AfriSam is a leading producer of quality construction materials in southern Africa. The company has committed itself to protecting the environment through conscientious and responsible manufacturing processes and a responsible attitude towards the impact of its business operations on the community and the environment. As the sponsor of this award, AfriSam is proud to be associated with the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) in recognising outstanding achievement in sustainable architecture.

## **THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS**

The South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) and the Regional Institutes are committed to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and competence in architecture.

Any member of the Institute, as defined in the Constitution, is required to:

- continually enhance their professional skills
- ensure that their work promotes sustainable development goals to the benefit of the South African community and the natural environment
- Improve the standards of health and safety for the protection and welfare of all members of society.

Members of the Institute, registered as professional architects, subscribe to a Code of Ethics with established principals which remain core to members as they conduct their business. To continually elevate the architectural profession and support members as they strive to attain the highest standards of workmanship, SAIA ensures its members are educated and trained appropriately. Thus, SAIA members are equipped to provide leadership and critical judgement, while also exercising their specialist knowledge, skills and aptitude for the betterment of design and development in the built environment.

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