

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

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KEY RESEARCH IMPACT

The Department of Architecture offers professional postgraduate programmes in the complementary fields of architecture and landscape architecture, as well as research postgraduate programmes across all architecture disciplines. Following an ecosystemic approach, the three programmes and our research focus areas are mutually supportive and often integrated in transdisciplinary research projects with partners in industry, government and local communities. The Department's research foci are built around the objective of creating resource-efficient, resilient and regenerative built environments which respect both landscape and cultural context, improving ecological integrity while contributing to a sense of meaningful place and social-ecological well-being within rapidly changing local and global contexts.

CAREER PATHWAYS

Alumni of the Department are design thinkers. This is an increasingly valued skill in the business world. Honours graduates can register as senior candidate technologists. To be a professional architect or landscape architect, one must obtain the professional master's degree in one's chosen field. This is followed by a professional exam for which practical experience is required. Graduates can then register with the relevant professional or statutory bodies. Postgraduate qualifications are also a cardinal part of the pathway to academia.

POSTGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Professional postgraduate degrees

Professional postgraduate honours and master's degrees lead students towards registration as Senior Technologists/Designers or Professional Architects or Landscape Architects. Our honours year offers students a number of interdisciplinary design studio electives working with partners in the private, public or non-profit sector, while the masters year is an individual exploration of a research theme, culminating in a design project.

- **BArchHons**
- **BLArchHons**
- **MArch Professional**
- **MLArch Professional**

Research degree programmes

The Department of Architecture offers postgraduate research programmes at honours, master's and doctoral degree levels. Postgraduate research studies in the Department are expected to contribute to one of our research focus areas.

- **BSc (Honours) Applied Science Architecture**
- **Architecture (MArch)**
- **Interior Architecture (MIntArch)**
- **Landscape Architecture (MLArch)**
- **MSc (Applied Science) Architecture (Coursework)**
- **PhD in Architecture, Interior Architecture or Landscape Architecture**

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RESEARCH FOCUS AREAS

CLIMATE-RESILIENT URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Climate change is a major disruptor in our built environment driving several cumulative, cascading and concurrent impacts that adversely affect communities. In response, this research group is exploring integrated, multi-disciplinary, built environment-related strategies that are locally appropriate and responsive to the African urban context and its growing climate change vulnerabilities. The research topics aim to drive climate change mitigation, enable climate change adaptation, and address climate change justice. The themes considered in this group include food security, heat stress adaptation, flood risk mitigation, biodiversity loss, ecosystem services integration, good health and well-being and sustainable cities and communities. These themes align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for the region.

DESIGNED ECOLOGIES

Fostering the human-nature relationship through social and ecological pathways

This field is about how we design ecological and cultural landscapes, which include multifunctional green infrastructure to help combat challenges of biodiversity loss, climate adaptation and food security. Several research projects exist in the field, using quantitative and qualitative approaches within inter- and transdisciplinary groups. This includes design experiments that test novel planting schemes, design prototypes and technologies to enhance urban biodiversity and livelihoods; the refugia abilities of planting palettes; biocultural diversity and relationships with nature; place perception and place identity; environmental justice perspectives; climate change adaptation; and the food security potential of indigenous species in vertical planting systems

LABORATORY FOR THE 6IR

What world will we choose for our grandchildren? This pressing question demands a fundamental re-evaluation of our current industrial trajectory rooted in extractive, degenerative models that erode ecological and social potential. In a world foregrounding technological development that pursues the autonomous, artificial and virtual, the Sixth Industrial Revolution represents a cultural pivot: a profound shift in how we imagine the relationship between technology, humanity, and the living world. At the heart of the 6IR is a belief in the generative potential of life itself. Nature is not a problem to solve, but a partner and guide, not a constraint, but the ultimate model for regenerative futures. This revolution moves us from extraction to regeneration, from control to participation, from isolation to symbiosis.

In the Laboratory for the 6IR we advance a new kind of industrial logic — circular, adaptive, bio-based, and ecologically entangled — designing futures where industry becomes a force for life-system health and ecological restoration. We envision a future where technology is ecologically embedded, industry nourishes rather than depletes, and innovation deepens our connection to Earth's systems.

SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE

This research field positions architectural design in a historical continuum of international (and local) theory, practice, and traditions. Researchers in this field are interested in the relationship between people, landscape, and artefacts of cultural significance and heritage value. Researchers collect, record, and analyse information about cultural artefacts and create prospects for architecture, informed by current best practice, as well as legal and heritage frameworks. Current research activities build on over 75 years of Departmental heritage and cultural research and publication. The Department's thriving Architectural Archive, which has generated several research outputs, presents prospective researchers with a wealth of unexploited artefacts and data on South African architectural heritage.

URBAN CITIZENSHIP

Through participatory processes of research and design, the discourse of architecture is extended beyond the realm of architect-as-expert towards the dynamic collaboration required for spatial agency. Immersive ways of engagement enable deepened understanding of user needs and contextual variables, to expand the empathic horizon of the designer to internalise different perspectives and worldviews. The dynamic expression of space, informed by ritual, inhabitation patterns, interpersonal networked relationships, and the appropriation of space, becomes the focus over static architectural proposals. Fluid and temporal conditions of living inform design interventions that are often small in scale, yet big in their impact on the lives of a variety of communities. The scale spectrum implies a concern beyond individual interest alone towards an intentional engagement with the public consciousness of the collective. In this way, co-design as a process is embraced as an instrument of urban citizenship, responsive to the complex emergence of African Urbanism.