

Alumnus showcases talent for innovative design

Renate Steenberg

The architectural firm of alumnus, Pieter Mathews, who graduated with a BArch degree from the University of Pretoria in 1991, was responsible for the expansion of the Elizabeth C Steijn Hall at the Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria (AHMP).

With the expansion of the Elizabeth C Steijn Hall, Mathews & Associates Architects combined the legacy of the old with the progression of the new. The original hall was commissioned in the late 1950s by Ms Steijn herself, who was the school's principal from 1945 to 1962. The design of the hall purposely moved away from the designs of other buildings on the school's grounds and its modernistic influences were clearly visible.

Due to the growing number of learners, a larger school hall became necessary. The school decided to approach Mathews & Associates Architects to design a hall that would honour the heritage of the old hall and meet the school's current needs. Pieter Mathews was supported in this project by one of the office's architects assistants, Philip du Toit, also an alumnus of the University. The school is the oldest Afrikaans school in Pretoria, which meant that it was important that the design incorporated elements of the old building.

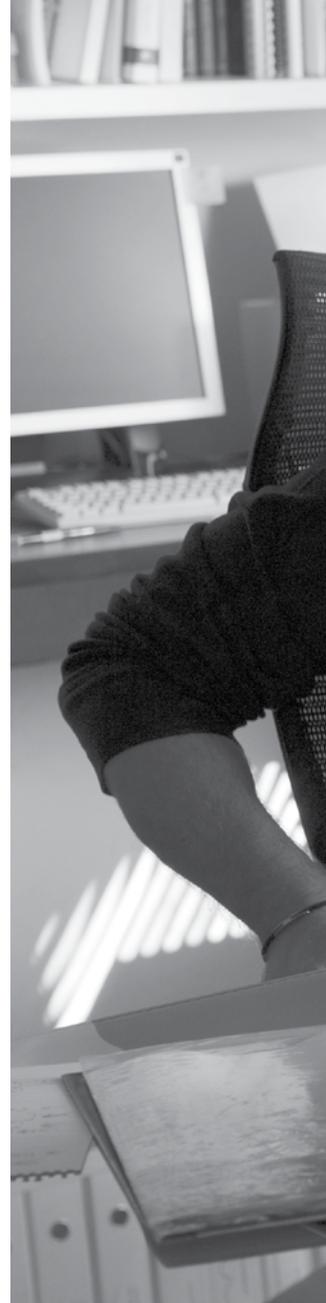
Art is very important to the school and there are a number of significant sculptures and other pieces of art on the school grounds. Existing pieces such as Elly Holm's "Bokkie" and new pieces such as Willem Boshoff's "Kompasroos" are part of the design. The amalgamation of old and new is particularly evident in the re-use of the original foyer's parquet floor, the original front door and the original, unplastered structure beams.

Mathews & Associates Architects is based in Pretoria and their projects have received numerous accolades.

Two of the most prominent were the Nellmapius Bridge and the Baobab Toll Plaza, both on the N1. The Nellmapius Bridge concept was exhibited at the 2012 Venice Biennale. The company also won a competition to design one of the types of the new Tshwane Rapid Transit (TRT) stations in the historically sensitive areas of Pretoria, called the Memory Box. Construction of this project is underway.

According to Mathews, his studio masters at the University of Pretoria, Prof Karel Bakker, Prof Roger Fisher and Prof Schalk le Roux, had a great influence on him, and encouraged him to work abroad.

He went to London where he was employed at Bruce Gillbreth Architects, an American practice, but later moved to Triad, a British practice, where he felt more comfortable with their world view, after which he travelled around the globe. In his final year of study, Mathews received the Gold Fields of South Africa Scholarship for Architecture, as well as the David Haddon Prize for office practice.



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Photo: Carla Crafford



Photos courtesy of Mathews & Associates Architects, unless otherwise indicated.

→ Mathews & Associates was responsible for the expansion of the Elizabeth C Steijn Hall at the Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool Pretoria.

In November 1995, he joined forces with Jacques Gerber and formed Mathews & Gerber Architects. The business was pitched as a youthful practice, helping young couples to build on a budget and realise their dream homes. They found a gap in the market and received extensive media coverage. However, the recession forced Mathews to become involved in building for himself and for clients, which had the positive impact of gaining valuable direct experience of hands-on building.

He built six houses during this time, of which four were featured in the *Digest of SA Architecture*, *Architecture SA*, *De Kat* and *House & Leisure*. In October 2000, Mathews & Gerber went their separate ways and Mathews & Associates

Architects was founded with Thomas Gouws and Anton Smit as associates. When Thomas Gouws left in 2002, Liam Purnell was appointed senior associate.

Mathews received many enquiries about Mathews & Associates Architects' use of unconventional finishing and texturing methods from the public and decided to publish a book. He approached traditional local publishing channels, but they turned him down, saying that there was no market in South Africa for books of this nature.

Mathews established Visual Books and published *Architecture* with the backing of one of the leading local building materials producers, Lafarge Cement, in 2003. The book was very successful and Mathews received the Pretoria Institute for

Architecture (PIA) President's Award for *Architecture* in 2005. His second book, *Detail Housed*, followed in 2007. In 2009, Mathews was also the publishing manager for *Construction Primer* by Hans Wegelin, now prescribed at most tertiary institutions.

In 2012, the Department of Architecture acknowledged his contribution to the Department with the Zero Hour credential. Recently, the design of the Elizabeth C Steijn Hall received a Merit Award from the PIA. The firm also designed a new sport clubhouse for AHMP, which received an Honourable Mention from the PIA. He is a former board member of the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) and is currently President of the PIA, as well as convenor for Cool Capital. ●

Among the company's prominent projects are the Nellmapius Bridge on the N1 just outside Centurion and the design of one of the types of the new Tshwane Rapid Transit (TRT) stations.



Photo courtesy of Aveng Grinaker-LTA.

Leading architectural education

The **Department of Architecture**, at the **University of Pretoria**, presents undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in architecture, interior architecture and landscape architecture. The design professions of the built environment compliment one another by collaboratively designing and realising space. The Department offers students an interdisciplinary learning environment and a unique opportunity to engage with lecturers and peers from these related spatial design disciplines. All three disciplines require both creative and rational innovators to design worthwhile environments for users.

The Department endorses a formal training that is academically and theoretically grounded and technologically informed. At the core of the curriculum is a studio-based culture, through which skills in design, theory, communication and management are developed. Discipline specific studios and modules are introduced from the second year of study. Graduates from this Department are highly regarded, both locally and abroad. Through a commitment to innovation, the Department promotes a sustainable and prospering South African society.

Interior Architecture



The Programme in Interior Architecture empowers students to design sustainable, meaningful and beautiful places within the context of architectural space. Graduates possess the theoretical and technical knowledge to engage critically with proposed or existing structures. Designers of interior environments shape the relationship between space, object and user. They follow a human-centred approach and perform spatial design and research services across various scales and typologies. Graduates work as designers in the built environment and related fields such as exhibition, lighting, product and stage design. The programme offers students the opportunity to become specialists in interior design within an interdisciplinary learning environment.

Programme structure

The following are studio based programmes with professional outcomes (admission by selection):

BSc(Int)	3 years full-time
BInt(Hons)	1 year full-time
MInt(Prof)	1 year full-time

Landscape Architecture



Landscapes are the represented expressions of the dynamic interaction between the technological and cultural activities of human societies with the physical environment. Landscape architecture is a profession and academic discipline concerned with the design of rural and urban outside places on various scales informed by this interaction. It considers change over time and mediates art and science; artefact and nature; city and region; and private and public interests. Landscape architects therefore synthesise knowledge from the humanities and the sciences to sustainably design meaningful and beautiful places that are grounded in material and immaterial culture, and ecology of their local contexts.

Programme structure

The following are studio based programmes with professional outcomes (admission by selection):

BSc(LArch)	3 years full-time
BL(Hons)	1 year full-time
ML(Prof)	1 year full-time



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