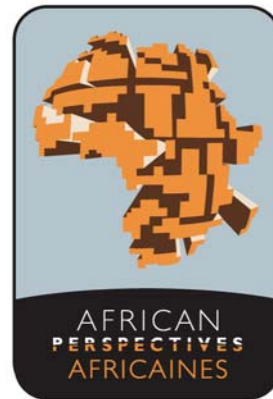


Manifestation African Perspectives

6 – 8 December 2007 at Faculty of Architecture / TU Delft
In collaboration with ArchiAfrika Foundation



Introduction

The international event 'African Perspectives' is a joint initiative of the Faculty of Architecture of Delft University of Technology and ArchiAfrika. This year marks the 165th anniversary of the founding of TU Delft, and the university is celebrating its 33rd quinquennial jubilee. The theme of this jubilee year is sustainable development, with a special focus on Africa. This is the context for the 'African Perspectives' event, a marketplace where architects, urban planners and other professionals, academics, students and other interested people from all over the world can meet each other at workshops, debates, exhibitions and films. For ArchiAfrika, the event is a logical follow-up to the conferences 'Modern Architecture in East Africa around Independence' in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (July 2005) and 'Africa Architecture Today' in Kumasi, Ghana (June 2007). The event will be held in two languages: English and French, the main languages on the African continent.

A number of specific processes can be identified in Africa, and will be considered from the following perspectives: urban development, the built cultural heritage, constructional engineering, the African Diaspora, and African architectures.

Exhibition 'Cities of the World' as centerpiece

The centerpiece of the event will be an exhibition of the work of Titus Matiyane entitled 'Cities of the World'. Matiyane lives and works in Atteridgeville, a township close to Pretoria. His panoramic drawings (1.5 metres high and from 6 to 46 metres long) give the impression that the artist has studied cities and landscapes from the air. However, his first panoramas date from the early 1990s but he did not fly for the first time until 1998.

The exhibition of Titus Matiyane's work reflects the basic themes of the event. It shows us intercontinental urban landscapes through his African eyes; it is his 'African Perspective'. The cooperation can only succeed if it is a true two-way exchange, i.e. Titus's view of 'our' world, and his work seen from a Western perspective.

Curators of this exhibition are Stephen Hobbs (artist and gallery owner in Johannesburg, SA), Kristin Feireiss (former director Dutch Architecture Institute (NAi) and gallery owner in Berlin, Germany) and Annemieke de Kler (project coordinator South African Seasons in 1999).

Five perspectives

It is apparent that *urban development in Africa* receives growing attention at Bouwkunde. This focus on contemporary urban issues is justified by the enormous challenge posed by urbanisation in Africa. The unchecked growth rate of African cities probably outstrips similar developments on the other continents. Iain Low (University of Cape Town, SA) and Arie Graafland (TUD) are composing the programme on this perspective.

African awareness of the value of their *built heritage* is often absent, due to the low priority caused by, in particular, poverty and war. However another reason for this lack of awareness lays in the fact that interest in architectural education is rather focused on western subjects, ignoring African achievements. There is a lack of institutional structure to deal with built heritage in Africa itself. Besides, the western origin concept of conservation and/or monumentality may be, at times seem quite alien to African culture, thus challenging the globally accepted charters on conservation of built heritage. The programme on this perspective is developed by Samuel Sidibé (director Musee National de Mali), Pierre Maas and Paul Meurs (TUD).

Focuses on issues on *building in Africa* have shifted from climatic geared and low-cost emphasis from the modernist period to sustainable issues today. Appropriate Technology experiments from the 80ties of the last century did not meet the expectations, and a fresh focus on an intermediate technology seems required. Joe Addo (architect in Ghana and USA) and Fons Verheijen (TUD) are developing the programme.

African diaspora is not a disciplinary theme, but a challenge standing on its own. There are some 400 million Africans in diaspora. The Netherlands, though currently trying to close the sluice locks, count a considerable and growing number of Africans between its borders. These people are on transit, on final destination, who knows? Fact is that hundreds of thousands do live here, will stay here, and retain at least some of their culture, enriching, en passant, the Netherlands in métissage.

Their requirements in terms of, for instance, housing have insofar only be integrated on a modest scale into the research and education at Dutch training institutes. The other way around, the contribution by the African in diaspora only recently commences to be felt in the field. This programme is composed by Ola Uduku (Edinburgh College of Art, Scotland), Wytze Patijn and Hein de Haan (TUD).

African architectures is the closing theme, and the most enigmatic one. What is African architecture, is there such a thing? Or is it only a geographical denomination? For that matter nobody will mention European architecture as a specific style or approach, seen the enormous diversity over the continent.

Africa, with a far larger surface than Europe exposes likewise diversity and yet it feels there are architectural principles, attributes or approaches that are found spread over multiple countries in Africa not to be found elsewhere. These have not yet had the chance to be voiced and are only scantily being researched at an academic level.

The value of contribution to the global debate on architecture by contemporary African métissage architectural design asks to be gauged. The planning of the programme of this perspective lies in the hands of Abdel Benabdeljalil (Casablanca, Morocco) and Tom Avermaete (TUD).

The overall concept and programming is in the hands of Wytze Patijn (Dean Faculty of Architecture TUD), Antoni Folkers (ArchiAfrika) and Paul Meurs (TUD).

Future goals for TU Delft and ArchiAfrika

More and more is being learned about developments in architecture and urban planning in other parts of the world, but knowledge of these developments in Africa and of the African cultural heritage is still limited, despite the fact that this knowledge is essential to the continued development of the disciplines of architecture and urban planning. ArchiAfrika was established to change this, and therefore strongly supports the aim of the Faculty of Architecture to strengthen its ties with Africa and place the country firmly on the teaching and research agenda of TU Delft. The 'African Perspectives' event will serve as the 'flywheel' for this. The aim of future cooperation is to facilitate the structural exchange of experience in the areas of architecture, urban development, public housing and the explosive growth of the large cities on the African continent.

Convocation 14 and 15 september

On these dates all persons responsible for the programming of African Perspectives will gather to discuss and fine tune the different parts of the manifestation. On 14 September a wider audience is invited to reflect on the different issues. There is also time to meet the key role players during a press conference. On the 15th the sessions continue with a smaller group to work on the results of the first day.

For more information visit www.bk.tudelft.nl and www.archiafrika.org or contact Berend van der Lans (africanperspectives@tudelft.nl; phone +31 15 27 84237 / fax +31 15 27 84727)