



AGE REVITALISED

Hein Visser, a well-known architect from Stellenbosch, believes in hard work and talent, but most of all in good relationships with clients. MARGUERITE VAN WYK asks him about what inspires him and the latest trends and challenges.



MvW: What do you want to portray in your designs?

HV: I have a strong inclination towards regionalism, and the local environment, natural or built, is important in design solutions. The client's brief and vision for the design are the ultimate guide to the final product.

MvW: What makes your work different from that of other architects?

HV: VKDB Architecture & Interior design mostly in the residential market but we have done projects for the wine industry, including some of the wine cellars around Stellenbosch. We follow the same approach whether we are designing a home, a wine cellar or an institutional building: detailed designs according to our client's needs.

ABOVE: A staircase incorporating oak and glass complements the sophisticated, minimalist interior in this home by VKDB Architecture & Interior. LEFT: A modern and serene living room.



ABOVE: The architectural modernity of this private home in Stellenbosch is reflected in the choice of materials, textures and colours, such as the copper cladding and timber elements.



We take this philosophy further into the interior design of the building and produce a 360° (complete) design that is tailored to our client's requirements.

MvW: What are the current trends in architecture in South Africa?

HV: Architecture is constantly evolving and continuously making use of new technologies and materials. Our particular interest is how applied decoration has given way to good detailing and construction of buildings. Materials are used as the source of inspiration and not so much as "I can afford it, therefore I use it". The optimisation of well-designed space is becoming more important in South Africa, as is the revitalisation of existing buildings. Older buildings are being given a new lease on life.

MvW: What inspires you?

HV: People, especially clients who appreciate the design aspects of the built environment and how they can positively influence their lives.

MvW: What is the best compliment you have received as an architect?

HV: I recently completed a residential project for clients whom I've known for many years and worked for before. After moving into their new home, they remarked how well it accommodates their lifestyle and that they really felt at home. If a structure works for a client, I am happy.

MvW: What has been your most challenging project?

HV: My thesis for BArch at Nelson Mandela University (University of Port Elizabeth) in 1988 was on the revitalisation of the beautiful Port Elizabeth Post Office as an art museum. As the precedent for my design, I turned to the conversion of the old station in Paris into the Musée D'Orsay and obtained my degree with distinction. I have always had a passion for old buildings and therefore decided that I would practise as an architect in Stellenbosch after my studies.

I find it most challenging to work with older buildings as these projects are enormously complex and time consuming. The restoration of the guest house, Heritage House in Neethling Street, Stellenbosch, has been particularly challenging. I am most proud of the outcome of the project and know that a beautiful old building has been revalidated.

MvW: What would be a dream project?

HV: The opportunity to design a contemporary building in the Stellenbosch CBD; a proud, modern building that would respect its surroundings. ▽



LEFT TOP: Functionality and longevity were key in the selection of furniture for this outdoor terrace. LEFT BOTTOM: Wooden screens bring warmth to this facade while helping the house blend in with the surroundings.

