

Architecture a viable, meaningful career choice - SACAP

As part of its focus on Youth Month, the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) is participating in career expos to promote architecture as a viable and meaningful career choice for high school learners. In so doing, it aims to raise awareness about the architectural profession.



National Architectural Student Forum (NASF), convened in 2016.

Six architectural students from SACAP's National Architectural Student Forum (NASF) shared their thoughts about their architectural studies on Youth Day, within the context of 21st century South African realities and the recent 'Think Tank' that SACAP held with its stakeholders around the decolonisation of architectural education and the #Feesmustfall campaign.

Tackling apartheid spatial planning

Khensani de Klerk, chairperson of the NASF and a student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), believes that architecture is shifting away from being a traditional elitist discipline, although she says transformation is an ongoing project. "As a postgraduate student, I would like to create a safe space in which black women can address the fact that they are in the minority in the discipline – decolonisation is one of the challenges students face today," she says. "My role is rooted in amending apartheid spatial planning and exploring intangibles, like economics and politics, that come with negotiating that space – after all, as the architect Alfredo Brillembourg said, 'If architecture is frozen music, then urbanism is frozen politics'."



Chair of the NASF Khensani de Klerk

For Viwe Mpambani, who aspires to finishing her diploma at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), architecture holds the promise of assisting disadvantaged communities. “I would like to design sustainable, cost-effective houses, schools or even community centres from natural and recycled materials,” she says. “I would love to mentor new students as well as be a voice for them. Architecture is a demanding field and you must be prepared to sacrifice your time – but just one project can change people’s lives. Architecture is not just about designing beautiful buildings; it is a tool with which to improve communities.”



Viwe Mpambani

Addressing gender-based misconceptions

“In a profession that was previously dominated by men, I think it is particularly difficult for women to build up the trust and reputation required to become successful in the industry,” says Katie Klemp, who studies at the University of the Free State (UFS). “However, the youth of today are particularly tenacious and are on a fast track to turning misconceptions around. I have a strong passion for changing the way the architectural

community sees women and I believe that achieving as a woman as my architectural learning sites (ALS) is a small but definite contribution to this goal.” Klemp not only aspires to changing the way men perceive women in the profession, she is also keen to show the older generation that young students and graduates bring inspiring new technologies and a focus on

sustainability to bear on the profession. “Architects are innovators,” she says with enthusiasm.

Thabiso Joyisa, a student studying at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) has expressed that he has had to overcome a number of challenges in his architectural studies. He says that, “There is a very high drop-out rate amongst black students from disadvantaged communities, due to the fact that most PDI students growing up in South Africa come from such diverse cultures backgrounds and have not previously had exposure to architecture as a field of study – coupled with a lack of financial assistance which is required to study architecture.” He feels fortunate that he has been able to study architecture and describes himself as a very passionate, hardworking person with big dreams to change the world. As a senior student, he has taken on a mentoring role helping those students that require his knowledge and skills that he has gained during his studies.

'Design begins on paper'

Ian Winfield, a student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and runner-up in the Caesarstone Student Designer 2014 competition, advises aspirant students to work efficiently, not just hard. “Draw as much as possible with the hand – don’t think that fancy 3D software is better, he says. “Design begins on paper and with concept models. This helps when you need to produce work in later years.” Although Winfield believes that architecture is an “expensive and time-consuming” degree, he says it is an exciting discipline to be involved in. “One day, I’ll be able to say ‘I helped to design that building’,” he says.



Thabiso Joyisa



Ian Winfield

Daniella Young, a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) recommends architecture but says that, “It is not for the faint-hearted and one should not do it unless you have an absolute passion for it.” She aspires to enhance quality of life through meaningful architecture and hopes to open a practice and lecture one day.

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