

Ora Joubert

With: Stephen Lear
Mark Hardman

Life-saver Centre, Kings Beach, Port Elizabeth

As one of the design workshops offered by the Department of Architecture of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, this design pertained to the reconsideration of the existing life-saving facilities at King's Beach.

In this instance the students – consisting of second year technology students as well as some architecture students at Honours and Master degree levels – were confronted with a “real” client and a realistic brief prepared by representatives of the life-saving club. The project was approached as an exercise in design methodology, with a concerted attempt made to demystify the elusiveness of the design process.

Introductory discussions focused on the four different design approaches, premised on the design aptitude profiles developed by Prof Jan Smit from the University of the Free State, which highlight the strengths and shortcomings of each. By being made aware of one's design inclinations, one can much more consciously work at honing one's skills and addressing one's inadequacies.

Discussions also focused on the systemisation of the design process which is all too often intuitively driven.

Armed with these insights, and following numerous site visits, students were given the opportunity to individually develop a design strategy most suitable to the project. After a short exploratory period, four proposals were selected for further development.

Having had the opportunity to closely analyse the polemics of the project, exacerbated by the fact that there is an existing building to take into account, the students were in a far better position to identify the successive steps of design exploration, including aspects such as zoning, access, circulation, ergonomics, massing, articulation, activation of edge conditions and the most appropriate three-dimensional realisation. Students were also encouraged to work in groups, in order to draw on the different skills which each had by now recognised they could individually contribute.

The ultimate objective was that the client would be presented with different design options, not as final and finite products, but rather as design strategies addressing a range of factors that required deliberation prior to professional implementation and final realisation. After this learning experience, the students were better equipped to approach design projects in a rational and systematic manner.

Students

Ahmed Farzaana
Matt Binda
Duncan William
Freysen Willem
Gray Arthur

Grobbelaar David
Hoffman Sulayla
Huisken Riaan
Johnson Devon
Jordaan Yohan
Lourens Dirk
Malotana Kamvelihle
Mhize Senamile
Pennacchini Robert
Brian Saunders
Schaafsma Pierre
Schmidt Susan
Subkaran Tashee