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NMU FACULTY OF LAW

**NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LAW**
Gqeberha

CLIENT

Nelson Mandela Bay University

ARCHITECT & PRINCIPAL AGENT

Muse Architects

QUANTITY SURVEYOR

BTKM Quantity Surveyors

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Poise Consulting

HEALTH & SAFETY CONSULTANTS

Bay Safety Solutions

GEOTECHNICAL CONSULTANT

SRK Port Elizabeth

LIGHTING DESIGN

Muse Architects

Spazio Lighting

MAIN CONTRACTOR

Alpha and Omega Group

PHOTOGRAPHY

Andrew Greenland; Ray Truter

Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha recently unveiled a modern new Faculty of Law building. The site is located on the South Campus of the University and to the east of the Embizweni Building which currently houses the Faculty of Law on its first floor. The site is bordered by a large public square to the south and a parking area to the north, with a number of existing walkways around the site. Although the only requirement in the placing of the building was that it had to be to the east of the Embizweni Building, it was decided to further define the site by retaining the existing walkways and allowing them to shape the building.

The Design

Designed by Muse Architects, the brief called for a new building that would house a large lecture venue, offices and ablutions. The building would also become the new face of the Law faculty. The brief also called for the new building to become an extension of the existing faculty located in the adjacent Embizweni Building.

The design process was informed by two main aspects; firstly, how does the building relate to its urban context, its response to a large public square and the adjacent post-modern building and secondly, how does the Faculty of Law function over two buildings (the adjacent Embizweni and the new building)?

The existing architecture of the campus is rooted in modernist architecture and expressed as concrete art forms set in a nature reserve. Recent additions to the campus





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have incorporated red face brickwork. The proposed building relates to the original aesthetic through form and mass expressed through the use of red face brick used in recent additions.

The existing faculty is located on the first floor of Embizweni Building and linked to the new building via an existing staircase between the buildings. Floor and wall finishes in the



existing faculty have been carried over into the new building but expressed in a contemporary manner, thereby strengthening the link between the buildings. Rainwater is collected from both roofs and transported via perimeter underground pipe that allows for water harvesting.

The design process was further informed by the current walkways around the public square. It was felt that primary routes should remain and that the building should respect them. The result is a building that is juxtaposed with the adjacent building lining up with walkways and thereby strengthening the public square and walkways.

Hard and soft landscaping has been used as a means to encourage interaction between students through the creation of pause areas. The space between the new and adjacent building creates a private landscaped courtyard for faculty students and staff and allows for an easy transition setting up the juxtaposition.

Charcoal concrete pavers have been used to reinforce the existing walkways which then transition to charcoal porcelain tiles as you step underneath the cantilevered entrance. The charcoal tile continues on the ground floor level as well as in the courtyard. The continuation of the floor finish into the courtyard allows the space to be used for functions should the weather permit.

Façade

The façade is predominantly made up of brick panels separated by vertical glass slots allowing light into the interior. The predominantly red face brickwork with protruding black brick increases in grading as the height of the walls increase.

The entrance is defined by a glazed cantilever 'box' suspended over a platform that delineates it from the walkway and public space adding a layer of privacy.

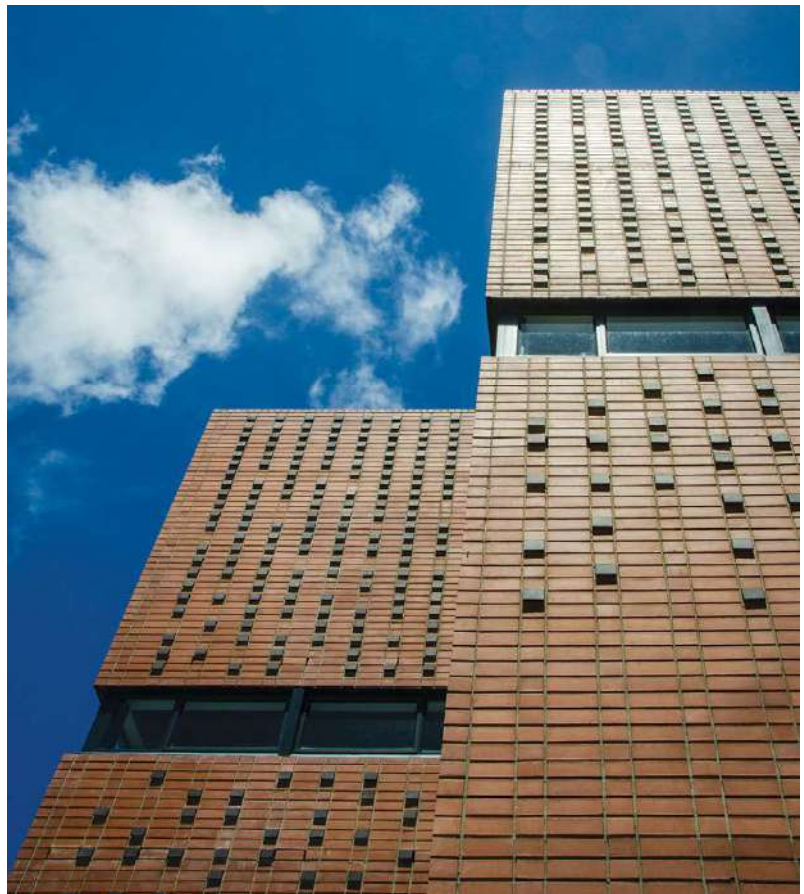
The monolithic form is interrupted by a horizontal glazed incision that allows views out of the office space on first floor level.

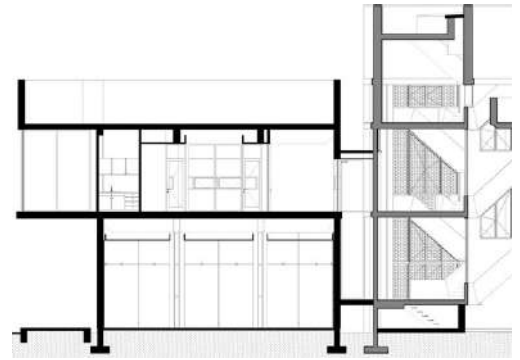
The façade in the courtyard is primarily glazed over two volumes which flood the interior with natural daylight and allows the courtyard to become part of the atrium.

The cantilevered office on first floor is primarily glazed with aluminium louvers allowing the 'box' to be expressed as a light element floating above the entrance and also controlling the light in the space.

The Interior

The building is entered via the walkway between two monolithic brick forms and opens up dramatically into the glazed atrium. The full height glazing allows the courtyard to become part of the atrium, thereby creating a space that feels larger than its actual footprint. The atrium/

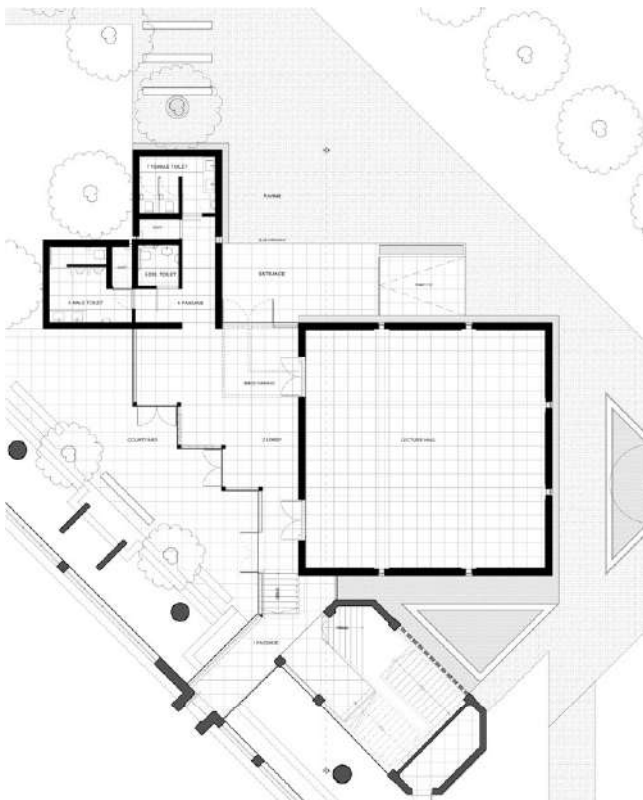




SECTION

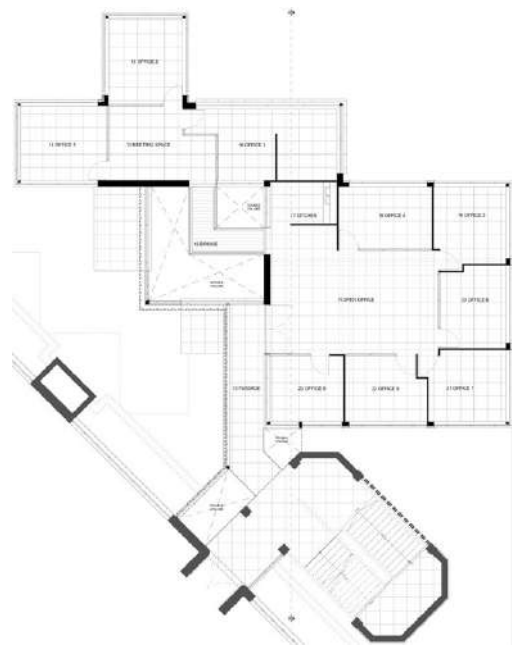
courtyard experience is further enhanced by the continuation of the external brickwork into the space. A lecture hall is housed in one of the monolithic forms with the contrast between the atrium and hall deliberate. Light in the space is controlled by full height slotted glazing that ensures there is adequate soft light during presentation. Walls have been clad with Kiaat timber panels; a continuation of wall treatment in the existing faculty building that also aids in the acoustic performance of the space. The ceiling to the column free space consists of nine 'boxes' placed between the concrete beams. These boxes house a ventilation diffuser and light tubes.

The bathrooms are located across the atrium creating a separate usage area. The vanities and walls in the bathrooms have been clad in



LEFT: Ground Floor Plan

BELOW: First Floor Plan





charcoal 'Neolith' stone allowing for robust and hardwearing surfaces which also echo the charcoal elements elsewhere on the building.

An existing staircase connects the two floors and as one exits the staircase on first floor the occupant again experiences the courtyard but also a framed view to the forecourt of the Embizweni Building. A glazed link enhances the experience leading to the offices. A large

general office space is surrounded by private offices and a staff kitchen. A bridge link leads to 3 private offices and is suspended over the atrium, again allowing the occupant a view over the courtyard. Light and ventilation to the offices is controlled by ribbon windows which are placed at desk height, allowing the occupant views across the campus and also eliminating the need for additional ventilation.

