

# PE firm recognised for work on Opera House, Campanile and Mendi centre

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Raking in the accolades, The Matrix cc Urban Designers and Architects recently received three awards from the South African Institute of Architecture - Eastern Cape. This brings its total regional awards to 11 for the organisation.



Port Elizabeth Opera House

Hosted at the Granary in Stanley Street, the awards were given in recognition of excellence in architecture and to create public awareness and debate on the built environment.

The company walked away with three excellence awards celebrating outstanding achievements in the design or restoration of buildings completed since last year.

The Matrix director Albrecht Herholdt said the acknowledgement from highly acclaimed architects and academics reaffirmed the efforts he and his colleagues strove toward.

“The awards mean a lot for our practice ... peer recognition is always appreciated. Our staff are highly motivated, talented and strive for unique solutions,” he said.

The Matrix received the awards for its work on the refurbished Opera House, renovated Campanile and purpose-built Mendi MultiPurpose Centre in New Brighton.

Motivated by the possibility of making positive contributions to Nelson Mandela Bay, Herholdt said he and his team spent many hours brainstorming during the design process to ensure issues of conservation were addressed and that they followed “world best practice”.

“Many of our projects are civic buildings, with many in the townships. We aim to promote place-making, civic pride and the creative arts,” he said, adding that all three of the awards the company had received were linked to conservation. “We regard our approach as contributing to expanding the body of conservation theory.

“Our basic premise is to respect the old and then contrast it with the new, in order not to blur history. The new is always respectful of the old, but the distinction is quite clear,” he said.

With limited budgets and high expectations, Herholdt said it was of utmost importance to make every effort to match these two and remain eco-friendly in their designs.

This includes rainwater harvesting for irrigation and toilet flushing, good wall and roof insulation, using the stack effect instead of air conditioning and passive design principles such as the correct orientation and protection from the sun on the north and west facades of buildings.

Since 2007, The Matrix has bagged 11 South African Institute of Architects (SAIA): Eastern Cape Awards of Merit, nine for completed buildings and two for books. Apart from the refurbished Lewis Stores building in Grahamstown, all the others are in Port Elizabeth. These include: the Pearson Conservatory, the Helenvale Multi-purpose Centre, the SAPS 10111 Call Centre, a residence on Little Walmer Golf Estate, 22 Lansdowne Place in Richmond Hill and now the Port Elizabeth Opera House, the Campanile and the Mendi Multi-Purpose Centre.

Apart from regional awards, The Matrix has also won 12 other awards, including national awards from SAIA, the Galvanising Fraternity and the Stainless Steel Industry.

SA Institute of Architects Eastern Cape president Dr Gillian Adendorff said the awards function was for buildings of distinction which had been completed by architects in the region. “The submissions were of a high quality, with an impressive selection of buildings that were submitted.”

She said the awards were not only for recognition of the architects, but for people to understand what good architecture was.

“In terms of your developers and clients to understand if you design and have architects put a really good building together, that responds to good design principles, it works and functions better.

“That’s what is more important, the ability to educate the public and make people aware of what great buildings are,” Adendorff said.

## **Eight regional awards were handed out to the following buildings:**

- Aspen Pharmacare (Themba Architecture);
- Bitumen Laboratory (NOH Architecture);
- Campanile (Matrix Cc Urban Designers and Architects);
- House Ferreira in Cape St Francis (Bergenthuin Architects);
- House Hidden in Kenton-on-Sea (FDT Architects); ý Opera House Extension (Matrix); ý House Van Jaarsveld in GraaffReinet (DMV Architecture) and
- House Whitfield (DMV Architecture).

- Two commendations were also awarded to the Fine Arts Gallery space at Rhodes University (MMK Architecture) and the Mendi Multi-Purpose Centre (Matrix).

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