

Expo showcases contemporary SA architecture

South African architecture created during the first decade of the country's democracy comes under the spotlight at the Design Indaba Expo in Cape Town this week. The Expo, which opens Friday, marks the South African opening of an exhibition of contemporary local architecture, the launch of a coffee table book based on the exhibition material, and the announcement of a local design competition.

The exhibition, 'Utopia. Nowhere. Close', opens in South African after its successful international debut at the São Paulo International Biennale of Architecture and Design in Brazil during November and December 2005. South Africa was one of 13 countries invited to participate in the national section of the São Paulo exhibition, which, with 300 000 visitors, is one of the largest architectural exhibitions in the world.

The exhibition was compiled by Johannesburg architects, Thorsten Deckler, Anne Graupner and Henning Rasmuss of the urban research and exhibition collective, sharpCITY.

All 51 projects that were featured in the São Paulo exhibition go on display at the Design Indaba Expo from Friday, 24 February to Sunday, 26 February. The projects range from a Cape Flats day care centre, the Brickfields Social Housing Project in central Johannesburg and the new legislature centres for the Mpmulanga and Northern Cape provincial governments, to corporate projects for BP Southern African, Discovery Health and De Beers.

The exhibition projects have also been recorded in a 224 page, hard cover, full colour, publication, South African Architecture in a Landscape of Transition, by Graupner, Rasmuss and Deckler. Published by Double Storey - a division of Juta - the book is priced at R330 (incl VAT) and will be available at the Design Indaba Expo and also at major booksellers.

The South African viewing of 'Utopia. Nowhere. Close.' has been sponsored by the design software, Autodesk Revit.

"Our support of the exhibition forms part of our vision of 'Helping Build Africa'," says Autodesk Revit business development manager, Amanda Wesson. "We have partnered with sharpCITY to promote a vibrant design culture in South Africa. We are committed to supporting our design community and hope to help sharpCITY take its exhibition to other centres around the country."

Design Indaba Expo also marks the launch of the first Autodesk Revit design competition - UrbanPlayMobile. The competition is open to built environment professionals and students. Entrants must create a roving event machine. Its main function is to promote public urban culture through temporarily activating spaces in cities, suburbs, townships and even rural landscapes, by facilitating events that could include film screenings, performances, recordings, marketing, fashion shows, edu-tainment events. Competition details will be available at www.designcomp.co.za from Friday, 24 February. Registrations close on 31 May 2006.

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