ARCHITECTURAL PHILOSOPHY & DESIGN CODE
ARCHITECTURAL PHILOSOPHY

introduction

the architecture of mahathunzi will be subservient to the landscape and reflect the values of the private reserve the architecture will be for people who love the land, want to be in nature and who seek peace and quiet thus the philosophy which derives the design principles is one of simplicity, directness, respect and humility

an architecture of disappearance

the landscape should prevail unaffected and uninterrupted by building intervention

the landscape should move through the buildings

buildings should blend, ‘become invisible’ and disappear into the landscape

buildings should interface gently with the earth and landscape
an architecture of humility and respect

- buildings are to be subservient to nature
- buildings should connect with the landscape with respect
- architectural simplicity and humility should prevail
- form, shape and feature should be irrelevant, with space being the primary idea
- buildings should be overtly horizontal in a stratified topography
- materiality should be raw, in its original form, un-rendered and honest

an architecture of resourcefulness

- buildings should promote spatial and experiential connection between inside and outside
- the architecture should be entirely of the place
- the architecture must safeguard the ecology of the landscape
- water and energy conservation should be integral to all buildings
- the architecture should be resourceful in every way
design code

introduction

The architectural design code for Mahathunzi private reserve is embodied in five fundamentals. These are intended to expand the philosophy and succinctly outline the design directives and parameters.

siting and landscaping

Views from houses over the landscape are crucial and siting and landscaping directives are structured to protect these.

1. All houses must be invisible from other houses, roads, walking paths and key vantage points.
2. Siting of buildings is to be carefully considered to minimize intrusion into the landscape, to avoid all excavations and to promote screening by existing vegetation.
3. Wild landscaping must be retained surrounding all buildings.
4. Domesticated landscaping may only be established in courtyards or in spaces behind houses defined by steeply sloping topographical conditions or natural landscape features.
5. Addition of indigenous vegetation to reinforce existing wild landscaping and to create screening is encouraged.
6. Swimming pools and other constructed water elements are restricted to private garden spaces or courtyards.
7. No intervention on the land in terms of cutting and platform excavation will be permitted and no importation of soil fill will be allowed.
8. No fences in the landscape will be permitted, but screens conforming to the enclosure and material guidelines are allowed provided they are fully integrated with the houses or ancillary buildings - electric game fencing comprising up to 3 strands to a maximum of 600m in height will be permitted to inner domesticated landscaped zones only.
roofs

low slung, understated single storey buildings are purposefully envisaged
to integrate spatially and experimentally with the landscape

all roofs are to be flat to ensure visual quietness and calm

all roofs to houses must have 3 metre overhangs to all edges except where extreme slopes
preclude overhangs on the upward slope interface

looking down on roofs, the principle of invisibility and view of untouched landscape must prevail,
so these are to be planted with indigenous landscaping or covered with field stone

roof edges are to be carefully considered and can be designed to be
expressed or dematerialized by overhanging landscaping

roof and veranda floor edge show may be any dimension up to a maximum of 350mm,
provided that planted roofs requiring increased depth for soil must be set back a
minimum of 1 200mm back from the leading roof edge

roofs are to integrate all drainage and no expressed gutters will be permitted

no communication or television dishes may be erected on roofs and are required to be
located remotely from buildings and on low level and screened from view

no solar water heaters or photovoltaic panels on roofs will be required due to potential
reflections and to alleviate visual impacts, consideration will be afforded to locating these in
screened areas provided they are totally concealed from view
plan and enclosure
with a clearly defined section and edge condition, buildings may assume any plan form in a range of geometries and enclosures
driven by site situation, orientation, slope condition and programme, plan form may include linear pavilions, internal courtyards, fragmented courtyard arrangements and multiple constructions forming courtyards.

Landscaping ought to extend to all veranda edges which may be flush with the external natural surface or raised above the natural ground level, preferably to a maximum of 450mm, but can be higher on the downward interface of a sloping site.  

A maximum internally enclosed area of 800sqm is permissible on each site excluding garages, carports, staff quarters and ancillary buildings - these buildings require to be fully integrated into the overall design solution of the house.

All building enclosure, other than lightweight screens, require to be set a minimum of 3.0m in from the veranda peripherally and may not exceed 2.7m in height - this condition may be relaxed for garages, carports, staff quarters and ancillary buildings.

Lightweight screens and supporting columns may be set on the edge of verandas and require to be in vertical configuration and comply with the material directives.

Vertical enclosure may be solid without openings, or incorporate appropriately proportioned apertures or fenestration.

Fully glazed walls with or without vertical mullions are encouraged provided that no horizontal transoms are incorporated - no reflective or coloured glass will be permitted and clear or light grey tinted glass accommodating thermal performance requirements is allowed.

Where buildings are constructed on sloping site conditions, plinths may be in the form of expressed stilted columns, solid podium walls or screeded with appropriate approved materials in advance or behind stilted columns.
materials

Materiality is necessarily raw and natural and should reflect honesty and simplicity to facilitate the art of disappearance in the landscape.

Walls may be of any fit for purpose material provided they are in their original form. Materials such as concrete, brick, hardwood, glass, unreflective metal sheet, rammed earth and stone are considered suitable.

Any exterior area that is to be painted, that this be the single colour “fauna” as per conditions of approval cl 4.2 ii.

No covering of construction or coating of any type will be allowed on any component except aluminium - fenestration frames and mullions, which require to be a dark earthy tone.

Balustrades to verandas may be formed of any approved material except glass, set in a vertical plane with handrails or in a vertical baluster configuration.

Gravel, natural rock, brush aggregate concrete and spread crushed shale are permitted. Materials for driveways and pathways while premix, tarmac, concrete cobbles and clay pavers are precluded.

services

As simplicity is a cornerstone of the design philosophy, all services are to be concealed either within the building’s structure or where this is not possible, screened from view as integrated components of the architectural design.

All components servicing water, including stormwater, sewerage and water supply reticulation, geysers and solar heaters, are to be built into a structure or fully concealed in an integrated fashion.

Water-harvesting is encouraged, ideally in the form of subterranean tanks with submersible pumps, alternatively, if located on the ground plane to be fully screened from both horizontal and vertical view and integrated with houses or ancillary buildings.

All electrical services including generators, ups, supply cables, distribution boards, kiosks and lighting conductors are to be built into structure or fully concealed in an integrated fashion. Generators require audio attenuation.

External lighting demands careful consideration to ensure sensitive integration into building design solutions and requires to be kept to a minimum in terms of quality to alleviate light pollution.
no visible light sources, wall light washing or landscaping feature lighting is permitted

all photovoltaic cell arrays, satellite dishes, radio aerials or other electrical or electronic component are permitted attached to building structure, but must be remotely located and fully screened from view

All external lighting requires to be entirely indirect and diffuse in nature with no source visible from any point externally. No floodlights, landscape or feature spot lights or high level wall mounted lights will be allowed. All luminaries are to be warm in terms of color temperature and no colored light sources will be permitted

waste receptacles will need to be lockable and animal proof to prevent wild life access and require to be fully concealed in screened yards integrated with houses or ancillary buildings

wood barbecues are permitted provided they are integrated with the building design solution; natural wood fireplaces are also permitted in accordance with the reserve management plan regarding the use and procurement of firewood

washing line, laundry driers and lp gas bottles need to be fully concealed in screened yards integrated with houses or ancillary buildings

fencing

fencing of proximity of dwelling shall not exceed 1 ha in extent as per conditions of approval cl 5.2

fencing of proximity of dwelling shall be strand electrified only NOT exceeding 750mm in height as wild animal barrier only

no bonnex, barbed or razor wire, or multiple stranded wire fenced are permitted

it is preferred that there be as little fencing as possible allowing wildlife up to the buildings

authors

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