

**Size:** 12,989m<sup>2</sup>  
**Completed:** 2019  
**Client:** University of Pretoria  
**Location:** Hatfield and South Campus of the University of Pretoria

Opened officially on Heritage Day in 2019, the Javett-UP Art Centre at the University of Pretoria is an exciting new museum that promises to become a new “home to the art of Africa” and can be seen as Gauteng’s counterpoint to the Cape’s Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa and Norval Foundation. A partnership between the philanthropic Javett Foundation and the University of Pretoria (UP), the impressive Javett-UP is one of the largest new art museums to open in South Africa in recent years, with an exciting mandate that seeks to engage students and the public with the creativity and diversity of African art, from the ancient to the contemporary. Architecture by Mathews + Associates Architects and Landscape Architecture by GREENinc, this project truly is its own work of art.

Pieter Mathews from Mathews + Associates Architects, a Pretoria-based architecture firm, designed this exquisite building. The Javett Art Centre at the University of Pretoria consists of a public art gallery and Mapungubwe museum linked to an open museum square which includes a restaurant and outdoor exhibition space located in a publicly accessible portion of the University’s South Campus. The gallery extends over Lynnwood road with a bridge gallery which includes a pedestrian concourse, stitching together the University’s Hatfield Campus and South Campus and touching down on a new University Arts Square positioned above a new student gallery.

#### THE BRIDGE GALLERY STITCHING TWO CAMPUSES

The Javett Art Centre at UP provides a public showcase for our national treasures, elevating art firmly into the public domain while celebrating and extending the original historic ‘Tukkielaan’ over Lynwood Road, strengthening the cultural spine of the University of Pretoria.

The pattern of the sunscreen panels on the western side of the bridge – which provides a cooling solar filter for the building – is a graphic representation of the Shweshwe cloth fabric which has been a part of South African life. This blue fabric has always been a great binding element in South Africa, proving to be very popular with people from all cultures, backgrounds and walks of life – Pedi (shweshwe),

## JAVETT ART CENTRE *A Work of Art*

**SUPPLIERS**

**All Bricks and Pavers:**

Corobrik – 011 871 8600

**Patterned Panels:**

S P E Engineering – 011 674 5046

**Lighting:**

Regent Lighting Solutions – 011 474 0171

**Concrete:**

Lafarge - 011 657 1092

**Red sculpture:**

Edoardo Villa

**Nurseries:**

Bristlecone Nursery – 012 207 9904  
 Garden Magic Big Trees – 082 576 2696  
 Grow Wild - 082 824 6715  
 Monavoni – 012 668 1261  
 Plantworld - 082 805 0910  
 Random Harvest – 011 957 5354  
 Siyakula Nursery - 076 639 7949  
 Sunbird Aloes – 082 824 6604  
 Tshala – 071 683 1177

**Stainless steel balustrades:**

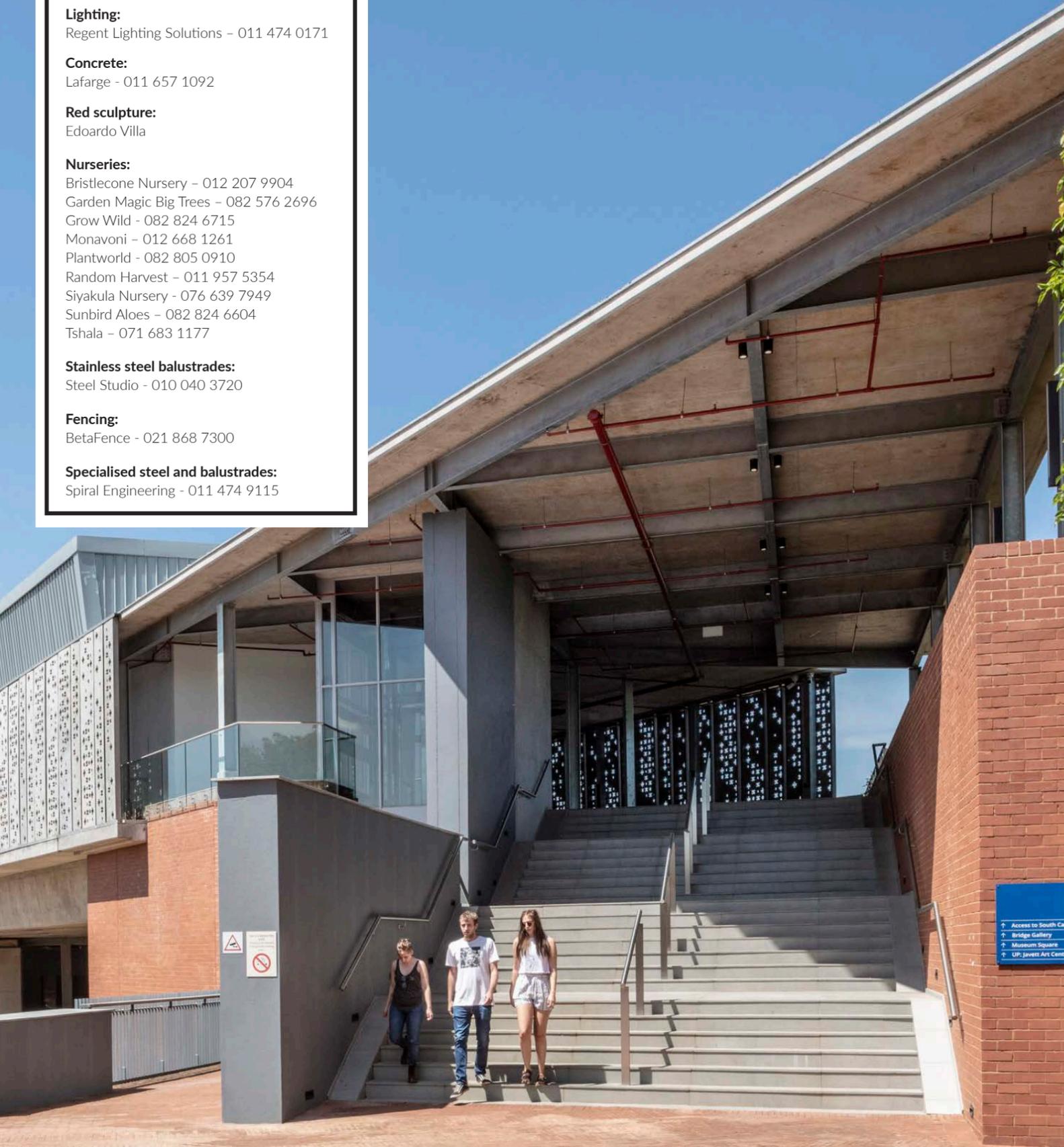
Steel Studio - 010 040 3720

**Fencing:**

BetaFence - 021 868 7300

**Specialised steel and balustrades:**

Spiral Engineering - 011 474 9115



Photograph by Alet Pretorius, courtesy of the Javett Foundation

Indian (printed), English and Afrikaans (sislap). The ever-changing shadow patterns on the walls and floors reminds us of how much we all have in common. The patterned panels are made of fibre-reinforced concrete and were designed by Mathews + Associates Architects and SPE Engineering.

**THE MAPUNGUBWE MOUNTAIN**

The second dominant feature of this complex is the Mapungubwe mountain. Juxtaposed against the bridge and located alongside Lynnwood road, the sheer mass and solidity of this iconic structure will establish its dominance as a new city landmark

These Mapungubwe national treasures of the golden rhino, spectre cow and leopard are housed inside this abstract architectural interpretation of the Mapungubwe hill. This solid, iconic, sculptural, vault-like structure was moulded using custom formed shuttering.

**PUBLIC SPACE**

The complex includes two open squares: Museum Square and the Arts Square. The Museum Square is located on the southern side of Lynnwood road in front of the main entrance. A natural gathering zone, this space is directly accessible to the public, serving the restaurant and playing host to various public functions and events. The main

public entrance is located from this square. In addition to the nine galleries, the complex also includes a 115-seat auditorium, administrative offices, storage, art conservation and quarantine areas, as well as a high-end restaurant serving the art complex while looking out over the picturesque Boys High grounds and opening up onto the centre's main public Museum Square.

The Arts Square is located where the Bridge Gallery touches down on the University's Hatfield campus, forming a raised focal culmination point along the university's culturally historic 'Tukkielaan' route. The university is well known for its sculptor alumni and it is envisaged that this square could also play host to international sculptural exhibitions and competitions. The space below the square forms a student gallery which creates a direct link between the faculties of the built environment and visual arts, thereby bringing together these two creative fields.

**WHAT IT HOUSES**

The Javett Art Centre at UP houses some of the finest works from the collections of the Javett Foundation Trust and the University of Pretoria, as well as various temporary special exhibitions. The southern gallery wing houses the private donor collections, including the private collection of the Javett Foundation Trust – the seed donor. The Bridge Gallery section is positioned alongside the

pedestrian concourse with an entrance into the gallery, thereby directly exposing the passing pedestrians to art, architecture and academic works daily. This dynamic gallery space exhibits various travelling exhibitions as well as selections of the students' own works of art, graphics, architecture and even projects of a more academic nature from various faculties.

Mapungubwe has always had a very strong connection with the University of Pretoria – both archaeologically and even architecturally – and by providing this fitting setting for these treasures, these pieces can now be proudly displayed to the world as a celebration of Africa's rich history. The Javett Art Centre at UP provides a valuable contribution to the university, the city, and the country, through the reactivation and unification of the university, the cultural enrichment and education of the city, and the international attraction of an uplifting national celebration of our rich African past.

GREENinc, the landscape architecture company on this project, explains the main brief was initially to design a museum for the Mapungubwe Art Collection.

When the location of the museum was determined, the new development had a repercussion effect on the surrounding buildings

(Visual Art building, Boukunde building and South Campus buildings) and elaborated a brief that allowed for an additional Art Gallery bridge, Arts Square, Museum Square and studio spaces.

The Lynnwood pedestrian bridge was the only link between Hatfield and South Campus and initiated an important pedestrian access between these two campuses. The impact of the Art Gallery Bridge called for a specific design proposal to incorporate the historical Tukkie Laan on the northern side of campus and to create a physical and visual link towards the southern campus. The proposed development deals with a sensitive environment considering the different users and departments that need to be integrated on both sides of the bridge. Therefore, the importance is placed on the horizontal threshold of the bridge on the Hatfield and Southern Campus and how the surrounding fabric will connect to the threshold.

The landscape proposal was finalised after numerous redesign attempts due to the different role players of the project. The design has included items like face brick feature walls, rammed earth walls, custom-designed clay brick masonry features, succulent podium exhibition space, stainless steel vertical green cable wall, custom-designed planter boxes and a fence.

**THE ICONIC PAVING**

More than 430,000 clay pavers were used to craft the exterior walkways, public squares,

ramps and parking area of the art centre. The textures and colours of the clay paving range are durable, colour-fast, skid-resistant and suitable for trafficked areas. The pavers were selected to create texture, with a simple layout. Only two paver variations were chosen to give a more uniform thread between the different spaces of the building. The paving links the new building with existing ones – the historical Boukunde, Visual Arts and Town and Regional buildings. Sixty percent of the pavers were installed on a basement or slab, reducing future maintenance issues as the pavers can be easily removed and re-installed without compromising the surface.

**PLANTING**

GREENinc strongly believes that it is important to only plant indigenous plants with new developments. Considering that any new planting introduced within the University of Pretoria will form part of the bigger Botanical Garden precinct, makes the use of endemic and indigenous planting palettes paramount.

Plants have a role to define, support and emphasise the importance of space. Qualitative landscape spaces should lead the decision-making process with a new project whilst the planting palette should complement the spaces. Trees were also used to emphasise boulevards, create a sense of scale or define crafted spaces.

At the Javett Art Centre at UP, this has become evident. Spaces were crafted between the

existing and new building fabric and emphasised with a selection of indigenous planting palette that is not necessarily commercially known.

The softscaping on this project is minimal due to the challenges with weight restrictions on the slab areas and basement. The selection of planting was made in conjunction with the Botanical Garden curator, Jason Sampson. Dr Ida Breed, senior lecturer at UP's Biodiversity Studio, Department of Architecture has also developed an 80m² experimental biodiversity garden as part of the art centre complex with a subsequent 200m² patch located at the Future Africa complex (Hillcrest Campus).

Wouter Labuschagne, project landscape architect explains: "As a landscape architect, I have learned a lot in terms of the spatial composition of urban space and the important role of integrating existing spaces with the proposed spaces. The value of landscape design is unlocked in these thresholds. The design is both simplistic and robust, but complex seamed together."

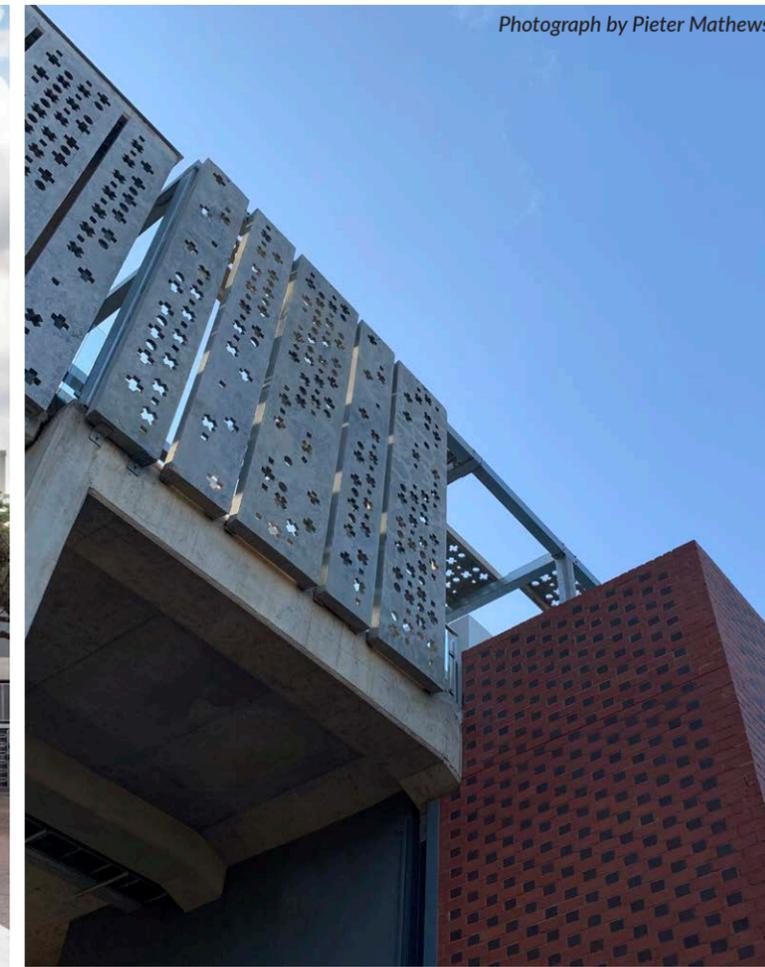
He also adds that: "Being part of this project on your home turf places a lot of pressure in terms of how you will show your design to the young designers at the university."

It certainly has been a successful project, and one we are sure we will be reading about in months to come.

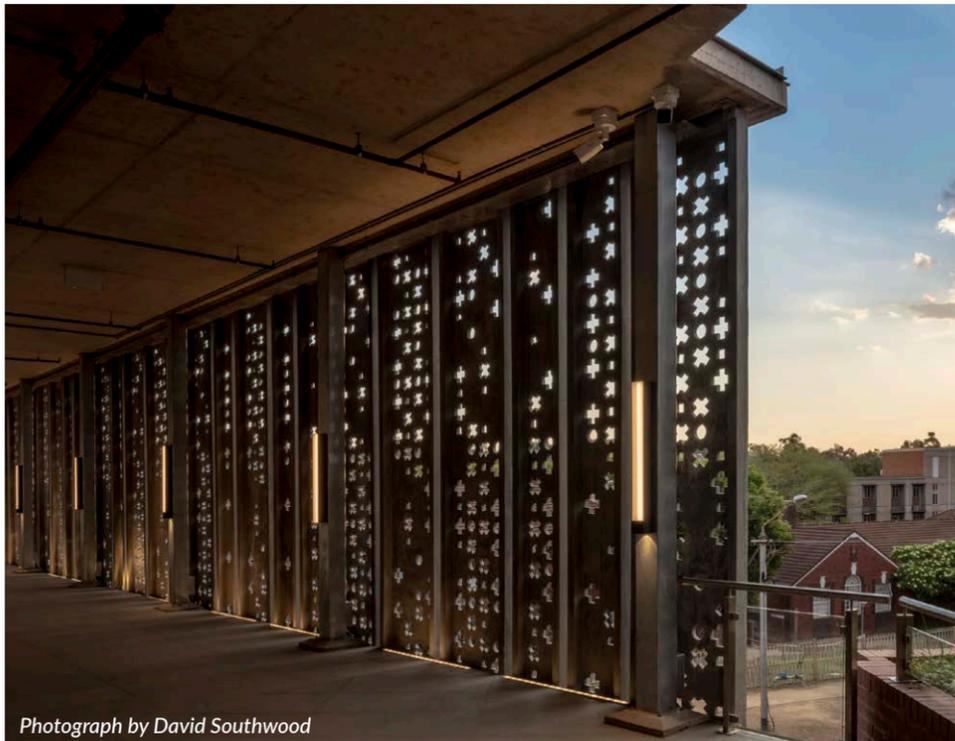
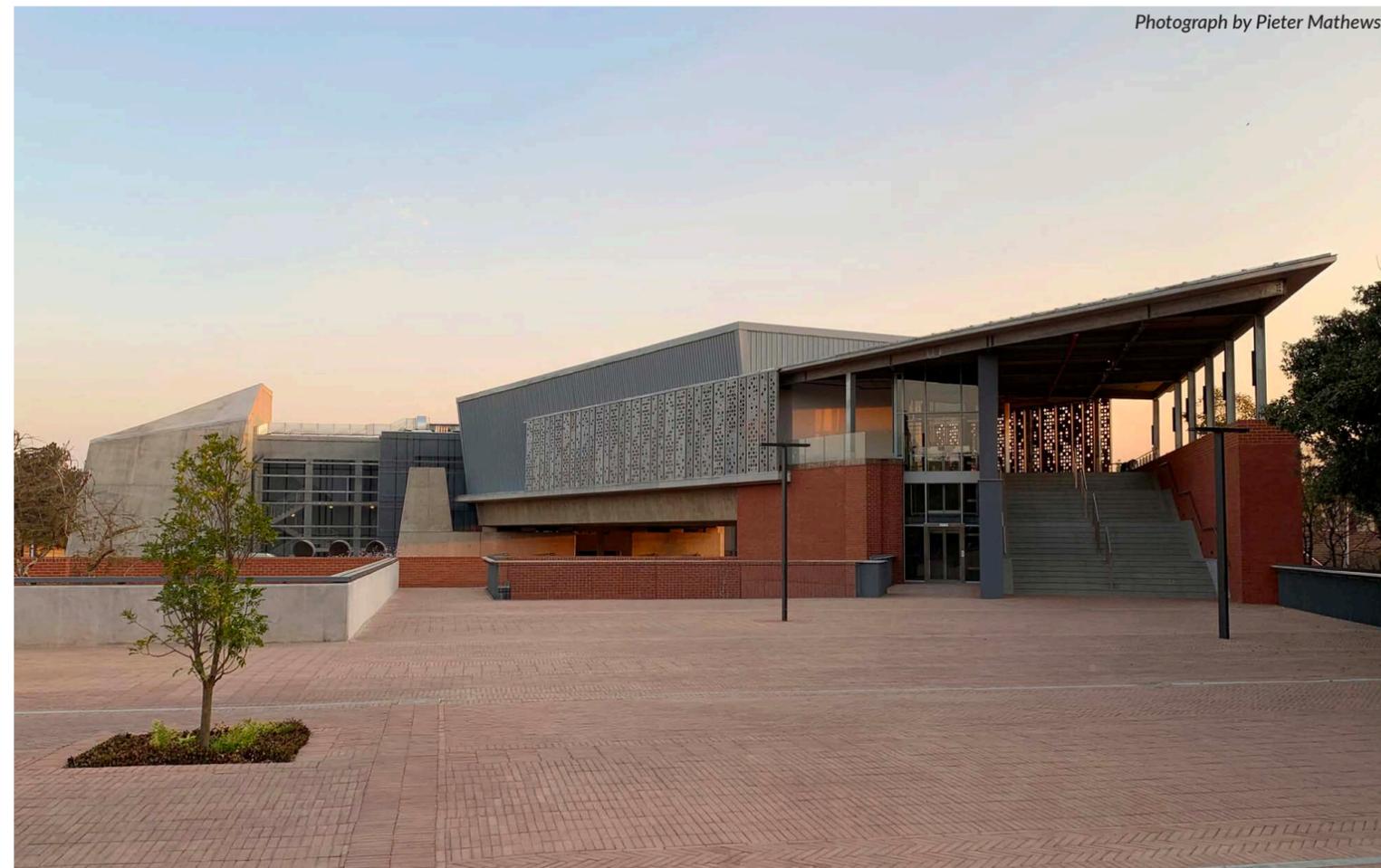
Photograph by David Southwood



Photograph by Pieter Mathews



Photograph by Pieter Mathews



Photograph by David Southwood

**MEET THE TEAM**

**Architects:**  
Mathews + Associates Architects

**Project architects:**  
Pieter Mathews, Liam Purnell,  
Jannes Hattingh, Carla Spies

**Landscape architects:**  
GREENinc

**Landscape Contractors:**  
Servest Landscaping

**Lead landscape architects:**  
Anton Comrie, Wouter Labuschagne

**Lighting specialists:**  
Pamboukian Lighting



