

CS STUDIO ARCHITECTS

DAWID KLAASTE MULTI PURPOSE CENTRE

LOCATION: LAINGSBURG, WESTERN CAPE

DATE: 2002 - 2005

BACKGROUND

Laingsburg is a rural Karoo town 280km from Cape Town on the N1. Its history dates back to the mid – 1700's, when the area was established to grow fresh produce for travellers. The site ERF1884 is located on the corner of Main Road and Third Avenue, Gardnerville - the historically 'non-white' area. The site was chosen after a process of community consultation. It was an old rugby field which had two existing shed-like structures. We were tasked with transforming these existing structures into a dynamic environment, which would attract travellers and the local residents alike.

DESIGN

The concept was developed over a series of design meetings and workshops. The workshops were facilitated by well known South African poet Diane Feerus who wrote poems based on residents' stories. Eventually one poem formed the basis of the design. The following had to be considered: The rich fauna and flora environment of the area, the flood of September 1981, the windmill as a symbol of the Karoo, the train and the water scorpion. (Cape Town based palaeontologist John Arnold discovered the track way of a gigantic water scorpion, or eurypterid, in the 260-million-year-old marine rocks, near Laingsburg. Local mythology soon translated the water scorpion to the "water kreek".) Secondly, we had to incorporate locally trained people in metalwork and electrical skills during the construction process. The metal work training was done by well known South African artist Willie Bester. The electrical sub-contractor worked with the local electricians.

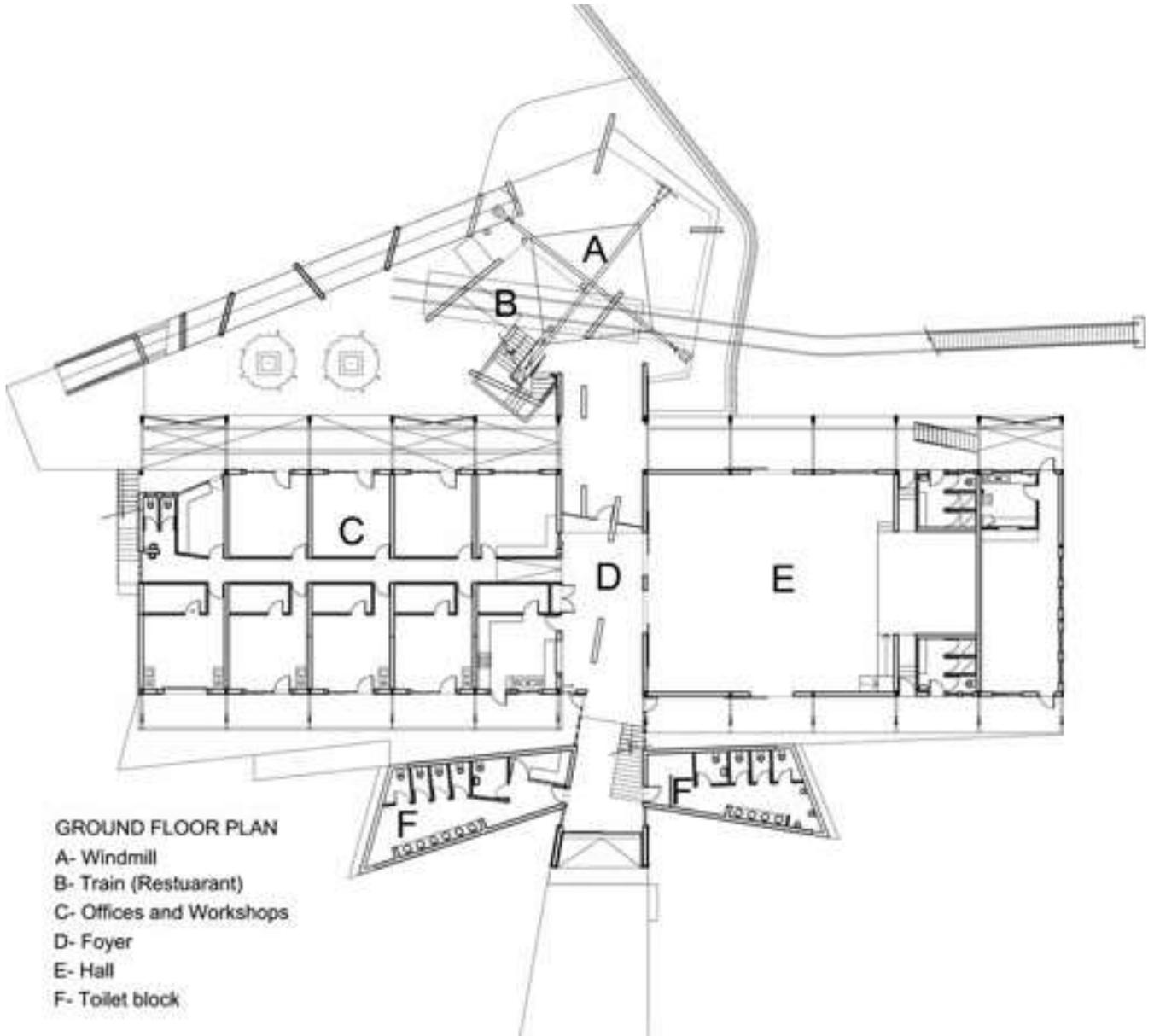
Two existing, shed-like buildings were taken apart and recycled. The roofs were extended to become single, mono-pitched roofs with large overhangs creating outdoor shaded areas at different times of the day. The existing roofing material was re-used as vertical cladding to the spine of the building, as well as on the newly created first floor office component.

The metalwork executed by the local trainees that were trained by Willie Bester, was a very rewarding process. All the buildings' handrails were made from farmyard scrap and painted a blue purple for decorative purposes. A clear reference from many locals was that the floodwater of 1981 raged through the town like 'an angry red bull'. The result was the request by the community to paint the building a symbolic red. As the building is owned and maintained by the Laingsburg Municipality, they have decided to repaint the building white as it is the most inexpensive paint.

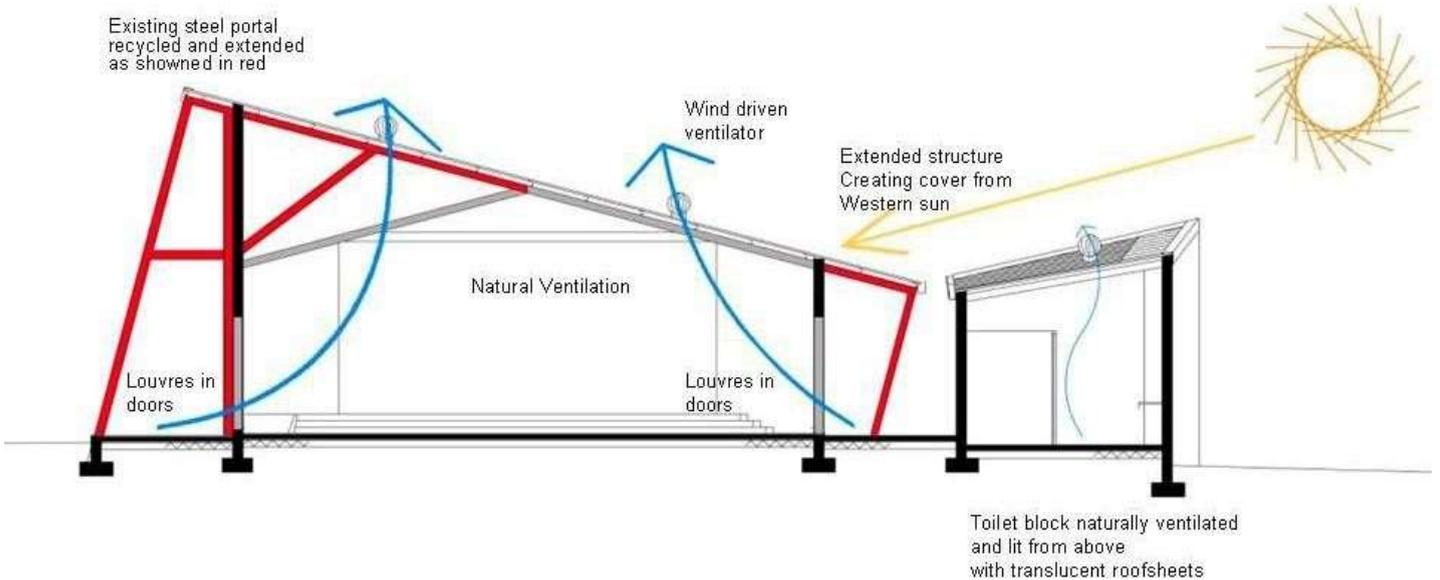
A concrete ramp provides outdoor access leading to the first floor of the windmill structure. At the first floor of the windmill, an old railway goods carriage has been placed on railway tracks. The train has been designed to be a restaurant to serve visitors. The windmill head was a major debate during the design process as it was argued that the large scale of the blades could make the windmill 'take off'. Hence, at the top of the windmill sits a rocket head, ready to launch itself into the hemisphere. The central spine connects the newly created wedge-shaped public toilet blocks on the west side with the sheds in the middle and the windmill on the east side.

The building was named after Dawid Klaaste who was the community liaison person and who coordinated the site. He was unfortunately stabbed to death. The community wanted the center to be named after him in his memory however the municipality has renamed it the Thusong.

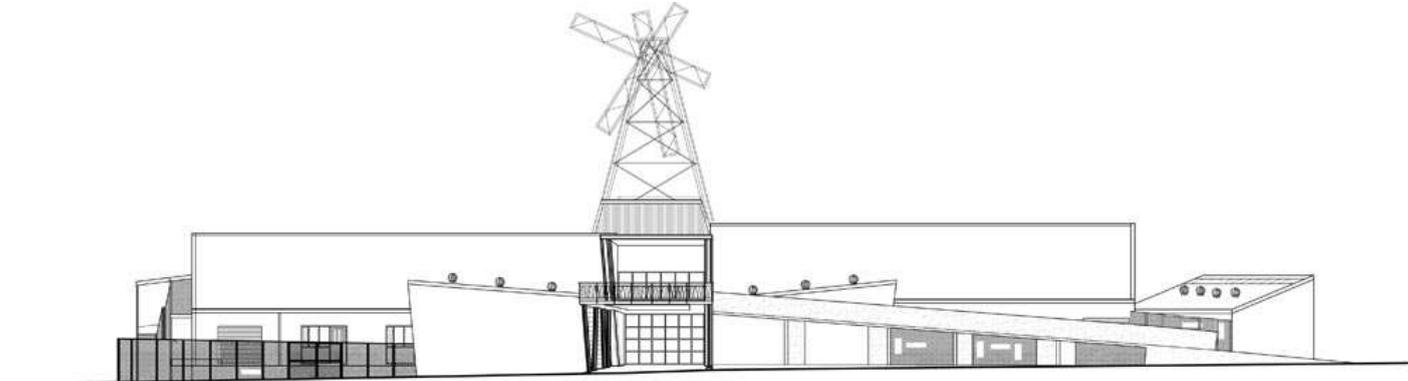
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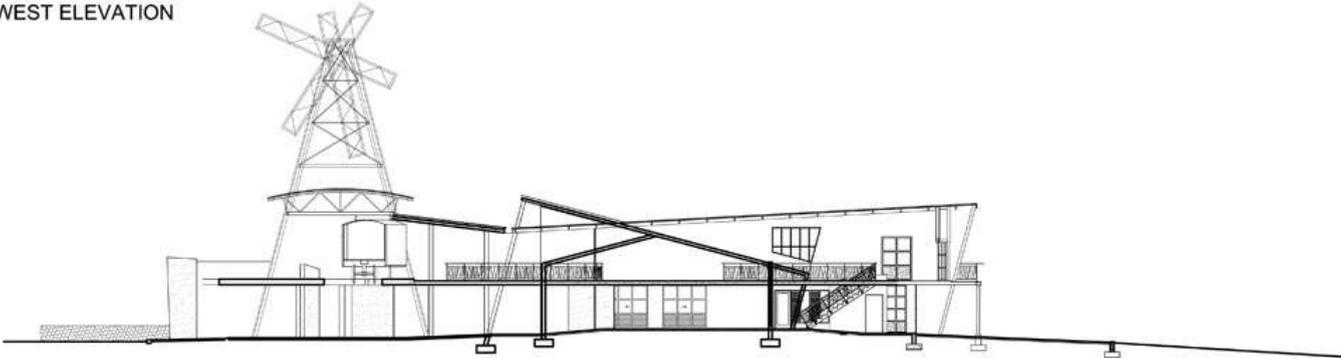
- GROUND FLOOR PLAN**
 A- Windmill
 B- Train (Restuarant)
 C- Offices and Workshops
 D- Foyer
 E- Hall
 F- Toilet block



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WEST ELEVATION



SECTION