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THE WORK OF
CAPE TOWN-
BASED JAKUPA
ARCHITECTS IS
INFORMED BY AN
INTRINSIC DESIRE
FOR A MORE
EQUITABLE AND
HUMANE CITY
AND SURROUNDS

URBAN EVOLUTION

They may have a string of impressive structures and projects attributed to them but Khalied Jacobs and Gabs Pather, the founding members of Jakupa Architects and Urban Designers, are understated about their achievements. 'We want to do work that is innovative but has meaning,' says Khalied, whose experience in post-conflict urban planning for the United Nations in Somalia has had a profound effect on his understanding of how to make a city work for its citizens. The pair, who met at university years ago and started Jakupa in 2004, share a passion for moving beyond 'commercial profit-driven projects', a desire informed by the reality of growing up in a spatially divided Cape Town in the 1980s – the hangover of which they seek to readdress through much of their work.

'We're interested in understanding the spatial structure of our city as well as mobility through it,' says Gabs, which explains their successful tendering for projects such as the upgrading of the Cape Town Station. The renovation project aims to help improve the commuter experience, link the city with neglected sectors of the urban environment and provide better facilities for vendors in the area. 'The train station is the biggest building in the city, but currently divides it between old and new. Our desire is to reunite the city with District Six, the Foreshore and Culemborg,' he says.

Other projects where Jakupa have left their mark include the Nyanga and Masiphumelele Urban Design Frameworks, schemes that relooked the urban planning of each of these areas, bringing in more people-friendly public spaces and systems encouraging easier mobility to and from home and work. They are also responsible for a series of pedestrian and bicycle pathways between Liesbeek Parkway and Woodstock, as well as in Khayelitsha and Athlone, and have also contributed design input towards the massive urban park that will form part of the greater Green Point Stadium environment.

Though it's clear that Gabs and Khalied are a force to be reckoned with within the industry, they firmly believe in empowering team members to take ownership of their work. 'Everyone in our practice is given their own project to manage according to their skills level and we troubleshoot together. It's a complex method but the results are unexpected and that's what's exciting,' explains Khalied.

With their obvious commitment to improving cityscapes, it was only a matter of time before they set their sights on Joburg. Currently they're busy with the Koponong Gauteng Government Precinct, where a neglected area of the inner city will be uplifted to include government buildings linked by skywalks, as well as a massive amphitheatre for public gatherings and a controlled environment for street vendors. The precinct will bring a much-needed sense of renewal and functionality to Joburg's CBD. 'Our shared values are the glue in our work. We believe that every project has the potential to reflect our current ideals of an urban landscape that promotes dignity for all who use it.' ■

1. Rendering of the planned rejuvenation of Cape Town Station's interior
2. Planned roof deck at Cape Town Station
3. The public transport shared service centre in Athlone (currently under construction) was designed by Jakupa in collaboration with Makeka Design Lab in Cape Town