

A SHOWCASE OF AFRICAN MEDIA IDEAS

Welcome to the home of the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies, a facility offering seven degrees and a dozen outreach projects.

The whole building looks new and fresh, yet only the top floor of the Africa Media Matrix is novel. With support from media company Johncom, it was added in 2005 to what used to be the two-story Leather Industries Research Institute, built during the Second World War.

The entire structure was gutted and rebuilt at a cost of R26m to be ready for teaching at the start of 2006. The conversion culminated a fundraising process that began in 2001 with a planning grant from the Ford Foundation.

A special vision has guided the look and feel for the building. It is: *to act as a vibrant catalyst providing any person entering the space an opportunity to engage with media production, consumption and debate in Africa.*

Non-profit company Artaid, founded by John-Anthony Boerma, advised the School on developing the aesthetics and collections policy, and assisted in securing and installing most of the artworks.

More details of the School and the Africa Media Matrix are available at www.ru.ac.za/jms

OUTSIDE

Pause before you enter the edifice and take a few steps back. Note the font used in the building's name. It's called Trebuchet. The "A" is actually an upside-down "V"; and the "M" is two upside-down "Vs". Result: AMM.

The five triangle shapes are echoed in the wooden benches on the verandah. The wavy bench weaved out of package binding tape was made by Manus Höln, a Cape Town based crafter.

The two woven pots at the head of the entrance to the building contain strips from aluminium printing plates. The original sheets are from Grocott's Mail, South Africa's oldest independent paper and now owned by Rhodes University as a community service and a platform for experiential learning by journalism students.

The printing press to your right comes from the Eastern Star printing museum just off High Street. The Chandler & Price Platen machine predates 1911. Its advertising patter at the time read: "the construction of these Machines is such, and their balance so perfect,



OUTSIDE CONT.

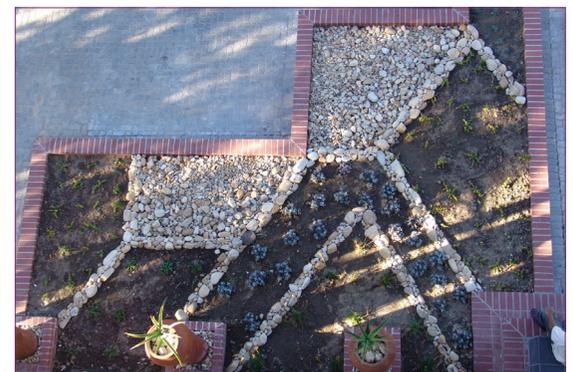
that they run with perfect ease, silently, and as rapidly as it is possible for any operator to feed them."

The costs of acquiring and installing this press, as well as the benches and the foyer furniture, were supported by Media24.

You'll notice some square brick tiles in the pebble bed next to the press. These come from Grocott's Mail, and date from pre-1906. They were on the floor of the paper's printing press.

Around the building is a pergola, upon which a 31 meter ticker tape will be running general news headlines plus information about activities and achievements of the school and its occupants.

Take note of the garden in front of the AMM; you'll be able to get an aerial view looking down from the balcony on the top floor. The plants, all indigenous, constitute a mosaic pattern approximating Ndebele design.



LEVEL ZERO

As you enter the door, you'll see a clash of bright colours. Directly ahead and slightly aloft is red - that's for radio. Beneath the banister there's a Venda drum, made by craftsman John Baloi. It's to call attention when there's a function in the foyer.



To the left is our reception area in blue. That framed cloth there is clause 16 in the South African constitution guaranteeing free speech. Look further to the left: that's a cloth from Senegal hanging over the student essay boxes.



Catching your eye will be the four electronic panels just past the pillar (that bears North African script). These screens show students at work around the building, as well as their output in video, photo and internet forms. They also publicise JMS events and achievements, and carry TV plus website news from around Africa. The feed is available on data-projectors in the seminar rooms and labs.



Notice that surrounding them is a mosaic made of tiles, done on site by the Spaza Gallery of Johannesburg. The four fists at

LEVEL ZERO CONT.

the top represent the word "news" in sign language; and the domino-like pattern below is the same in Braille.

You'll notice the ottomans grouped around the pillars. They're made in Grahamstown to designs done by Jane Solomon of Cape Town.



To your right, you'll notice a student photographic display against the wall. In front of it and further right are two tall tables with mosaic surfaces. One consists of thought-provoking quotations; the other is not Japanese design - it's a reproduction of proof-reading symbols.



Turning to face the car park, your eyes meet a display of colourful wire-woven bowls on the wall. From Kwazulu Natal, they're made of strands of telephone wire - but the plain blue one is the 35 km of super-speed cabling used in the building. It's not all about wire: the dataprojector suspended from the ceiling in the foyer - like its counterparts throughout the building - can operate wirelessly through Bluetooth technology.



THE LANDING

Ascend the steps to the landing above the foyer. You can't miss the Zulu hats on the right. Nor can you bypass the Ndebele painted TV camera against an Ndebele decorated wall - done in situ by artist Martha Rankoe. That's your colourful cue for the television section up the stairs - just follow the Ndebele patterns when you get there.



To the right is the staff tearoom - a tribute to the 1950s Drum magazine heritage. Before going up to the next level, walk to your left past the kitchen with its mosaic top including even Rhodes saucers. There are 34 languages on the news wall. If you look down at the reception, you'll notice yet another Spaza Gallery mosaic. From here you can see a map of Africa in the pattern.



Down the passage on the right hand wall is an installation of wire radios. Made by Wilfred Arendse, these all work. When they're switched on, a sensor triggers the power and a cacophony breaks loose. Directly opposite them is a display of the history of the building, while next to the



THE LANDING CONT.

disabled persons' lift is some memorabilia about our first alumni reunion in 2004 (the university's centenary year). Journalism itself was started at the university in 1970, and housed then in the Rhodes theatre building.

You will have passed a red passage to the radio studio. Another clue that you're close to audio are the clock-faces made of old LPs (check out the labels). Notice the multilingual toilet names as you proceed down the passage. We've Zulu, Xhosa, French, Shona, Venda, Swahili, Afrikaans and Arabic in the building.

To enter the radio section, you'll need to negotiate the access control system. This helps us track movements in the event of kit going missing.

Through the radio door, you'll find a newsroom to your right. No tape. It's all digital these days. To your left is a control room and two sound-proof studios. Its output contributes to the mix on the campus station RMR, and (during the Grahamstown National Arts Festival) to SABC station SAFM.



LEVEL ONE

As you mount the stairs to the next level, you'll see a patchwork cloth map of Africa with country labels in French. It comes from Benin, and sends a reminder of different views of the continent. Halfway up the stairs is a Peters projection map, which contrasts with the shape of Africa as shown in the familiar Mercator projection on the mezzanine. It's evidence of the many possibilities in making meaning.



When you arrive at the next floor you'll confront an Ndebele pillar - a hint that you're en route to TV. Look down the passage to your left for the next Ndebele artwork. Before proceeding there, look at the news photographs on display - donated by Reuters. On their right is the Aral seminar room. The framed image on the wall is a tribute to Africa's earliest journalists - and also to staffer Joe Alfors who oversaw thousands of technical details in making this building possible. Please read the caption.



In the same passage on the right is the technical store - the hub where media equipment is issued for student use.



LEVEL ONE CONT.

The opposite wall contains 100 images of the best front pages of The Star newspaper during 2005, compiled by Dave Hazelhurst, winner of the Mondi-Shanduka Lifetime Achiever award for the same year. Past the store is a display of Mozambican artists' representations of buck horns, donated by Artaid.



Turn around and stroll down the passage towards television, passing the offices of media studies academics also on this floor.

Pause at the large wooden blocks, which Grocott's Mail used many decades ago to print posters, and see if you can make out the word "Matrix". Next to these is an installation of wire televisions (again by Grahamstown's Wilfred Arendse), with beadwork initials of Journalism and Media Studies woven by craftswomen who sell their wares at the Drostdy Arch.



Opposite the TVs you'll see the poster "Grahamstown will never be the same again". Alumni Natalie Dixon and Nichole Fox staged a massive concert at Rhodes in 2005 to raise funds for scholarships.



LEVEL ONE CONT.

Further along the passage are examples of posters marking how the School has commemorated Media Freedom Day in past years. The printed cloths on display a little further on come from young creators at Victoria Girls High School in Grahamstown.

Now it's time for television.

The room you enter here is the control room - the nerve centre that drives the studio just ahead and on your left. What goes on in the studio can be narrowcast directly to the electronic screens in the foyer, and in the event of a temporary broadcast licence, can be transmitted from the Network Centre elsewhere on this floor. To the left of the studio is an archive to store past student work.

The television section also includes a newsroom directly to your right. In there, you'll notice from the Jane Solomon curtains that the pen still has a role to play. Among the images hanging here are posters from occasions when the section has broadcast directly to Grahamstown as Cue-TV. The 2001 African Charter on



LEVEL ONE CONT.

Broadcasting is also on display.

Adjacent to the control room is the MultiChoice Digital Discussions room where students plan video projects and work in teams, each with their own production suite and individualised name. The ottomans are Jane Solomon's designs.

Exit into the passage, and turn left. There are covers of books published by some of our alumni. Then you pass artefacts about the School's scholarship programmes, started originally by former Daily Dispatch editor Donald Woods. There's also information about our Steve Biko Media Week competition that promotes careers in media to matriculants.

Further down the passage is a giant photograph taken by Chris Kirchoff, and donated by him, showing just how deeply cellular communications have penetrated Africa. This is appropriately located because a little further on your right are materials produced by Highway Africa, a project whose agenda is heightened awareness of Information and Communication Technologies by the



LEVEL ONE CONT.

continent's media workers. 2006 marked the tenth anniversary of HA's conference which has grown to be the world's largest annual gathering of African journalists.

Opposite HA's display is a record of the Rhodes Journalism Review, founded by Kerry Swift. Also shown is the earliest magazine ever produced by the Department - Inquiry - dating from 1979. At the end of the passage is the Pearson seminar room, paid for by the same company which has also supported a Chair of Economics Journalism in the School. The walls inside are coloured the same as Pearson's famous "pink paper" - the Financial Times.

Retrace your steps and opposite the stairwell you will see a short passage. It leads to the Network Centre. There's restricted access here, because within is the IT hub of the entire building - and a back-up of the central campus computer system. Take a squiz at the pictures and read the caption for more detail.



LEVEL TWO

En route from level one up the stairwell, there are two artworks on display. The one made of electronic debris is the product of the Umcebo (treasure) project based in Durban and done by handicapped children. It is sponsored by the French embassy. The banner of famous photographer Peter Magubane was made and donated by Graeme Germond. Note the lampshades as you ascend: they're woven from 32m film.



When you reach the top floor, you've arrived at the writing, design, photography and new media level.

Turn right towards the pink-painted walls. You'll see printers' trays from Grocott's Mail - with beaded artwork letters by Bukelwa Fukena from Qolorha. Then do an about turn, and head back down the passage, passing the stairwell to your left. Take a look at the display about an historic protest by South African editors against subpoenas compelling journalists to testify in court. Past them, you can see the TV studio down below. But stay in the main passage and head onwards.



LEVEL TWO CONT.

It's a good time for a pit-stop. The toilets are on your left. Before you enter, remember that the building is intended to provoke thought about the media. Enough said. The fonts used are Palatino Linotype and ITC Franklin Gothic Heavy.

On exiting, turn left and note the prominent media people whom Rhodes has recognised with honorary doctorates.

Take the last door to your right, and enter the Photographic Lab where students process images using software. The same space opens up with sliding doors into three other computer spaces - for new media, design and writing.

The Design Lab features Francophone African tabloid newspaper pages, while the largest space - the Writing Lab has framed copies of Cue newspaper. This publication was founded in 1987 by a former head of department, Prof Gavin Stewart, and it appears daily during the National Arts Festival.

On the far side of the labs is a passage filled with metal display boards for showing



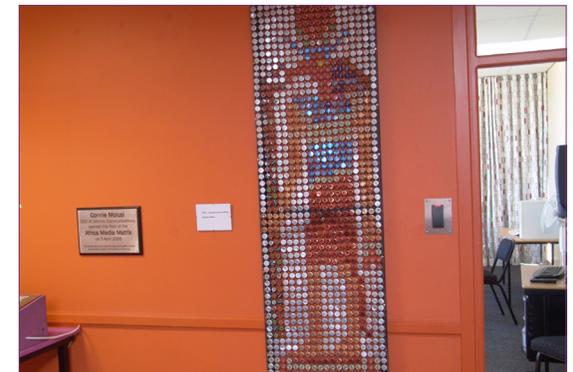
LEVEL TWO CONT.

student photographic work. Walk along in the direction of the front car park. Near the end, note the Grocott's wooden blocks on your left - spelling "Think Design".

As you approach the stairs, you can't miss the boater hats. They're made by an artist called Mr Shabby from Cape Town. If you turn right and walk past them, you come to the photographic darkroom, and the design and photojournalism workrooms.

Back in the main passage, the end displays a photograph of an armed anti-apartheid activist running towards you. It was donated by Peter Magubane in April 2006. Next to this is a representation of the Egyptian god of writing, Thoth, made with bottle tops by Bongani Mphefu from Johannesburg. A plaque notes the opening of the building by Johnnic CEO Connie Molusi.

As you look to your right down the stairs, you'll see electronic screens on the banister, as well as a map of the world at night. The lights that mark out the shape of the Nile are fascinating. And you can even see a pinprick



LEVEL TWO CONT.

for Grahamstown. Alongside the stairwell is a Zulu rickshaw head-dress - ancient aesthetics that were put to colonial use.

Just above the staircase is a light table - the kind of device used to do “paste-up” before the advent of Desktop-Publishing on computer. On it is the production of a publication by Rhodes students done in the mid-1980s.

The first seminar room on this floor is dubbed the Section 16 room - after the free speech clause in the South African constitution. Inside it, and the other seminar rooms, the curtains also celebrate the clause.

Down the passage are three grey display boards behind perspex covers. Here are the winning entries for writing, photography and design in the national Mondli-Shanduka journalism competition. The boards (and the archive which is housed at Rhodes) are sponsored by the company.

Opposite this display are three more Senegalese cloths. And looking down at the end of the passage,

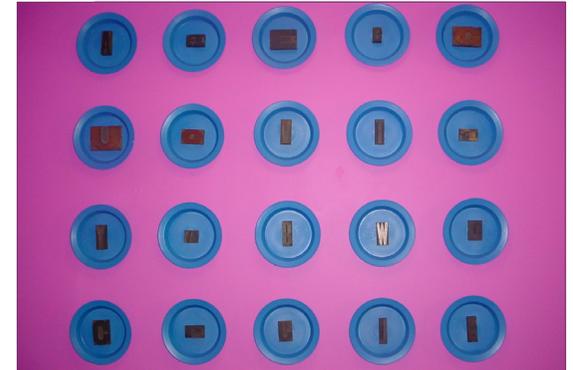


LEVEL TWO CONT.

you can see an installation of blue plastic plates - each bearing a Grocott's printing block on it. The idea is taken from a common African sight - street vendors selling fruit or sweets in similar dishes. Next to the lift is another Grocott's artefact from the past - a printer's frame with hotmetal content.

Culminate your tour at the Johncom Conference Room. The plaster-cast kudu horns are by Johannesburg-based Gerhardt Swart and Anthony Harris. These African communications instruments are ancestors to the modern day Vuvuzela. The large photograph by Chris Kirchoff is of a circle of human-high Eastern Cape aloes which are used by local people as an outdoor church.

Open the Constitution curtains, and proceed onto the balcony. From here you can see not only the patterned garden below, but also the entire Grahamstown horizon with areas both rich and poor. It symbolises the Africa Media Matrix as a place with a view - and with a vision. This is a place to stimulate ideas about media making a difference in Africa.



Vision Statement of the School of Journalism and Media Studies

The School of Journalism and Media Studies strives to contribute to the commitment expressed in the South African Constitution to “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental rights; [and] lays the foundations for a democratic and open society...”

Our vision is informed by the following understanding of the media:

- The media constitute one of the powerful institutions that mediate our relation to and experience of the world,
- The nature of such mediation is conditioned by the media’s particular political, economic, technological and historical contexts,
- Consequently, these mediations contribute to the production and reproduction of the dominant relations of inequality that structure social life, and are implicated in questions of gender, class, culture, race, geography and sexuality.

Journalism and Media Studies aims to produce self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken. Such graduates are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions.

Moreover, Journalism and Media Studies seeks to make valuable intellectual contributions to the broad African media environment, and to the integrated and ongoing education of media practitioners.

Donors: Ford Foundation, Johncom, Pearson, MultiChoice, Media24.

Contributions in kind: ADC Krone, Philips/GijimaAST, Nortel/BCX, APC, Fire and Instrument Services.

CONTACT US

School of Journalism and Media Studies
P O Box 94
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
6140

(046) 603 7100

(046) 603 7101 (fax)

<http://www.ru.ac.za/jms>



Photographs: Guy Berger; Shalen
Gajadhar; Christiaan Louw; Simon
Pamphilon; Gregor Röhrig

Design & Layout:
Shalen Gajadhar
s.gajadhar@ru.ac.za
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