Architecture, History, and the Debate on Identity in Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa

IKEM STANLEY OKOYE
University of Delaware

Q: Do you think that a modern Nigerian aesthetic is possible? A: A Nigerian aesthetic? On what would it be based that is as solid as that on which Aalto's Finnish tradition or Tange's on the Japanese tradition was?

Maxwell Fry
We must ... draw on our traditions.

David Aradeon
Good and up-coming architects are coming to terms with the fact that they live in Africa ... you need to look at what's indigenous.

Ora Joubert

Preface
Interestingly, the African academy's engagement with architectural history, apart from the fact that it is based in the now traditional and myopic idea of a modernist Day 1, was instigated in the context of a perceived threat, one only marginally related to Maxwell Fry's idea that African historical architecture (were such a category imaginable) offered nothing of value to contemporary architectural practice.¹ The greater threat lay elsewhere. Given that the modern state in Africa is relatively weak in that it has few resources to enforce its own laws, the idea that the architect is the only creator whose design proposals had first to be approved by building inspectors and planning authorities before construction could proceed is in reality nonexistent (though articles of registration and the sanctions they impose on the noninitiated are on the law books). Anyone can, where enforcement is nominal, design and erect a building. This is the threat to Architecture.

In such circumstances, the professional African architect (and we must bear in mind that European architects as well as traditional master builders with other claims to professionalism competed in the same space) appropriated European expertise (and with it a Western and modernist architectural history), but in some sense only in order to struggle precisely for the securing of a bureaucratic control akin to what it means in Europe and America to be registered. It was, then, left to those on the outside—the artist Demas Nwoko, for example—to mount a challenge to the fledgling orthodoxy. Nwoko, who in the 1960s, as part of the pan-African art group Mbari-Mbayo, wrote profusely on the significance of Africa's past, was in the 1970s not only commissioned but actually constructed several important projects. This series of threatening acts nevertheless finally brought legitimacy to the idea that an understanding of African architectural and art history could produce buildings that not only would receive critical acclaim, but could secure further commissions for one who was juridically illegitimate.²

Striving to inculcate an African sensibility in a twentieth-century building, Nwoko created his circa 1967 Dominican chapel (and there is an irony here, of course) in concrete, capturing the fluidity of an object formed in clay or carved out of wood. It was soon followed by several other jobs, the most important of which was the circa 1980 design for a major museum in Benin City, Nigeria. With his proposal, a studied, presentist interpretation of the architecture of the ancient kingdom of Benin, Nwoko secured governmental patronage, against all expectation.³ In choosing Nwoko, the state was undermining its own legitimacy, or at least putting aside, in a manner that seemed reckless, its own laws regarding professionalism. The significance of this episode (and there are stories too numerous to count about unqualified outsiders crossing into territory the profession would like to reserve for itself) was not lost on the profession or on those teaching in the Anglophone African universities, who themselves had harbored a suspicion of the dominant position occupied by modernist ideology masquerading as the only worthwhile architectural history.

Of course, there is no entity "Anglophone Africa," outside perhaps some five or six cities.⁴ Not even in South Africa, where large swaths speak Afrikaans and Zulu rather than English, can this claim be sustained. Moreover, the architectural histories of countries such as Ethiopia, for which English has become either lingua franca or at least an unofficial second language in its metropolises, were incomparably diverse until the actualization from the 1870s onward of the colonial project.⁵

This prior history of diversity could hardly have been
otherwise, and we should not expect anything less complex. Only with great effort can the approach of “architects” like Nwoko be sustained in national contexts in which a tradition like the architecture of Benin was only one of perhaps two hundred others in Nigeria alone: in effect, two hundred different architectural histories. In the wider African context, consider that Muslim Hausa architecture of Zaria (in present-day northern Nigeria) was as unrelated to the architecture of Ethiopian Christianity just outside Addis Ababa as the latter was from the late-eighteenth-century Asante architecture of Kumasi (in present-day Ghana), the “Dutch” architecture of the Cape (South Africa), the Luso-Yoruba architecture of Lagos, Badagry, and Porto Novo, and the Latin-Izoh architecture of Okrika and Buguma (coastal southeastern Nigeria). With such examples, I present a dilemma: Architectural historians, whether African, American, or European, are used to the moniker “African” standing for something essential—something traditional or indigenous, a locally invented product uncontaminated by more globalized histories.

Thus Dogon architecture, with which we (the African academy included) became most familiar via Bernard Rudofsky’s work; Batammaliba architecture, with which we have become acquainted thanks to Suzanne Blier (and which in the U.S. now usefully infiltrates introductory textbooks as exemplary); and southern Mande architecture, studied and recorded in drawings by Jean-Paul Bourdier and powerfully imaged in the critical documentary films of Trinh T. Minh-ha, have occupied the architectural imaginaries recalled most typically when the qualifier “African” commences a stream of thought on architecture. Such imaginaries were co-opted in the development of the early-twentieth-century ideologies of modernist architecture (from Le Corbusier’s to Hugo Häring’s) and continued to be referenced in the later modern buildings and philosophies of Aldo Van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger. These histories cannot be expelled completely when the period that most insistently produced the academicization of building production and its pedagogy within the African architectural academy (the decades between 1945 and 1965) is considered in relation to architectural history’s status within contemporary architecture schools.

The School of Architecture: Four Motifs and Attendant Questions

The twenty years directly following the end of World War II were a defining phase on the African continent, as nationalist movements for independence grew in stridency and progressively elicited concessions from the colonial administration. Ultimately, these concessions led to the dismantling of the colonial project itself, and in some contexts, like the former Rhodesia, to interesting distortions of the very idea of independence. Without recognizing this history, peers in other places would fail to understand much about the status of and the practices involved in teaching the history of architecture in African universities, as well as the debates surrounding both.

There are currently close to forty departments of architecture on the continent (Nigeria’s account for more than a quarter of them), all located in institutions that, following the twentieth-century Western European tradition, owe
their existence to the state and its funding. Nevertheless, all architectural history in the places I explored, with the exception of some South African institutions, is taught essentially as an adjunct to the education of future practitioners. The very survival of architectural history in institutions confronted by minuscule budgets that must be justified to politicians and education bureaucrats depends, but for rare instances that are themselves on their way to extinction, completely on its being viewed as relevant by both state operatives and those (who are essentially employees of the state) involved in studio work; the latter include both students who receive a highly subsidized education, and their teachers.

What defines a pedagogy of history as relevant in the professional teaching studio in Africa? And how has this produced the forms of architectural history? Answers to these questions can be summarized as emerging from an intense, sometimes confrontational debate between those who see Africa as the site of a rich heritage whose histories ought to be a central component of the study of architecture and architectural history, and those who regard these histories as irrelevant to the aspirations of relatively new modern nations. In between, in a sort of negotiated compromise, are those who recognize the importance of historicity to any contemporary practice likely to produce things of value, but who also feel that thus far no method of communicating such historical knowledge has been proposed that is adequate for a student body more intent on careers in architectural practice.

Several central motifs mark the debate. Perhaps the most important is one centered around the very nature of architecture as a discipline. This question well summarizes the issues: Is the discipline of architecture (or architecture as knowledge) more like art, science, or medicine? Depending on which of these three possibilities best represents what architecture is as practice, history occupies a different position in each conceptualization.

A second motif is that because no institution of which I have been made aware trains architectural historians, a certain constituency that is familiar especially in the U.S. and Western Europe is almost unknown in the African academy. The summarizing dilemma thus raised is: Need architects study history in the same manner as historians, and if not, what kind of history and what kind of history teaching best serve practitioners in training? Further, what should be the content, in Africa, of the history of architecture? Should the history of architecture, for example, center around issues like technology, materials, and style (as it presently is), or should it shift toward a history of space but be complemented by a closer allegiance to the history of art?

A third motif concerns the problem of numerosity. That is, even if the question of content were resolved in a way that recognized the importance of including materials that narrate African historical experiences of building, this hardly addresses the fact that every language community produces its own architectural history, and that a genuine conformity to the idea of inclusivity would lead to an impossible number of parallel histories. The summarizing questions here are: Which architectural history (that is, of which set of ethnicities) can arguably serve to illustrate concepts of architecture and its history, and on what basis should such difficult choices be made? To illustrate the complexity of

Figure 2 Demas Nwoko, Dominican chapel, view of the reception area
the situation, any single African country contains on average about eleven different ethnic groups (language communities). Nigeria has over 250, for each of which it is possible to produce a sophisticated architectural narrative. Faced with this rich dilemma, long-term Nigeria resident, Polish architect, and teacher Zbigniew Dmochowski focused on the major ethnicities, exploring and recording a vast array of materials (now housed in Warsaw) from which his editors have, posthumously, produced a mammoth work, *An Introduction to Nigerian Traditional Architecture*. The titles of the three volumes—*Northern Nigeria, South-West and Central Nigeria*, and *South-Eastern Nigeria*—are barely disguised euphemisms for the majority triad Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, and Yoruba/Edo on which even national politics rests. Of course, minority groups protest their relative absence both from the book itself and from the schemes of architectural education.10

A fourth motif recognizes that local communities (whether in the South African context of African ones like the Tswana, or of diasporic ones like the Afrikaner) tell themselves stories about buildings, their styles, and how they came to be; and that such stories often become formalized as oral tradition. Asante (Ghana) oral history, for example, has its explanation for how their great architectural tradition of rectilinear courtyards, decorated plinths, and arabesque screen-walls came to be invented—a narrative that on the face of it claims a connection to Anansi, the trickster figure of many Akan myths. Igbo (Nigeria) oral tradition relates, again in what initially appear to be mythical terms, the invention of the straight flight of stairs as an indicator of status and of the moment marking the birth of the modern age.11 The Tswana and Ndebele (southern Africa) have stories about their layered and ornamented (by walls) approaches to traditional buildings, as well as their artists’ focus on the ornamented, elaborately painted surfaces of such walls. Afrikaner (Dutch and Huguenot origin) oral traditions, too, have their mythologies regarding not just what they encountered in the African landscape, but also narratives long converted to written scholarship about the invention and stability of the elaborate, baroque, limewashed Cape Dutch gable ends. Given such possibilities, the African academy has been grappling with this question: What role should be assigned to traditional oral histories and historiographies that, adequately engaged, reveal significant (if sometimes submerged) architectural histories?

Each of the institutions surveyed has responded to these questions in particular ways. An interrogation of the status quo inherited from a colonial past has been a central effort in most departments over the last few years; with these major overhauls, all of them hope to respond substantially to the motifs and questions I have highlighted above.

**The Trouble with History (Or What Is Architectural Knowledge?)**

If architecture belongs to the same knowledge-field as urban planning or the study and design of the environment, then it is valid to insist that architecture is a science or technology. Given, moreover, the problem of urban overcrowding that has resulted from poor resource management, and given the devastation of African environments by resource extraction (gold, bauxite, uranium, diamonds, and crude oil), it is hardly surprising that it is in Nigeria, which has an incomparably large population of over 120 million and an equally incomparable cache of extractable raw materials, that the issue of architecture as knowledge resonates most vibrantly. Here, then, did urban planning come to be most influential, as is evident in the magnificent, rapidly occupied new capital city of Abuja, which was realized against all odds. Nor is it surprising that the University of Lagos (UNILAG), located in the metropolis that only ten years ago was the capital city, chose the departmental moniker School of Environmental Design.12 This move preceded what a few years later was seen in the U.K. to be the controversial renaming, in the era of Richard Llwyyn Davies’s leadership, of England’s oldest architecture school. In 1974, the Bartlett School, where architecture, building science, and urban planning are taught, was renamed the School of Environmental Studies (it reverted to its old name in 1981). Architecture was viewed as a process-oriented, open-ended science—not an art—allied to planning, behavioral science, sociology, acoustics, and engineering.

Against such a background, Rem Koolhaas’s brief sojourn in Lagos in 1998 (upon which portions of his book *Mutations: Rem Koolhaas, Harvard Project on the City* are based) would seem opportune.13 In the ten or so days of that visit, Koolhaas consulted with faculty at UNILAG. In June 1999, Koolhaas wrote from the U.S. inviting the university to enter a partnership with Harvard on a new theoretical project on Lagos. The study was meant to comprehend the conurbation in new ways and to come up with a series of proposals for its reconfiguration.14 Interested as Koolhaas has been in the urban dilemmas of super-cities like Shanghai and New York, one would not have expected that in Lagos he was walking into a minefield of controversy. However, Koolhaas’s “failure” to have the Lagos project follow the cooperative lines he sought devolved from his proposal’s having brought to crisis the contradictions implied by the ideology of architecture as science.15

384  **JSAH / 61:3, SEPTEMBER 2002**
The line leading to the crisis deserves elaboration. The
idea of architecture as science, or at least as technology asso-
ciated with, among other fields, tropical climatology, is cen-
tral to the larger majority of architecture departments on
the continent. Typically, from the University of Addis
Ababa (Ethiopia) and the University of Khartoum (Sudan,
not included in this report) to the Kwame Nkrumah Uni-
versity of Science and Technology (Kumasi, Ghana), archi-
tecture has been allied with departments of building and/or
engineering. At the University of Lagos, this notion came
to be tested as the department grew, and was subjected to
serious (if hardly vociferous) critique in 1976. David
Aradeon, a Columbia University–trained architect then
teaching at UNILAG, published “Space and House Form”
in the Journal of Architectural Education, formalizing a schol-
arly approach that was already in evidence in the Lagos-
based architectural practice of his professional colleague,
Nigeria-naturalized Briton Alan Vaughan-Richards
(1926–1987). Indeed, they can justifiably claim to be Nige-
ria’s first modern historians/critics of architecture, since in
the early 1960s both of them had published several polem-
ic essays on related subjects in the West African Architect
and Builder (now defunct). They continued to publish in the
late 1970s for New Culture: A Review of African Arts, of
which Nwoko was a co-founder and editor. In both his
work and writing, Aradeon argued against the positions
taken by influential modernist architects such as Maxwell
Fry and Jane Drew who, in justifying their own practices in
newly independent Nigeria, had insisted that local histori-
cal art and architecture had nothing inspiring for or worthy
of emulation by the modern architect. Fry’s argument
replayed colonial-era ignorance and disparagement of
things African and traditional in a local campaign to legiti-
imize the International Style.
Against this current, Aradeon produced his essay,
which is essentially an argument not exactly for a national-
ist architecture, but for an approach that would pay atten-
tion to local architectural traditions, and that could
therefore produce a regionalist modernism. At the time,
Aradeon was already some five years into his position on
the faculty at the University of Lagos, where he remained
until 1998. It is clear that he had an agenda. Apart from his
interest in radical urban planning, he was predisposed by
his own postgraduate research experience to some mode of
an African architectural history. He soon came to plot for
inclusions in the curriculum that would more accurately
reflect his own design interests and tendencies. This
approach is also borne out by his contribution to a major
cultural exposition, FESTAC (Second International Festi-
val of Black and African Arts and Culture), held in Lagos in
1977, for which he curated an architectural exhibition that
was remarkable in its focus on traditional architecture.
Aradeon’s FESTAC show came out of what was still an
ongoing attempt to center the study of historical African
architecture in the university curriculum both as architec-
tural history and as studio-based architectural studies,
thereby displacing the study of Western architectural con-
cepts and architectural history to the margins. The initial
response of the students is noteworthy, not just for what it
tells us about them and the unofficial architectural culture
they inhabited, but because it anticipated the struggles that would unfold among the department’s teachers and affiliate faculty. The more the department insisted on instituting this curriculum more broadly, the more students (especially the advanced graduate students) complained about it. Their opposition got quite out of hand in the late 1980s, in the form of barely veiled threats against Aradeon.21 Apparently, the very idea of architecture as a field of study serviced by history (that is, the role they wanted history to play if it was to have a role at all) demanded in the already formed minds of students a focus on modernity, trendiness, internationalism, fashion, and the kind of selling of arrogance implied in notions of the architect as genius.22

The struggles around this issue continued for several years. In 1998, only a year before his retirement from the university (and barely eight months before Koolhaas’s visit), Aradeon delivered a lecture at UNILAG titled “Architecture: The Search for Identity and Continuity.”23 It was a kind of swan song. The new head of the department, Olumide Olusanya, was determined not to interrogate the effectiveness of Aradeon’s approach, but to explore the very assumptions about what architecture was as a discipline and as a field of practice that had made Aradeon’s tenure controversial. Although the new curriculum is yet to be finalized, Olusanya has asked questions about what architecture is as knowledge. Through discussions with other faculty he has also come to settle upon the idea that it is not comparable to a science nor closely related to art. Rather, in terms both of its social meaning and its mode of acquiring expertise, he has argued it is most comparable to medicine. For Olusanya, architectural knowledge is a hybrid terrain to which other kinds of knowledge contribute. Moreover, he argues, the process of educating an architect involves a slow acquisition of skill in a manner that inevitably includes a period of apprenticeship. As he puts it, in architectural education “the only sphere of knowledge that is the architect’s alone is the one that at a certain point leaves only the possibility of learning by doing.” The analogy is to medicine and to the idea of medical knowledge as consisting of pure specialties like anatomy and physiology, but which is ultimately gained only after a period of hands-on internship and residency wherein theoretical learning never guarantees practical brilliance.24

In Olusanya’s scheme, the history of architecture becomes one of architecture’s pure sciences and relieves the burden with which Aradeon was faced—of having both to teach the history of architecture and to bring this history into studio projects he ran. Moreover, specialists, essentially pursuing their interests in other fields (and presumably located in other departments), can be called on to contribute their knowledge to the architect’s education. There are some clear advantages to this conception; an important one is that the field of architecture achieves a higher status within the university.25

**Particles: History as Case Study**

At the renowned architecture school of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), in Kumasi, Ghana, the status of architectural history responds to the second motif listed above, where the question is not the justification for a particular subfield, but rather whether in bringing any such field to architecture its pedagogic styles need remain unchanged. Although many of the issues debated at UNILAG are also found at KNUST, there are nevertheless important differences between them.

At KNUST, the response to dilemmas like the ones faced at UNILAG has been to reject history as a subject taught as it might be taught to architectural historians, and to invent other, more pragmatic alternatives. The need for new possibilities arises not only because in Ghana, unlike in Nigeria, there are few professional art historians (most are autodidact historians whose training in architectural practice includes the standard fare of introductory classes in history), but also because most students here have little study in the humanities. They are therefore ill prepared to take on architectural history in the form of lectures that are detailed, sequential interpretations of styles, forms, and spatial layouts.

The alternative is two courses, both still under the rubric “architectural history,” but taught within broader histories of culture. The first, called “Cultural History and Appreciation,” covers material that has little to do with architecture, including, for example, anything from the idea of divination in traditional culture to the political dress style in the nationalist era. However, it remains distinct and is not required of students in other departments because it situates architecture within a narrative of political history, rudimentary ethnology, art history, and the appreciation of architectural masters and their masterpieces. The course moves sequentially from ancient Greek and Roman culture and architecture to the modern era and the architecture of Oscar Neimeyer and Charles Correa, and is required of all students, undergraduates and diploma (equivalent to the American M.Arch.).26 A second course, “West African History and Culture,” focuses on the region’s history and culture, exploring the history of the African state up to the 1850s (ancient Gana, Mali, Songhai, Asante, and so on) and the architecture produced in each period. This course also enables exploration of the eighteenth- and early-nine-
teenth-century architecture of Kumasi, the center of a still-extant Asante Kingdom and where KNUST is located.\(^{27}\)

The centrality of these courses is reinforced by what occurs in studio. For each studio project or unit, there is a requirement that students write a “precedent report,” which covers in detail the historical precedents relevant to the problem under study. Clearly, not taking the cultural history/appreciation courses seriously handicaps the student when these reports are due. Where the new conception at UNILAG would ally the discipline with medicine, here history is brought closer to jurisprudence.

**What History, What Identity?**

Perhaps nowhere has the anxiety over architectural identity seen at KNUST, to which I pointed in the third question, about choosing which ethnic or national cultures to deploy in the historical curriculum, been as severe as in South Africa. The country’s recent history is unique on the continent, since the status achieved by other polities in the 1960s (Independence and self-determination) came late to South Africa, following the end of apartheid. Where many African nations are experiencing the disillusionments of the “failure” of the dream, South Africa had just emerged into a postapartheid optimism (indicated by the recurrence of the phrase “the *New South Africa*” in the discourses of public debate, scholarly journals, and the everyday social and political commentary in the broadcast and print media), and this phenomenon separates it like a time warp from the rest of the continent. Nevertheless, South Africa shares many of the same problems, even though their origins differ substantially from those in other places, and the issue of identity, which we have seen as central to debates in West Africa, is at a no less critical point.

The symptoms of this identity crisis may be judged as much in the pages of the journal *VISI* as in the publication of books like *blank_____Architecture, apartheid and after* and Sabine Marschall and Brian Kearney’s “Africanization”-focused *Opportunities for Relevance: Architecture in the New South Africa*, and the recent pronouncements and work of architect-teachers the likes of Joubert (see epigraph), Jo Noero, and Peter Rich.\(^{28}\) They express their unease with a South Africa whose urban and suburban landscape appears indistinguishable from that of Western Europe and North America.\(^{29}\) In part for this reason, but also under the pressure both of the reorganizations of tertiary institutions (that is, institutions of higher education) being considered by the government and of a rapidly transforming student demography that has seen black student admissions increase steadily, university architecture departments have been transforming their curricula.\(^{30}\)

Typically in South Africa, architectural education for a professional degree occurs in two phases. The first is a three-year degree leading to a Bachelor of Architectural Studies; it is followed by two years of largely studio based teaching, culminating in the Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.). Students inclined to research may spend an additional year pursuing a master’s degree that is largely self-directed and involves a research project.

Within this structure, the history of architecture was from the start a central part of a student’s education. For example, for the first degree at the University of Witwaters-
rand (Wits for short), one would once have taken a compulsory course that consisted equally of history and theory and extended across all three years. For the second bachelors, a history and theory course was also offered for one year; it was biased toward the modern movement and the history of urbanism but, unusually for the continent until very recently, focused on its own city (Johannesburg) as a series of case studies. There was also an elective during these two years, “Art in the Public Domain,” taught by the Department of the History of Art.

Today, the history of architecture still plays the important role it has since the earliest architecture departments were established by such internationally known architectural historians as “Pancho” Guedes and Dennis Radford. However, the signs of change that might be related to the shrinking funds (despite an unprecedented growth in enrollment) and threatening institutional amalgamations are marked by the fate slowly befalling architectural history in general. Here, and not at the level of curricula, have the most radical alterations occurred. Where the courses in the history of architecture were always taught separately from those in architectural theory, one increasingly encounters new courses combining both subjects (for example, a course called “Discourse” at Wits). This trend has had effects in more distant arenas. Most significant for architectural history is the deleting of the range of histories that were once on offer. Previously, represented in the three-year course was the standard fare from ancient Egypt to the modern movement. To this was attached a closing narrative covering architecture in southern Africa—a heady mix including indigenous domestic architecture (Zulu, Tswana, Khoi), Afrikaner (Dutch) and English settlements, Cape Dutch architecture, Malay architecture (Hindu and Islamic), Republican, Victorian, and Edwardian architecture and ending in explorations of local modernisms, including Brutalism and International Style.

This rich variety is being replaced increasingly by “theory,” the space for it created, after painful debates and soul searching, by abandoning the European focus. What is left of history, therefore, sometimes expands African content (perhaps pursuing the Afrocentrist/African Renaissance agenda set by President Mbeki; see note 30) by including histories of West Africa (Asante, Dogon, and Hausa, for example), and of North and East African Islamic architecture (particularly of the Eritrean/Ethiopian, Kenyan, and Tanzanian coastal region for the East African section). In other institutions, this shift is achieved (sometimes in response as well to pressure directly from students) by putting less emphasis on European histories and counter-balancing them with, for example, Indian, Japanese, Malaysian, Thai, Javanese, and Chinese architecture; at the University of Natal, Durban (UND) these are gathered in a subsection called “Exotic Architecture.” Elsewhere still, at Wits, for example, Asian content has also retreated almost completely, solidifying what often seems to be a domineering Afrocentrist approach that many teachers more familiar with an earlier status quo accept with difficulty.

The Afrocentrist position hardly explains everything about these changes and is not exactly parallel to the American version (which, in any case, barely reflects architectural education in the U.S.). Rather, Afrocentrist debates have circulated around the position that there is nothing superior about European culture to Africa’s, especially given the connection between racist or racialized thinking in European intellectual history, and the fact of apartheid in South Africa’s history and that all the important lessons about architecture are well represented in the continent’s own history. There is also the suggestion that in Europe hardly anything but European architecture enters their own architectural histories, and that to insist on the inevitable relevance of Europe’s architectural history to South Africa’s (or at least of Europe’s to the exclusion of the African indigenous) is to mark both an insecurity and a lack of integrity. The questions contesting this position go something like this: Since the new South Africa has significant European and Asian components, must their own architectural histories, aspects of which were compromised by connections to segregationist power, go without representation in the new histories? Are there not ways in which these histories might be told while being interrogated? Could they be critical histories that do not erase, but “represent” the constitutional, postapartheid present?

For example, the architecturally (and politically) perverse monuments in Pretoria to the Great Boer Trek or to the Afrikaans language certainly offer challenges to openness. For many, these monuments are stark reminders of an unfortunate history whose effects are connected, through apartheid’s history, to the unsafety of contemporary urban South African street life. When the African National Congress (ANC) came to power, there were serious proposals to destroy these memorials. Such proposals have now receded. Within the transformative architecture-history academy, however, the Afrocentrist solution (temporary, I suspect) has been to ignore such buildings altogether. Some artists and political figures are, however, already indicating ways in which even such signs as the Voortrekker Monument might be stripped of their racist connotations and supplied with new meaning.

Other qualities of the South African academy render unique the location of architectural history and how it might be taught. In the first place, architectural history as an
independent academic discipline is recognized here, although the route to professional status as an architectural historian (and before that to writing a doctoral dissertation) is tortuous. Less so than in West and East Africa, the history of architecture in South Africa is not always considered an adjunct of the studio. Indeed, the history of architecture is not always taught within the department of architecture, and unlike the situation in, for example, Nigeria, it is rarely offered by the likes of a historian of urban design in the planning department or an art historian in the art department. It may also be taught to those with no obvious interest in careers as architects. Within departments with names like Cultural History and Folklore and where, as at the University of Stellenbosch (near Cape Town), there may be no students training to become architects, one encounters an architectural history covering broader arenas than is familiar in the rest of South Africa. That is, although those South African architectural historians who are located within “history of culture” academic contexts approach their subjects from a standpoint that is closer to what in the U.S. would be a vernacularist paradigm, they attempt to communicate the details of the social production of buildings and of architectural style in ways that are less common in architectural schools.

A paradox nevertheless lies at the heart of the wide historical space covered in the South African curriculum. Despite its breadth, both kinds of historian (foregrounding culture or the architectural object) restrict the individual topics they cover in ways hardly entertained by their Nigerian or Ghanaian counterparts, who are rarely other than institutionally based practitioners. Whereas curricula in English-speaking Africa extend across a range of subjects, indicating an internationalist attitude, in South Africa sustained focus on local architecture is restricted to its European legacy, not to the no less interesting Tswana, Zulu, Malay, or Khoisan histories. Despite even the “history of culture” or vernacular bent, few courses explore the architecture of the indigenous “African” (the word a flawed designation for non-white) community.

In South Africa, this tendency is indexed in interesting ways by what texts are available. Although book publishing in the history of architecture has a longer, more established history in South Africa than elsewhere in Africa, of the plethora of past and recent English and Afrikaans publications in South Africa, only a few, such as Franco Frescura’s *Rural Shelter in Southern Africa*, even remotely attempt a serious study of the architecture of its non-white sector.

By contrast, the teachers of history in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Ghana face a level of textbook unavailability that is of a completely different dimension than the difficulties encountered in South Africa. Architectural historians in these other zones of deprivation have devised coping mechanisms that come closer and closer to self-publishing. At the University of Lagos, Ade Adedokun, an architect and urban planner in the planning department who occasionally teaches history in the architecture department, has published a series of related booklets on architecture that focus squarely on canonic history and only marginally on local history. Adedokun’s booklets contain stripped down, easily accessible narratives covering a range of topics from ancient Egyptian and Greek architecture to European and American modern architecture, all illustrated by drawings reproduced in low quality. Adedokun justifies this compromise as a low-cost alternative that is absolutely necessary where a volume such as Spiro Kostof’s *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* would be both too expensive (even in paperback) and conceptually advanced for beginning West African students; for them, some of the basic ideas of Western architectural thinking are quite remote, and a more patient, first-principles approach is necessary. The fact that there is nothing similar in South Africa to the balance one encounters in Nigeria between its own “European” tradition (that is, the colonial and the Luso-Yoruba or Brazilian baroque) and the architecture that is native to its political space (say, Igbo or Hausa) may in part be a result of the absence of the desperation Adedokun has experienced.

**Crisis? Not that Crisis!**

Not in all African universities does the acute concern over identity and its representation in the history of architecture dominate the internal debates. Instead, as at Ethiopia’s only architectural school, at the University of Addis Ababa, the history of architecture can, without much angst, replay the canonic introductory survey we might find in an American or French school. Unlike the situation in South Africa, or even in Ghana and Nigeria, there is now little concern (though perhaps the word should be “possibility”) about including African and/or specifically Ethiopian architectural histories as major parts of the pedagogic mix.

The once-small architecture department at the University of Addis Ababa was founded in 1963 from the earlier Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology that was itself once known as the Building College. It was first staffed by Swedish, English, and Japanese architects, but soon thereafter was run mainly by Finns. The young Ethiopian architects that these pioneering teachers soon produced slowly occupied positions within the department itself (many after also having trained abroad, typically in Helsinki and Leuven). By the early 1990s, what had been a
produced reconfigured locations, obliterated architectural (the trajectory of ancient Ethiopia, in the sense of Ethiopia's uniqueness, and the view of Ethiopia as ur-third-world space. Rather, in Ethiopia the problem has been how to maintain in its positive aspects the break instituted by the overthrow of monarchy, focusing on housing, sustainability, and climate. These characteristic interests and the academy's comfort with canonical European histories are, I believe, a result of the country's own history—the successful repulsion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of attempted colonial incursion (by Italy), sustained feudalism (stabilizing self-representation), and a near-disastrous revolutionary era that began with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 and his replacement by a socialist regime, and ended with the ouster of President Haile Mengistu in 1991. Given this past, the Ethiopian academy had to make sense of the paradoxical fact that the absence of a significant colonial history accounts for Ethiopia's having remained, despite the Marxist interrogation, something akin to a preindustrial state.

What kind of architecture could be imagined, given the country's insistently disadvantaged economy and the memory that Ethiopia produced the twentieth century's most harrowing images of starvation? Only as perversity could one have focused not on issues of shelter for the displaced but on questions of postmodernity and style! The situation was, until recently, not unlike the one that haunted postwar Europe and gave rise to the CIAM ideology of an intimate and responsive mass housing, Habitat (see note 19). However, it was also possible during Mengistu's socialist era to respond to the urgent desire for an architectural discourse appropriate to this reality because of the expansion of bureaucratic architecture through the new government design office, the Building Design Enterprise. The BDE was led by Eastern-bloc architects, mainly East German, Bulgarian, and Polish, some of whom also taught in the architecture school. At the university's architecture department, these teachers saw the Scandinavian and Japanese traditions of the school's founders as bourgeois; they at least officially were more likely to insist that a pragmatic, unestheticized functionalist architecture was more appropriate to the economics of Ethiopia's postmonarchical era.

Ideas related to those of Habitat are still fostered in Ethiopia under the sponsorship of the Norwegian Institute for Sustainable Housing, especially through its Southern and Eastern African Research Council on Housing (SEARCH) program, which has "centers for excellence" in Ethiopia, South Africa (University of Capetown), Uganda (Kampala University), and Kenya (University of Nairobi), among which selected students from all these institutions circulate. Indeed, the focus on Habitat is alive and well not only in the new master's program in urban design offered in Addis, but also in
the pedagogical visibility of housing, planning, and sustainability in the school of architecture's culture.

Ethiopia as Africa: Archaeology, Anthropology, and the History of Architecture

It might appear that architectural history hardly exists here, at least not to the extent it does in Nigeria, Ghana, or South Africa. Although a history of architecture can be framed on the subject of housing and sustainability (and much of the history of European modern architecture from Martin Wagner through Walter Gropius to Peter and Alison Smithson has been this exactly), it was inevitable for reasons I now turn to that the notion of history as connected to identity would emerge in Ethiopia, too.

Ethiopia's successful anticolonialism as fact and as representation (in its modern painting, for example) came to mean that the country could be held up emblematically as an authentic, unsoiled Africa. Addis Ababa was, for example, the place where other African nations chose to locate the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This decision secured the notion of "Ethiopian-ness" as central to "African-ness." In addition, in Ethiopia (though not in Eritrea), the Africanized modernism of the OAU secretariat buildings constructed in the mid-1960s rendered modern architecture and its historiography here unimaginable without a linkage to the idea of "Africa" itself. In this sense, modern architecture in Ethiopia was once synonymous with anticolonialism, liberation, and independence, as in other parts of Africa from the late 1950s to the late 1960s, especially in its Miesian "American" form. In the 1950s and '60s, the idea of political independence was merged with a certain aesthetics of "the architectural pristine," serving a progressivist utopian view of the future. The role of the history of architecture from 1965 to 1975 was, then, to familiarize students with a utopianism not at all available locally. The history of architecture once exposed students and brought them to a commitment to the tenets of the International Style. Unavoidably, this subject came, from the early 1980s up to the late 1990s, to track the move in Europe and the U.S. to postmodernism, and soon new commercial private sector and municipal buildings sported the current interest. These structures presented familiar premodern images of "Ethiopian-ness" via superficial pastiches applied to their façades. But, from the moment of its appearance in 1990 (coinciding with a building boom and increasing urban density), it faced criticism, first in the journal of Ethiopia's architects' association (AEA Journal), then in the occasional column of the private newspaper, and finally in popular culture, through the circulation of the music of Selfhi Demissie, a.k.a Gashée Aderramolla (which means "cleaning and greening the city").

Although there are no professional architectural historians to take up these critical challenges, the coincidence of this critique with the persistence of Ethiopia's own architectural memory, whose relevance only a small group of architectural instructors continued to insist on, gives rise to a new tendency. The pedagogic promise of architectural history, which is crucial to these teachers, at least, is understood as the only way of imagining a contemporary Ethiopian architecture that leaves behind both the dogmas of revolutionary, modern, and Christian periods and the bureaucratic modernisms of OAU and United Nations buildings. It is also assumed that the new architecture will overcome recent forms of postmodernism, including the perverse classical grandeur of Addis Ababa's newest five-star hotel, the Sheraton, without resorting to bare functionalism. The beginnings of a response to this issue are coming in part from a consideration of both anthropology and (unlike the situation in southern Africa) archaeology.

Following a method developed independently (though similar to approaches at UNILAG and KNUST), and inspired by the theoretics of Ahmedabad-based architect Balkrishna Doshi, a more radical history of architecture is increasingly subscribed to by those autodidact instructors in cultural studies and the history of architecture who are combining ethnography with studio. Following such methods, students might be required (in addition to designing a building for communal use, usually in a rural setting inhabited by one of Ethiopia's many ethnic groups) to produce reports that are ethnographic accounts of traditional buildings. Such projects rely on oral historiographic methods, and the inevitability of justifying this approach (the fourth of the motifs around which this text is structured) in the production of architectural history is thus increasingly confirmed. The lessons of the reports are expected to be applied in the design projects—not simply as stylistic pastiche, but in conceiving the building as a physical and spatial assembly.

Apart from orally inscribed architecture and the visible remains and legacy of Christian architecture, other examples of historical architecture in Ethiopia have been made accessible through archaeological research. Since the early twentieth century, starting with the Deutsche Aksum Expedition of 1906, archaeologists have unearthed a rich, non-Christian architectural past centered on the Tigrean kingdom of Axum (Aksum). Two other locations, Gondar and Lalibela, though continuously occupied church sites/oncommunities, are also yielding information. Reports such as David Phillipson's The Monuments of Aksum, rich in
architectural content, project an image of a local and independently invented formal tradition that has obvious potential for what is thus far only a teaching studio–imagined new architecture. These archaeological sites, to which students take field trips, have provided possibilities for moving beyond superficiality to interrogating everything from the urban typologies appropriate to an African lifestyle to the formal and spatial layouts of specific buildings, to attention to how the detailing and assembly of these ancient buildings satisfy both functional demand and aesthetic quality (architectural detail was meticulously attended to in Axumite architecture).

At their best, the courses that both utilize ethnographic methods and revisit archaeology lead to productive confrontations with Ethiopia’s architectural past. In the ethnographic projects, especially, instructors also understand that they could be slowly building a storehouse of information that will become available to the discipline of architectural history when a few of those students currently imagining futures as architects turn, as some of us did, mainly to writing instead of drawing.

Appendix
The countries covered in this study are Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. With the exception of Nigeria, among whose over forty-five universities (not counting specialized tertiary institutions such as agricultural colleges or technological institutes) are several accredited ones that are privately owned, African universities (or at least those in nations in which significant sectors of the urban population speaks English) operate on the European model in that all higher education is state funded and sponsored.

Respondents
Nigeria
Ade Adejokun, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Lagos
Olumide Olusanya, Department of Architecture, University of Lagos
George C. Williams, Department of Architecture, University of Lagos

Ghana
G. W. Instifull, Department of Architecture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
H. N. A. Wellington, Department of Architecture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

Ethiopia
Fassil Giorgis, Department of Architecture, University of Addis Ababa
Bekele Mezen, School of Fine Arts, University of Addis Ababa

South Africa
Matilda Burden, Department of History, University of Stellenbosch
Anne Fitch, Department of Architecture, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
Walter Peters, Department of Architecture, University of Natal, Durban

Institutional Histories
Nigeria
Only about ten accredited schools of architecture exist in Nigeria (the majority in federal, as opposed to state, government funded institutions). Among the prominent architecture departments are those at the University of Nigeria (Enugu Campus); the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (founded in 1962); the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile; the University of Port Harcourt; the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt; the Lagos State University; and the University of Lagos (founded in 1962).

Ghana
There are currently three universities in Ghana (not counting two others with specialized faculties). KNUST, the only one that trains architects and offers courses in the history of architecture, was founded in 1951 as the College of Technology, Kumasi. It was soon renamed the University of Science and Technology, and it became the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in the early 1970s.

Ethiopia
There are three universities in Ethiopia (not counting at least five specialized universities and polytechnics), only one of which, the University of Addis Ababa (founded in 1965), offers courses in architectural history as part of architectural training.

South Africa
There are six schools of architecture in South Africa: at the University of Natal, Durban (founded in 1910 as Natal University College, initially a college of the University of South Africa); the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (founded in 1906 as Transvaal University College and gaining status as a university in 1922); the University of Port Elizabeth; the Port Elizabeth Technikon; the University of Pretoria; and the University of Cape Town. South Africa is the only country in which courses in architectural history are offered outside architecture schools (and on occasion, as at the University of Stellenbosch [founded c. 1913], in universities with no architecture departments).

Notes
1. The individuals listed in the appendix contributed greatly to this report. I was in regular contact with them, sometimes through face-to-face meetings, sometimes via e-mail, and occasionally over the telephone. Although I have tried hard to derive larger meaning from the localized information each contributor provided, I alone must take responsibility for my interpretations. I sincerely thank all those who generously gave their time to a project whose value to their own pressing local situations was not always obvious.

2. Legitimacy here is relative. Demas Nwoko’s work is not taught in architecture schools, nor is he written about in local architectural journals. Yet, I have insisted since 1980, first in an unpublished paper written for a seminar led by Robert Maxwell, Sr., that a future architectural history will have to recognize Nwoko, precisely because he was both original and illegitimate, as a vanguard architect of African modernism.

3. Benin was well established by the fifteenth century or earlier and became known in the West through the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bronze and brass heads and plaques that made their way (after the 1897 British occupation) into Western museums.
4. Although Zeynep Çelik approached me with the request to produce my report using “Anglophone Africa” as a preliminary frame, I quickly departed from this idea, since Africans hardly think of themselves in this way. Cameroon is both French and English speaking. Neither Sudan nor Ethiopia is Anglophone as such, but English is the second language of instruction in the universities after Arabic in Sudan and Amharic in Ethiopia. The modern academy in Sudan was produced in the context of what was except in name a British colony; the Ethiopian academy was not formulated similarly, but has drifted toward using English as its second institutional language. I had therefore imagined including surveys of Cameroon and Ivory Coast together with the obvious cases of Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. Of course, not all English-speaking African nations have an architecture school. Ultimately, a different reality constrained the report; it had more to do with the difficulty of transnational electronic communication with colleagues.

5. The thwarting of the colonial project separates Ethiopian modern history from that of the majority of other African nations. We might be tempted to think that the history of slavery, like the history of colonialism itself, produced a common architectural tradition in West, Central, and southern Africa. However, just as the history of slavery itself was diverse, so its manifestation as architecture varies incredibly from one location to another. For example, the trade forts and castles of present-day Senegal, Gambia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone are hardly replicated in coastal zones of Nigeria.

6. Bernard Rudofsky, Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture (New York, 1964), Rudofsky’s book has remained influential long after its first edition was printed. However, we must recall that it was not Rudofsky but the younger generation gathered around the notion of habitat at the 1953 CIAM meeting in Aix-en-Provence that sparked further interest in Dogon architecture. The attendees saw Dutch participant Aldo van Eyck’s documentary film and exhibition, which first rendered Dogon architecture and settlement forms relevant to modern architectural and urban discourse. (The original scholars of Dogon architecture were ethnographers Leo Frobenius in the 1910s and Marcel Grandier and his colleagues Michel Leiris and Germaine Dieterlen in the 1930s). Suzanne Preston Blier, The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Basketmaker Architectural Expression (Cambridge and New York, 1987). Jean-Paul Bourdieu and Trinh T. Minh-ha, African Spaces: Designs for Living in Upper Volta (New York, 1985), Trinh T. Minh-ha (director), Naked Spaces: Living Is Round (1986) and Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen (1982).

7. I count locations where the language of instruction is in English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, or Amharic. The forty schools are dispersed among approximately 250 tertiary institutions (not counting specialized tertiary institutions like music academies, agricultural colleges, and business schools). Of the latter, about 120 or so teach in English. This fact does not always coincide with the political division Francophone/Anglophone. Francophone Cameroon has at least one university in which English is the primary language of instruction, a legacy of a complex history (involving, for example, the reconfiguration of borders in the late 1950s so that Anglophone Nigerians were reassigned Cameroonian identities following a referendum. On a country by country basis, Nigeria leads the pack with more than sixty universities and polytechnics, followed by South Africa with about twenty-one. By comparison, Egypt has approximately fifteen such institutions. Recent policy in South Africa is likely to lead to consolidations (reducing the number of universities), while policy in Nigeria (such as the establishment of private universities along the lines of the American model) seems set for further growth in the number of higher-educational institutions.

8. Architectural history as a discipline is not recognized as an autonomous professional field, and it is not possible yet (though it may in the foreseeable future be so in some places) to graduate with a master’s or doctoral degree in the history of architecture.

9. Departmental budgets in African institutions are minuscule compared to those in Europe and North America. The University of Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) exemplifies the rare instance in which architectural history, in some form, seems less likely to disappear. Its exceptionality is not necessarily a result of the university’s being better funded, but of the fact that its architecture department was founded by architects who also held English doctorates in architectural history. Even at Wits, though, the history of architecture is as increasingly being sacrificed to curricula configurations favoring “theory.”

10. Zbigniew Dmochowski, An Introduction to Nigerian Traditional Architecture (Lagos and London, 1990). The protest is quite legitimate, since the richness and historical depth of any particular ethnicity’s architectural history has nothing to do with its relative demography. The best example of this has been the canonical interest in the architecture of the less than half a million Dogon (Mali), an interest that extended even to teaching in Nigerian architecture departments in the 1980s, as at the University of Ife (now Awolowo University). By comparison, some of Nigeria’s minorities with significant but largely ignored architectures, the Tw, for example, number over two million.


12. Lagos is located in a lagoon system of waterways extending almost six hundred miles to what is now the environmentally traumatized region of the Niger Delta.


14. I suspect Koolhaas was, following his exhibition on China for Documenta X, also targeting Documenta XI, whose director is Nigerian-born Okwui Enwezor, who recently curated and co-curated a number of exhibitions in which Lagos has been center-stage; two of them are The Short Century, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and P.S. 1/ MoMA, Queens, New York, tour completed 5 May 2002, and Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis, Tate Modern, London, 1 Feb.-29 Apr. 2001.

15. Koolhaas’s original idea is laudable for its reasonable movement away from the more pronounced asymmetries of similar studies in the past. It skirted the problem engendered whenever a person operating out of a G7 state studies any aspect of the “underdeveloped” world. Such a relationship was the stuff of all kinds of planning and architectural projects and the feasibility studies that justified them during the era of high modernism. Sensitive to this issue, Koolhaas proposed his Lagos study as a joint project between Harvard and UNILAG faculty, with students from both institutions. However, the idea was ultimately unsuccessful, to the degree that it ended up as a Harvard project and not a collaboration. It seems that the administration at the UNILAG, likely misconstruing the scale of Koolhaas’s joint-research proposal and misunderstanding, therefore, the extent to which Koolhaas could marshal monetary resources (a misunderstanding not unrelated to the cachet of the Harvard name), did not cooperate. Perhaps the administration was reacting to a perception that Koolhaas was not forthcoming, but they failed to respond to his official request, despite the interest already generated among the faculty of the architecture department itself.

Some UNILAG faculty were successful architects in their own right, and one of them, George A. Williams, is both an architect and a historian of Lagosian urbanism (see his “Influences of Imperial Conquest on the
Environmental Fabric of Early Lagos up till 1920,” Nigerian Heritage: Journal of the National Commissions for Museums and Monuments 6 (1997), 62–76. Koolhaas ultimately carried out the project largely with Harvard Design School graduate students as part of his Project on the City. UNILAG faculty certainly had their competitors. Glendora Review, Nigeria’s premier journal of arts and culture, announced in roughly the same period (2000) that it was working on a collaborative project with Koolhaas, Harvard students, and OMA. Although it was likely referring to the same study, it said nothing about UNILAG’s participation. Even more interesting for assessing the originality of Koolhaas’s project (and possibly explaining something about the sidelong of his initial contacts) is the fact that a large group of Nigerian architects and artists calling themselves the CIA (Creative Intelligence Agency) had been working on ideas very similar to Koolhaas’s for several years. Their project was published in Glendora Review as “The Century Project,” and the essay, which includes several original urban design and analytical drawings by Lagos-based architects, artists, theorists, historians, and critics, does not mention Koolhaas. See Dapo Adeniyi, Koku Konu, and Uche Iroha, “The Century Project,” Glendora Review 3, no. 1 (2000), 47–58.


17. Almost word for word, the same British architects argued in India, suggesting that Indian architecture in the twentieth century also had nothing to gain from traditional buildings. There are ways in which these architects are Koolhaas’s predecessors, given that his voice on Lagos now resonates much more loudly than that of the many local architects, critics, and historians who were before him produced adequate descriptions, critiques, and projects for the reconfiguration of the city. One can read the tenor of British architects justifying their West African practices in, for example, Fry’s master plan for the Northern Region’s one-time capital city of Kaduna, or for the University of Ibadan’s campus (the oldest of Nigeria’s modern universities).

18. In several significant ways, Aradeon and others like him elsewhere thought that the exemplary modernists for Africa were Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, and Hans Scharoun, not Le Corbusier or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

19. Aradeon’s interest in planning is indicated by his concern for ways of upgrading slums through architectural design rather than through erasure and replacement with planned new towns (as had historically occurred in modern Nigeria). This interest converges with the idea of Habitat, as well as with Rudolfsky’s and Van Eyck’s focus on Dogon architecture. Aradeon, a student at Columbia University at the time of Rudolfsky’s MoMA exhibition, spent two and a half years living in rural West African communities not long after his return to Nigeria. His West African travel was a sustained, but never published, study of traditional architectures.

20. The pedagogical structure Aradeon encountered required that he offer lectures in an area of interest and lead a unit of the design studio. His lectures, as well as those given subsequently by Susan Aradeon (an American art historian who was David’s spouse), provided a historicized study of the concepts underlying the visual and spatial composition of traditional architecture. In studio, he had students explore these concepts through the design of traditional environments, which typically were also examined via the production of scaled models of complex-form clay and thatch-roofed buildings.

21. Regarding my point about the struggle to legitimize the idea of registration, it is worth noting that the story behind the resistance to Aradeon’s ideas was more complicated than this. The disturbances were also likely connected to a kind of standoff between Aradeon and the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), which in the push to legitimize its monopoly apparently insisted that for him to register as a practitioner in Nigeria, he must sit for all the stages of its professional examinations. Aradeon resisted this demand, and the tension generated between him and the institute caused graduate students to become concerned that it might affect their own advancement toward registration.

22. The students preferred the continuation of the kinds of pedagogic traditions familiar in this university, where cult heroes from Le Corbusier and Mies to James Stirling and Aldo Rossi took center stage. This is in contrast to, for example, the focus at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), where one would have just as likely learned about Dogon architecture and Marcel Griaule’s representation of Ogotemmeli’s views of it (in Marcel Griaule, Conversations with Ogotemili: An Introduction to Dogon Religious Ideas [New York and London, 1965]). Although some of the students understood the value of an education that required them to become familiar with some of Africa’s own historic and/or traditional architecture, they were not persuaded by the idea that this knowledge should take on greater importance.

23. The talk has been published: see David Aradeon, Architecture: The Search for Identity and Continuity—An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Lagos on Wednesday, 11th February, 1998 (Lagos, 1998).

24. These areas—aesthetics, structures, psychology, history of architecture—are, Olusanya argues, purer and can justifiably be allocated their own separate departments. Medicine, however, is a field of practice “supplied” by departments of anatomy, physiology, hematolgy, etc. Olusanya makes clear, though, that the other area offering an equally good analogy is the arts—painting or music, for example—practices he sees as constituted as spheres of knowledge by their own “pure sciences.” But, he argues, perhaps erroneously, that there is nothing comparable in the field of architecture to music theory in terms of its rigor and persuasiveness. Olumide Olusanya, conversation with the author, Apr. 2002.

25. University administrations may have an easier time comprehending this disciplinary structure since it replicates a powerful one with which they are familiar, that of medicine. Moreover, it seems that architecture persuaded no one at UNILAG of its legitimacy as a pure sphere of knowledge—those within the architecture department suspected theirs was seen as somewhat shaky, in that it seemed nebulous. In the new scheme, rather than architecture’s struggling (unpersuasively) to demand recognition as a pure field, it represents itself according to a different model, one that the university administration knows. The UNILAG experience is not at all unique, even if the revolts that accompanied the reforms were apocalyptic. Although in the new millennium there are noteworthy exceptions—in places like the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and the University of Natal, Durban, likely because of postapartheid transformations in national culture and politics—the Lagos case is typical in that curricula are now less concerned with local historicities.

26. Paradoxically, ancient Egyptian architecture, the grandest of African historical traditions, is not included in this survey, a reflection, I suspect, of both the tradition of architectural history instituted at KNUT by the school’s British founders (here the colonial inheritance, barely infected by the concerns of modernist pedagogy, survives) and the continued learning
experiences of current Ghanaian teachers, whose education in places like McGill University (Montreal) may have followed the standard Western European metanarrative of Hellenic uniqueness and founding originality. In part, the somewhat postmodern approach of this pedagogy appears to be an attempt to serve one component of the student body—those sent back to Africa from Western Europe and North America by immigrant parents interested in connecting their offspring to their heritage, while providing the young returnees with a higher education at a modest cost. However, something else drives this curriculum. Not only is it clear that the children of immigrants are interested in returning to the places of their birth, but local-born students, too, imagine that such an education in architecture enables employment abroad in the future.

It is noteworthy that the local ideology of architectural education is not spurred by concerns we might think relevant to a disadvantaged economy, like appropriate technology or recuperating histories of local architecture, which, in Ghana, at least, rival the histories of Western architecture. Instead it is fueled by an intense desire to be contemporary and to be a part of the global cultural dialogues. Such dialogues—with the rare exception of Buckminster Fuller's 1960s globetrotting, which included several stops in West Africa, of the Association for Development of African Urbanism and Architecture's well-publicized projects in the early 1980s, and of Rem Koolhaas's inclusion of Africa in his Project on the City—tend to oversail their own sites as they travel the America-Europe-Asia axis.

27. The coverage of Asante architecture apart, there is a certain arbitrariness to the choice of which particular culture and its architecture should be represented, since the sheer numerosity of states, cultures, and their independent histories is overwhelming in the absence of the kind of metanarrative enabled in the Western European context by the real or imagined dominance of Hellenic, then Roman, and finally Catholic traditions. In Ghana, the choice seems governed by the tradition with which any particular teacher is familiar, as well as what material is available for assignment in libraries where resources are relatively modest.

28. In VIS I, one recent, pessimistic view finds salvation from the identity crisis only in eliding “new Ishiguro novels, new Mamet movies, Barry Ronge's retirement and my new home designed by Ora Joubert.” See Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavi, eds., blank Architecture, apartheid and after (Amsterdam, 1997). This rather precious book, which accompanied an exhibition at the Netherlands Architecture Institute, includes essays by urban historians, artists, architects, architectural historians, and sociologists. Although the majority of the texts focus on issues of urban settlement, crime, difficulty, erasure, and memory, a few are more strictly history of architecture, centered on specific architects or a narrow set of buildings. Sabine Marchall and Brian Kearney, Opportunities for Relevance: Architecture in the New South Africa (Pretoria, 2000).

29. It must be reiterated that as was the case, for example, in Nigeria, these voices are dominant in the academy but by no means in the professional world outside. One passage in Hanlie Retief's essay “A Distinctive Architecture,” VIS I (summer 2001), reads “Who of us hasn't driven through a typical South African city landscape and wondered: What on earth is going on here? What country am I in? On which continent? On what planet?” He also quotes architect Glen Gallagher: “If there were truly integrity in our buildings, it could not be the architecture of another continent. Are we building for white people to remind them where they came from, or for black people, to remind them—or are we building for the people of the new South Africa?”

30. The changing demography is not simply a product of an institutional response to perceived need. Like the impact of affirmative action in the workplace in the U.S. (or of similar legislation in the Nigerian educational system favoring underrepresented ethnic groups), the new demography of the tertiary institution is a product of a majority government's policy intended to restore opportunity to "previously disadvantaged persons." The same state direction, in no small measure responding to the South African president Mbeki's desire for an "African Renaissance," is largely responsible for the immediate pressure for changes. The possibility of instituting such a renaissance is not unconnected to the fact that architectural education in South Africa was and is highly standardized across all of its six institutions, and this because all tertiary establishments are state funded.

31. Africa's history is not just “black,” of course, but also white, Arab, Berber, Khoisan, Fula, Nubian, and all the colors in between. Afrocentrism here is not as racialized as its American variant.

32. This issue introduces an inconsistency. In Ghana (though not in Nigeria), not simply local accreditation boards, but also the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Canadian Institute of Architects set great store by accreditation. It seems contradictory to eschew European architectural history while seeking legitimacy through accreditation from former colonial metropoles. The South African idea, perhaps purely strategic, devolves from the advantages of reciprocal registration across the Commonwealth, offering South Africans the possibility of practice in the U.K., Canada, and Australia without having to take new professional registration exams.

33. First one must attain the second (professional) bachelors degree mentioned above, and then the master's degree. Thus, in theory, all architectural historians are also practitioners of architecture. At best, one goes through this process having earned a first degree in history of art. In some departments, at the University of Witwatersrand, for example, changes are under way to allow masters architecture students to take additional art history electives.

34. Perhaps for this reason, teachers in such departments may not have been trained as architectural historians and seem to have relatively little contact with those in the school of architecture.

35. In all of Africa, relevant and affordable teaching texts are hard to come by. Especially in the architecture schools, those teaching the history of architecture have come to rely on ad hoc selections culled from architectural magazines and journals.

36. An example of this history would be a sequence of publications in which the study of Cape Dutch architecture plays a critical role and that would include Nigel Warden et al., Cape Town: The Making of a City (Cape Town, 1998), and James Walton, Homesteads and Villages of South Africa (Pretoria, 1952). One certain cannot imagine such a bibliography for any architectural or spatial tradition cultivated by the black population. See Franco Frescura, Rural Shelter in Southern Africa: A Survey of the Architecture, House Forms and Constructional Methods of the Black Rural Peoples of Southern Africa (Johannesburg, 1981).

37. So, for example, even though after Frescura a small number of publications on traditional architecture have been produced in South Africa, the last serious and extended work published on a comparable subject in Ghanaian architecture (not counting doctoral dissertations available through consortiums such as the UMI Ann Arbor, but including presses in Europe and the U.S.) was Labelle Prussin's Architecture in Northern Ghana (Berkeley, 1969).

38. In effect, architecture (officially, architecture and urban planning) is a three-year undergraduate program, since in the first of the four years all freshmen (in the Science Freshman Programme) follow the same non-specialized set of courses in the physical and natural sciences. Entry to the architecture stream after successfully completing this year is by screening; currently about thirty to thirty-five students pass into the architecture department annually.

39. Although the architecture department at Addis includes many of a distinctly artistic bent, the university regards architecture primarily as a technology. Architecture and urban planning are taught in the Faculty of
Technology, as are chemical engineering, civil engineering, building technology, electrical and computer engineering, material research and testing, and mechanical engineering. The Graduate School of Continuing Education is also part of this department.

40. A similar debate is, however, now center stage in the political realm. The new democratic state allows a free expression of ethnicity, and some party politics increasingly seeks ways to exploit this to advantage, although most Ethiopians might still frown on any tendency, now normal in Nigeria, to frame one's identity first in relation to ethnicity and not to nation. This is hardly to suggest that Ethiopia is any less varied ethnically than is the Sudan or Nigeria. Here live not just large numbers descended partially from a Greek immigrant community, but also indigenous peoples including Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Guargare, Afar, Harrari, and more than eighty other language groups. Moreover, Islam is nearly as present in the culture as Christianity, and followers of both faiths coexist with those practicing traditional religions and those who are exclusively secular.

41. The attempt at securing a colony was consistent from the late nineteenth century right up to the World War II defeat of Mussolini. The Marxist overthrow of the historical monarchy and the subsequent revolt against the Marxist regime take Ethiopia toward the kinds of issues with which Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa struggle.

42. Indeed, for the Jamaican, black-diasporic religion Rastafarianism, Ethiopia serves as the origin itself.

43. The Organization of African Unity set up headquarters in Ethiopia in the 1960s, and with this produced one of the more significant modern buildings on the continent, this time not in distant Eritrea, but in the royal capital city itself.


45. Doshi has spoken and written much on the idea of making architecture "Indian" (see, e.g., "History, Myths, Memories, and the Search for Indian Architecture," in *Identity for Indian Architecture* [London, 1980]). The appeal of his approach to Ethiopians seeking similar historical connectivity is clear. But there are other connections beyond this one. Not only is Doshi also involved with India's Center for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT), whose agendas are linked to the aid-related housing concerns of the Ethiopian world (Doshi co-authored *The Habitat Bill of Rights* in 1967), but he shares this concern with Finnish urban planning institutions and academies, which fund some of the University of Addis architecture department's current research projects. Moreover, Indian architect Kurula Varkey, a protege of Doshi's who succeeded him as director of the CEPT, taught at the University of Nairobi (one of the institutions of the SEARCH project). And in architecture specifically, Doshi's connection to Louis Kahn is shared with architect and University of Addis Ababa teacher Fassil Gasail. 46. Such an understanding of local ethnic tradition has become especially important since, with the new political leadership, the issue of how Ethiopia's other ethnicities might be represented in the new democratic public culture has been raised.


48. Where Ethiopian artists may acquire avant-garde status merely by producing sculpture (the context being defined by a Christian Ethiopian historical focus on painted icons), architects do not have the same recourse because Ethiopian Christianity produced some exceptional buildings, including churches hewn from rock. Moreover, in what was Ethiopia's coastal zone (now Eritrea, which in the early twentieth century was occupied by Italy), a dilapidated legacy of sleek modernist architecture survives in Asmara, the capital. Since these histories were never lost, there was no identity crisis like the one suffered in West and South Africa.

49. This situation produces particular effects unfamiliar in North America, but quite routine in Europe. For example, the logic of the university is not, as in the U.S., driven more by the needs and/or demands of a liberal undergraduate education than by those of professional and/or graduate education. Likewise, bureaucratic desire for standardization leads, in the latter contexts, to a kind of division of labor in which resources are dispersed across many sites according to a rationale of efficiency.

**Illustration Credits**

Figures 1–3. Photographs copyright © 2002 Obiora Udechukwu

Figure 4. Photograph copyright © 2002 Ikem Okoye