

#2 ARCHITECTURE Otherwhere

durban
2014



hey bru, nguni!*



On Visiting Heaven...

An African parable of spirituality is a useful tool for looking at the elsewhere of architecture.

Otherwhere is not an abstract place removed from the everyday here-and-now, but is already present in many of the ways we see and experience the world that surrounds us. The trick is recognising the elements of this otherwhere, and bringing them forward, in order to better shape our responses to the challenges that lie ahead. In the face of unique changes facing our world and societies, responses of the past have already proved inadequate. The answers are hidden in plain sight.

Traditional African religion in this part of the world offers an analogy, by way of the hereafter. In the Zulu language the word 'zulu' means heaven, *kwaZulu* means 'in heaven'. Traditional faith has always depicted an afterlife that is immediately present. The dead surround us, quite literally. In this African cosmology, there is no far-off location

for an afterlife lived among supernatural beings. Instead, the dead are merely transformed - along with their experience of the world.

According to legend, when a person dies, their spirit remains in the places they knew during life. The experience of death, however, inverts all the senses of the dead. What once tasted sweet becomes intolerably bitter, and formerly acrid smells are transformed into fragrant scents. The existence of all our deceased relatives and friends continues around us, in a spirit world of 'otherwhere' that lies beyond the sight for those that remain alive.

Our beloved departed see the lives of the living more clearly from the 'otherwhere' that lies across the flimsy partition of death. More importantly, they plead and negotiate on behalf of the living, with whatever forces or powers that exist in those dimensions.

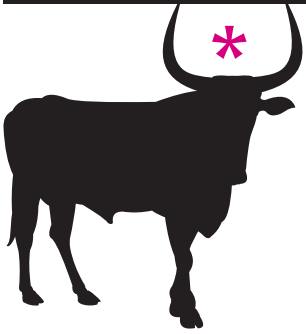
OURBAN



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OTHER DURBAN



Nguni cattle are an indigenous breed of livestock, descended from the original herds brought to southern Africa by Iron Age farmers. Once scorned by commercial farmers as mongrel cattle, the Zulu people have always prized them. Today the local origin of these animals protects them from disease and climate change, and commercial farmers have caught on. Their Zulu owners describe distinctive patterned hides in poetic praises, as these cattle form a cornerstone of human culture too. A unique feature of many speckled skins is a mirror image pattern on the hides - each side of the cow's hide an exact reflection of the other, like a bovine Rorschach...



Traditional African medicine called *muthi* [pronounced *moo-tee*] is a multi-million dollar industry that operates from Durban's sidewalks and provides an alternative health system for 70% of South Africans...

Seawater is used in traditional medicine, as well as religious rituals. Informal vendors on Durban's beachfront sell empty plastic bottles for people to collect their own seawater at the shore...



Fancy a Bunny For Lunch?

Durban's contribution to global cuisine is the oddly named Bunny Chow. The widely available Bunny is a loaf of white bread (or part thereof) with the soft centre removed to make a hollow. Piping hot Indian curry is then inserted - either beef, mutton, chicken, vegetable or beans. The removed soft bread is then used as a lid. The finished Bunny is then wrapped in paper, making the perfect cheap, portable, tasty, take-away meal...



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