

7 Precedent Studies

IT University in Copenhagen
Ørestad, Copenhagen, Denmark.
Henning Larsens Tegnestue A/S.
Completed 2004.

The building is located along the canal in the northern part of Ørestad within a new district of Copenhagen. The district is described as “an urban vision created upon a bare field outside the historical city’s diversity of blended functions and visual patina.” It is within this urban vision that the building intensifies the urban dynamic by “pushing its extroverted functions like café, restaurant and library forward into the urban scene so that the building shares its inner pulsing life with the city around it.” The building comprises of a large centre atrium (60m x 20m x 25m high), unfolding into plazas on the north and south, entering into a spatial dialogue with the site and surrounding district.





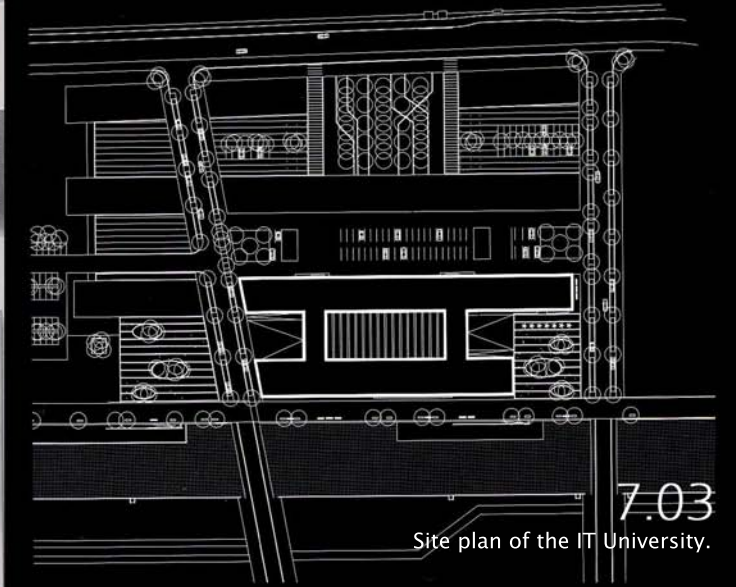
7.01

Image indicating the 'drawer-like' meeting rooms within the central atrium of the building.



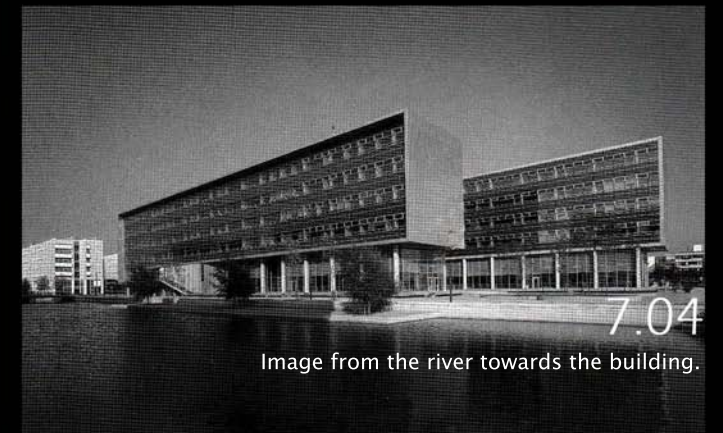
7.02

Location plan of the university precinct.



7.03

Site plan of the IT University.



7.04

Image from the river towards the building.



7.05

Image indicating the transparent entrance of the eastern facade, showing the meeting rooms within the central atrium of the building.

The building is described as “absorbing the adjacent city space as a direct part of its inner spatial quality, so that the life in these spaces and activities inside the building are melted into a cohesive whole.” It is this concept of connection, integration, and association with others, that resonates within the theoretical position of this dissertation, and the importance of the programme of the building creating a spatial dialogue with one another. The majority of the functions inside the building are centred on group work and group projects, offering interactivity between student, and between students and the researchers. The goal of the project was to create a dynamic study and research environment within open study areas which provide possibilities for informal and spontaneous encounters. “The space appears as a geometric installation consisting of precisely formed group and meeting rooms that are placed in a complex composition, where their differing size and placement read like open drawers in the tall atrium.” (Yoshida, 2005: p.44)

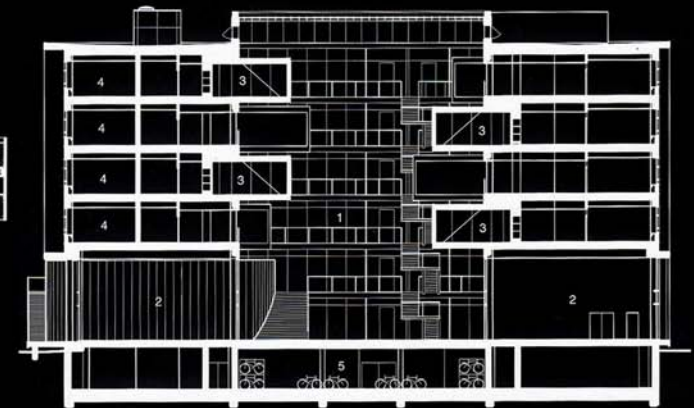


Image indicating the meeting spaces within the atrium.



7.07

Floor plans indicating the ground and first level of the building.

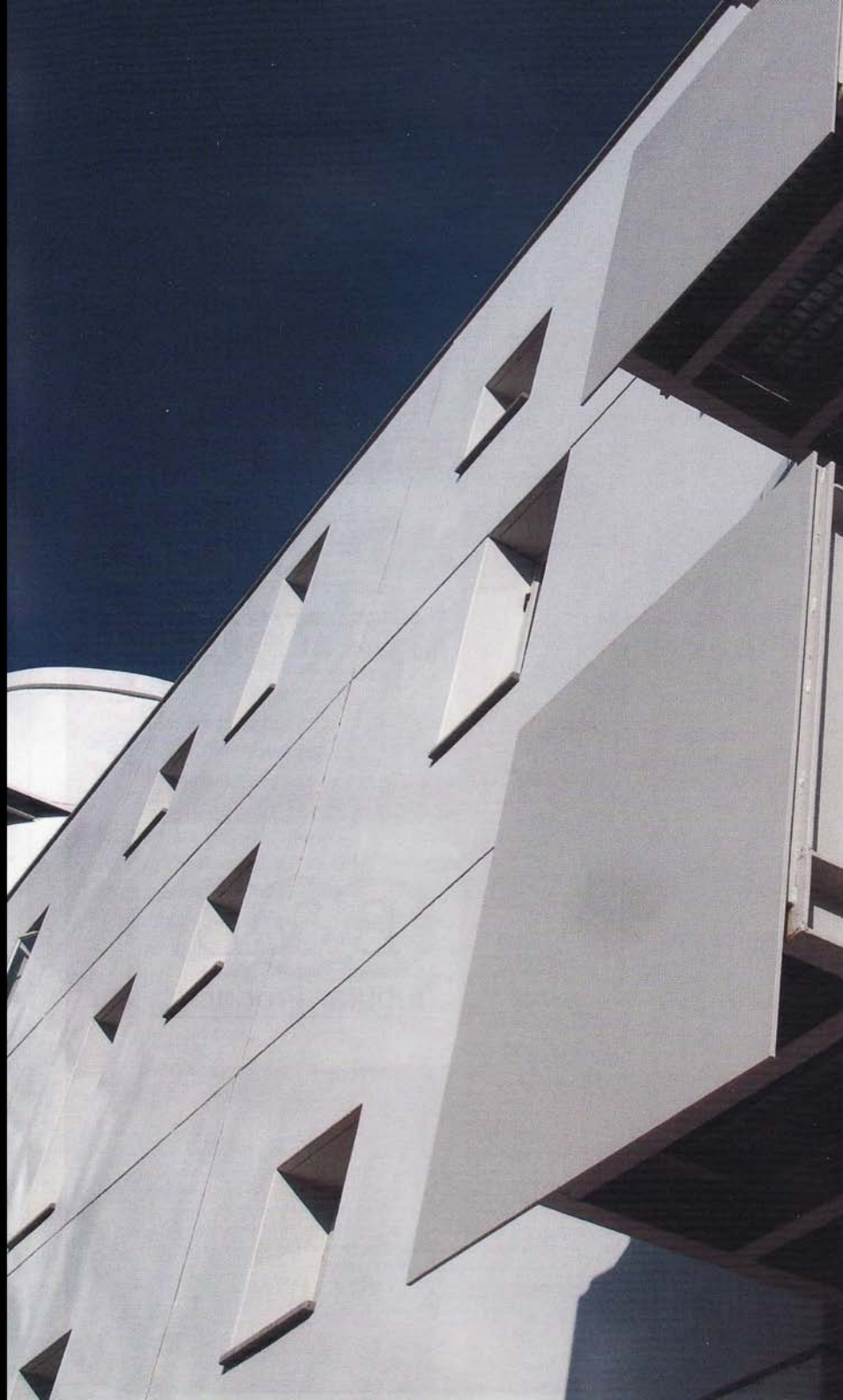


7.08

Section through the central atrium of the building.

Law Faculty, University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa.
Kruger Roos Architects.
Completed 2003.

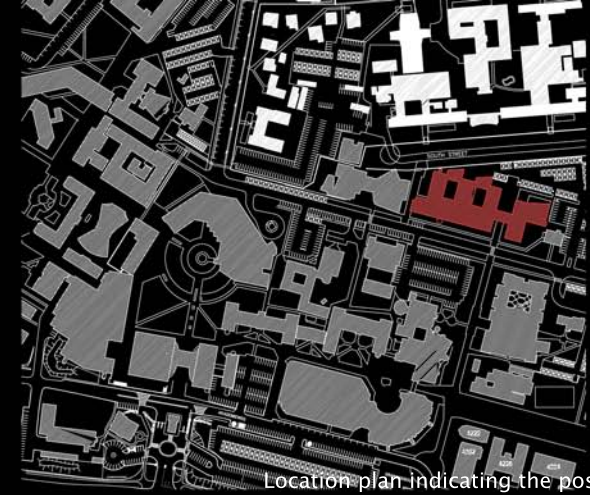
The building is located on the main campus of the University of Pretoria, on a site that was previously occupied by small residential buildings and used as an annex by the students from adjacent residences. Due to the location of the current ring road of the campus and the security fence around the semi-private precinct, the site of the law building has not been integrated with the commercial precinct to the north. Yet, it is stated that the building is “a happy merging of a site and a building that echo the same concern for the environment: direct, unpretentious, legible and strong.”





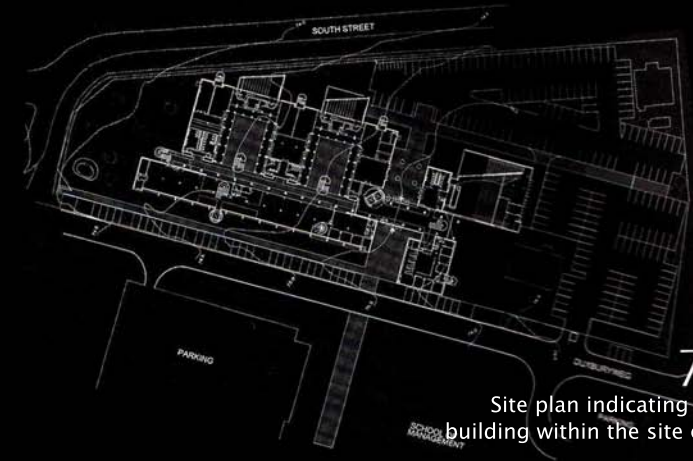
7.09

Image of the southern elevation of the Law building's administration block.



7.10

Location plan indicating the position of the building within the University precinct.



7.11

Site plan indicating the building within the site context.



7.12

Image of the Law Faculty building's model indicating the north and south elevation.

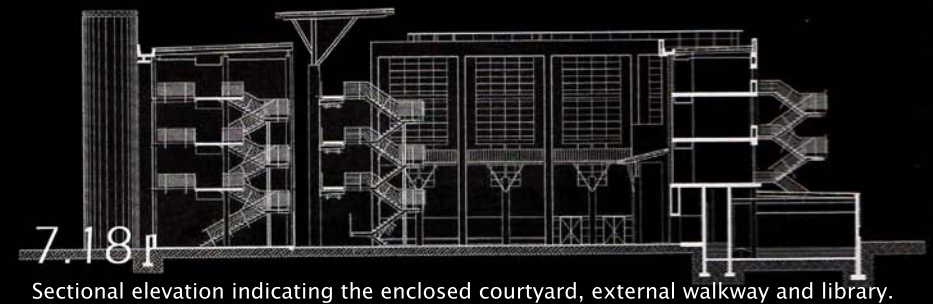
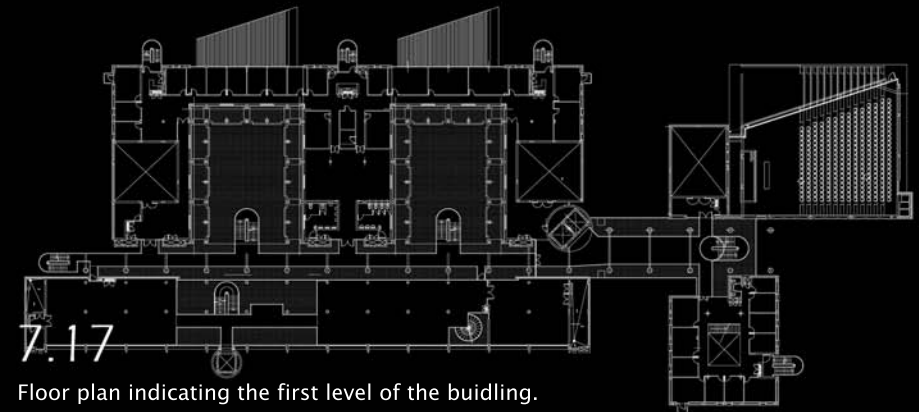


7.13 Image indicating the library, south entrance, and administration block of the building.



Images of the external and internal spaces.

The lack of integration with the urban fabric only means that the building does not contain functions like cafés and restaurants, opening up to the street. Instead, the building is internalised and functions as “a small campus inside the larger one and this concept has been evident since the first sketch plans: solid blocks of lecture halls, meeting rooms and private offices envelope planted courtyards and are connected with the library, large auditorium and administrative offices by four levels of interior ‘streets’.” Therefore the building enables the opportunity for students to meet and interact with one another within these ‘streets’ and interior open spaces, while watching campus life through the large windows of the library. “People can walk through the building easily and freely, but are also displayed and etched against the light. Their voices fill the big open spaces. They complete the building. It becomes a building only if there are people to fill its spaces.” It is this concept of the user completing the spatial quality functioning as a campus within a campus, which resonates within the theoretical position of this dissertation. (Le Roux & Botes, 2005: p.37)



Bahen Centre for Information Technology,
University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.
Diamond & Schmitt Architects.
Completed 2002.

The building is located in a dense urban environment surrounded by six existing buildings, forming part of the University of Toronto's downtown St. George campus. Considered as an infill project the Bahen Centre is nestled among an eclectic collection of smaller existing buildings, where the construction involved the demolition of Victorian houses; public opposition resulted in the retention of the most historically significant of these, incorporating the building within the complex. The building also replaces an asphalt-paved parking lot and service yard with usable space and three distinct landscaped courtyards. "The Bahen Centre for Information Technology is designed to accommodate spaces that are adaptable, flexible and shaped on the understanding that the essence of education lies in connection." (Schmitt, 2008: p.01) Education in the twenty first century is more than just the presenting and passing on of knowledge, it is the expansion and development of thinking. Schmitt notes that the ideal environment in which to facilitate this enlightenment allows for interaction, congregation and convergence, not only of people but of ideas.

7.19

Image indicating the stairwell located within the atrium.





7.21
Site and ground floor plan indicating the site context.



Site/ground floor

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| A Koffler Centre for Student Services | D university offices |
| B Fields Institute | E F. Norman Hughes Pharmacy Building |
| C Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design | F steam plant |

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. courtyard | 7. offices |
| 2. lecture theatres | 8. café |
| 3. meeting rooms | 9. tutorial rooms |
| 4. atrium | 10. lounge |
| 5. computer laboratory | 11. PEY program office (Victorian house) |
| 6. study hall | |

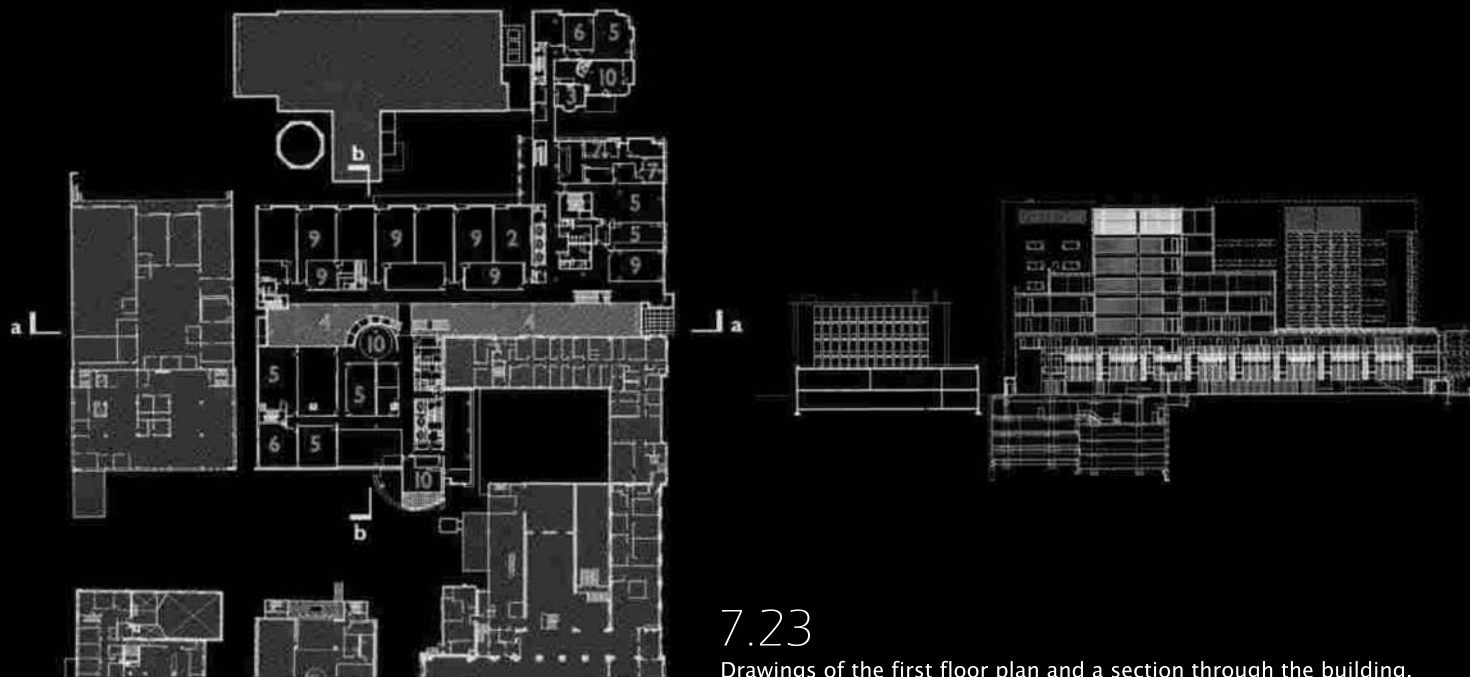


7.20
Images of the external views of the building.

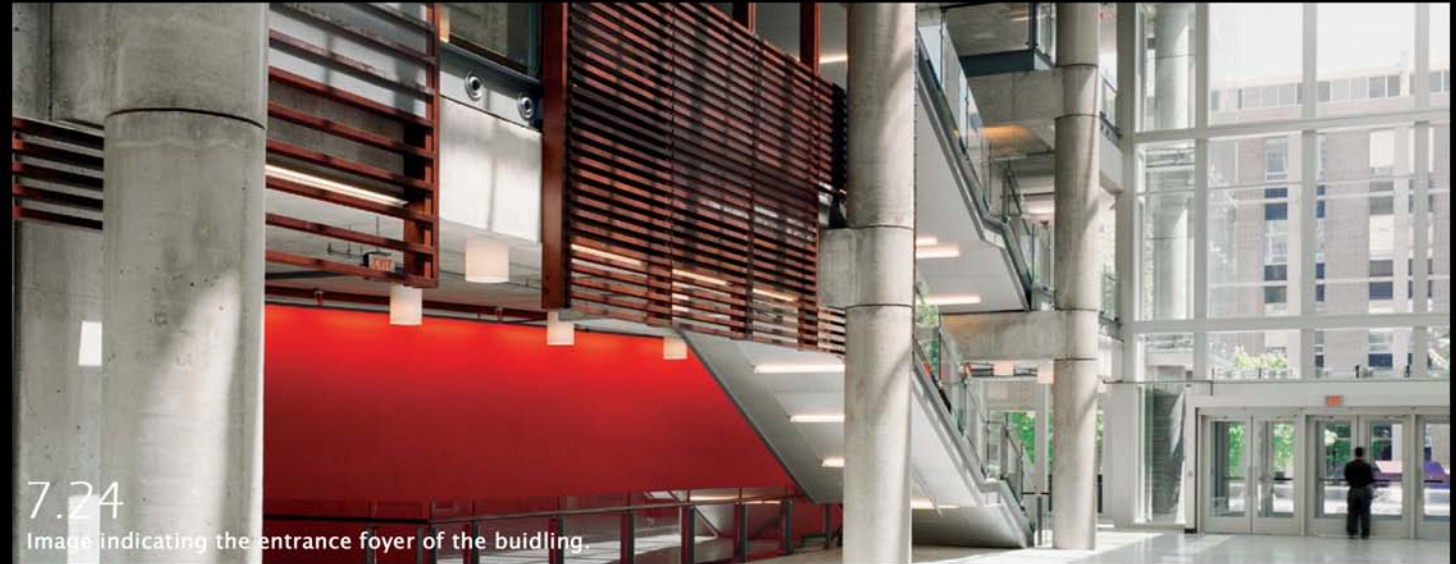




7.22 Aerial image of the eastern elevation indicating the urban context and 'infill' character.



7.23 Drawings of the first floor plan and a section through the building.



7.24

Image indicating the entrance foyer of the building.



7.25

Image of the internal atrium space.

It is within this complex interweaving of urbanity, public space and sustainability, that the Bahen Centre shares with this dissertation the theoretical position of merging cultures, and of combining environments. “Fundamentally, the Bahen Centre is a reflection of the belief that education requires people to connect with each other, with ideas and with their environment.” The emphasis lies with the connection of the building and its student to the outside environment and campus. It is stated that the naturally-lit atrium and stairwell with its “sense of expansiveness and merging pathways is fundamental in promoting convergence and interaction.” The building includes a variety of spaces that can be used as informal meeting spaces. The building contains both passive and active systems, including the provision of daylight to minimize the need for artificial lighting, natural ventilation including the use of the atrium as a thermal chimney, sun shading devices to reduce the cooling load, and careful zoning of building to maximize the benefits of various orientations. “The project’s most significant contribution to sustainable design has more to do with its relationship to site and its attitude toward the city and traditions of high density urbanism.” (Polo, 2003: p.20)