

## SYNOPSIS of

### GABRIEL FAGAN: AN APPRECIATION

By

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Gabriel Fagan might be more popularly associated with exemplary restoration work, but his approach to architecture is more urgently relevant to our times and immediate future than that of younger and more avant-garde architects.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has left us with fragmented cities and buildings, and the great project is now to confront the challenges of the burgeoning environmental crisis. Fagan's architecture re-connects with nature both human and environmental. His architecture belongs to the Cape Town region and connects to its landscapes, climate, culture and history. His own house is a masterful demonstration to this end and is a convincing synthesis of modernity and local tradition.

His architecture belongs to our times. His constructional syntax is rooted in contemporary idioms but is also related to the vernacular. Like the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, his work has a propriety and aptness and relates to the traditional. His work has a probity that reflects a love of how buildings are made. This sense of probity is achieved through the approach of appropriateness which manifests itself in a "to and fro" over the 30 year restoration of the Castle of Good Hope. The restoration is a tour de force.

New insertions into the renovation of the South African Breweries are all bold and consistent with the robustness of the 19<sup>th</sup> century complex. The new 'counterpoints' the old. The 19<sup>th</sup> century complex plays a new role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century conditions. This is propriety at its most effective.

Buchanan proceeds to describe Fagan's own house as "probity at its best" and describes applying these principles to other houses where the clients record their preferences in writing without subsequent modifications to accommodate difficulty. This is professional probity.

Like Aalto, Fagan uses thumbnail sketches extensively. His thumbnail sketches are about cyclical movement between decision making at the form level and that of making. His work never becomes subservient to theoretical preoccupations like typology. Fagan's work has a certain syntax and grammar which grows out of the 'doing' rather than an applied overlay. Like children who learn to speak without first learning the alphabet, his work is ultimately joyous like a child's ever increasing use of vocabulary.

Today, architecture needs Fagan's experience design skills and sensibility more than ever before.

