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LECTURERS CHANGING LIVES

Story by Alma Viviers Photos by Michael Hammond and Je'nine May

An irrepressible passion for their discipline, a genuine enthusiasm to impart knowledge and the desire to make a difference are three of the standout qualities shared by six academics who have been honoured with awards for their teaching efforts.

Each year, the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA), in collaboration with the Council of Higher Education, recognises up to five academics with National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards. This year UCT is proud to have scooped two, with both Dr Ian Rijsdijk and Prof June Pym earning this prestigious award.



Dr Ian-Malcolm Rijsdijk
Senior Lecturer, Centre for Film and Media Studies



Assoc Prof June Pym
Director of Education Development Unit (EDU), Faculty of Commerce

Dr Rijsdijk, who also earned a UCT Distinguished Teachers Award in 2013, is the son of a teaching couple: "I suppose I always feel lucky that I was the son of teachers. My father taught physics and my mother was a lecturer in education, so I think teaching came naturally to me."

He also credits his English teacher (and rugby coach) as someone who shaped his approach: "He taught me that the job of the teacher is not to teach the child what the teacher knows but to identify what is excellent in the child and to nurture it."

To achieve this he believes in combining "big lectures", which have an element of performance and where he likes to engage with students, with more personal attention in smaller groups such as tutorials and seminars.

He gets particular joy from "pushing students to new places" and stretching the minds of unlikely film students who take his

winter course, a condensed version of the full-semester first-year course, particularly popular with engineering students requiring a humanities credit.

As one engineering student put it in his feedback: "Before taking this course, I had the idea that it would be complicated, and that I would be expected to learn the terminology and technical details related to filmmaking. But what I didn't expect was that it would be so engaging and so much fun. Dr Rijsdijk seems to love teaching, which is a gift to his students as his lectures are always interesting and inspired. In fact, if teaching is a talent then Dr Rijsdijk must have been born with it, as he knows well how to interest his students in the subject matter and to motivate them to their fullest potential. This makes him an exceptionally gifted teacher and an outstanding human being, for his influence to bring out the best in others."

For Prof June Pym, teaching has always been about "how you shift things, change things and how to make things more curious, more exciting, more accessible for students".

In her role as director of the EDU she is particularly interested in creating a dynamic learning environment where students also feel a sense of belonging.

"The university has a very dominant culture and students have to deal with many academic and personal challenges to try and fit in," she explains. "For me it is important that we see the variety of students as an asset, and to shift our practices so that it is not just a case of students having to assimilate, but rather asking: what are the different ways of being? What do we need to shift so that [the university] becomes truly transformational?"

One of the ways in which to start making this shift, she believes, is to affirm what people come with and to enable them to find their voices.

"It can be so hard sometimes to walk through that door, to ask those questions, to say 'help, I am drowning and I need help,'"

Pym says. "It is so important for students to find their voice, to ask and to connect."

In student feedback, where she is often referred to as a motherly figure, it is clear that she acts as such an enabler: "She had a sincere concern for each student's well-being, and genuinely cared about not just our academic progress, but really our advancement overall."

Another wrote: "She saw potential beyond that which we could see in ourselves, and she motivated, encouraged and supported us to realise it."

Pym emphasises that this work has been effective because of a highly skilled and committed team who want to make a difference in students' lives.

Asked what she believes makes for a good teacher, she says: "You have to care. You have to care about the quality of people's learning experience and time. You can give a recipe of things that make a difference, but actually it is about a culture of care – care for students, care for the quality of what you are doing – rather than just being pragmatic. And for me, that is the passion."

“It is so important for students to find their voice, to ask and to connect.”

The university honours up to four exceptional teachers annually. This year's Distinguished Teachers Awards go to Dr Spencer Wheaton, Dr Linda Ronnie, Prof Delawir Kahn and Prof James Gain.



Dr Linda Ronnie
Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Business

Dr Linda Ronnie is a senior lecturer in organisational behaviour and people management at the UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB). Prior to her academic career she worked in the manufacturing sector, where she gained extensive management experience. While working for the industry training board, her then-manager encouraged her to do a training and education qualification which set her on a new trajectory, sparking an enduring interest in adult education.

"Since then I have been teaching for almost 20 years, one way or another," she explains.

Ronnie believes an eagerness to learn is vital to being a great teacher. "I go to all my classes expecting to learn; I go there with an expectation that all of us in the room are going to learn something."

According to her, preparation for every class and having genuine respect and regard for students also helps make her effective, in and outside of class.

"For me, theory is useless if it doesn't have resonance in management practice in the work environment, and vice versa," she says. "It is about marrying the two. By virtue of the subject I teach, students often come with questions about their situations at work, which in turn gives me an opportunity to firmly root the theory in their actual, real-world experience."

For her, the Distinguished Teacher's Award is an honour, especially given that it is the first time that a GSB faculty member has been recognised in this way. On a more personal level, she is also profoundly touched by the feedback from students and colleagues that helped motivate the award.

"When I was reading through the motivation letters, I was really humbled," she says. "Of course I feel very chuffed, but I think it is because we have great students at the GSB that this is possible. We have a wonderful time learning and growing together. I have no doubt that what we do here enhances African management practice".

“I go to all my classes expecting to learn; I go there with an expectation that all of us in the room are going to learn something.”



Prof Delawir Kahn
Head of the Department of Surgery

For Prof Delawir Kahn, being a surgeon and being a teacher are intricately intertwined.

"Surgeons thoroughly enjoy what they do. To a surgeon, what we do is not work," he enthuses. "To be in an operating theatre ... there is just nothing like it. I think there are very few people who get that much job satisfaction and who love to tell people what they do as much as surgeons."

He counts legendary surgeon Jack Collis, plastic surgeon Dr Frank Court and Dr Tom Starzle, the father of liver transplants, as some of the mentors who left a lasting impression on him during his training.

He believes that you don't teach students to be good doctors: "You have to act as a good doctor, and in that way, influence what they become. By being a committed, dedicated and hardworking person ... it rubs off on people."

Kahn relishes the opportunity to make the connection between theory and practice in the operating theatre. "Students might learn anatomy, but it is still a mystery to them what it really looks like inside a body," he says. "But as surgeons we can show them an open chest with a heart beating away, or where we have removed an appendix or cut out a section and sewn something together again."

He is also passionate about the work that he does with grade 11 learners who don't know whether they want to do medicine or not.

"I take them on a walk through the hospital and into the operating theatre; it leaves an incredible impression on them," he says. "I like to think it makes a big difference in whether a student decides to take up medicine or not as a career. I think the intention is not to make a difference in someone's day, but in someone's life."

“You don't teach students to be good doctors. You have to act as a good doctor, and in that way, influence what they become. By being a committed, dedicated and hardworking person ... it rubs off on people.”

“It is great to not only change the way people see film, but the way they see the world.”



Assoc Prof James Gain
Deputy Head of the Department of Computer Science

Assoc Prof James Gain comes from a long line of teachers. “Both my parents were academics; in fact, I am a third-generation academic. My grandfather was originally a UCT professor in the medical faculty, so it is sort of a family profession.

“The thing for me is I really like to have the students engaged with the material I teach,” he explains. “It is very easy for students’ attention to lag if you are the kind of lecturer who speaks throughout the entire lecture.”

For Gain it is important to create the type of environment where students are not afraid to ask questions. He does in-class exercises, and breaks large classes into smaller groups, to make asking questions less intimidating.

“For example, in larger groups I use polling exercises where students have to respond using polling sheets,” he explains. “Because everyone is doing it, it is less intimidating than venturing an opinion, but it still means students have to grapple with a response to the material, which is far more effective than just asking them to think about it.”

One of the biggest challenges in teaching computer science specifically is the huge class disparity in experience and exposure.

“We have such a wide range of abilities coming into the course. On the one hand you have people who have been doing hacking at home or IT studies at school, and on the other you have people who haven’t touched a computer. Teaching for such a broad range is

“In science there is this kind of chain, going back thousands of years – of knowledge building on knowledge – and the same applies to people. I had people imparting their knowledge to me and inspiring me to carry on the subject, and I try to do the same for my students. So I feel like I am a part of that chain; and if I was missing or my students were missing, the chain, in a sense, would be broken.”



Dr Spencer Wheaton
Senior Lecturer, Department of Physics

Dr Spencer Wheaton, a “home-grown boy from UCT” got early teaching experience as a student tutor, and after his honours degree, took a two-year break from postgraduate studies to teach physical science at a local high school.

He recalls that although he was an expert in the subject matter, he didn’t have a clue about teaching, and learnt a lot from those early experiences.

“One of those early lessons for me was that very few learn just by listening to someone else; you learn best by doing,” he recalls. “The big mistake that I made in those early days was thinking that I could stand in front of the class and give a wonderfully clear exposition of physics and expect them just to get it. I remember getting those first test scripts back and realising that they hadn’t got it at all!”

This realisation still informs his pedagogy today – he creates multi-dimensional, active experiences for students.

“You have to know where your students are coming from and what motivates them. One of the courses I teach is physics for non-physics majors; and those students are not particularly

“I am boyishly excited by my discipline, and that comes through. Lots of students are not terribly excited about physics but at least they appreciate that I am, and it helps to spark their interest and motivate them. They also see when you are putting in a lot of effort, and almost feel morally obligated to do the same.”

passionate about physics, otherwise they would be majoring in it, so I have to meet them where they are at and choose an approach that best sparks their interest.”

He tries to do this by making connections with the real world and linking the physics to what they might be majoring in. Knowing that no two people learn the same way, he also tries to create variety in his approach.

“What works for one student, might not work for another, so you need to have as big a toolkit as possible of methods for teaching: using demonstrations, simulations, videos and stories.”

Using these tools also allows him to break down barriers and be more approachable. “I think the most important thing is to be true to who you are,” he says of his teaching style. “Students pick up on that, and they recognise when you are genuine. I am boyishly excited by my discipline, and that comes through. Lots of students are not terribly excited about physics but at least they appreciate that I am, and it helps to spark their interest and motivate them. They also see when you are putting in a lot of effort, and almost feel morally obligated to do the same.”

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

We asked previous winners of the Distinguished Teachers Award about the secret to their success: what makes a teacher great?

“University-level educators are recognised by students to be excellent when they love their discipline, but have also learnt how to listen, are not slow to admit to not knowing, and share their resources selflessly. The best teachers I know are generous in all aspects of their lives.”

Prof Andy Buffler
Head of the Department of Physics



“The attributes of a great teacher are knowing your discipline, having empathy for the bravery it takes for students to speak, being vulnerable – but mostly, being a clown; and falling down sometimes helps.”

Dr Susan Levine
Department of Social Anthropology



“I like to take students to the brink of what I know myself. That way, the questions I ask of them are genuine (it’s not as if I know the answer in advance, and they have to guess the right one). The students sense that we’re all trying to figure something out, and they quickly appreciate that their contributions play an active and valuable part in our intellectual adventures. I like to think that I’m bringing the excitement of a research strategy into the classroom, rather than introducing students to a well-established field where the answers are already known.”

Prof Carrol Clarkson
Department of English

“The greatest reward of all is that years down the line a student remembers something you said, some advice you gave. You have long since forgotten that throwaway line or that casual conversation, but it changed a life. I don’t understand why smart young South African graduates aren’t battering down the doors to become lecturers – it is such a hidden pleasure, it seems? We need to bring it out into the open and we need to welcome young lecturers into our communities, on the challenging but rewarding journey of learning to teach (and to research).”

Prof Jenni Case
Department of Chemical Engineering

“The most rewarding aspect of teaching is when students become comfortable enough to participate in class, and when they are no longer intimidated by my position. They feel that I care about their progress, and are willing to put in as much effort as I do in making the learning experience what it should be at university: fun and inspiring.”

Dr Zenda Woodman
Department of Molecular and Cell Biology



ANATOMY OF A TEACHER

Story by Helen Swingler
Photos by Michael Hammond

'Teachers on the table', bodies donated to UCT's anatomy laboratory for dissection by second-year medical students, are a vital part of medical education, even when the donor is a centenarian – a trend that's increasing, says Professor Graham Louw.

Louw was speaking at the cadaver dedication ceremony in the Student Learning Centre. Each year students honour the body donors and thank their families, often in song and verse. The observance provides what health sciences dean Professor Wim de Villiers called "a time of reflection and celebration".

Body donors – 'silent mentors' to students as they discover the intricacies of human anatomy – are a gift to the university and are treated with care and dignity, Louw told their families.

"Respect and ethics are vital in training to be a doctor," added Professor Malcolm Collins, head of the Department of Human Biology.

For many students it's a rite of passage, said De Villiers; their first confrontation with death.

One family spoke fondly of their 100-year-old aunt, a donor who'd died in fine fettle, with no hint of Alzheimer's or dread disease.

And there were more donors like her, said Louw, referring to two 101-year-old men who had arrived at the faculty's mortuary.

"There's been a change in the demographics of the bodies we receive. More and more are over 100 years old, a reflection of improving quality of health, advanced healthcare services, and better education about health care.

"Ten to 20 years ago most were aged between 70 and 80. This has shifted by 20 years; we're now getting donors in their 90s and early 100s. People are surviving illnesses that they didn't in the past. It's one of the reasons many older people donate their bodies; medical progress gave them so much."

Older bodies are also useful teachers, showing, for example, the ravages of lifelong alcohol abuse on the liver, the demise of the female reproductive system post-menopause, and the accumulative effects of HIV and TB.

Each cadaver is a mirror of a life: the appendectomy scar; the stainless steel pins in a bone; pacemakers; breast implants; prostheses; and synthetic lenses.

"Every body has a story to tell," said Louw.

Males are now also better represented among donors, he went on, thanks to better medical intervention and treatment for the testosterone- and adrenaline-driving behaviour that causes heart attacks and strokes – and car accidents.

Today's donors are also taller than their counterparts in the past. Stainless steel tables recently replaced the original marble dissection tables, which dated back over 100 years. These are easier to clean, but they also accommodate cadavers that are now 10 to 20cm taller than they were a century ago.

Unfortunately, very few teenage or younger bodies are donated, and this gap is noticeable in the curriculum.

"You can't take adult anatomy and shrink it; children are very different," said Louw.

Somerset Hospital donates newborns – those who are stillborn or die of natural causes, and whose mothers abandon the bodies – for neonatal studies. Half of the adult bodies donated are unclaimed: paupers, prisoners, and the homeless.

Louw paid tribute to them too. "We remember the people who came to us without an identity, without a name. They were marginalised by society, and at least today we can express gratitude that we were able to use their bodies and give them a dignified passing."

Some bodies are embalmed for the dissection table; others are frozen for surgical teaching; while some are used to practise new techniques. Others still are plastinated (the fat and water are replaced by silicon) and are used for demonstration.

Paradoxically, donors help improve quality of life.

"The donors make it possible for future doctors to understand anatomy; not just to learn it from a book, but to actually see the three-dimensional structure of the body – and this, even with all our modern technology, is critically important," said Collins.

After the ceremony, a son whose mother had donated her body said to the students: "Thank you. You guys are the future and my mom would have been so proud of you."

Another had been the partner of a donor for 25 years.

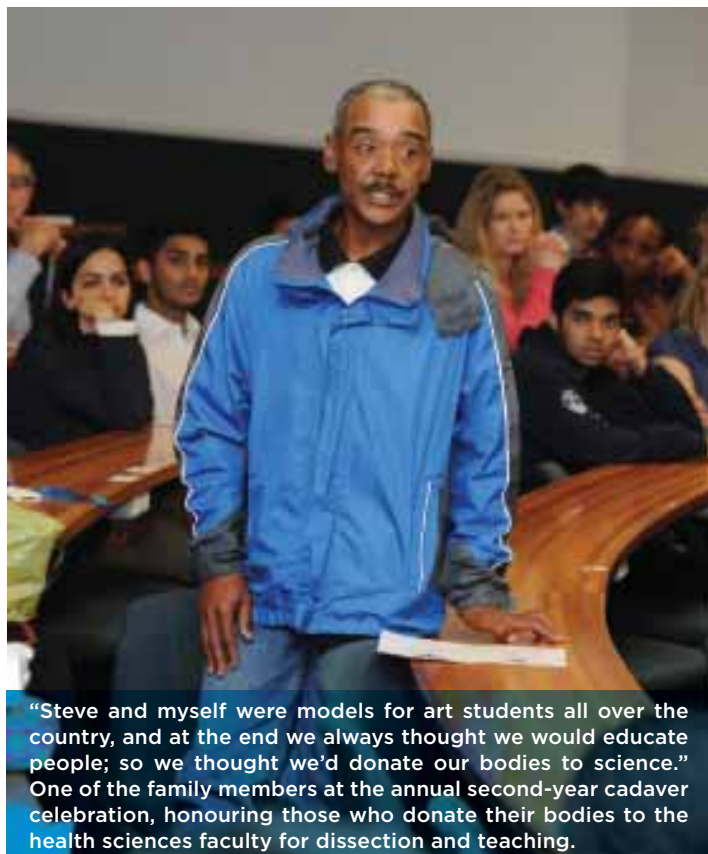
"Steve and myself were models for art students all over the country, and at the end we always thought we would educate people; so we thought we'd donate our bodies to science."

In closing, De Villiers said that as part of their training, students were being hardwired to care for patients in a community, "part of a transformative experience".

Body donors, he added, were examples of a 'good death': selfless, and with a greater cause in mind.

“We remember the people who came to us without an identity, without a name. They were marginalised by society, and at least today we can express gratitude that we were able to use their bodies and give them a dignified passing.”

Graham Louw



A GOOD DEATH

Story by Helen Swingler
Photo by Michael Hammond

Cape Town has run out of space to bury its dead; and new, environmentally and culturally acceptable options are urgently needed, both for burial and cremation, as well as for memorialisation, says PhD candidate and change agent Lucienne Kelfkens.

Kelfkens has just signed up to have her body donated to UCT's medical faculty when she dies.

It took some thought and persuasion (it took her family by surprise) but she's well aware of the growing dilemma about managing the city's dead. In Cape Town, over 1 600 people die every month, and 60% of them are buried.

It's a burden the city can no longer carry, says Kelfkens, who is attached to the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the Graduate School of Business, and is CEO of Imvusa Change/Partners for Impact.

With growing urbanisation, land is valuable; too valuable to house vast graveyards like Maitland cemetery, which is the size of 140 soccer fields.

Increasingly, cemeteries are being vandalised and have become lonely places, some unkempt and under water. And exorbitant funeral and funeral insurance costs are leaving the city's poorest deep in debt.

Environmentally, the dead also leave a large footprint.

Crematoria release pollutants such as formaldehyde, dioxins, and mercury from the amalgams used to fill teeth.

Caskets use metal accessories and linings, and glue and varnish that

can pollute groundwater or create noxious crematoria emissions. In the case of burial, the depth of burial creates anaerobic conditions, and corpses decay to methane.

The sprawling Maitland cemetery and its barely-used mausoleum are not at all like the nature park Kelfkens envisages, where bodies would be shallow-buried in shrouds on simple wooden pallets (preferably alien wood), much as Muslims do, and located by loved ones via GPS; bodies decomposing naturally so that the ground can be used again.

Options such as 'green' burials are being explored in other parts of the world; and Kelfkens has started conversations she hopes will drive innovation in death care in South Africa – where there's too little conversation about it, in a society largely estranged from the idea of death.

To facilitate a shift in mindset on this taboo subject, Kelfkens has partnered with the South African Faith Communities Environment Institute to launch a first round of interfaith workshops that will explore change. She is also in talks with the funeral insurance industry to come up with alternatives.

Part of her campaign is the recently launched documentary *Dust*

to Dust: Creating space for change, which explores various opinions, cultural beliefs, and options.

As a change agent, Kelfkens believes system innovation can re-shape the demand for existing funeral options, using design-thinking methods that encourage what she calls "innovation for inclusiveness".

To illustrate this, Kelfkens is part of a group co-designing an extension of the city's public cemeteries, which includes the option of memorial parks.

"We hope to understand the narratives of various cultures and are planning an interactive expo in the city to share these options."

Kelfkens has spread her net wider: she's in talks with the city of Bristol to have the documentary included in a death exhibition, and with UCT and Dutch academics on the possibility of semi-cremation, which allows bones to be returned to relatives.

She is also collaborating with Yarden, a Dutch funeral/cremation company that's developing an interfaith 'farewell centre' in multicultural Amsterdam.

The company is exploring other new ideas, partnering with companies to create a commercial cryogenics-based process that freeze-dries bodies and converts these into a sterile powder for use as compost. It's an

alternative for those who don't want to be buried and don't fancy the idea of cremation.

These remains can be buried, sustainably returning to the soil within a year, or be subjected to an 'accelerated composting' option. The remains are given to the family in an urn for scattering or growing purposes.

The world-first Design for Death competition in 2013, an initiative between the Lien and ACM Foundations, spotlighted the importance of death care.

The website lists some intriguing ideas: a grandmother's familiar scent captured for eternity; a micro-airship that transforms bodies into gentle rain; and mushroom suits that aid the corpse's natural biodegrading.

Winners in the Eco/Green Deathcare category, France's Pierre Riviere and Enzo Pascual, married design with emotion, energy and the environment. Their entry, 'Emergence', is a cemetery that's a reservoir of life, created from biological concrete (which supports the growth of flora on its surface) to absorb carbon dioxide and provide electricity. In the reservoir, the dead lie in biodegradable urns or caskets that are re-absorbed by the earth.

While green burials come with their own environmental watch points, such as potential groundwater contamination, there is little doubt in Kelfkens' mind that new options also need to address our discomfort with death.

As Robert Feagan writes in 'Death to Life: Towards my green burial' in *Ethics, Place & Environment: A Journal of Philosophy & Geography*: "In this sense, rather than being seen as contrary or contentious, green burial may actually enable us to dispel some of the growing angst, uncertainty, and insensitivity often underlying prevailing burial practices, while contributing to an emerging environmental consciousness."

But as Kelfkens adds, it's going to need a major shift in thinking and practice. "For inclusive innovation to work, one needs the collaboration of the academic world, government, business, NGOs and the community. "The action research is designed to allow for participating actors to tap into the innovative journey while changing their business models. Ultimately, it's the consumers who have to be inspired to reconsider their decisions regarding death care."



2014 IN PICTURES



Clockwise: Renowned primatologist and chimpanzee researcher Dr Jane Goodall delivers the Vice-Chancellor's Open Lecture in February. • 2014 SRC president Mangi Gondwe addresses a packed Jameson Hall during the Parents' Orientation Programme on the eve of first term. • Fine art classes during UCT's 2014 Summer School. • SAX Appeal day sees hundreds of students selling the annual RAG magazine at intersections around the city in aid of SHAWCO community projects. • A stunt cyclist takes a spin through Jameson Plaza. • It was an historic moment for the Ikey Tigers when they outclassed Tuks, 39-33, to take home the FNB Varsity Cup in April. • Orientation leaders from the Humanities Faculty take to Jammie stairs to show first-years some UCT 'gees' during O-week.



Clockwise: Learners take the opportunity to find out what fields of study are offered at UCT during the university's annual open day in April. • UCT's annual Africa Month in May culminates in a symposium, panel discussion and exhibition that highlight the contribution of the LGBTI community to African culture. Here Zambian artist Milumbe Haimbe discusses the meaning behind her digital illustration, *The Revolutionist*. • Open Day visitors navigate their way around campus in April. • J'Something, Mi Casa's frontman, gives it his all at UCT's 20 Years of Freedom concert held in May. • Africa Month saw the UCT community come together to play sport (above) and share continental cuisine (below) during May. • Thousands of high school learners descended on campus in April to take part in the annual UCT maths competition.



Clockwise: June marked the beginning of the Jammie Bikes leasing service – a joint initiative between Properties & Services and the Green Campus Initiative that makes 200 UCT branded bikes available for annual rental. • As part of UCT's Cricket School of Excellence holiday clinic in July, young cricketers' skills were developed. • Veteran media personality Max du Preez delivers the annual TB Davie Memorial Lecture in September. • Newly-hooded Commerce graduates take a moment to enjoy the limelight at a June graduation ceremony. • A training session at the Underdog Project in Hout Bay – a life-skills and outreach organisation for at-risk teenagers and shelter dogs supported by UCT's Knowledge Co-op. • Students from the UCT School of Dance hone their skills. The school celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2014.



Clockwise: High school students playing Metropolis – a city-based game developed by the African Centre for Cities, aimed at giving players a sense of the cumulative advantages and disadvantages people in Cape Town experience depending on where they live, and what they earn and own. • RainbowUCT marks campus' annual Pink Week with a march to show solidarity with the African LGBTI community. • UCT Hockey Club nurtures young sports talent as part of its ongoing development programme. • The School of Dance's annual showcase at the Baxter Theatre gives students the opportunity to perform on a professional stage. • Students concentrate on their final exams in the Sport Centre in November (above), and Engineering & the Built Environment students wheel their entry in the SASOL Solar Car Challenge onto Jammie Plaza (below). • Opera School students show why UCT alumni grace opera stages around the world, during the annual Vice-Chancellor's Concert in August (above), and students at Graça Machel Hall celebrate the UCT Chancellor's birthday in October (below).



Amandla EduFootball provides a safe space for youth, promotes fair play, builds resilience, and develops young leaders. Photo supplied by Amandla EduFootball.

CHILD GAUGE 2014

The only way to end the cycle of violence is to prevent it

The mainstream media in South Africa has no shortage of stories about violence perpetrated against children. These cases, extreme enough to be covered by reporters, are just the tip of the iceberg: over half of South Africa's children frequently experience some form of violence from a very early age, and our system – under-resourced and over-burdened – is tasked with responding to these incidents.

But, while the knee-jerk reaction to such horror in the media is a normal human response, and those tasked with taking on each case might see no end in sight, the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town is asking the most important question of all in their Child Gauge 2014: how can we *prevent* violence against children, rather than reacting to it?

Where are we?

While many acknowledge that levels of violence against children are unacceptably high in South Africa, a veil is drawn over the exact nature and extent of the problem. This paucity of research and data presents a major stumbling block. According to Associate Professor Shanaaz Mathews, director of the Children's Institute, "South Africa is both lacking national empirical data on the exact magnitude of the problem, and has a limited research base on the causes and effects of violence against children in the local context."

The data that is available, however, exposes the underbelly of the problem.

It is through lack of prevention that we end up with the horrifying statistics at hand, and even just a snapshot of some of them paints the fullness of the picture: a conservative estimate of 26 000 child victims were in the crime stats of 2011-2012; in 2009, 1 018 children were murdered, and 45% of these murders occurred in the context of child abuse, while incidents of sexual violence (which are known to be under-reported) amounted to nearly 22 781 in the 2013-14 crime statistics.

That is an average of 62 cases per day.

And that's the bigger picture.

In the life of an individual, different forms of violence are more prevalent at different stages. UNICEF's Patrizia Benvenuti, who co-authored a chapter with Mathews in the Child Gauge 2014, explains: "It is important to understand how violence impacts on children's psycho-social functioning at different developmental stages."

She says this perspective also "highlights how early experiences of violence may increase the risk of children becoming victims or perpetrators later in life, and how the cumulative effect of violence has negative outcomes for the child in later life".

The agenda, however, can be set with one overarching goal in mind: better surveillance systems, which would strengthen protection mechanisms.

To this end, a national study on violence against children is currently under way, and this research will provide the first national prevalence estimates by 2015.

Effective prevention: is our country ready?

According to Joan van Niekerk of Childline South Africa, "Most countries follow a response-driven approach to the prevention of child maltreatment", even though "mitigating the consequences of violence for [the] affected child is unlikely to decrease the incidence of violence against children in the population as a whole."

This is also an expensive approach. The costs of prevention programming are a fraction of the treatment costs and are estimated to result in a saving of 96 to 98%.

But the lack of prevention programming in South Africa is not because the legal frameworks are absent.

As Van Niekerk points out, "South Africa has put in place laws and policies that support the prevention of violence against children, but implementation has been slow."

She and Mokhantso Makoe of the Human Sciences Research Council say that most child protection programmes, with the exception of social grants, are implemented by NGOs in the social welfare sector; and that historically, these organisations have focused on the provision of early-intervention and tertiary-response services.

"Any shift in practice will depend on the capacity and readiness of South Africa to implement prevention programmes," they say. An international study by the World Health Organisation found that South Africa has low levels of readiness for programming of this nature, but Van Niekerk and Makoe recommend a multi-sectoral approach to implementing the National Strategic Plan; stronger surveillance systems to identify families and children at risk; broad-based prevention that changes behaviours associated with risk; and strong co-operation between government, professionals, civil society and researchers to create programming that fosters community ownership and participation.

Adopting a systems approach

Stakeholders with an interest in the well-being of children are asking the same question: Why is there a significant gap between the state's legislative and policy commitments, and the real-life experiences of children?

Despite our well-meaning laws and policies, says Cathy Chames

of Southern Hemisphere, "South Africa's children continue to experience violence in a range of settings, including the home, school, community, alternative care, and the justice system."

That said, the law itself could do with fine-tuning, say the researchers. Chames and colleague Dena Lomofsky explain that the Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Offences Act, and Child Justice Act present "a key design problem", in that these laws were developed separately, and therefore do not speak to one another – and sometimes contradict each other.

They recommend reviewing the legislation with the goal of 'harmonising' it.

Another buzzword for what is needed is 'collaboration' – across government departments (with the Department of Social Development at the helm) and across all role-players within society, including but not limited to civil society, the media, schools, and religious and traditional leaders.

This could lead to holistic programming that breaks the 'vicious cycle' wherein social workers spend more time responding to situations than delivering early intervention services. Parenting skills development, therapeutic programmes and managing family disputes are some of the areas in which money and energy could be better expended.

Also, say the authors, local data is paramount. "Programmes and services should be planned and targeted according to local needs. So the more local-level the data, the better. The international trend in child protection surveillance is to use data to understand child maltreatment at a neighbourhood level," they say.

Are we adequately resourced?

The answer to this question, in a word, is 'no'.

Adequate financial and human resources are both fundamental to the prevention of child maltreatment.

Yet, according to Lucy Jamieson of the Children's Institute, in 2013 more than two-thirds of role-players cited 'lack of material resources' as a major challenge.

To compound this, it is not possible to track or even estimate expenditure on prevention interventions because the funding is "scattered across a number of sub-programmes in the provincial budgets".

The budget for 2014-15 is less than half of a predicted 'low-cost scenario', and only 7% of a predicted 'high-cost scenario'.

Other challenges cited by Jamieson, Lorenzo Wakefield (from the Consortium on Crime and Violence Prevention) and independent researcher Megan Briede are that funding is not being prioritised for children with disabilities, and that funding for NPOs has declined steadily since 1994, and is also not appropriately allocated.

In terms of human resources, too, there is a dire shortage of skilled professionals working in prevention. For example, many early childhood development outreach workers have no formal training, while less than a third of child and youth care workers are adequately trained.

On the positive side, an illuminating role model is the Isibindi programme, which, explain the authors, "delivers services to vulnerable children in communities (mostly in remote rural areas) with high HIV and AIDS prevalence rates, unemployment and poverty, and few existing social services."



Sonke Gender Justice helps to challenge gender inequality, and promotes men's involvement as fathers. Photo supplied by Sonke Gender Justice.

It is based on a model of care that sees community-based programmes training unemployed community members in accredited, integrated child and youth care services.

But it is the exception to the rule.

The authors call for much higher investment in resources for prevention and early detection services, for NPOs to be remunerated at full cost for their services in this arena, and for the development of a far stronger workforce of professionals to carry out the necessary work.

corporal punishment by caregivers before the age of 18.

While there might be difficulties implementing a prohibition on corporal punishment in the home, many activist groups (such as NGO Sonke Gender Justice) feel it is an important stepping stone, as are effective parenting programmes.

Starting school: an increased risk of violence

As children begin their life as school learners, they are out of the home and in the wider community much more frequently.

When they venture out, they face an increased risk of violence – in particular, sexual violence, which has a lifetime impact on physical and mental health, brain functioning, life expectancy, employment and sexual health.

Lucie Cluver and Franziska Meinck of Oxford University, along with Shaheeda Omar of the Teddy Bear Clinic, advise that there are also risks of secondary trauma when "health and justice services are unable to cope with the needs of sexually abused children", and that the "attitudes of justice and court officials are crucial to reducing secondary trauma for the child".

A best-practice model in prevention of sexual abuse is evident in the Zero Tolerance Village Alliance in rural Limpopo. It has shown encouraging results by using a multi-pronged intervention that includes workshops on sexual rights, police training in victim empowerment, and the establishment of village committees, safe houses and support groups for victims.

And, he adds, "It is complicated by religious and cultural justifications. These have their roots in the deeply patriarchal and conservative attitudes held by many in South Africa."

Primary targets for intervention include vulnerable families and caregivers, and pre- and ante-natal women in particular. Home visits from well-trained community nurses, mental-health screenings for mothers during pregnancy, and a greater understanding of the role of men in childcare are vital to enhancing the capacity of caregivers. Examples of successful programmes to this end include the Philani Plus home-visiting programme, and the Perinatal Mental Health Programme run by UCT; but more are needed.

Adolescents and violence

The high prevalence of violence creates the perception that violence is normal, particularly as "hegemonic masculinity is the dominant cultural form" in South Africa, say Pinky Mahlangu and Anik Gevers of the Medical Research Council.

In the adolescent age group, the roles of victim and perpetrator are both common, and in vulnerable, poverty-stricken communities, "success and respect are often earned and defended through violent behaviour towards the more vulnerable in society", they say, adding that "this is further compounded by the failure in the criminal justice system to

convict offenders".

Yet there are signs of hope.

The Children's Institute's Ariane de Lannoy says that schools offer a particularly effective strategy for reaching large numbers of young people, and these programmes have the ability to reach beyond individuals and into the wider community of peers, parents and teachers.

The Stepping Stones programme, for example, runs a series of 13 peer-facilitated workshops to create a participatory environment for sharing and growth with positive results. 'Prepare' uses the school environment for an adolescent HIV-prevention programme, while Amandla EduFootball goes broader, as a community-based intervention for both in-school and out-of-school youth, leaders and organisations.

"Higher levels of risk are encountered as young adults move further away from home and family in search of connection with peers," explain Mahlangu and Gevers.

While the structural causes and problems remain the same, an increased degree of risk-taking behaviour creates increased exposure to violence. That risky behaviour manifests in different ways for boys and girls.

According to the researchers, "Males have been found to show externalising risk-taking behaviour such as truanting, involvement in crime and substance abuse, while girls are more likely to display internalising behaviour such as depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts."

On the other hand, interventions are easier to manage and maintain in this age group, and there are a significant number of programmes showing encouraging results.

Making it work

With the Children's Act as a roadmap for South Africa, the framework is in place to deliver a systematic, multi-sectoral approach, but the ability to shift from policy to practice requires a number of steps for effective implementation, say Mastroera Sadan and Shanaaz Mathews of the Children's Institute.

Firstly, a common understanding of prevention and "identifying existing strengths and building the resilience of children and their families through collaboration with

SOUTH AFRICA'S CHILDREN

18.6 million children in South Africa

19% have lost one or both parents

23% do not live with either parent

0.5% live in child-headed households



POVERTY AND SOCIAL GRANTS

56% live below the poverty line*

11.1 million receive the Child Support Grant

512 000 receive the Foster Child Grant

121 000 receive the Care Dependency Grant

(*Poverty line defined as R635 per person per month)



HEALTH

Under-5 mortality down to 41 deaths per 1 000 live births

Infant mortality down to 27 deaths per 1 000 live births

25% must travel far to reach a health facility



EDUCATION

Gross attendance rate of **97%**

90% of 5 to 6-year-olds attend preschool

85% of 10 to 11-year-olds have completed Grade 3

61% of 16 to 17-year-olds have completed Grade 9



HOUSING

55% of children live in urban areas

74% of children live in formal housing

19% live in overcrowded conditions

25% of under-2s live in overcrowded conditions

2 million live in backyard dwellings and shacks



WATER

6 million live in dwellings with no on-site water

78% in formal dwellings have water on-site

64% in informal dwellings have on-site water

other service providers" is important.

Secondly, what is needed is a coherent policy framework "that includes both secondary and tertiary prevention". Evidence is critically lacking across all sectors, and "it is critical that administrative data sources be streamlined and managed effectively", say Sadan and Mathews.

The report concludes that "prevention programmes should not be viewed in isolation, but rather integrated across government departments, primary healthcare and early childhood services, and into a national strategy that can make a difference in the lives of South Africa's children".



CITIES: THE NEW FRONTIER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Story by Leonie Joubert
Photo by Bruce Sutherland

When we think of iconic cities around the world, we often imagine their skylines – think New York, Paris, Shanghai, Sydney. But is this kind of urbanisation inevitable? asks Aromar Revi, director of the Bangalore-based Indian Institute for Human Settlements. Moreover, is it desirable?

“Is this kind of urbanisation inevitable?” asked Aromar Revi, pointing to a photograph of the New York skyline, with the ‘new’ World Trade Centre dating the picture decisively. “Is *this* kind of urbanisation inevitable across the world?”

A city like this was great for its time, but is it what we want for the future? This is the question posed by Revi, director of the Bangalore-based Indian Institute for Human Settlements, during his delivery of the first Africa-based talk to form part of the Kapuscinski Development Lecture series. The talk was hosted by UCT’s African Centre for Cities, and the series commemorates the work of Polish journalist and writer Ryszard Kapuscinski, who was renowned for his reportage of developing countries.

In the century between the 1950s and 2050, a shift is happening across the world, from civilisation being predominantly agrarian and rural, to one that’s predominantly urban. Urbanisation is a ‘giga-trend’, Revi says, and something which now puts cities at the epicentre of the challenges linked to climate change, population growth and environmental resource depletion. But because cities also concentrate so many development issues, they also present a unique opportunity for academics, researchers and policy-makers to change the everyday lives of ordinary people.

“And the core thing we’re talking about here, is: what is the role of cities and towns in this?”

In 1900, the global population was just 1.5 billion, 13% of whom lived in cities. The gross world product was \$2 trillion, and the urban share of that was already a significant 30%. By 1950, with the post-World War II population at 2.5 billion, the gross world production was up to \$7 trillion, and cities accounted for 45% of that economic output.

Fast forward to today: a population of 7 billion people, 70% of which are urban (although not yet in Africa).

“This is what’s significant, though. In just 60 years, gross world production has jumped from \$7 trillion to \$70 trillion.”

By 2025, the population will be up to 8 billion people, the gross world production up to \$85 trillion, and 75% of that will be generated by cities. This is why governments need to take cities seriously: because the urban economy is responsible for most of the world’s consumption, output and employment.

“Most jobs are driven by cities – that’s why cities are critical.”

Because of this concentration of pressures and challenges – such as issues linked to the economy, demographics, health, education, energy and the environment – Revi maintains that cities present a unique opportunity to tackle development meaningfully.

“And this is the touchstone of everything we do; it’s about changing the everyday lives of ordinary people.”

A tale of two cities

The remains of the ancient Indian citadel Dholavira tell the story of an urban hub that was able to adapt to environmental change.

“There was a shift in the climate, and the system crashed,” explained Revi, “but the city adapted over a period of 1 000 years. They built massive water storage systems, brick by brick, carved from rock.”

But Old Goa, in the north of India, collapsed because its inhabitants didn’t understand the environment. They sunk wells into the ground for drinking water, but also had cesspools, so the people of the city were plagued by cholera and dysentery.

“This city died in less than 200 years. In the history of civilisation, the collapse of cities has led to the collapse of cultures. But where we are going to isn’t inevitable; it’s based on the choices we make.”

Setting a sustainable development goal

“Changing the goals of the system – and the system is us – is a leverage point,” he said. “For instance, 200 years ago, some parts of the world decided that slavery was unacceptable, and the system

goals were changed. Similarly, the universal declaration of human rights re-oriented the world. We are at an interesting junction in sustainability right now, and we need to re-organise the core goals of the world, countries and institutions.”

There is a small window of opportunity in which to steer urban transformation appropriately, but this needs city-scale development goals that reflect the kinds of global goals drawn up by the United Nations in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A recent meeting of mayors from 200 of the world’s major cities, along with representatives from regional governments, academics, people’s movements and international organisations, saw them discuss the idea of drawing up an urban sustainable-development goal. In fact, without such a goal, Rio de Janeiro mayor Eduardo Paes argued, the SDGs will remain incomplete.

Revi presented the first target of such an urban SDG, which should aim to “end extreme urban poverty, expand employment and productivity, and raise living standards, especially in slums”.

The second two targets, which Revi wasn’t able to present in the talk due to time constraints, are to “ensure universal access to a well-designed, secure, and affordable

built environment and basic urban services, including housing; water, sanitation and waste management; low-carbon energy and transport; and mobile and broadband communication” and to “ensure safe air and water quality for all, and integrate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, efficient land and resource use, and climate and disaster resilience into investments and standards”.

However, a goal like this will need new governance architecture that balances inter-generational and intra-generational equity, and considers the interests of nation-states, local and regional governments, private-sector firms, and the rights of communities and citizens.

“Cities are the most complex environments we’ve ever created. We haven’t always run them properly. But they are rich, and well-resourced in terms of human resources and capacity. And they are the most significant places where change and development can happen,” he said.

The next crucial step, Revi concluded, is implementation.

Aromar Revi was speaking at the Kapuscinski Development Lecture series, delivered for the first time in Africa at UCT on 5 November 2014, and held during the Africa Centre for Cities’ *City Desired* exhibition.

CITY DIVIDED, CITY DESIRED

The story of Cape Town is often cast as a tale of two cities – a place defined by division. UCT’s African Centre for Cities mounted an exhibition looking at Cape Town’s current challenges, but also at its citizens’ needs and hopes for the future. *City Desired* profiles 10 Capetonians whose life experiences give specific insights into the fabric of the city. Six are featured here.



Mtandana owns a takeaway and restaurant in Sweet Home Farm, an informal settlement in Philippi on the Cape Flats. Her business must frequently deal with electricity outages. The need for electricity, along with the other primary municipal services – running water, proper sanitation, efficient refuse removal, installing and maintaining stormwater drains – is critical to the well-being of neighbourhoods such as Sweet Home. This is particularly true as the region ploughs forward into a climate-altered future, in which heat waves, windstorms, droughts and wintertime floods are likely to happen more often, and more aggressively.



Twin brothers Hasan and Husain Essop grew up in Rylands. Their father, Yunus Essop, was forcibly relocated in the 1970s from District Six, a racially mixed suburb in the city’s heart, to Rylands. District Six had been declared a whites-only area in 1966; house demolitions followed shortly after. About 60 000 people were displaced eventually.



The story of food and our city is a complex one. One could begin to explore it on the Cape Flats, where emerging farmers like Kieyaam Rykklief try to coax and cajole growth out of the reluctant soil, so the city can put broccoli and cauliflower and salad leaves on its table.



Parker is a psychiatrist at Lentegeur Hospital in Mitchells Plain.



Goven is an architect and urban planner who grew up in Springs and studied architecture at Wits and UCT before co-founding ARG Design, a Cape Town-based company specialising in urban design, architecture, environmental management and landscape architecture.



Barends is not your typical gangster. After serving his first sentence for robbery at the age of 16 and spending the next 18 years in and out of over half a dozen Western Cape prisons, he has been hailed as one of the best conflict mediators on the Cape Flats. He works for CeaseFire, a model imported to Hanover Park from the gang-ridden streets of Chicago.

“As a young woman, especially being black in a more white environment, it was very difficult. People often assumed I was either the secretary or the junior, even though I was the principal in the practice.”

“With the young people who are starting on this road, I can give tips and I can lead, but they have to walk it on their own.”

“If you do things only for other people, self-sacrifice, it’s the surest road to bitterness and burn-out. You need to do it for yourself; but it’s a conception of the self that is well beyond Western individualism.”



A CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACADEMIA

Story by Yusuf Omar

Academic freedom holds a complex and contradictory place in post-apartheid South Africa; in that though the concept is acknowledged in the Constitution, this is not a guarantor of academic freedom in practice, says UCT's Professor John Higgins.

Higgins, a professor of English, was speaking at a seminar on 5 November, organised by UCT's Department of English and dedicated to exploring the relationship between academic freedom and the humanities as a discipline.

Higgins was joined on the panel by Professor Nithaya Chetty, a physicist from the University of Pretoria. Much of the content of the two's arguments stemmed from their recently published books – Higgins' *Academic Freedom in a Democratic South Africa*, and Chetty's *Faculty and Freedom: The struggle for the soul of the University of KwaZulu-Natal* (co-authored with Christopher Merret).

Constitutionally guaranteed?

While South Africa is rather uniquely placed in having the right to academic freedom enshrined in its Constitution – the USA, for example, doesn't go this far – the idea of academic freedom is officially severed from the location and condition of its practice: universities and institutions of higher learning.

This severing renders the right to academic freedom an individual right, "akin to artistic freedom of expression in public life in general", argued Higgins. While apartheid's legacy and the particularities of the negotiated settlement are the chief reasons for this anomaly, Higgins remarked that this means people have not, in practice, been able to turn to the Constitution for support on matters of academic freedom at universities.

In defence of curiosity-driven enquiry

"One of the constraints that academic freedom as a situated practice faces is constraints to funding and research support," said Higgins. "If, for example,

the research practices essential to academic freedom are only possible in certain institutions, or in certain disciplines, or in certain areas of certain disciplines, then academic freedom is correspondingly weakened ... the material and institutional resources for the practice and exercise of academic freedom are absolutely crucial, yet fall out of the picture once it is regarded as a purely individual right, akin to freedom of expression."

Globally, research and enquiry in the humanities are "massively" sidelined when it comes to funding, because generally speaking, they are not seen as yielding the same visible results as 'applied research'.

The lack of support and funding for research dangerously undermines the real function of university education and its social functions, he argued, particularly if the bond between teaching and research is regarded as a defining feature of what it means for higher education to be higher.

In this way, many of the current policies supporting research – which tend to place teaching and research in opposition to one another – work to undermine academic freedom.

In addition, Higgins drew attention to President Jacob Zuma's recent statements that "students must emerge from our universities as patriotic citizens willing to participate both in the conceptualisation and the implementation of our progressive programmes to transform society".

Here he cautioned that it was absolutely crucial to understand the use of the pronoun 'our' in this formulation: was its force an inclusive one, or an exclusive one? Did 'patriotic' here mean following the ANC's lead, or being in a position to offer evidence- and theory-based criticisms of government policy? Minister Naledi Pandor's recent pronouncements

that higher education should not encourage people to 'speak truth to power' strongly suggest the exclusive reading.

What's a university education for?

"The enabling of critical thought for the development of people: citizens who are equipped to speak truth to power, whatever its complexion." This is what Chetty sees as the fundamental purpose of the university.

"Its training of accountants, lawyers, physicists, pharmacists and a host of other specialists is a secondary matter. The best graduates are able to apply reasoning and judgement to contemporary problems and interrogate the way power is exercised."

This was crucial in the light of South Africa's history of intellectual conformism, inherited from colonialism and apartheid, Chetty said.

"The university belongs to all its members including dissidents, and ceases to exist should these basic definitions of the academic process be abandoned," he added.

Universities are national assets deserving of careful custodianship. When tied to specific political agendas, by definition they restrict free thought and debate, Chetty argued.

Academic freedom's greatest threat

There are challenges to academic freedom from policy-makers, too.

"Legislation has enhanced the power of councils and effectively diminished those of senates, which constitutes a threat to university autonomy."

Authority had been transferred away "from the world of reason" to people "with a multiplicity of extraneous agendas, as we experienced at UKZN," Chetty contended.

The Protection of Information Bill, popularly known as the Secrecy Bill, also poses a threat to academic freedom.

He argued: "The greatest concern is the ... influence of a global trend of managerialism, imported from the commercial world. It has the capacity to turn universities into academic factories dominated by contracted vice-chancellors with short-term careerist or ideological agendas who believe they are the equivalent of CEOs, backed by a phalanx of executive managers and a hierarchy of lesser enforcers."

Managerialism has also led to enormous salary disparities – to the benefit of those "giving the orders", added Chetty.

This results in a mindset of power and obedience, line management, and other phenomena "all foreign to a real university".

Universities have become places of bureaucracy, assessed by measured outputs, where students are customers and staff are deployable human resources, Chetty lamented.

This also has implications for transformation; which, he said, is currently being driven along narrow, racist lines.

Call for a new civil rights movement

Chetty called for a new civil rights movement for universities "that seeks to re-establish the foundations of our institutions of higher learning in the democratic South Africa. This discourse should be led by academics."

For this to happen, South Africa's academics need to be at the forefront, leading society and addressing its challenges.

"We need to return to some very basic principles that govern transformation. Our first obligation at universities is to produce quality research and quality, thinking graduates in society, in the context of transformation."

Transformation at our universities also means that we need to affirm individuals who are underrepresented in our university system, and create an enabling environment for their success, argued Chetty.

"This is a deep-seated moral requirement, given our divided history."

Chetty also called for "the end of the professional university manager".

"We need to retrain our senior university managers back to the academic trenches."

It's a system failure

Higgins returned to the purpose of higher education.

"You have to think about what higher education is for, as a totality. If you start weighing off one discipline against another, it gets very complicated. Instead, it's best to broaden your perspective about what higher education is in the current dispensation."

"It does produce – no matter the particular discipline you're involved in – an improved capacity for critical reflection."

Speaking of totalities, Higgins emphasised that higher education was but one aspect of the education system. The near-dysfunctional primary-school system, for example, was not supporting academic freedom, he said.

The seminar, held on 5 November 2014, was part of the Department of English's *Africa, Reading, Humanities* discussion series that was launched in February this year, and brings scholars together a few times a month to debate key issues of humanities research in Africa.

CLASSIFIEDS

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Lecturer: Finance, Department of Finance and Tax, Faculty of Commerce, Closing date: 1 December 2014

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THE SECRET LIFE OF OBJECTS

Essay and photos by Stephen Inggs
Professor, Michaelis School of Fine Art

As an artist, Prof Stephen Inggs has a lifelong relationship with objects and transforming them imaginatively into images, culminating in the recent retrospective *Index* marking his professorial inauguration at UCT. *Object Relations* is his latest project – a collection of images and essays in which UCT staff trace the power of objects that connect them to ideas, to people and to their pasts. This is his essay, *Built to Last*, one of 21 essays in the book, *Object Relations*.

There's something almost mechanical about my desire for the search. Mechanical, because it's too regular to be instinctual; a given at any destination that I've almost begun to pre-empt to the second. More than an urge, a kind of obligation. To seek out local flea markets and junk shops and look for interesting objects among the bric-a-brac.

Finding them is never a given. It takes considerable patience and a good eye to spot a treasure. In addition to being attracted to the functional beauty and simplicity of well-made objects, I have a particular fascination for tools that measure. My late father, a chemical engineer who passed this interest on to me, was fond of quoting the famous physicist and engineer Lord Kelvin's dictum: "To measure is to know."

Consequently, one of my collecting passions is vintage mechanical alarm clocks and timers. As symbols of industrial engineering their physical form and materiality can be striking: pressed steel casings, aluminium, metal and glass parts, phosphorescent numerals and finely crafted hands. It seems to me that some cultural characteristics of the country where they were made are embedded in their appearance – whether it is the shape, materials or style of typography, revealing aspects of history and technology. For example, some Russian alarm clocks made during the 1960s such as the Slava resemble

sputnik spacecraft, giving expression to the space race that heated up during the Cold War era.

With names like Zobo (American), Smiths (English), Japy (French), Veglia (Italian), Junghans (German), Geruischloos (Dutch) and Vega (Russian), the clocks evocatively reveal their global origins. One cannot help but imagine the countless stories these objects could tell – over whom they stood watch, what they witnessed, where they travelled or how they were treated. Doubtless some owners forgot to wind the mechanism or set the alarm, and arrived late for work, or missed appointments that may have altered the course of their lives.

Artists have long been fascinated with clocks and time. Possibly one of the most astonishing contemporary works of art is Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), a visual tour de force of fragments sampled from movies and television series in a 24-hour looped montage. The artwork looks at a clock in action demarcating time, minute by minute, in perfect synchronisation with real time. Taking three years to edit and produce from thousands of clips, *The Clock* is a coherent reference to every minute of the day, creating a captivating and extraordinary filmic evolution of time. Well worth the time to watch.

In a Darwinian sense, alarm clocks are a like a species sharing similarities, but each differing in appearance, shape and size, and

adapting to local conditions through a process of natural selection and industrial mutation. Through an evolutionary twist of fate, mechanical alarm clocks are now a dying breed, becoming extinct and giving way, first to batteries and electricity, and now to the digital age. Today, digital wristwatches and mobile phones perform the alarm function with a host of features, including variable musical sounds, pitches and volumes while simultaneously downloading email, receiving messages and keeping track of one's schedule. It's an indisputable fact that these digital

devices do a better job of keeping track of time; but there is something unique and special about mechanical alarm clocks. The fact that they need to be wound instead of charged, that they are dedicated to a single, specific function, and that they stand sentry in a designated place on bedside tables makes them not only distinctive, but also authentic objects.

Mechanical alarm clocks operate as a form of memento mori, drawing attention to our mortality by counting time and displaying the brevity of life. And yet they are strangely human-like themselves, having names and

personalities that run fast or slow, requiring attention, checking and setting, with parts named faces, hands and legs.

As we sleep, these sturdy mechanical objects tick rhythmically, with a steady, beating heart, breaking up time. Then, as instructed, they perform on cue, sounding out a piercing signal to make sure we wake up and get on with our day.

Object Relations is available at independent booksellers around Cape Town.



To read other essays in Stephen Inggs' *Object Relations* collection – about Virginia MacKenny contemplating the significance of a glass of water, Mark Solms' last letter from his father, Andy Buffler's plastic scintillator (which glows when exposed to radiation), what a tennis racket means to Hedley Twidle, or Nick Shepherd encountering the box in which Sarah Baartman's remains were repatriated – head to the online edition of *Monday Monthly* on the UCT website.