

Into battle with robots • Is the Bibi-Barack honeymoon over?

# The Jerusalem Report®

OCTOBER 21, 2013

COVERING ISRAEL, THE MIDDLE EAST & THE JEWISH WORLD

# WATER WATER EVERYWHERE

Israel has become a world leader  
in water technologies and emerged  
from crisis to independence

NY & North NJ \$4.00  
Elsewhere in US \$5.50  
Canada C\$5.95  
UK £3.50



9 771885 888001

16/10/2013

המחיר באילת

21.00 ש"ח

המחיר באילת 17.80 ש"ח



## Reading the land

Once Jerusalem's chief architect, Stan Field is enjoying success with his sustainable designs both in his native South Africa and his adopted California

Renee Ghert-Zand  
Palo Alto

**STAN FIELD** looks back on his long career in architecture and sees a single line extending from one end of the world to another. This line has followed the natural landscapes of three countries on three different continents, all of which played home to Field at one point in his life. It has traversed his native South Africa's vast wilderness, Israel's ancient wadis and terraced hills, and, in the last two decades, Northern California's lush vineyards and giant Redwood forests.

All architects know how to read blueprints and plans, but Field has a unique ability to read the land. The natural terrain, the "groundscape" as he calls it, in-

spires his designs. Field doesn't impose buildings on a piece of land. Instead, spends a long time getting to know the land, and he allows it to inform him what kind of structure belongs there.

"I design architecture that belongs to the place and the time," he says. "We're dealing with a holistic approach. Sustainability is at the heart of it. Everything is connected... Climate and comfort, energy, water, air, wind and geology—these things are the forces that shape architecture and environment. I'm really talking environments rather than specific buildings or structures."

Field always takes the same approach

no matter what the scale or location. It could be a private home on the African veld, an urban planning scheme to unite East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem following the Six Day War, or a community center in a poor South African township. It could also be a posh winery north of San Francisco, an automobile factory in Hawaii, or a new synagogue building he is currently designing for a Conservative congregation situated just three miles from his office in Palo Alto, in the heart of California's Silicon Valley.

On a sunny August morning, Field hosts *The Jerusalem Report* in his office on the mezzanine floor of a building that also houses the cheerfully decorated headquarters of a

children's book publishing company. He flips through the pages of personal sketchbooks and architecture books with his designs dating back to the early 1980s, when he was chief architect of Jerusalem. Many of the images depict the surrounding terrain, and, amazingly, the structures in them do appear as though they have been almost pulled out of the ground.

It is clear from Field's passionate manner that he has no intention of slowing down. However, at age 69, he seems to be pausing to take stock of what he has accomplished. His retrospection might have something to do with his selection as the 2012 Sophia Gray Laureate, an annual honor bestowed in recog-

The Karoo Wilderness Center in Karoo, South Africa, produces its own energy and harvests its own water

nition of a South African architect's contributions to society.

"It's the South African version of the Pritzker," says Field, referring to the annual Pritzker Architecture Prize, considered the Nobel Prize of architecture.

It might also be related to the fact that several years ago, he took on a full partner for the first time ever. That partner is his 37-year-old son, Jess, who, with his cutting edge technical



## Architecture

and digital skills, is positioning Field Architecture for the future, while keeping it firmly rooted in his father's unique vision.

"By working together, we have extended the generational dimension," Field says. "I have a foot in each generation now. I can see back-

### AN ARCHITECT NEEDS TO BUILD. TOO MANY OF STAN'S VISIONS END UP IN BOOKS

ward and I can see forward because Jess is my partner.

"He and I can draw on the same piece of sketch paper with the same pencil," Field Senior adds.

He speaks with no exaggeration, save for the fact that his son is the one who draws in pencil, while Field usually prefers to use a pen.

"I'm more intuitive. Jess, he has the logic. He has a left brain and a right brain. I think I've just got a right brain," Field suggests.

This powerful yin-yang dynamic is not lost on clients.

"Stan is the seasoned master architect. He has the ability to read the land and to understand what the land wants in relation to our vision. Jess is his prodigy son who can bring it to life. He has the ability to take concepts and create renderings of art," says David Levy of the design Field Architecture has put forward for Mayacamas Ranch, a group retreat center in Calistoga, California.

Jess, who manages to exude intensity and calmness at the same time, remembers sitting on his father's lap and learning to read architectural plans that his father brought home and unfurled on the kitchen table. From very early on, he wanted to follow his father into architecture. Jess obviously did end up an architect, but he didn't take the direct route.

This has a lot to do with his father's decision to move the family (Field and his wife, Carol, also have two daughters) from Johannesburg to Jerusalem to Palo Alto during the first 14 years of Jess's life. This left him unsure of where he belonged. His undergraduate studies in classical drawing and physiology were a first step, but they did not end up directly leading him to an architectural firm. Instead, Jess took a year and a half off to study martial arts

in Japan (he received his black belt in Karate there), and to travel Africa overland all the way from Nairobi to Cape Town. Soon thereafter, he followed up those adventures with a two-year stint in the Israel Defense Forces at the height of the second intifada.

"I have always felt like an immigrant. I feel hugely connected to South Africa. We visited South Africa every year and I grew up as a South African in Israel, not as a real Israeli. Still, I felt compelled to go back to Israel to explore my Jewish identity," Jess explains. "I had to find my place."

IT EVENTUALLY became clear to Jess that his place was in California, and he decided to leave Israel after his discharge from the military. Committing to the career he was drawn to as a boy, he pursued a Masters of Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley, where he graduated with honors, and won the Eisner Prize for the highest creative achievement.

Stan Field received his Masters in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1968, where he studied under Louis Kahn, one of the great 20th century masters. It's im-

possible not to notice, as one surveys Field's office, that the frame displaying his diploma also includes a photo of Kahn in profile. If one looks closely, one sees that behind and off to the side of Kahn, who appears in sharp focus in the foreground, is a slightly blurry young Field gazing attentively at his men-

### JERUSALEM HAS A DNA, AND IT NEEDS TO BE FOLLOWED. OTHERWISE, IT'S CHAOS

tor. (Though older and greyer now, Field still sports the same long, shaggy haircut and mutant chop sideburns—apparently a vestige of his counterculture days.)

"It [studying under Kahn] was incredible," Field says. "It changed my whole life. He was a profound thinker and great teacher. In fact, I almost believed that he designed architecture in order to teach. It was as if he used his build-ings to portray and to communicate his ideas about architecture."

Although Field was deeply affected by Kahn, there was one fundamental way in which the student differed from the master.

"This was during the '60s, a very tumultuous time in the country, in the world... Students were burning down schools of architecture... Yet, Louis Kahn was talking about order," Field recalls, "that order exists and that architecture is the uncovering of this latent order."

The student was troubled by the professor's approach, as there was total disorder all around. "I started thinking of a more dynamic order. Architecture doesn't exist in a vacuum... It has a social-political dimension," Field continues. "It's one of the most public things you can do. As a result, I started thinking more in terms of the times and situation and started to look to that for inspiration."

The times and the situation played a huge role in Field's development as a young architect after he left Penn. Returning to South Africa, he designed around a dozen houses, as well as an urban development plan for Sandton, an upscale section of Johannesburg. The Sandton plan involved a "spine," a reflection of Field's reading of the land's skeletal structure, so to speak—a concept that would reappear in several of his later designs in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

"That was the Apartheid era. I was young,

but I was aware that something was deeply wrong. We protested and did whatever we could, but eventually it was hopeless," Field says. "I was caught between this terrible government and a black uprising that didn't want any white help. I was this in-between person who became completely irrelevant."

So, Field moved his family to Jerusalem in 1978, spurred on by his Zionist upbringing in Cape Town and the post-1967 burst of building energy in the Israeli capital. He started off working for noted landscape architect Shlomo Aronson, a natural move given the importance Field gives to getting to know the land.

By 1979, Field was appointed chief architect of the City of Jerusalem, a position he held until 1984. In this role, he worked for former mayor Teddy Kollek, but beneath the city's chief engineer—a reality that got in the way of some of his plans coming to fruition.

Field's main focus while chief architect was The Seam Urban Design Master Plan. "I was

The Ubuntu Community & Health Center, opened in 2007 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, has received international accolades





## Architecture

charged with stitching the wound in the city together," he says metaphorically.

His idea was to use the capillary nature of the narrow streets and alleyways running east to west to allow for a connection across the no-man's-land. He even conceived, after realizing that the stone used for building within the Old City must have come from the Seam, of creating a park by quarrying building stone from the area.

"However, there were forces at work," Field laments.

His plans for an east-west connection were stymied by road engineers building Route 1, which runs north-south along the Seam, making for a quick commute for residents of the city's northern suburbs into the city center.

Still, many of the things Field envisioned in his scheme did eventually come to pass, and he is happy to see them when he returns on frequent visits to Israel (one of his daughters lives in Eilat).

Asked if there are any hard and fast rules about architecture in the Holy City, Field offers, "Jerusalem has a DNA, and it needs to be followed. Otherwise, it's chaos."

He warns that Jerusalem is a whole, and that it is not about its parts. It also must be built on a human scale. "The Arabs build into the slopes, in scale with the land," he points out.

"It is a huge mistake to build on top of hills. I understand the Jewish inclination to build fortifications, but it is a mistake. It breaks the silhouette of the land and exposes the structure to the sun and the wind," he says in a not-so-veiled criticism of some of the capital's recent building projects.

**ALTHOUGH FIELD** departed for California in 1990, he has left a visible imprint on Jerusalem and its suburbs, especially through work done in private practice, beginning in 1985. His Mount Zion Spiritual Complex was never constructed, but he did leave behind a synagogue in Tzameret Habira, as well as one in Ramot (Jess's bar mitzvah was the first celebrated in the building). He designed several private residences, including a stunning eight-apartment complex in Abu Tor at the corner of Ein Rogel and Assaf Streets. Working with Moshe Safdie, Field had a significant hand in designing the plans for the Mamilla development in Jerusalem and the new city of Modi'in.

Fast forward 23 years, and Field, a lifelong recreational surfer, is riding a wave of international accolades for Field Architecture's

## I UNDERSTAND THE JEWISH INCLINATION TO BUILD FORTIFICATIONS, BUT IT IS A MISTAKE

design for the Ubuntu Community & Health Center, opened in 2007, in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Located in a poor black township, it has gained the attention of the Clinton Global Initiative for its inspired design, which has transformed the lives of local residents.

The firm is also enjoying attention for its Karoo Wilderness Center in Karoo, South Africa, which is now in progress. Not only is the structure deeply connected to the landscape, but it is also an outstanding model of sustainability, generating its own energy, harvesting its own water, processing its own waste, and providing thermal comfort using no municipal water or power.

Most recently, the Fields have shifted their focus closer to home, working on designs for two Palo Alto Jewish institutions. Having designed the *mikveh* (ritual bath) for Habad of Greater South Bay over a decade ago, the architects will soon design a new Habad Center in Palo Alto.

Rabbi Yosef Levin is looking forward to once again working with Stan Field. "He builds from the inside out. He knows how to make the building speak for Habad."

Field is particularly excited about embarking now on the final design phase for a new synagogue building for Congregation Kol Emeth in Palo Alto. Field Architecture has envisioned a completely new complex of buildings on the same site where the current synagogue has stood since 1965.

According to Kol Emeth's senior rabbi, David Booth, the congregation hired the Fields after an exhaustive selection process that included proposals from some 20 firms. "He's operating on a level unlike others," the rabbi says of Stan Field, who happens to be a congregation member.

"I came in to it proposing not a design, but a vision," Field explains. Kol Emeth's exceptionally strong connection to Israel (Booth says more than 60 percent of the congregation has either personally lived or has family in Israel, or has other close ties to the Jewish state) inspired Field to meld "the here and now of Silicon Valley with the legendary place that is the Land of Israel."

To do this, he started not even with a vision, but with a material — sand. "It's the

COURTESY FIELD ARCHITECTURE



Father and son team: Jess and Stan Field

sands washed by time, it's a return to the beginnings of where we became a people in the desert," he says.

The Fields are proposing sanctuary walls that hint at the passage of time, appearing to be either rising up from the ground, or to be eroding down into it. They would be built using rammed earth, an ancient, sustainable method that gives a visual impression of layered sand.

This is yet another example of how Field spends a great deal of time and effort in understanding the opportunities of each project. "As a result, Stan hasn't built as much as he could have," says Etienne Louw, a fellow South African architect now based in Sacramento, California. "He's asked me for advice from a management perspective, but he hasn't necessarily been ready to change his style."

"Stan, by his own admission, has not been as financially successful as he could have been. However, Jess has a greater appreciation for the realistic aspects of the business," Louw notes.

Jess may be setting up business infrastructure and systems, and rationalizing Stan's hand-drawn ideas into 3-D building information modeling, but he's still learning from his father. "Stan has taught me how to listen to clients and to interpret. That's not something easily taught in a classroom. It's something I learn by watching him work with people," the son says.

"It's uncommon for fathers and sons to work in such harmony, so there is a great opportunity for continuity," offers Louw.

"An architect needs to build," says Jess. "Too many of Stan's visions end up in books. I want more of them to come to be."