

Asset

Issue 142 | November 2025

Ntsika Architects Chief Architect of Parliament



Nadia Tromp: Founder of Ntsika Architects

Cover Story:
NTSIKA
ARCHITECTS



READ TIME: 10min

Ntsika Architects unlocks transparency and inclusion at Parliament

Interviewed by Tony Korsten | Written by Ana Lorton

When **Nadia Tromp** left Cape Town for Johannesburg she set out to make her mark in a big architectural practice doing big projects. Her ambitions morphed into work focused on social justice and human rights. Now, more than twenty years later, that bold move and the evolution of her practice and ideals sees her, as CEO of Ntsika Architects, at the helm of possibly the most significant design currently underway – South Africa's Parliament.

Nadia Tromp: Founder of Ntsika Architects

Cover Story:
NTSIKA
ARCHITECTS

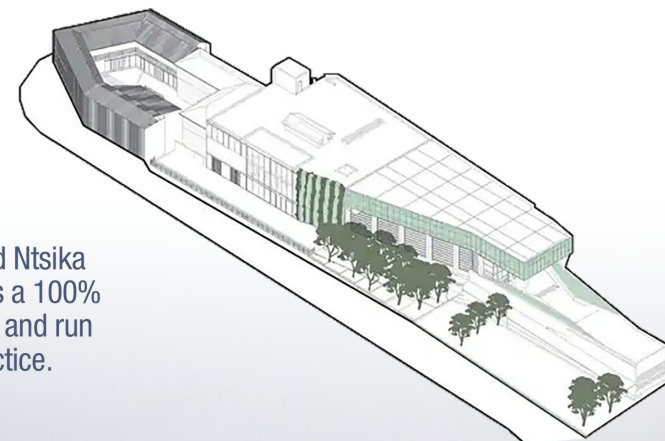
“I’ve known the Parliament building since I was a child,” says Nadia, “and have an intimate understanding of what it represents, and what it should represent. This was an exclusionary space steeped in colonial and apartheid practice, and a site of protest for most of its existence. But it’s also the place where the first democratic government sat. As architects we felt a responsibility to make the design outcome more true to our constitution, reflecting transparency and inclusion.”

Nadia has won international and local recognition for her work, in the process proving herself a skilled businesswoman with a strong entrepreneurial spirit. In 2008 she founded Ntsika (‘pillar of strength’) as a 100% black female-owned and run architectural practice.

A commitment to social and spatial justice

Most recently, Ntsika was honoured with a SCAPE Award, which celebrates exceptional architectural and design work. The award was made for its upgrade design of the Westbury Transformation Development Centre in Johannesburg, chosen as the Flagship Project of the Decade. The newly designed building has been described as a “breath-taking and inspiring multipurpose centre which will provide opportunities for social interaction and activity for both the young and the aged in Westbury and surrounding neighbourhoods.” It speaks directly to Ntsika’s vision and commitment to social impact.

In 2008 she founded Ntsika (‘pillar of strength’) as a 100% black female-owned and run architectural practice.



Artist's impression of the Westbury Transformation Development Centre

Cover Story:
NTSIKA
ARCHITECTS



Westbury Clinic in Johannesburg



Cover Story: NTSIKA ARCHITECTS

This focus is not incidental, with Nadia hailing from Ocean View, a township outside of Cape Town that still suffers from historical neglect and many social ills. “My story, our story, is one of displacement and fractured communities, but also resilience. An important consideration for

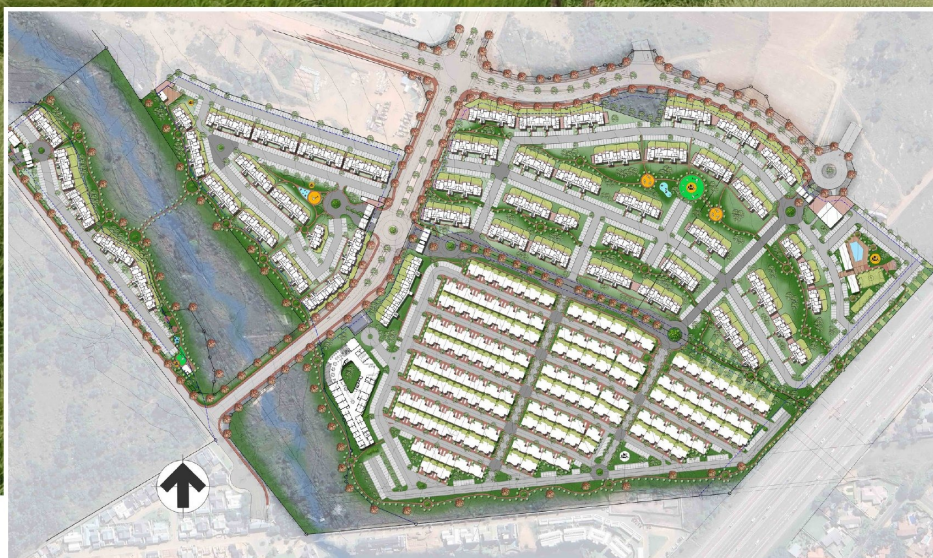
us as architects must be to help create spaces that communities truly embrace as their own and which foster cohesion,” she says.

With her award-winning civic, commercial and residential work helping to shape many landscapes, from Johannesburg to

Mozambique and the Middle East, it now seems appropriate that Ntsika has been chosen to spearhead the design of Parliament.

“Much of our focus as a practice is on social and spatial justice,” she tells **Asset**, “and looking at projects through this lens, has created the opportunity to produce

architecture that pushes boundaries, that is innovative and challenges the status quo.” This bold approach is clear in the resultant design of the Parliament National Assembly. Using the key pillars of the constitution of South Africa as her inspiration for the design, the ideals of freedom, equality and equity are made concrete in physical form.



In 2022, following in-depth discussions about South Africa's housing shortage with longtime friend and colleague **Jean-Paul Zietsman**, Nadia co-founded HUB South Africa. Rooted in the strong foundation of HUB Architects' extensive experience in sectional title residential developments, the new venture represented a natural evolution of Nadia's commitment to shaping the future of urban living. Guided by her belief in collaboration and innovation, Nadia joined forces with a partner equally dedicated to addressing the country's housing challenges and creating lasting impact through thoughtful, people-centred design.

HUB SA designed Parks on View – seen here – for Parks Properties in Pretoria. The development received a 2025 PIA Awards for Architecture commendation in the category ‘Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing’.

We had developed a clinic prototype for the City of Joburg a few years earlier and thought a great deal about how we could create clinic spaces where the spread of airborne diseases would be controlled.

Esselen Clinic in Hillbrow

Sensitivity of approach

In pushing the boundaries in terms of architecture, Nadia says she and her team scrutinise what a project could represent for a larger urban community and how it could invite a broader public response. "There's a sensitivity among many practices towards the political and historical contexts of spaces which communities inhabit or make use of. We

certainly always take this into account, whether it's a project the size of Parliament or a smaller civic amenity."

The Esselen Clinic in Hillbrow, as an essential civic amenity, is just one of a number which Ntsika has worked on. The building in Hillbrow started life as a maternity clinic, originally designed by German architect **Wilhelm Pabst** who fled Nazi Germany in 1935. "It's an interesting

building featuring multiple curves which Pabst likened to the curves of a pregnant woman," Nadia smiles.

"We had developed a clinic prototype for the City of Joburg a few years earlier and thought a great deal about how we could create clinic spaces where the spread of airborne diseases would be controlled. The introduction of a courtyard into the clinic, as a mechanism to control the spread

of airborne disease, became an integral design element. As a considered response, we decided to create multiple courtyards in the Hillbrow space which could be used as outdoor waiting areas, and help to lower the rate of spread of communicable diseases. These open spaces have proved extremely successful."

Ntsika has worked extensively with the City of Johannesburg on urban environment



The Parliament buildings before the fire. Photographed in 2019.

upgrades. These have included the upgrade of Main Street East as well as Gandhi Square, with Ntsika contributing both design and urban frameworks. Rea Vaya stations were integrated into these spaces so Ntsika's involvement on the design of a number of stations followed naturally.

While Johannesburg is Ntsika's main 'playground', the practice has also worked in other parts of Africa and the Middle East, and is currently working on a range of leisure projects in the Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal.

"Projects like these take us outdoors into nature and allow us to be creative in a very different sector, which is wonderfully inspiring!"

The redesign of Parliament's National Assembly

It's the Parliament project that is understandably the primary focus for Ntsika. "I knew about as much as any ordinary South African about the space at the outset but now my knowledge of it is so much deeper. Since our appointment more than a year

ago I don't think there's a day or night I haven't been drawing and consulting on it. I dream about it," says Nadia.

Ntsika's brief is the redesign of Parliament's National Assembly which was left unusable after a fire three years ago. It has been a lengthy and complex project with Ntsika onboarded to design the National Assembly chamber while Osmond Lange Architects was assigned the Old Assembly chamber. Their close collaboration is supported by **Mike Scurr** of heritage

architects Rennie Scurr and Adendorff. Nadia reports that Parliament is currently an active site, with Raubex, as the building contractors, pushing to complete work within the 20-month contract.

"The decision to demolish the National Assembly chamber area entirely was taken early in the project, with the structure in the centre of the building completely destroyed. As the seat of Parliament it's the main focus of the building. However, although it sits within

Cover Story:
NTSIKA
ARCHITECTS

a heritage precinct, this was the most recent addition to the site, only having been built in 1985. The demolition of the post-tensioned beams above the old chamber, supporting the upper floors, was complex and required precise execution to prevent structural failure of the entire building."

Ntsika's design was driven by a desire to make transparency and inclusion an integral part of the new Parliament building. One of the ways the design achieved this was

to move the National Assembly chamber to the second floor. This opened up the ground and first floors to be more accessible public spaces.

Nadia is clearly thrilled with the way their thinking has played out. "We wanted these areas to be places where the history of our country could be told, and which school and tour groups as well as members of the general public could visit. We created a blend of heritage and 21st century elements which

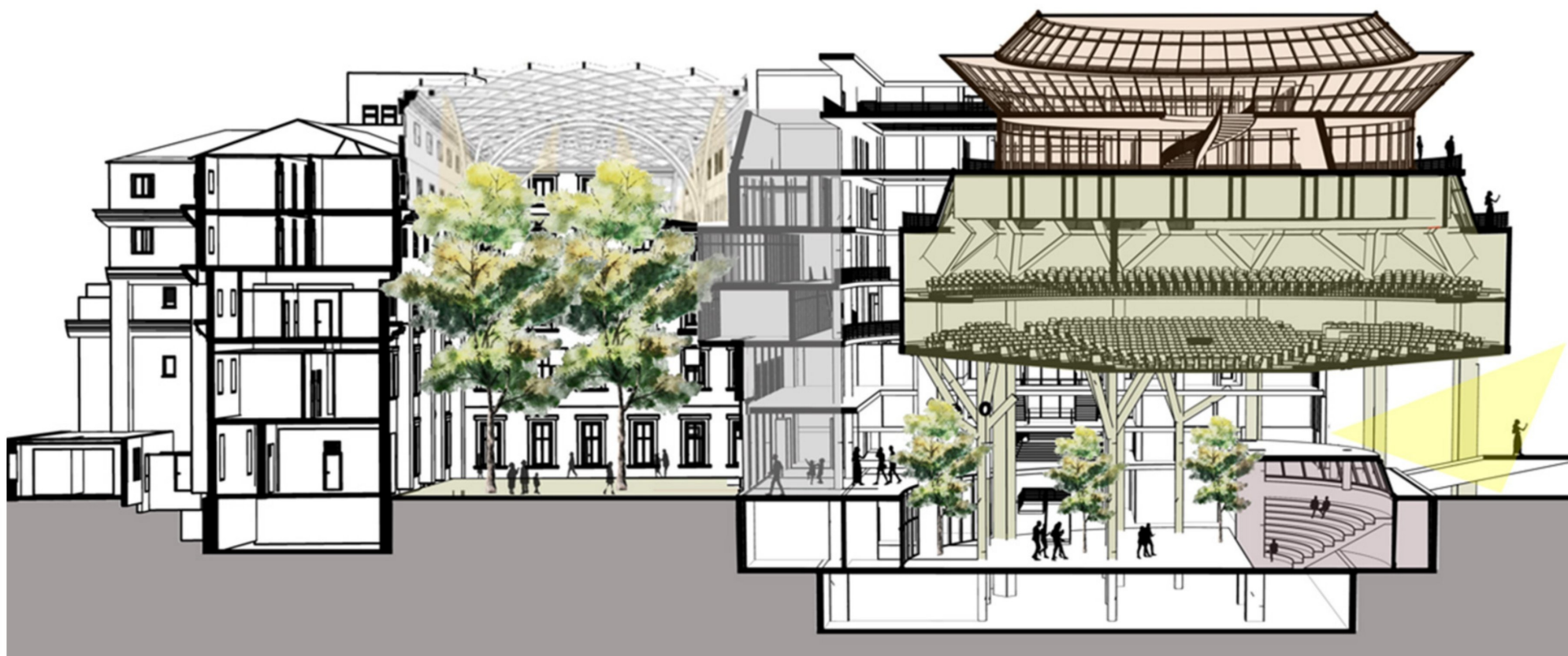
Ntsika's design was driven by a desire to make transparency and inclusion an integral part of the new Parliament building.

has given the space an entirely new look and accessibility. Importantly, our starting point was not about style. It was about thinking around how we could make the space function well while enabling the unfolding of different opportunities," she explains.

In collaboration with Osmond Lange, they have created an entrance to Parliament which leads visitors "through the old to get to the new" as Nadia describes it. There is a fascinating reveal of history before the

visitor enters a new space which she views as infused with optimism about the future of South Africa. "My hope is that people will use the space and engage with it with an optimistic view of the future. We've created a wonderful opportunity for both agency and voice, and for people to be more connected to the daily workings of Parliament."

Security and fire protection have been a critical focus of the restoration and rebuild





My hope is that people will use the space and engage with it with an optimistic view of the future.

work, even down to the selection of new fire-resistant chairs for the rebuilt Assemblies. Sustainability consultancy Solid Green has been on hand to guide a holistic overview of sustainability and ensure controls are in place, with solar power and rainwater collection high on the agenda. The consultancy has also provided

valuable insights through performance modelling of the design, which has informed the articulation of the façades by Nadia and her team. The main façade faces the nearly 450-year-old Company Gardens.

Nadia shares that, in addition to designing the façade's aluminium fins to address thermal

comfort and shading requirements, the team also used their articulation to promote and encourage engagement with passers-by.

"The public has a view into the building, which supports our belief in transparency. At the same time those

inside the building see out and feel themselves grounded in the country they have been elected to serve when they see Table Mountain and the city beyond." It's an inspiring insight made tangible, something which is a hallmark of Nadia's sensitive and inspired approach to design.

A future-facing vision

Ntsika's architectural work across a range of social and civic projects aligns with Nadia's impassioned support of the profession, particularly in a South African context. "I speak to many young South Africans who want to study architecture, and I have contact with others who join our mentorship and bursary programmes, which we've been running for ten years. I advise them not to think about leaving to seek the bright lights of overseas cities, but to consider making a difference here."

She believes that there is great value in practising as an architect in a country like South Africa, where you can have a vision and you can see it built. "Many colleagues abroad never have the opportunity to build the work they design."



Entsika Consulting Services in Midrand



Cover Story:
NTSIKA
ARCHITECTS

We also need to be bold and ambitious and willing to fight for our shared vision of what tomorrow holds.



Orchards Clinic in Johannesburg

In many cases, and very evidently in the case of Ntsika, South African designers are inherently sensitive to South Africa's past and the ambitions for the future.

Ntsika Architects has shown the way across multiple sectors and civic projects, and none more relevant than its current work on the Parliament of South Africa. The focus on work which seeks social and spatial justice for communities and

end-users has been consistent under the quietly passionate and committed leadership of Nadia.

"In some ways the devastation of Parliament is symbolic of our journey as a country. We must never forget our past but we also need to be bold and ambitious and willing to fight for our shared vision of what tomorrow holds." 

Nadia with some of the members of her team at the SCAPE Awards

