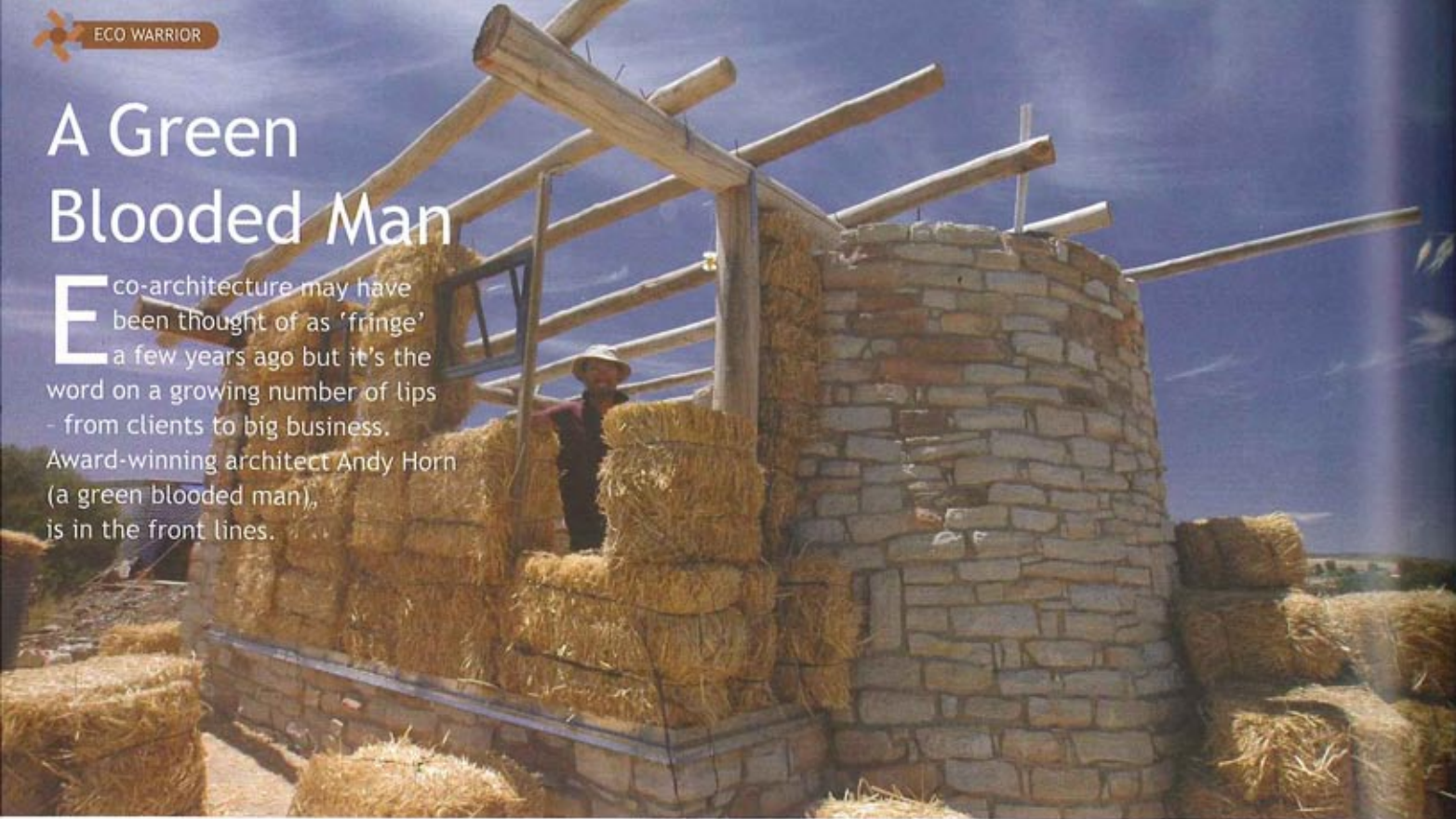


A Green Blooded Man

Eco-architecture may have been thought of as 'fringe' a few years ago but it's the word on a growing number of lips - from clients to big business. Award-winning architect Andy Horn (a green blooded man), is in the front lines.



In 1995 Andy Horn graduated from the University of Cape Town and since then he has built up experience in the field of ecological design. While encompassing a holistic vision, his special focus has always been on the use of local, natural, non-toxic and recycled materials such as stone, clay, sand, straw, reeds, thatch, cob, compressed earth, bottles, poles etc.

In 1998, he founded Eco Design out of a life-long concern for the rapidly degrading natural environment and widening social inequalities. The company's first commission as an independent practice was to rebuild an old langhuis for actress Sandra Prinsloo. The project used straw bale infill construction

techniques which set the tone for much of Eco Design's subsequent work which has afforded them the opportunity to continue to explore and refine the use of natural and local materials.

Passion for recycled materials

Before Horn qualified, he had all the building blocks for going green; a passion for recycled materials such as thatch, compressed earth, stone and clay and a strong conviction that we should be building with natural, non-toxic materials. He walks the talk. But it's not easy being something of a purist and single minded about sticking to principles.

His UCT thesis based on a real eco sensitive project was, almost derailed when his professor declared the site of the project 'inappropriate'. Horn took the gap a few

years later when the funds came through for the construction of the community centre and the company that won the tender pitched for a project architect. What was significant about the project was the use of compressed earth bricks made on site. Compressed hydraulically, the bricks are strong and durable and are used widely in the rest of Africa, parts of Europe, Russia and Australia. It was a first for Cape Town in 1996.

And therein lies the rub. Why would a building method that insulates well, is not transported at high cost by road (resulting in a carbon trail) and is not wrapped in plastic for delivery, not be the answer to housing ills? Further, the cost of the bricks weighs in favour of man-power not manufacturing, effectively redressing two issues, ecology and job creation.



Green architecture

Taking into consideration their global and local environment Eco Design is a practice that endeavours to create greener architecture. But what is green architecture? Green architecture is not a style, trend or a vernacular. Neither

Is it new? It is a climatically, geographically and culturally appropriate method of designing architecture and constructing buildings. It combines the best of both old and new technology. 🌱