Elao Martin wins UJ Corobrik regional architecture award

The University of Johannesburg's Elao Martin is the regional winner of this year's Corobrik Architectural Student of the Year Award.

Martin received an award of R10,000 while Steven Moore won second prize of R8,000 and Jean-Mari Steyn received the third prize of R6,000. Ruby Mungoshi was presented with R6,000 for the best use of clay masonry.

All the winners pictured at the award ceremony at the University of Johannesburg are from left to right: In third place Jean-Mari Steyn, the winner Elao Martin, Ruby Mungoshi who received the award for the best use of clay brick and Steven Moore who received second place.

Martin will be one of eight young architects from major universities around the country who will be recognised for their talent an innovation throughout this year. The winners of each regional competition will then go head to head for the national Architectural Student of the Year Award and prize money of R70,000. This will be announced in Johannesburg on 8 May.

His dissertation is entitled "Reimagining Kitintale's landscape through clay brick making". Says Martin, "Clay brick making in Kampala, Uganda is one of many activities that have negatively affected wetlands' ecosystems. An age old way of making; the process has created visible scars in the wetlands landscape through the mining of clay soil as miners clear large areas of land and vegetation for the raw materials used to make the bricks, leaving the soil barren, and the wetland unable to work as a carbon sink and water filter, or provide natural resources used for subsistence."

Creating a sustainable landscape

The radical design proposition is for the digging of clay soil for the brick making process to create an edge or buffer between the informal settlement of Kitintale, and the wetland. This dug edge in the landscape will prevent the informal settlement from encroaching further into the wetland. As this protective edge of the wetland will inevitably transverse many human activities in the wetland such as farming, the project also explores ways that the process of clay brick making and its devices can be colonised, and appropriated by these activities to create a sustainable landscape, long after the clay brick makers have left.

Through seasonal flooding, and after the water has subsided, the silt left behind will encourage farming activity to take up the area excavated, and the wetland can regenerate itself, while maintain the terraced landscape that acts as a protective edge.