

THESIS ABSTRACT: SUZANNE SCHEKMAN 680752 [ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION: REHABILITATING IDENTITY]

This dissertation document began as a journey of discovery of a new city, filled with many hidden historical treasures, some sadly forgotten about, left abandoned and neglected falling to ruins, misused and unappreciated. Relocating from Durban to Johannesburg, my eyes were opened to a completely new cityscape, sparking an interest in the layered history of its development and growth over the years. Through my journeys of the many streets of Johannesburg I began to notice the abundance of charmingly crafted architecture, quietly resting between the busy streets, many neglected and unused, creating a sense of sadness amongst the vibrant and multicultural movement surrounding them. I began to question the possibility of reviving such buildings to include them back into the city where they can once again be filled with life and no longer simply passed by without a care. The aim of the document was to research the many opinions and approaches surrounding preservation of historic architecture, resulting in a formal strategy of rehabilitating the old structures and breathing new life into them. The strategy adopted was to imagine the life of a building as a book of many chapters, with the view that buildings need not reach their final lines, through the continued writing on new pages, adding in whole to the layered tapestry of uses, events and years through which it was witness to. The new chapter proposed for the building became that of a safe house for victims of trafficking where the process of rehabilitating their identity and image of self became possible within a building which too had undergone a process of rehabilitation. Through research of statistical information and theoretical theories, strategies are formed to create a building in which layers of time are woven together and architecture is created allowing for users to feel safe whilst remaining connected to the city, regaining a sense of identity through contact with the building witnessing its transformation from once being in a state of disrepair to that of becoming a striking example of persevered architecture and history.