

urban continuum: a third typology in fordsburg

tahira toffah

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Tahira Toffah

Date

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All photographs and diagrams, where not credited, are by author

Thank you

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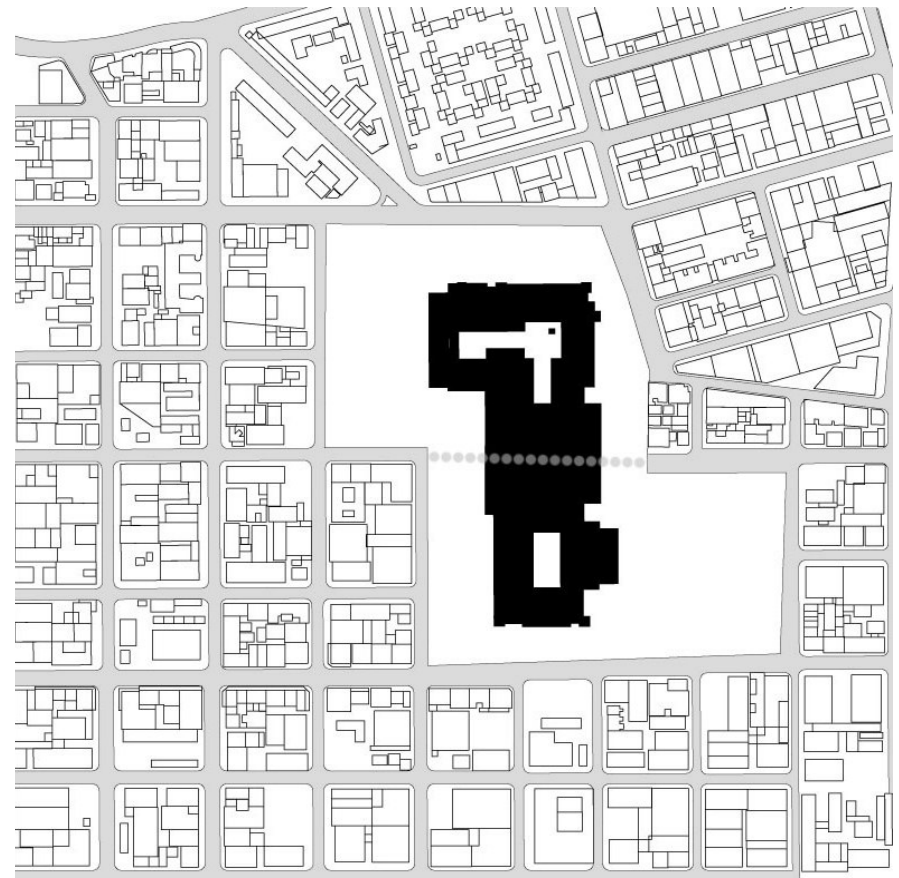
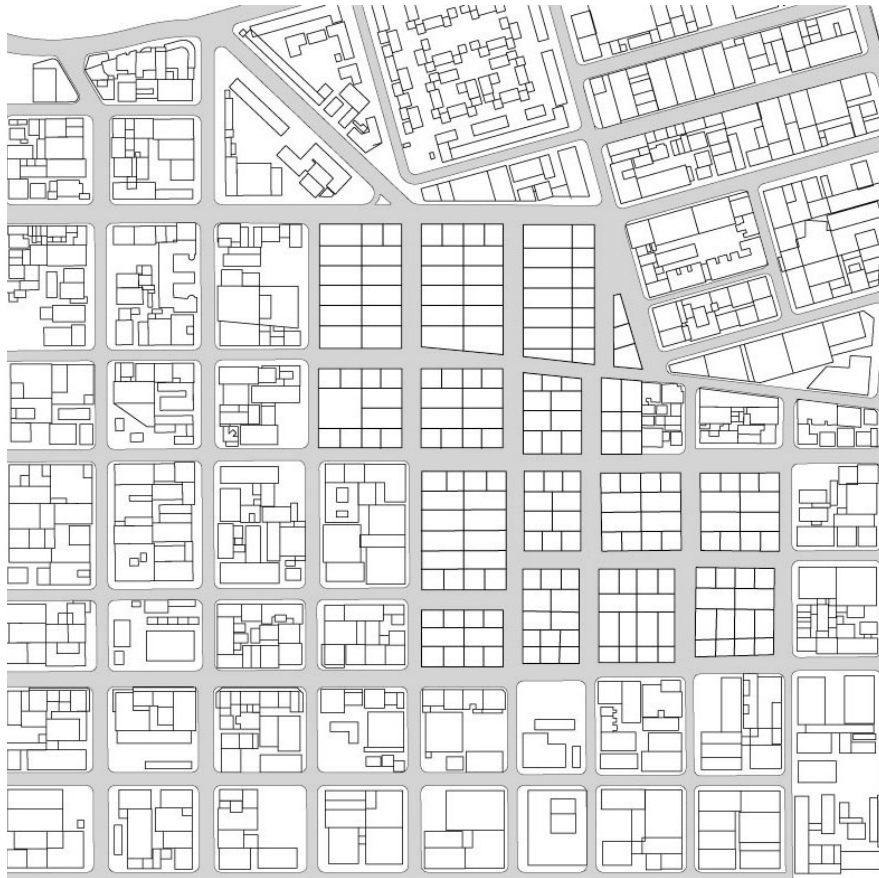
ABSTRACT

The premise of this thesis is the investigation of an urban landscape fractured by successive political, economic, and developmental concerns. It is an exploration of the intricate urban, architectural and cultural fabric of Fordsburg, revealing binary polarities ingrained in both landscape and mindscape. Discernable within these fractures are two distinct urban typologies: the layered urban fabric of Fordsburg; and the Oriental Plaza Shopping Centre (The Plaza), characterised by its uniformity & its discontinuity with the former.

As an urban environment Fordsburg lacks collective public space beyond those of purely commercial or religious purposes. However, the Plaza has become one the public places of Fordsburg and a place where people from all over Johannesburg have an opportunity to interact in the inner city beyond physical social boundaries. Despite the opportunities presented by the Plaza in this regard it is not a traditional public institution. It is privately owned and consumer based, with exchange as the predominant mode of interaction. Thus the Plaza has outgrown its initial conception as a political tool built to satisfy the needs of a middle class white consumer market and is now open to new possibilities.

The thesis proposal is an urban scale intervention that aims to reconcile the built form and spatial structures of the Oriental Plaza from the politicised forces of its initial conception with the forces that define its current position in an era of democracy. Thus Orient destination of the few becomes a city threshold for the many. Once a key made to fit the landscape and mindscape of one period in time it has become a keyhole to unlock new and imaginative possibilities in another.

Despite the apparent vastly different physicalities of the two typologies – Fordsburg as a historically intricate urban environment and the physical form of The Plaza – they share many similarities as well. This investigation seeks to learn from both typologies, the differences and the similarities, in order find an appropriate third typology to mediate between the typology of the mall and that of an urban environment. This is critical in the immediate context of Fordsburg and relevant to the future landscape of South African cities today.



Continuum - anything that goes through a gradual transition from one condition, to a different condition, without any abrupt changes or discontinuities.
(Oxford dictionary)



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