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Fighting for peace: a martial arts [Diversion] centre

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00_ABSTRACT

"There is no keener revelation to a society's soul than the way it treats its children"
-Nelson Mandela

In places deemed safe for our children, they are being exposed, tainted and scarred by the darkness of crime- eight times as much as our adults. In desperation, some of our children seek support within their dysfunctional families but they fail. As their cries for a way out are unheard, the soul of our nation turns to crime as an alternative. This thesis explores the physical and emotional instability of children as a result of prevailing crime. Instability that, in cases, leads children into a life of crime. The look into statistics regarding children and crime intensifies the urgency of the problem. The aim of the new justice act is to divert children away from the formal justice system (a fairly new approach launched in 2010). An interview with social worker Esmé Jacobs pointed out that the use of a diversion center was a step in the right direction.

In this thesis, the use of Martial Arts is being promoted and highlighted as the diversion. Martial Arts is used as a means to allow our brittle children to be nurtured, to be integrated in a safe environment, to be guided onto the best path, and can be seen as an alternative family entity. Martial arts was uncovered through its history and philosophies, and analyzed through its structures and composition. The effects of the practice of Martial Arts are prominent in the interview with Paul De Beer – an architect and one of the highest qualified aikido practitioners. De Beer introduces the look into a Clinical Martial Arts Programme for rehabilitation for children at risk.

Martial Arts and nature are one. Architecturally, the concept embodies the amalgamation of nature and architectural design: The flow from one into the other; the concepts of openness and all-inclusiveness within Martial Arts are points to respect when creating the space for the recuperation of our children, and the architectural challenge of giving our at-risk children a chance at life by creating a second home and not an incarceration facility. Dojo Stara Wiés, the world's largest performance training centre and a home for Martial Arts and Martial Artists alike, offers a platform to experience of the spirit, atmosphere and philosophy of Japanese Martial Arts. Dojo Stara Wiés was analysed to correctly expose the connection between Martial Arts and architecture and how they both embody the same energy and philosophies.

Site selection had the prerequisites of educational, recreational and community facilities. Belief systems show the importance of water in cleansing and rebirth, therefore a site with water was crucial as it would aid change. The above elements were a priority when choosing a site so that children would be fully integrated within the environment and the community. Germiston Lake was chosen and analysed as the site for the Diversion Centre.

A Martial Arts Diversion Centre: a young architect's conscious effort to heal our children through the use of architecture in conjunction with the principles of Martial Arts.

"Architects today tend to depreciate themselves, to regard themselves as no more than just ordinary citizens without the power to reform the future."
– Kenzo Tange