

- *n.*

1. preliminary plan or sketch for making something ~ art of producing these.

2. plan, purpose or intention.

3. established version of a product- building.

Oxford Dictionary

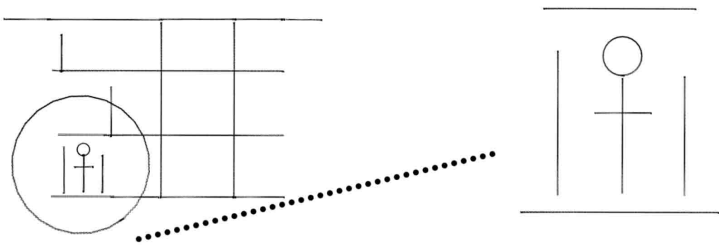
DESIGN



CHAPTER 5

Architecture that touches the spirit

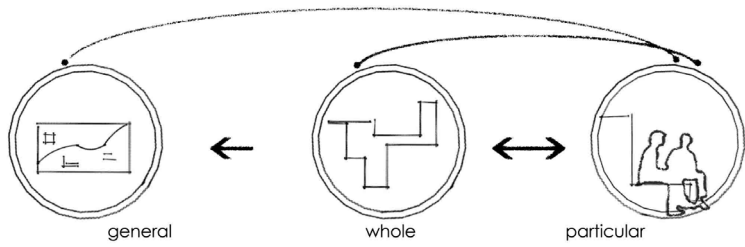
even our experience of large-scale space is dependant on momentary experiences



Tiny window
www.sxc.hu/lelimz



A welcoming architecture
www.sxc.hu



working between the specific and the whole

WHY SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL — FROM THEORY TO DESIGN

“Today we suffer from an almost universal idolatry of giantism. For every activity there is a certain appropriate scale. What scale is appropriate? It depends on what we are trying to do.” (Schumacher 1973:60) In looking back on all the studies in this thesis, I realized that all of what encompasses my view of the Sublime and Beauty is about the singular, personal experience of space on a small and intimate level. Getting in touch with the essence of that experience – man in space – is about focusing on the small moments. The approach to design thus became something quite unconventional. Instead of creating form and ‘zooming in’ on it, I aim to work ‘backwards’. In other words, designing the beautiful moments of experiential architecture and then moving out slowly to eventually get to the larger building. As was previously mentioned, I believe that only once we ‘strip’ architecture down to its purest forms, can we begin to compose the Sublime, simply.

The result has been focusing on simplicity of form and a complexity of experience. Also, I have decided to design a small building with a basic programme and small-scale focus.

In his book, *Small is Beautiful*, Schumacher identifies the effects of scale on economics and people. He notes that “While many developers – who may not be in touch with real life – are still engaging in the idolatry of large size, with practical people in the actual world there is a tremendous longing and striving to profit from the convenience, humanity, and manageability of smallness.” (Schumacher 1973:59) We are only human – we are also natural creatures. I stress that mass-production, despite having made our lives easier, has also made us forget about the joy of being human and the Beauty of the everyday. Schumacher argues that the modern economy is unsustainable due to man’s consumption of natural resources and in particular, of fossil fuels. In recognizing that architecture contributes to this race for “bigger, better, faster”, I aim to design a small building in harmony with nature and hopefully prove that because man is “small”, and buildings are designed for man, then small is beautiful. “Let us approach this from another angle and ask what is actually NEEDED. In the affairs of men, there always appears to be a need for two things simultaneously – we always need both FREEDOM AND ORDER. We need the freedom of many autonomous units, and at the same time the orderliness of large-scale, possibly global, unity and coordination.” (Schumacher 1973:59) Another aspect which affects us designers is the constant jump from the design of the ‘specific’ to the considerations of the ‘whole’. In other words, it is important to remember that no matter how small our buildings or insertions into places, they can and will have an effect on the larger-scale. This imposes another layer upon the method of design. In designing the ‘small’ moments, I need to constantly keep the ‘bigger picture’ in mind – realizing that the building may gain considerable complexity as each ‘designed moment’ meets the next – therein is the challenge of creating a ‘building as an experience’. Finally, I will aim never to lose the ‘unity and coordination’ of the building to nature.



THE COME BACK OF REDEFINED BEAUTY - CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK / THEORY APPLIED

“We have still to learn how to live peacefully, not only with nature but also with those Higher Powers that have created nature and have made us; for assuredly, we have not come about by accident and certainly have not made ourselves.” (Schumacher 1973:18)

Looking back on all my thoughts in this thesis, I began to compile a set of design principles which could inform the building. Could I create a design approach which ensures a sublime experience? Or one that tests it? I have yet to see ... my concern is that the Sublime actually happens in a less contrived manner – when one is not aiming to achieve it. It is the result of an unlaboured thinking and deep meaning. So the design becomes almost like a test – is there a quantifiable list which we can hold by which will ensure our buildings are Beautiful? Of course not, but perhaps even the idea of trying is beautiful in itself! The following are the principles and guidelines I have established:



GUIDELINES FOR BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE

Beauty is the by-product of creating a deep human experience

It must be an elegant solution

Every space should move a person to be or feel or do something

Unity in Design is about the relationship of the parts to the whole

Beauty is not extraordinary – it is about the EVERYDAY and the ORDINARY magic of architecture as an envelope to the actions of everyday life.

Symmetry is man's constructed idea of Beauty – Asymmetry is Nature's inherent Beauty

Details are beautiful if they are appropriate

Meaning is Beautiful

Remember, there is beauty in chaos too...

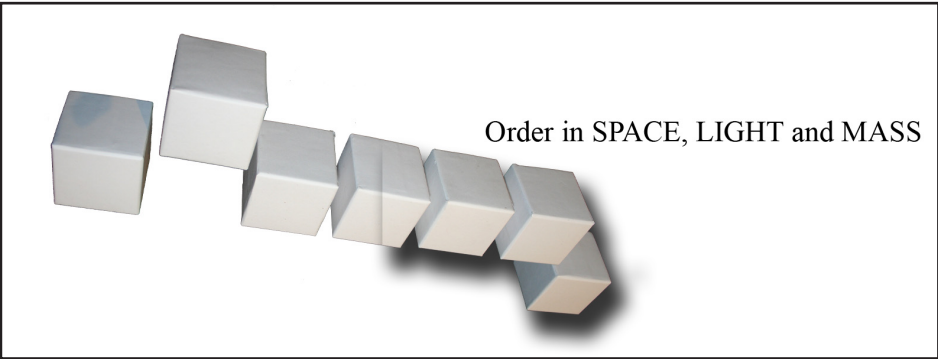
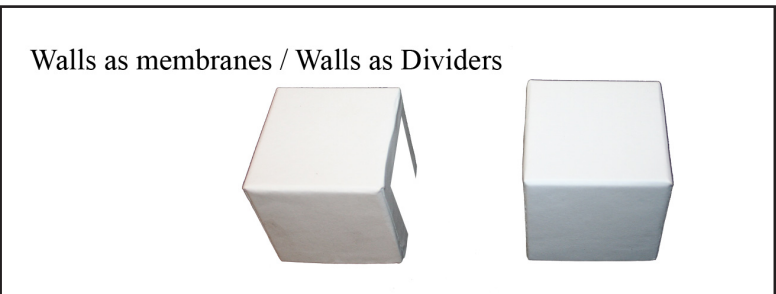
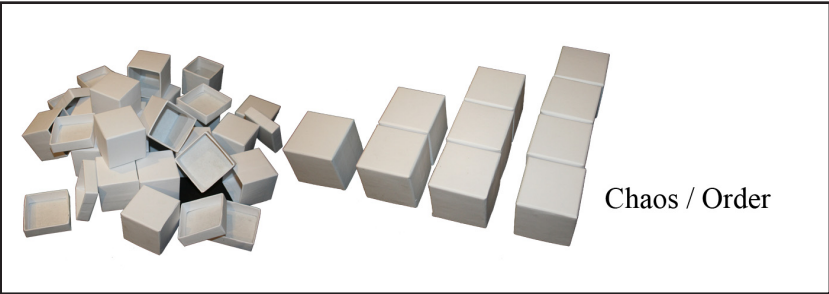
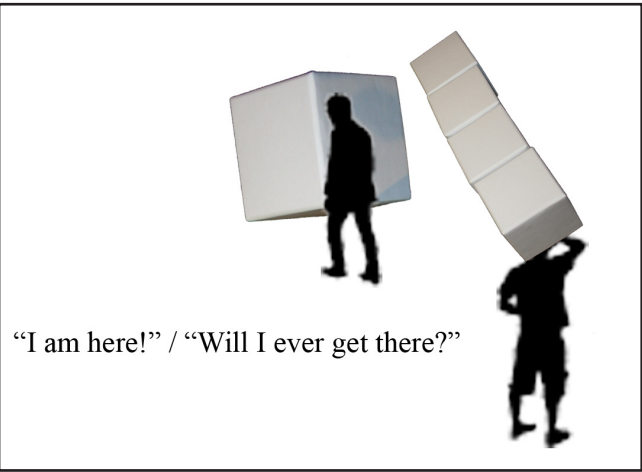
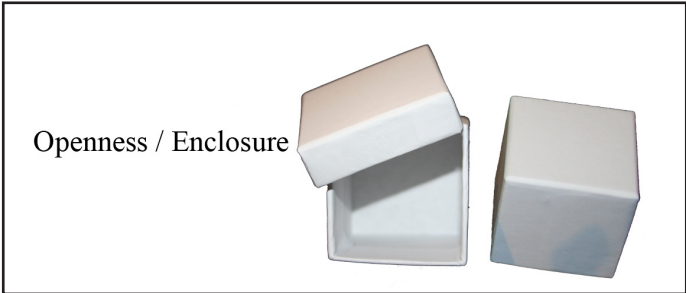
Basic aesthetic sensibility comes from restraint and refinement.

SIMPLICITY is beautiful

CREATIVITY is beautiful

Experience of space is about TIME – slow man down and slow his journey through time...mystery is beautiful.

Clean, Pure compositions result from refining deep complexities.





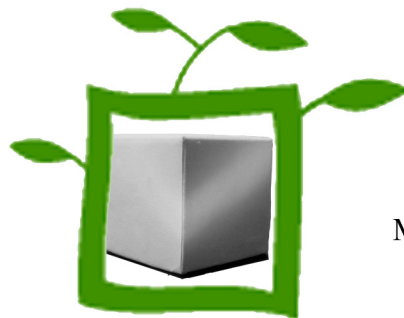
Use hierarchy to create the EXPERIENCE of space in succession



BE HONEST – what you see must be what you get; free design of excess and extravagance; purify materials and use them for what they ARE and WANT to be.



Aim for a simplicity of form and a complexity of experience.
Conceive spaces 'inside-out', from interior to exterior



MAKE IT SUSTAINABLE

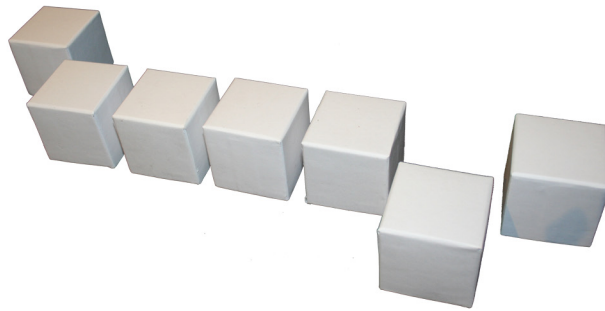


Remember, there is beauty in chaos too...



Always make design CONTEXTUAL
- to site through specifics
- to local identity and cultural Tradition and heritage

DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Make sure that each PART affects the WHOLE
and vice versa



Space must be SEEN, FELT, HEARD,
TOUCHED and even SMELLED



Always consider SCALE and PROPORTION
- to man
- to the surroundings



THE BRIEF

The brief shall explore:

- The site
- Overlapping Uses / The challenge of the design based on programme
- Private and Communal space and Thresholds between them
- Experiential quality

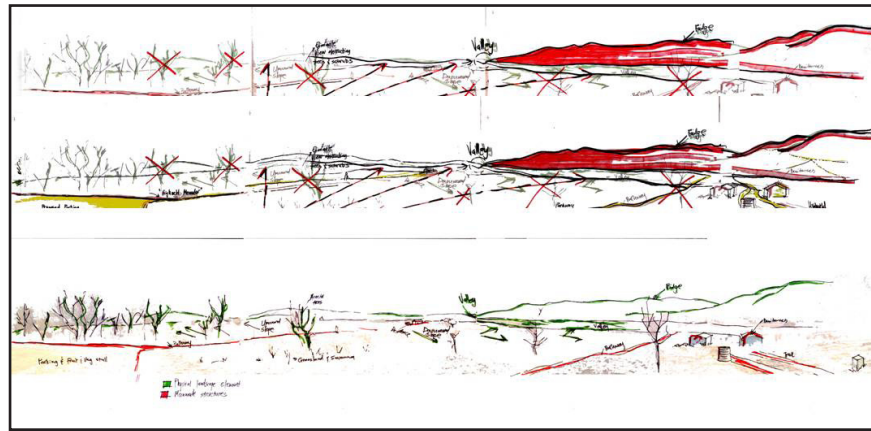
Introduction

When considering the complex idea of ‘architecture that moves man’, I needed to choose a programme which would ‘move man’ to be or to do something very particular. I wanted to be able to design an unambiguous experiential quality of space, rather than simply attaching a function to a building. This idea, I believe, sits at the core of true Beauty – every building has a meaning and a purpose. A hospital cannot look like or be experienced as a church. Buckminster Fuller said: “When I am working on a problem I never think about beauty. I only think about how to solve the problem. But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful, I know it is wrong.” (www.wisdomquotes.com) So actually, the design of the building for this thesis has been very challenging – I too have tried not consider Beauty and the Sublime as the means, and rather as the result of careful architectural consideration.

Choosing a programme for the building was a natural response to my discoveries in both the Cradle of Humankind and the theories of Beauty. Beauty is almost always related to art, architecture, craft and essentially, the realm of creativity. Moreover, my attraction to the NIROX Foundation (previously discussed) was charged with the functional beauty that an artists’ residency and Sculpture Park could offer in nurturing the creative spirit of an innately creative nation. As a designer, I saw opportunity in designing something personally relevant to my life – since this thesis is actually about MY ideas of Beauty, I could relate closely to the experience that would ‘move me’ and so many others. Thus the programme is essentially an artist’s residency. Since NIROX caters for the more exclusive market, I considered what a place of creativity could mean for young, less celebrated designers – students in creative fields, flourishing artists, architects, fashion designers and sculptors. Alan Alda said – “The creative is the place where no one else has ever been. You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you’ll discover will be wonderful. What you’ll discover is yourself.” (www.wisdomquotes.com)

Wouldn’t it be Beautiful to apply that spiritual concept to a literal built form – creating in the landscape, away from our city of comforts, and discovering ourselves in the ‘wilderness’ of nature.

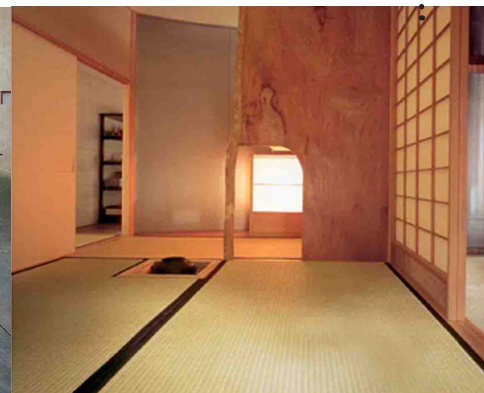
Every process of this thesis has involved simplification and “essentializing”. In other words, I wanted to explore what the essence of man is, and how architecture could cater for our basic needs in a beautiful way. In establishing the fact that the building will need to focus on the HUMAN experience, I have essentialized this idea to its purest form – what are the basic human activities of the everyday? What are the things that man needs to have in order to survive and what daily rituals can architecture start to celebrate and consider? Moreover, what else could be added to the programme to distinguish it from a purely necessity-based functionality? The answers to these questions, though intrinsically complex, I chose to answer simply – man needs to eat and sleep. And the Sublime spirit of the creative mind can add another dimension to the way we go about these two daily rituals. Thus I aim to design a sublime space for man to eat, create and sleep.



The diversity of the site



(Fluckiger 2007:120)



(Isozaki, Ando, Fujimori 2007:56)

CHALLENGE OF THE DESIGN - FREE OR HIGHLY SPECIFIC?



Experiential quality determined by site



Collaboration vs Isolation (arq journal 2008:41)

The site

“Creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations, the latter (like the river banks) forcing the spontaneity into the various forms which are essential to the work of art or poem.” (Rollo May: www.wisdomquotes.com) The site offers the opportunity to think of architecture as place-making. It has all the characteristics of a beautifully natural place – a river, a forest and open landscape. I feel that the diversity of the architecture could be enhanced by placing buildings in different locations on the site, could create different experiences – eating on the river banks, sleeping in a forest and creating in the open landscape. Moreover, I believe that by utilizing the beauty of the site in its natural form, architecture can act as a frame for nature and man, rather than be something which competes with them (an idea which is central to this thesis). It could also enhance the quality of such everyday rituals – thus the “limitations” of the site become the magic for creating “spontaneity”.

Overlapping Uses / The challenge of the design based on programme

As much as the building is considered one entity, one place, the programme is quite diverse. Eating, sleeping and creating / designing are three very different activities. When I look back on all the theoretical ideas in the thesis, I came about a contradiction: On the one hand, architecture can be very specific. By this I refer to examples like the Japanese Tea House. In this instance, everything is “designed”. In fact, in some cases, it is ‘over-designed’. This type of architecture is quite forceful – it tells a person where to sit, how to be, what to look at, where to move and how to feel. In other cases, the architecture is quite ambiguous – in the work of Donald Judd for example, spaces could actually be used for anything and it is up to man to be free and use the open structures as one sees fit. Indeed, Judd’s concrete museum could be a shelter to sleep under as well.

I have thus chosen to approach each programmatic idea as an expression of this contradiction – in some instances the architecture will deliberately force a person to be or to do something very particular. In other places, spaces will be ‘left’ open and give man the freedom to inhabit and conceive of the space as he sees fit. This will be expanded upon in terms of the design responses in Chapter 6.

Private and Communal space and Thresholds

I seem to constantly refer to the inhabitants of this scheme as “man” and not as “people”. I realize that despite the buildings being small, the reality is that by many people (established at about 20 people at a time) inhabiting it, there will need to be space which deals with a sense of community. Practically, this means spaces where people can collaborate on design ideas, places where more than two people can eat together communally, and places where sleeping becomes a shared experience. Thresholds are dealt with in a non-conventional way: since space is not a constraint and there are no surrounding buildings, I aim to discover whether the land itself can simply create threshold through the considerations of enclosure and open space and whether architecture can be an ‘opening’ into the landscape.

Experiential quality

How can a building grow? Could I design the visual and spatial quality of an interior experience and then move out to design the greater whole? I don’t believe that the design can be conventional – after all, nobody experiences a space from the “aerial” view of the building which has the tendency to be the starting point for most buildings. I aim to use two ideas to establish these “experiential ideas”: First, could I begin by framing the beautiful views on site, and establish these points as the ‘windows’ to the building, and design the rest from and in between there?

Secondly, could I think first about the very detailed aspects of materiality, light and structure and then design based on those interior qualities of experience? These ideas are explored in the design development chapter.



THE PROGRAMME

How the above ideas materialized in practical, architectural terms is through an artist's residence, more specifically:

1. STUDIOS, DESIGN AND CRAFT SPACES
2. A RESTAURANT
3. A RESIDENCE

“All children are artists.

The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

Pablo Picasso –

www.wisdomquotes.com

STUDIOS, DESIGN AND CRAFT SPACES

- Studio spaces ranging from small and intimate to larger. These shall accommodate from between 1 to 10 people.
- Indoor and outdoor spaces which flow and can be adaptable to cater for more or less people.
- Collective studio where “the mess” happens. There is Beauty in chaos of the design process; paint, paper, water, colour, glue, clay, wood and so much more! The space needs to cater for it while retaining the simplicity of elegant design.
- Areas for storage of materials and tools.
- Library / reading area for books and study.
- Toilets
- Wet areas for washing tools, hands and materials.
- A kitchenette
- Display spaces to exhibit the art-in-progress, or complete works.
- Meditative, intimate quality space from where design inspiration can be drawn and “the quiet” can happen.
- An outdoor amphitheatre for lectures and public forums.



images by authour and
www.designindaba.co.za/marijevogelzang



Everywhere where there is
interaction between a place,
a time and an expenditure of
energy, there is rhythm
(Lefebvre 2004: 15)

THE RESTAURANT

- Dining spaces for visitors and the public
- Dining space for residents which can overlap with the above or be a more communal sense of dining where designers can collaborate over a meal at one large table.
- Kitchen
- Storage and Refuse as well as delivery access.
- Reception area and small office
- Toilets
- Waiting point
- A bar
- Outdoor dining areas which are simply about sitting in the landscape and eating; and more enclosed areas for dining with framed views.



images by authour



“Aesthetic appreciation of nature, at the level of forests and landscapes, requires embodied participation, immersion, and struggle. We initially may think of forests as scenery to be looked upon.

That is a mistake. A forest is entered, not viewed. It is doubtful that one can experience a forest from a roadside pullover, any more than on television.... You do not really engage a forest until you are well within it....In the forest itself, there is no scenery.”

(Rolston 1998: 156)

THE RESIDENCE

- Accommodation for approximately 20 people. These will range from communal sleep areas (up to six people) to private units for couples and individuals (one or two people)
- An area for hammocks as an alternative to formal sleeping units in the landscape
- Bathrooms both communal and private
- Outdoor lounges and communal spaces for interaction and relaxation
- A staff residence for approximately 6 staff and a laundry area
- Storage areas for linen, mattresses and supplies.
- Reception office and administration area

Since the aim is to use the human body as a means for scaling and dimensioning, I have chosen not to assign a schedule of accommodation based on sizes and square meters. In most cases, since *Small is Beautiful*, I aim to design minimally to accommodate all these functions in the simplest way possible.