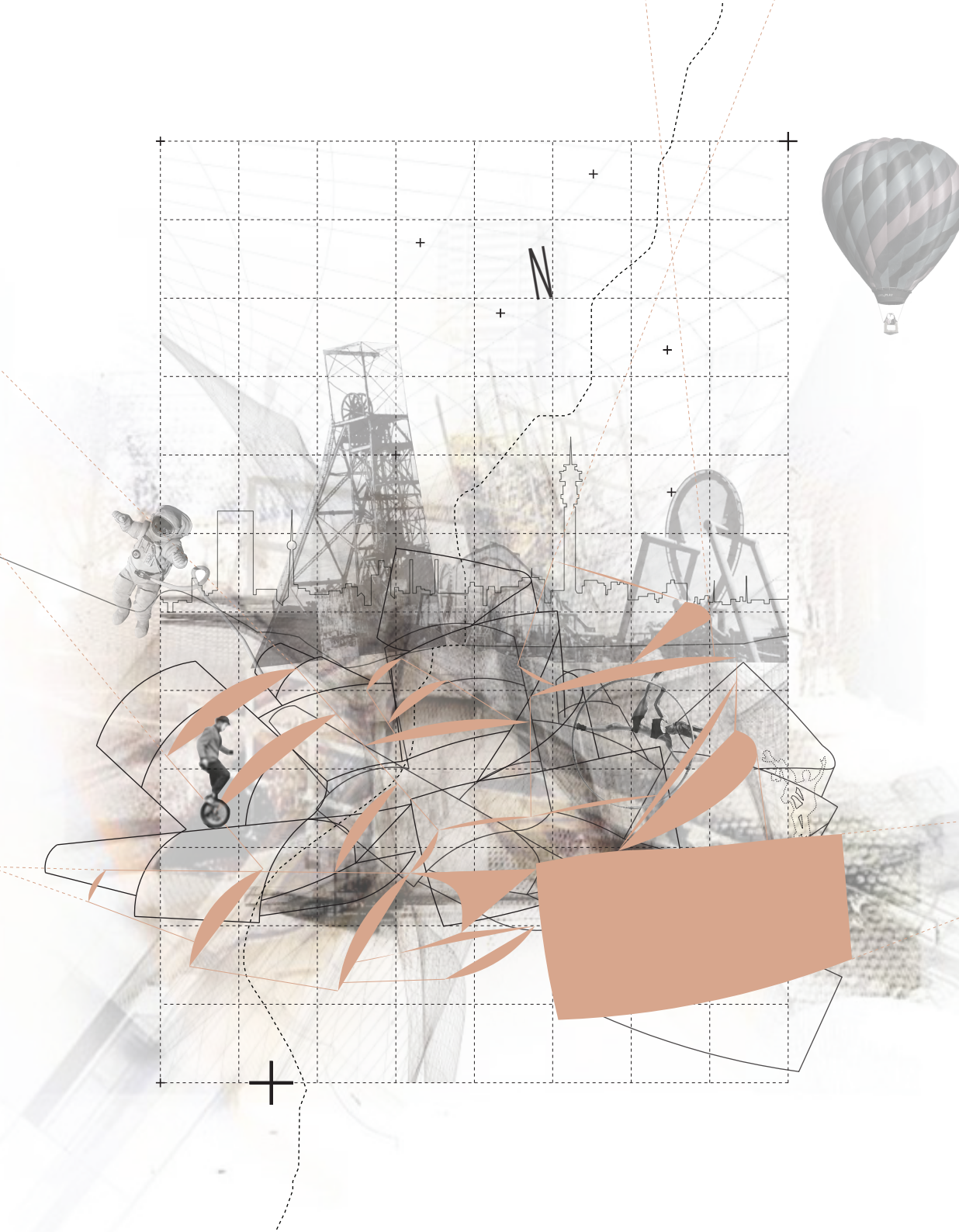




Théâtre de L' Absurde

A Parasitic Mediator Within Gold Reef City

ABSTRACT

Johannesburg is as a polyglot city; a contrived conurbation of remarkably disparate contexts within a single urban boundary. Today it is a city that cannot be read as a comprehensive whole, as philosopher Achille Mbembe (2008:59) suggests, it is "a metropolis increasingly forced to construct itself out of heterogeneous fragments and fortuitous juxtapositions". Yet these stark fragments of misery and privilege are not simply the inheritance of a political or geographical past but equally, the making of its present. This research paper therefore aims to move beyond the mundane social matrix in order to present an architectural intervention that attempts new ways at deciphering the conflicting logics that make Johannesburg today.

A city that has been shaped by the rise and fall of legally sanctioned segregation, Johannesburg currently demonstrates one of the worlds most socially, economically and spatially fragmented urban landscapes. Produced by a whirlwind of social, political and economic forces, it is a city where the wounds of the past remain clear.

The research paper contextualises the profoundly unequal city that Johannesburg is today. Through the acknowledgment of growing anxieties within the city due to crime, it is the enclave that dominates the landscape and shapes the city of multiple urban formations. Gold Reef City, a capitalist enclave, becomes the base of the theoretical unpacking of how the boundary wall of these social enclaves can start to be broken down, allowing a more inclusive urban formation.

The theoretical implementation is supported by architectural intervention through the construction of a new theatre typology. Gold Reef City as a whole is a theatrical production and exists on a stage of spectacle and escape. Although a theatre already exists at Gold Reef City, it is entirely inaccessible to visitors who have not purchased tickets. The new theatre acts as a whirlwind, distorting the absurdity that exists on the site and allows these fragments to meet at a single point. It is a parasite, a spectacle that juxtaposes all that exists within Gold Reef City. Welcome to 'The Theatrical Machine'...