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Remember to forget : archives for architecture : Johannesburg

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2014-11-26
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Remember to Forget:
Archives for Architecture

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Abstract

The built environment of Johannesburg has gone through numerous changes in its relatively short history. Traces of past events are visible, but the full stories are unknown and there is an absence of memory on both an institutional and a social level. Through their interwoven relationship with time, buildings become references for memories. And as a collection of artefacts (buildings), each with its own narrative, the city can be seen as an archive of its own past.

This project investigates the relationship between memory and architecture through narratives of the built environment. The project aims to show that the rich history of everyday spaces, and the public participation that occurs therein, create associations and memories of place and the city.
The proposal is for the Hubert Davies site in the historically rich area of Ferreirasdorp to be converted into an Archive for the Built Environment of Johannesburg. An alternative approach to heritage is suggested – a commemorative architecture that is neither monument nor spectacle.

The programme would ensure the conservation of the site while also facilitating access to the history of the city through public participation and use. Through its adaptive re-use the archive's site and programme enable it to play an important role in reminding the city of where it comes from.