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Thresholds: activating the Braamfontein cemetery through an interpretation centre

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1. RESEARCH THEORY



CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION.....p02

1.1.1 SUBJECT.....p02
1.1.2 RESEARCH AIMS.....p02
1.1.3 ABSTRACT.....p02

1.2 A PRELUDE.....p03

1.3 INTRODUCING A CEMETERY.....p05
1.3.1 RE-PURPOSED CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD.....p07

1.4 DEATH, MORTALITY AND IDENTITY.....p11
1.4.1 PROXIMITY.....p16

1.5 COMMEMORATION THROUGH ARCHITECTURE p19

1.6 THE ROLE OF COMMEMORATION POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA p21

1.7 BRAAMFONTEIN CEMETERY.....p24

1.8 SITE AND CONTEXT-AND INTRODUCTION.....p25

1.9 LIVING AMONGST THE DEAD.....p28

1.10 CONCLUSION.....p30

RESEARCH THEORY



BRAAMFONTEIN
Aerial view of Braamfontein and
Braamfontein Cemetery

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 SUBJECT

THRESHOLDS is a study of the nuances of the relationship between a space and a non-space in a city; the proximity in which the two exist, the space between them and how one enters from one into the other.

1.1.2 RESEARCH AIMS

I intend to explore the role of a large scale non-place (the cemetery) in the city as experienced by the individual and it's neighbouring spaces, the rest of the city.
The intention is to have a better understanding of the relationship between the two and the limits of negotiating long-standing social perceptions.

1.1.3 ABSTRACT

A green palisade fence is not all that separates the urban, kinetic Braamfontein from it's dormant cemetery. It's a long-standing perception that the two spaces are not related despite their proximity. And for this reason, you too have likely driven past it's sixty metre long edge without having given it too much acknowledgement.

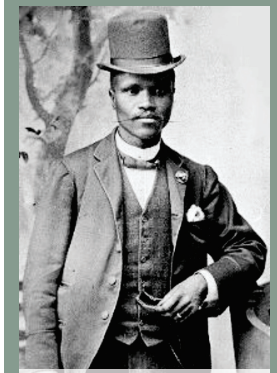
Granted, it's easier to overlook a space supposedly devoid of rational markers from their neighbours because of rhythmic disturbance in function and social experience or even their inability to mirror their adjacent counterparts: a derelict building, a desolate parking lot in the evening, a twenty one hectare cemetery in a city.
However, what makes the green, park-like Braamfontein Cemetery different from any other in Johannesburg is that it was the first cemetery in the city. As a result, is the final resting place of significant contributors of the country's history. It is then, currently a commemorative landscape in which events, social and burial practices of Johannesburg and South Africa are recorded.
For this reason, one could say that this cemetery is very much a part of urban Braamfontein in 2014.
How then to negotiate the de-alienation of this remarkable space while preserving its beauty, sacred aura and distinction?

1.2 A PRELUDE

“Please be respectful. You are standing on a mass grave”, read the finger-wide font engraved at the foot of the dark granite cube I stood in front of. I immediately felt displaced. The ground I was on was ignited with an elusive (subtle/glimmer and sacred) presence whose significance I had not yet grasped; where this presence begins and where it ends. In order to get perspective, I decide to step back and attempt to discern the parameters of this sacred space by plotting a rough path on the uniform lawn so that I can make my way back to the granite cube in order to record the details of the memorial plaque.

The Enoch Sontonga Memorial in the Braamfontein Cemetery has a grand and noble presence. Amongst only a stipple of trees, the memorial is a lone, solid figure emerging from 45 meters of a grassy and gentle slope. After a lengthy investigation, the memorial was erected at the precise location of the composer’s mortal remains*. Amongst his remains there are the remains of approximately twelve thousand black Christians and mineworkers (Marketing Dept, J. C.; 2008).

The memorial is a monument to the composer of a section of our current national anthem. His composition allowed for a black African inclusion with the existing Afrikaans anthem (which in turn allowed for the blending and co-mingling of segregated histories) . The significance of his contribution, together with the political circumstances in which the composer was buried in which the composer was elevates the memorial to a sacred symbol in a reformed South Africa. Furthermore, the composer’s life and his remains, signified by the memorial, confer upon the land an almost sacred aura. A sacred place has an active invisible threshold which radiates in varying intensity from it’s monument and site (such as a cemetery) . Both its tangible and intangible properties are



Enoch Mankayi Sontonga
circa 1873 - 18 April 1905

“The humble and obscure life of Enoch Sontonga is an antithesis of the dreams he inspired in generations of Africans through his famous composition "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika". Details of his short life are hard to come by. He was born in Uitenhage (Eastern Cape), in about 1873. Trained as a teacher at the Lovedale Institution, he was sent to a Methodist Mission school in Nancefield, near Johannesburg. He married Diana Mgqibisa, the daughter of a prominent minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and had one son.

A choirmaster and photographer, he wrote the first verse and chorus of "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" when he was 24 (1897), one of many songs he wrote for his pupils. Later the same year, he composed the music. The song is a prayer for God's blessing on the land and all its people. Sontonga's choir sang the song around Johannesburg and KwaZulu-Natal, and other choirs followed them. It was first sung in public in 1899 at the ordination of Rev Boweni, a Shangaan Methodist Minister.

Most of Sontonga's songs were sad, witnessing the suffering of African people in Johannesburg, but they were so popular that after his death choirs used to borrow them from his wife. According to sources, she eventually sold the rights to the song for a mere sixpence. She died in 1929.

Sontonga died of unknown causes at the young age of 32, in 1905. He was buried in Braamfontein, Johannesburg and his grave has only recently been discovered after intensive research."

-A direct excerpt from ZAR Biographies


ENOCH SONTONGA MEMORIAL


STREET VIEW


AERIAL VIEW

constituted by the actual physical space; (that which can be seen, witnessed and observed) and symbolic space (such as the history of the place Rules, folklore, ritual and customs). The actual and symbolic elements of the place are design constituents intended for the protection of the sanctity of the site which has been historically recognised as significant and set apart for spiritual, cultural and emotional reminiscence. I felt I had unknowingly walked through some of these reminiscences at the Braamfontein cemetery.

The actual and symbolic elements are present in order to preserve the integrity of the space or site. These elements in turn are rendered as vital and alive by those who come to pay homage to the site and thus ensuring its transgenerational continuity and sustainability. The fluidity created by those who pay homage, by those who practice their ritual through authentic participation, acts as a buffer against stasis and dormancy.

Architects have attempted to translate the invisible and the symbolic through their design and creative endeavour. This study is concerned with how memorial sites, which contain both actual and symbolic elements, influence or impact our daily lives . The design of the interpretation centre is an attempt to address and respond to how the invisible impacts the visible or how the symbolic impacts the actual. The Interpretation centre attempts to create a threshold, (a bridge, a form or) a context in which an individual who approaches the space is able to negotiate it. Indeed it has a supplementary or auxiliary function in that it allows for the acquisition of knowledge through pedagogical means, as well as building up of a historical archive. And thus it renders more accessible that which potentially eludes material experience.



CITY OF THE NON-LIVING
Calvary Cemetery, Queens, New York

1.3 INTRODUCING A CEMETERY

The word cemetery has its origins in Middle English as derived from the Latin and Greek words for “dormitory” and “to put to sleep” respectively (Oxford; 2014). These explanations allude to functions of daily living and perhaps signify our desire and longing for death not to be final and for the departed to return back to daily living. The “remains” of the departed, which are contained by the structure of the grave, allow the living to continue on with communion. Indeed, the Johannesburg City Parks, who oversee the city’s cemeteries has aptly suggested that cemeteries are for the living in that the allow for the ritual of mourning to continue.

Death, as old as life itself, is an event; an experience that occurs to a person as well as to those who are associated with them. This is why in most cultures, the burial ritual is not the final one. People return to the final resting place for further ritual , or for a form of pilgrimage (Gerber, 2008). Graves become enshrined in that they house the remains of the bodies of the

dead; moreover the remains have an association with the spiritual world which the living don't have access to. It is almost as the grave if (in its physicality) ensures some kind of link and continuity to this unknown world.

Cemeteries are largely characterised by their landscaped, park-like appearance and have the formally defined function of the burial of (or otherwise interred) human remains (Rugg, 2000) . They are not to be confused with the graveyard which is found in a churchyard. Disease caused by the inadequate disposal of human remains in proximity to the living prompted the move of the buried body to the cemetery; which is close to, but not within communities of the 18th century (Rugg, 2000). By virtue of not competing with infrastructure or buildings on the outskirts, cemeteries are significantly larger than their original counterparts. In terms of the physicality of the cemetery, other, characteristics include a boundary made of a hedge or a wall and an entrance with ornate, highly stylised symbols which historically were not found anywhere else. The entrances traditionally declare the meaning of the site either literally or symbolically indicating the life's end, eternity and the passage of time, .

The representation of death is dependant on our limited and finite knowledge of it.

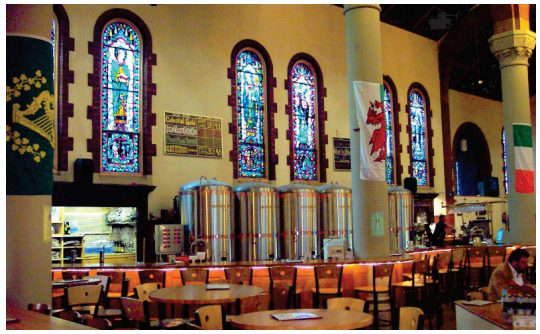
The ergonomic design and behavioural practices imposed on a cemetery allow for the process of mourning the dead to continue through introspection, remembering and grieving. Interestingly, it is not uncommon for a cemetery to contain demarcations according to religion, class, age and race. It is after all a micro-social instance that mimics the practices of society at large. This is highlighted by early English cemeteries which have both consecrated and unconsecrated sections (Bal. Et al; 1999).
The cemetery is frequently considered as a sacred space. The term "sacred" space is used in the broader sense in this context. It refers to the state of being worthy of spiritual respect and of inspiring awe.

EXPANSE
Acres of cemetery land



A RESTAURANT

The Church Brew —
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

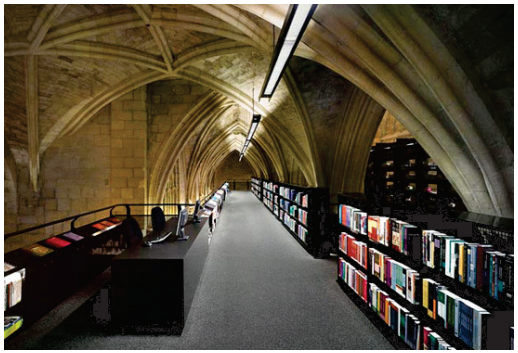




A BOOKSTORE

The Selexyz Dominicanen bookstore —
Maastricht, Netherlands





A NIGHTCLUB

The Church nightclub —
Denver, Colorado



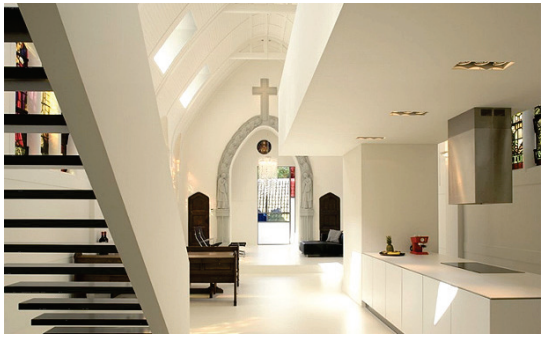


1.3.1 REPURPOSED CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD -Photodocumentary by Jennifer Lewis

A HOME

Church of Living converted home — Utrecht, Netherlands





The sanctity of a cemetery is thought to be derived from the respect it commands from whomever enters it. When entering the cemetery one is confronted with the “otherness” of the space. This is done to protect the bereaved from behaviour that would be regarded as inappropriate and inviolatory. Written and unwritten regulation is put in place to preserve this.

Hillary Kaell, a professor of religion, (Concordia University, Canada), conducted a study about re-purposed churches in Montreal. She explored how the needs of the various communities have shifted since organised religion is no longer the forefront of the needs social activities. These formerly holy places were created for a single purpose; to be a house of worship and dedication to God. The buildings are at the end of a long lineage of Christian architecture which has been developed over centuries to best inspire awe and host a spiritual presence so the inhabitants may connect with it.
The re-purposed churches, as documented by Kaell, now have other purposes including a library, a university building, a housing complex, a museum of fine arts and a gym amongst others functions.

The re-purposing of sacred places is not easily justifiable or feasible for that matter because of its prescriptive function and design as a sacred place. Moreover, the idea of perceived residual sanctity is not quantifiable and difficult to negotiate. Physical markers of the instance of churches (like stained glass and steeples) will always bear reference to their original purpose. Physical architectural symbols may imbue the sacred place with an indescribable quality which no act of deconsecration can entirely eradicate.A cemetery for instance is considered sacred not only for hosting the remains of the departed but because it may connect people spiritually by allowing them to connect to another dimension of time and meaning (Coomans T., et al, 2012).

http://expatior.com/for-the-best-views-in-paris-dont-go-up-the-eiffel-tower/

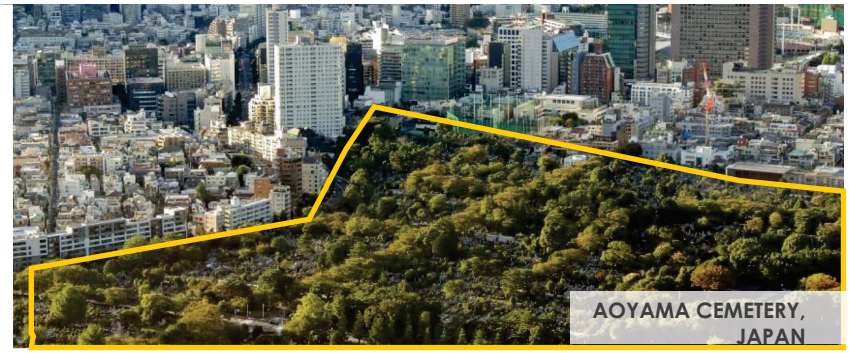
http://bigskybrooklyn.blogspot.com/2009/04/mt-zion-cemetery-queens.htm

Aoyama cemetery

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2014/10/18/travel/grave-hunting-tokyos-re

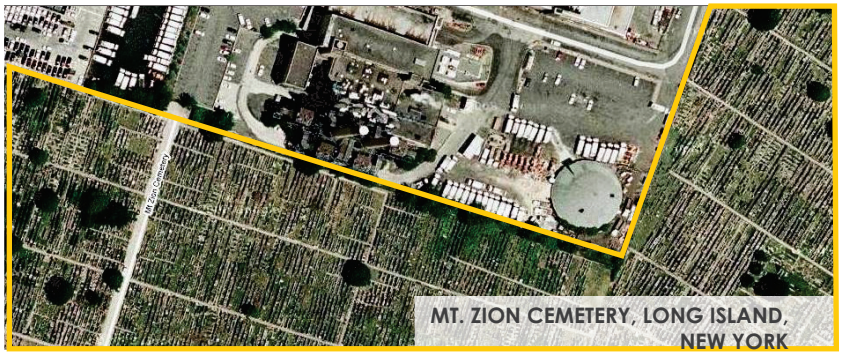


http://www.japan-photo.de/e-grab.html





http://snapshotsforsoreeyes.com/tag/pere-lachaise-cemetery/





http://www.demotix.com/photo/496049/guadalajara-cemeteries-day-dead-aerial-view



/
nl
ealms-dead/

Cemeteries exist in dormant and stark contrast to their immediate surrounds because they remain fixed in time. Unlike the community church which has architectural elements that can be upgraded to have a more contemporary look, the tombstones,memorials and their site were designed for permanence and no major upkeep. The cemetery is immune to an aesthetic and experiential re-imagining outside of its prescribed function. Individuals that might be more inclined to maintain cemeteries are usually deceased by the time justifiable refurbishment is required. Furthermore, motivating for a "face lift" for a grave site and individual headstones could be difficult to justify to a managing body since the activity requirements remain unevolved from the ones at the cemetery's inception.

A sacred space demands particular interaction (Davis, 2000).
It is this defined behaviour that keeps it exclusive; mostly from our own regular behaviour that would otherwise wear it down to secularity. This standard behaviour has fostered a culture of approaching sacred spaces with an almost pilgrimage-like reverence.
A pilgrimage is a deliberate journey in which the destination is of spiritual significance and healing to the pilgrim (Coomans et al, 2012). Every pilgrimage has a destination. Although characteristics of the journey may vary widely, it can be concluded that the process and experience requires varying degrees of introversion. By this I mean withdrawing from a secular attitude and succumbing to the experience or spiritual cues the journey and destination offer.

Approaching and experiencing a pilgrimage without this attitude adjustment would hollow out the experience. The same could be said about visiting a cemetery. One does not simply "pop into" or drive through a cemetery. So, in the same way the cemetery falls outside of our experience of rational space. Approach to a cemetery is in addition a spiritual and emotive experience. This incarnate approach to prepare for the experience has over time become a social ritual we partake in.



http://thinkartmakeart.com/middle/mon%20vietnam%20big.jpg

1.4 DEATH, MORTALITY AND IDENTITY

"Saints and sinners enter life's door
The good to admire the bad to abhor
Their voices stilled in death's final lull
The dead are all equal"

The Dead Are All Equal, Bob K (A poem inspired by the Vietnamese War)

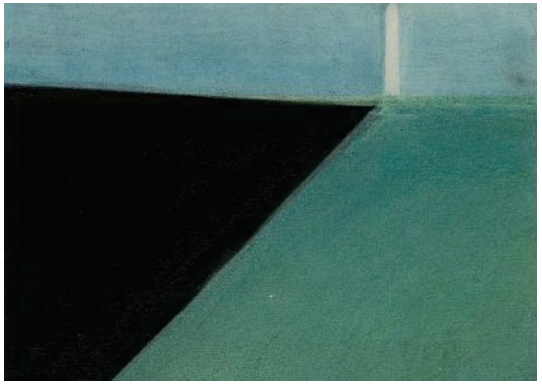
"Death is an equaliser". This has been the subject of poems and prose beginning in the 16th century; a discourse that attempts to finally unite humanity despite who they were prior to being deceased. It's a destination we are all bound for and for the most part, the humbling cessation of our calculable knowledge of life. This offers a sliver of justice in social circumstances where inequality is present and had been a contributor to the death/s. Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial may be seen as an evocation of the crudeness of death and how an individual visiting the memorial negotiates it; the memorial is a "scar-like" monument on a purposely cut landscape, with a list of names of the deceased soldiers, a mirror-

-like gabbro that allows a visitor to see their reflection when reading their name. James Webb, a US senator and former supporter of the project, described the v-shaped gabbro walls which push back the ground they emerge from as a “nihilistic slab of stone”. It’s complex to over-simplifying the physical means by which we depict or express our grief. The word ‘monument is also an adjective used to describe enormity and this is how, I assume, the public expected Lin to design the monument. Large in size and character. The “godlessness” of Lin’s representation of the collective loss, as some have come to experience in time, (reference here catalogue) attempted to equalise the experience of death in that no one could have a greater claim to it.



IN MEMORIUM
Design submission for Vietnam Memorial by Maya Lin (below)

http://artseverydayliving.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Vietnam-memorial.jpg



http://bettercities.net/news-opinion/blogs/lisa-austin/17565/where-design-competitions-err



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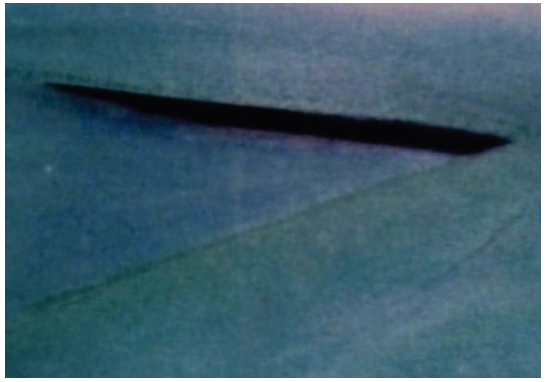


http://bettercities.net/news-opinion/blogs/lisa-austin/17565/where-design-competitions-err

The approach of handling the memory of the dead (more so those who have died in trauma) is a delicate affair. Religion generally promotes the idea that the body gives over to a spiritual form in death, and in the giving over allows the body to enter another dimension, which is a sacred one. Behavioural response to death differs in varying societies and religions. Traditions and rituals surrounding the mourning and the disposal of the corpse are used to emphasize cultural values but also determine the transition of the deceased to the next world (Abramovitch, 2004). The corpse is not only a biological entity but also a social one (Davies, 2000) in that it is intertwined with the living and their memory.

According to Karl Jaspers (Philosophy of Existence, 1971), experiencing the death of a loved one tends to evoke thoughts of our own mortality; how it would be without the deceased individual and how we would eventually share an end like theirs. The recent death of our former president Nelson Mandela although, not unexpected, appeared to leave our country shell shocked at the time.

Although he had not actively played a political role in a long time, his life had become an international symbol of peace and tolerance and each report on the decline of his health seemed to pose an uncomfortable (perceived) displacement of this symbol of peace and tolerance.
The event of his death naturally spurred talks about the condition of lives of South Africans who remain and the political state of the country. Essentially, his death called into question the quality of continuing lives. As is the case after the loss of any of our loved ones, existential evaluations set in.

According to Robert Hertz, a French sociologist (Davies, 2000); society is concerned with its continuity when it is faced by the event of death. This applies particularly to the individuals who played a significant role in that society. The dead become part of our ritual to live again as we did before they died.
It was perhaps in that same token that the memorial statue of Nelson Mandela was unveiled the day after his funeral to offer the nation symbolic and psychological continuity.
Is the life and spirit that is transferred from a human symbol or a tragic social event into a physical marker effectively alive for very long after its erection? And why is it necessary?



http://cdn.mg.co.za/crop/content/images/2013/02/25/ED_South1394.jpg/688x518/



http://ewn.co.za/2013/06/27/Only-God-knows-when-its-time-Makaziwe

Perhaps the answer is this: memory activates our daily lives, whether it is for the mundane recall of helpful behaviours or as a prompter for a needed paradigm shift or for political ideals which keep the peace and are for the betterment of the immediate society. Physical reminders of such memories could influence a conditioning that would be beneficial to the individual and society in which he or she lives, in that abstract concepts like peace, justice, mercy and charity are rendered more material. Moreover, the physical reminder act as a buffer against the transience of human existence.

We do however have to allow for desensitisation over time; a first time visitor to the Mandela statue would react in awe of the monument which was designed to inspire. This is different to the experience of a security guard who walks by it every day.
It appears that time, frequency and approach impact the novelty and the sanctity of a memorial. What works against acting insensitively is the required formal behaviour which is safe-guarded by devotees or people who acknowledge and respect the sanctity of the monument. Participating frequently in, and having a significant number of participants of ritual is what continuously activates sanctity (Husken & Neubert, 2012).

Monuments and memorials are then kept alive by the frequency, deliberation and repetition of the approach to them. When doing this, internalising the spirit they represent gives more vivid meaning to them. This becomes the relationship that activates the two parties; keeps the monument or memorial alive while the latter provides the emotional and psychological memory for daily life.

So then becomes the following debate: which sacred symbols of memory are actually necessary to be activated in a person's life. Daily and/or otherwise.



MEMORIAL CEREMONY: DEC. 2013

http://catholicphilly.com/media-files/2013/12/MANDELA-RICARD1.jpg



MEMORIAL STATUE UNVEILING: DEC. 2013

http://www.timeslive.co.za/incoming/2013/12/16/000_dv1595804.jpg/ALTERNATES/crop_630x400/000_DV1595804.jpg



MEMORIAL: JULY 2014

@kmarwala_instagram



GREAT SPHINX, EGYPT
National Geographics, 1921
Donald McLeish

http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-of-the-day/sphinx-egypt-mcleish/

Monuments and memorials are then kept alive by the frequency, deliberation and repetition of the approach to them. When doing this, internalising the spirit they represent , gives more a vivid meaning to them. The individual, in his or her approach to the monument keeps it alive whilst the monument provides for emotional and psychological memory for daily life.

PROXIMITY, MEMORIALS AND THE VISITOR

A study of the behavioural patterns; expected and exercised around memorials of all kinds in different contexts in South Africa

1.4.1 PROXIMITY

walking

definition: navigating the site to observe, meditate or just pass through the sacred object.

ritual participation: approach, pilgrimage, tour, visit, pass by

deliberation: low-medium

standing/ stopping

definition: deliberately pausing at any point in the site in order to interact with it or the object of sanctity.

ritual participation: glancing, looking, touching, interacting with body.

deliberation: medium

sitting

definition: stopping at points in the site that are dedicated(and not) to being seated;

ritual participation: sitting on: designated seating, ledges, interactive/specialised seating, grass or ground

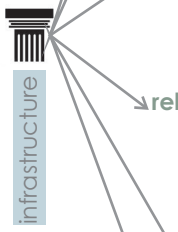
deliberation: medium-high

looking/ reading

definition: pausing to engage with the visual aspects of the site.

ritual participation: reading, looking, glancing

deliberation: medium-high



KEY	TYPES	MATERIAL	EXAMPLE	GEN. SIZE
infrastructure	plaque	bronze copper granite	memorial plate	
	statue/sculpture	bronze copper marble	bust sculpture statue	
	monument	granite marble stone brick metals	tower building large sculpture religious statue location	
	religious building	brick stone timber	church mosque temple synagogue prayer/meditation places	
	site	flora elements	garden large dedict. landscapes natural "wonder"	
	relic	variable	object on site object in building	

sanctity

definition: what makes the place/ object set apart or to be revered

rating: how intolerant the place/object of "secular" activity is

- very tolerant
- tolerant
- neutral
- intolerant
- taboo

proximity

definition: how often, how close a visitor or passer by can come to and interact

proximity allowed: how close a person can be (interactive) w/the site/ object

- passerby
- looker
- close looker
- mental interaction
- active interaction



typology summary: memorial gardens are landscaped sites that are dedicated to the dead. they are designed to evoke quiet contemplation when people walk through them.

location: sharpville, johannesburg
activity: procession, standing, sitting, reading
entry: controlled; all week
purpose: place of remembrance
infrastructure: memorial wall, amphitheatre, landscaping
context: phelindaba cemetery; sharpville township (suburb)

SHARPVILLE MEMORIAL GARDEN



typology summary: a memorial museum is a building in which the memory of an event or person is commemorated through various media. this may be accompanied by a square, small scale monuments or statues.

location: orlando west, soweto, johannesburg
activity: standing, sitting, reading, interacting
entry: controlled (med); all week, paid entrance
purpose: host multimedia artefacts
infrastructure: building, water feature, plaque
context: med-high density suburbia and small-scale retail

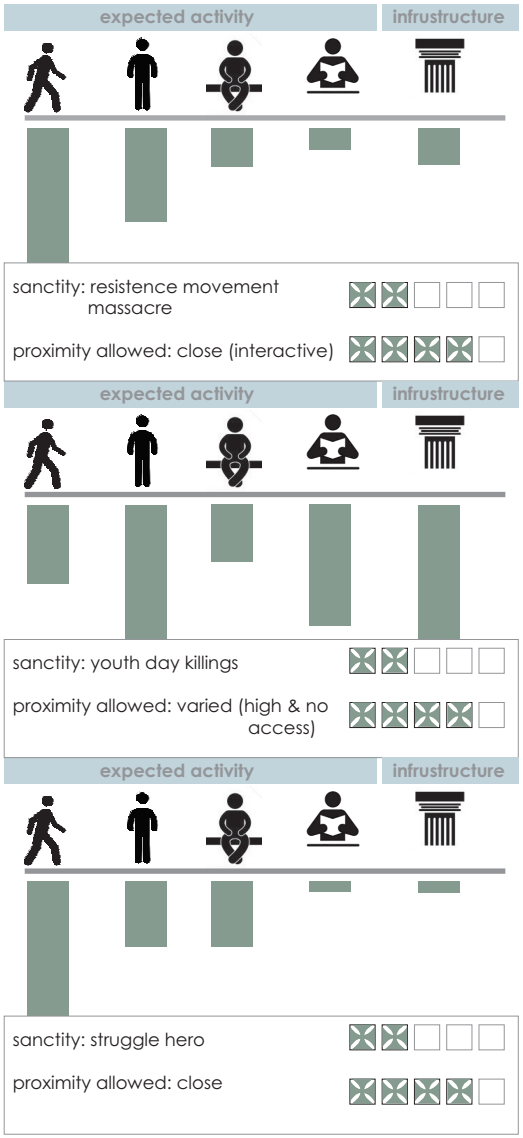
HECTOR PETERSON MEMORIAL MUSEUM

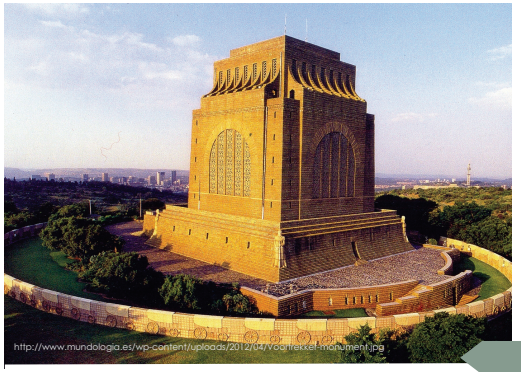


typology summary: a square is usually in the context of a city as it would likely be surrounded by buildings. a memorial square usually has a statue, bust, small monument, plaque or symbolic planting as a focus and is an open space where people walk through.

location: johannesburg cbd
activity: walking, sitting
entry: open access
purpose: commemorate individual or event
infrastructure: bronze statue on
context: commercial, transport & minor retail

GANDHI SQUARE





typology summary: monuments dedicate to memory are to commemorate a notable historic event or person. a monument may be placed anywhere from the city to its outskirts. it is generally charactised by its "monumental" size.

location: tshwane, gauteng
activity: standing, sitting, reading
entry: controlled; all week
purpose: place of remembrance
infrastructure: building, amphitheatre
immediate context: nature reserve

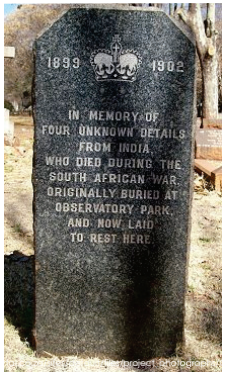
VOORTREKKER MONUMENT



typology summary: a memorial statue is a reproduced image of a person or object that was a significant player in a historical event.

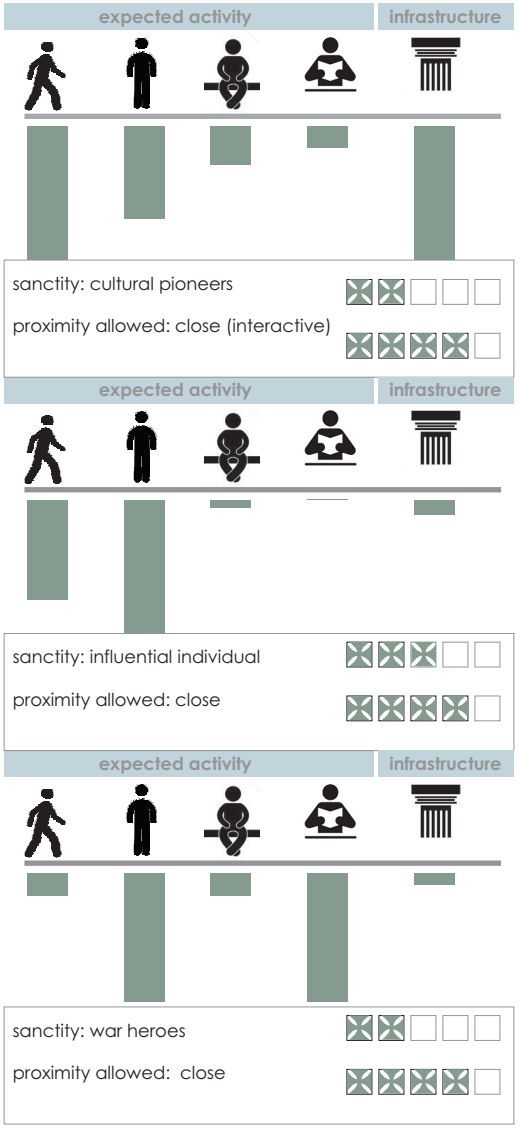
location: union buildings, pretoria
activity: standing
entry: controlled (med); all week
purpose: depict the likeness of Nelson Mandela
infrastructure: bronze sculpture
context: government campus

NELSON MANDELA MEMORIAL STATUE



typology summary: a plaque is an inscribed stone or metal that is attached to a wall, a statue, monument, stone, tree... anything with some form of permanence that is related to the memory of whatever is being honoured. it can elevate a mere bench or bookshelf to a level of sanctitiy. these are used to
location: braamfontein, johannesburg
activity: standing, reading
entry: free daily access
purpose: honouring memory of the dead
infrastructure: granite slab
context: commercial, transport & minor retail

MEMORIAL PLAQUE-BRAAMFONTEIN CEMETERY





http://www.independent.co.uk/incoming/article8518458.ece/alternates/w620/holocaust.epa.jpg

1.5 COMMEMORATION THROUGH ARCHITECTURE

For the vast majority of people, the cemetery has a very particular purpose. Its a place for the burial of the dead and a place for the people who remain on to mourn. What this project would like to do is to alter or redefine the very reductive purpose of the cemetery by opening it up for daily use and considering how it might function as a visually stimulating, accessible and safe space. Like Beyers Naudé and Ghandi squares in the city centre, the cemetery contains a collective traumatic history of struggle and resistance. In the Braamfontein Cemetery there are memorials and graves of the Anglo Boer war, World War II and the anti-apartheid resistance. A collective traumatic history has the potential to instil a national identity and pride as well as to educate those who weren't immediately effected by those particular events.





SHOE WELL
Design submission for Vietnam Memorial by
Maya Lin





THE MEMORY VOID
Design submission for Vietnam Memorial by
Jewish museum, Berlin





http://www.rabbisacks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/HOLOCAUST0061366340352.jpg

TOWER OF FACES
Design submission for Vietnam Memorial by
Maya Lin



FIG. 1. NELSON MANDELA MEMORIAL
By artist Marco Cianfanelli

http://kissmyblackads.blogspot.com/2012/10/nelson-mandela-monument-by-marco.html

1.6 THE ROLE OF COMMEMORATION POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

As mentioned earlier, monuments and memorials attempt to embody the spirit of a historical event .
There have been debates about interchanging the terms “memorial” and “monument”. The general consensus is that a monument is an architectural element and a memorial is a memory signifier . Physically, the two may even share qualities. A memorial is often created to commemorate a loss or death and a monument is used to celebrate or create large-scale awareness.
A monument or memorial can come in one of the following common forms: a garden of remembrance, a bronze statue, a commemorative plaque, a museum, a memorial stone, a demarcated grave site and a square of dedication. Even in their wide variety, the common characteristics of memorials and monuments are their permanence. This is displayed in the sturdiness of their build, their robust materials and their integration with nature.

In recent years, the country underwent a significant re-branding by redesigning the landscape with monuments of people who had died or were significant players in the fight to implement the new government. This took the form of new monuments, removing old ones and the renaming of cities and street names. This process of memorialisation became a point of contestation to some who felt it unnecessary and those who saw the relevance in removed monuments . The new monuments came in the form of a wave of museums and renovated squares (Marschall, 2010) where the narrative that had begun in TRC hearings would continue or be completed in order to usher in closure. However, as Marschall suggests, there has been public debate about whether people actually care about monuments in our national context. This lack of care may be a result of monument/memorial fatigue or missed interaction opportunities through inappropriate location selection and also communication. It seems as if most people are ignorant about the intended purpose of the memorial or monument.

Monuments, in post-apartheid South Africa, primarily function as a tool to bring healing to the nation's traumatic history (Marschall, 2010). This project is less ambitious in it's scope. One of it's main objectives is to create an interface between the cemetery and it's history and the passer-by or visitor by creating an information centre that negotiates the rich historical space that surrounds it. This negotiation takes the form of providing knowledge of those buried in the cemetery which in turn enhances the experience of it.





http://johannesburg1912.wordpress.com/2014/07/27/history-of-braamfontein-pt-1/

1.7 BRAAMFONTEIN CEMETERY

The cemetery is a documentation of the people and events that made history in the city as well as the country. The Braamfontein Cemetery, now also referred to as the Enoch Sontonga Memorial Park, was formally established in 1888 as the first regional cemetery ; a tear-away from the church, mine and hospital burial grounds. While Johannesburg's population grew rapidly during this time owing to the gold rush, the mortality rate also rose quickly due with the war and the earlier, less sophisticated mining practices. During the early 1900s, mourners requested locations for different religions . The divisions were accompanied by the demarcations to accommodate race, historical events and civil servants. The general design mimicked that of a European cemetery layout, with long rows in even sections, straddled by long roads.

The formalisation of apartheid laws in the 1950s filtered into infrastructural and planning regulations at the time. Segregation was not a new concept for a city that initially drew the broader strokes of division during its fledgling years through the topographical features (ridge, watershed and mining belt) of the city in conjunction with man-made barriers like the railway tracks as buffer zones . A more distinct lattice of division began to emerge following the 1951 Group Areas and the Bantu Homelands Acts in that there were lower lying areas that were more susceptible to harsh elements and areas further from the mining activity which were areas which had more favourable climate and health conditions. Where formal walls were not put up or declared as dividers, ritual was formalised. Behaviour was legalised and division was emphasised down from existing daily activities to newly founded ones. Cemeteries were no different. New ones naturally came into being in the communities that were already racially divided by the 1950's.

The Braamfontein cemetery site positioning is a dual representation of this division as it is nestled between the ridge and the railway, the initial class and race dividers . Moreover, the placing of the cemetery in a socially and geographically undesirable locations is reminiscent of the early practice of outskirting similarly awkward spaces from towns.
However, time and modernity impose themselves onto structures, vocabulary and behaviours, as was the case when the segregation laws were dropped giving way to a new democracy in 1994. Where the cemetery was once the centre of nesting doll-like social structuring, it currently stands alone and a pariah of 19th and 20th century beliefs.

1.8 SITE AND CONTEXT-AND INTRODUCTION

The site Braamfontein Cemetery is mysterious and multi-layered. The residue of the iniquities of apartheid are visible in the adjacent neighbourhood of Vrededorp. The consistent façade of Solomon Street, which introduced me to Vrededorp, is low-rise (1-2 storey) and weathered. Beyond that are deliberate axial roads that have still weathered homes on either side of them.
The adjacent site was originally part of the cemetery site. It is now being used for light industrial activity by Telkom technical services mainly. Separating the cemetery and the adjacent site is a streamlet, the beginnings of the Braamfonteinspruit.

At the north of the cemetery, is the University of the Witwatersrand. Further north west is the University of Johannesburg. Owing to this, there is significant student foot traffic on Enoch Sontonga Road.
The M1 highway and the fairly busy Smit Street are on the east and south borders. On the South border are more light industrial buildings of sizes varying from single to four stories. Amongst them is a warehouse that has been converted to a church.

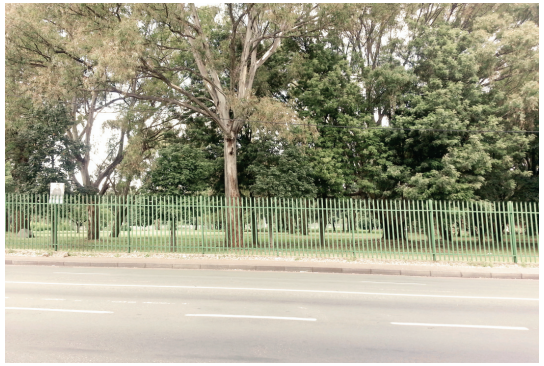
There is something ironic in the cemetery being a signifier for both park-like greenness and the dead. As managed by City Parks, Braamfontein Cemetery is a beautiful leafy, park-like place that occasional visitors and mourners only get to visit. The contrast of this in a dense urban context makes it all the more desirable to inhabit.



SURROUNDING SITES
Areas surrounding the Braamfontein cemetery



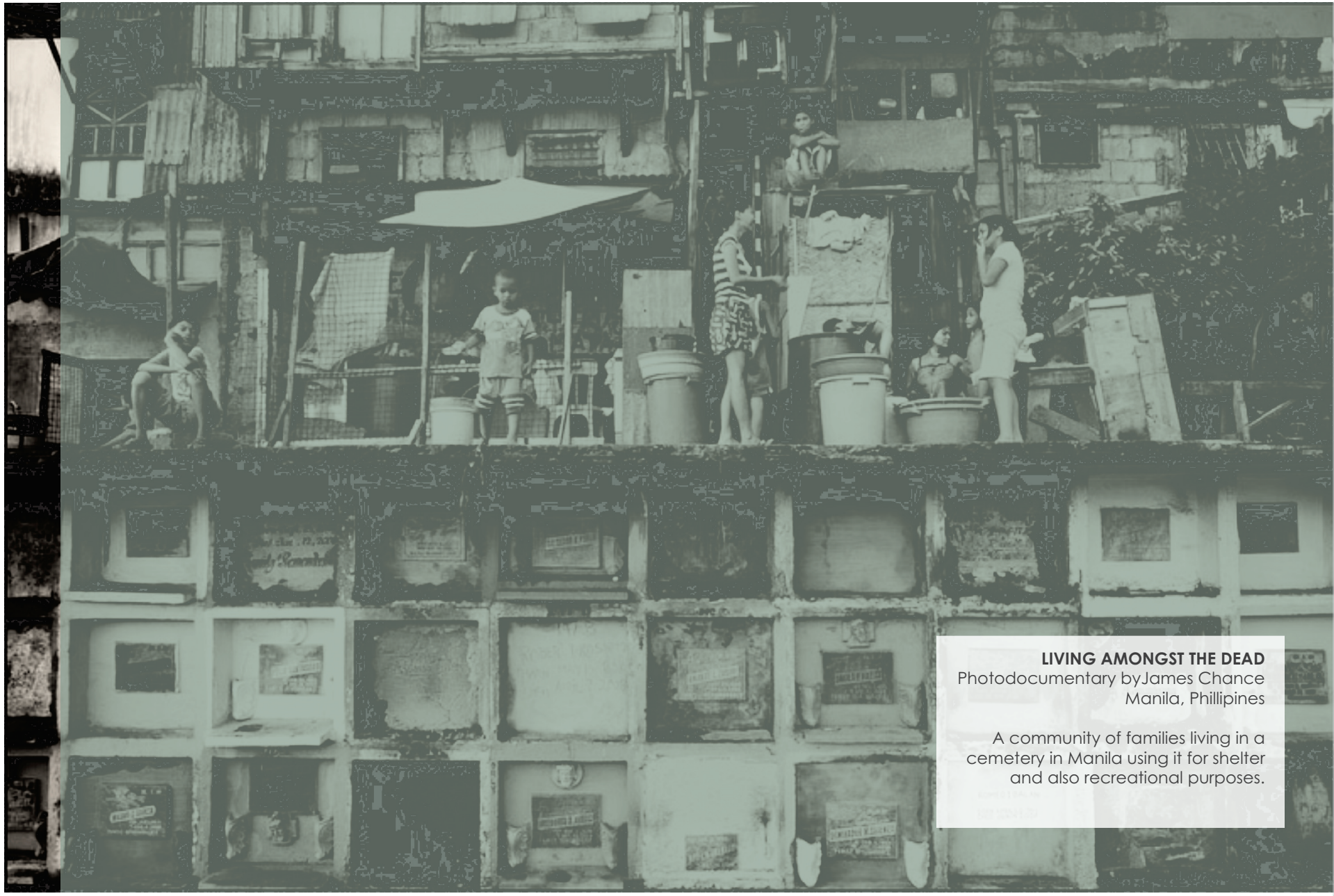












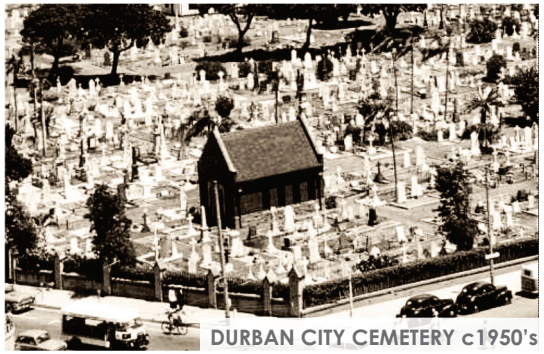
LIVING AMONGST THE DEAD
Photodocumentary byJames Chance
Manila, Phillipines

A community of families living in a cemetery in Manila using it for shelter and also recreational purposes.

1.9 LIVING AMONGST THE DEAD

Contextualising the monument appropriately is done for historical accuracy, authenticity in experience and for the healing of the immediately affected. It is natural therefore to have the volume of monuments we do evenly spread all over the country.
Pilgrimage to a memorial site can take the form of a day trip to or on a site, a visit to a museum or the non-deliberate walking or driving past a memorial. The deliberation of a pilgrimage suggests the preparation of the mind for an experience that could effect the desired output for the pilgrim. This aids in the ritual of exchange with the sacred symbol and person that will activate them both.

The only active function remaining in Braamfontein cemetery is the crematorium which has recently been renovated. On some Saturdays, mourners would make their way to the south-eastern corner of the site to pay their last respects to their loved one, perhaps even have a plaque raised in their honour on the memorial wall. This is a culturally mandatory journey, and necessary for the deceased and mourner.
Beyond that, we experience the cemetery at a superficial level from the outside and don't participate in the crossing of any of the thresholds that help us engage with the richness of the entire place, be they a cognitive acknowledgement or curiosity.



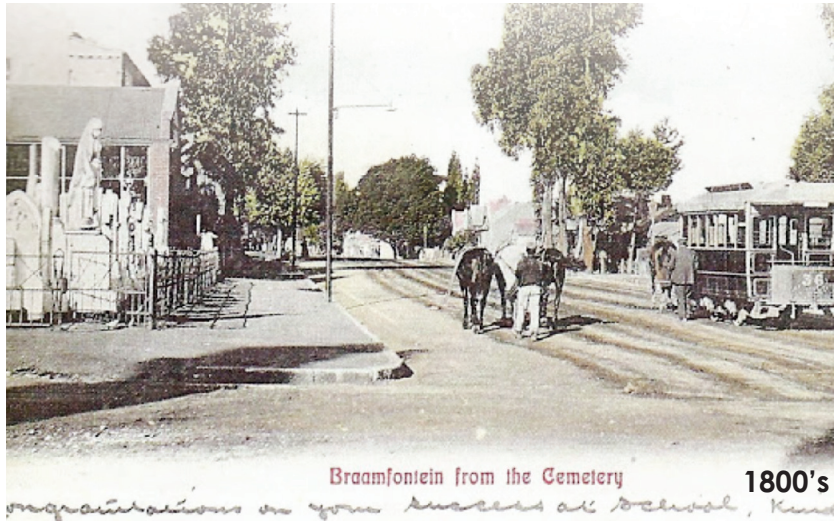
DURBAN CITY CEMETERY c1950's

http://www.fad.co.za/Diary/diary028/West%20St%20Cemetery%20Chapel.jpg



DURBAN CITY CEMETERY c2012

google earth 2014





http://johannesburg1912.wordpress.com/2014/07/27/history-of-braamfontein-pt-1/





http://www.jhblive.com/kultcha/features/rejhb:_joburg's_oldest_cemeteries/152843



1.10 CONCLUSION

It is difficult to ignore the allure of the historical and aesthetic richness that the Braamfontein Cemetery has to offer. Nevertheless, the mystery and sanctity of the cemetery make it difficult to start a dialogue. Although passive cemeteries are a worldwide contention, they are not easy to dismiss given the aura that surrounds them. This project is an attempt to make the cemetery relevant again by resuscitating its history through the establishment of an interpretation centre which functions as a guide and enables the negotiation of the space.

An active Braamfontein cemetery would be one that participates in the social rhythm of the city and speaks to a continuity of and in history.
City Parks is working on a strategy to maximise the use of the venue while still retaining its essence. This has been in discussion for the past two years. How to demarcate the space remains a contentious issue. It is a hope that this project begins to address ways of renegotiating the cemetery space so that it plays a vital and essential role in the urban landscape.