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Points of convergence: redefining the place of arrival in Johannesburg

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SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

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ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND DISCOURSE



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POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

Redefining the Place of Arrival in Johannesburg

2014/12/12

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Points of Convergence, Stefan Antonio Mazzoni, 2014.

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Stefan Antonio Mazzoni

12/12/2014

Date

POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

ABSTRACT

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The ideology of hospitality, symbolic of travel in a world filled with experiences is sought by us all. The notion of exploration as a result of our curiosity is deeply embedded in our makeup. A profound understanding of the world is one of our greatest endeavours as it is routed in the conception of cognitive thought. We are wired to settle in the most habitable parts of the planet and even then we feel the urge for discovery, we do this in the form of travel. From my own encounters as a young boy, nothing expresses this narrative better than the exhilaration and excitement I felt then I arrived in a new city. My experiences by their very nature were formulated from a multitude of sensory indulgences which were unfamiliar but most intriguing. Drawing comparison came naturally as the mind's way of evaluating the surroundings and juxtaposing them with those of my home. This analogy was the core principle to interpreting foreign spaces and devising conclusive outlooks. During the time that one absorbs any foreign way of life, the hotel takes care of the traveler's basic needs and contributes significantly to the overall experience, lending to the enjoyment and relaxation of travel both of which are key components.

The city itself encapsulates the principals of hospitality as it fundamentally offers the traveler, visitor and the local inhabitant, sustenance, safety, and shelter, essentials that are expected and in place from our early social development. These elements are the most basic necessities to sustain survival and are readily available in any city. In the past, cities were fortified against aggressors by defensive walls which enclosed the city and which apart from their utilitarian function, symbolized the status and sovereignty of the citizens and the grandeur of the city. The entrance to the city was through a befitting imposing gate which demarcated the place of arrival and entry and added to the city's standing.

With the progression of time and the advent of rail travel, the city's railway station defined a place of arrival and was often among the grandest structures, designed to impress and declaring lavish opulence and wealth.

This thesis investigates the possibilities of creating a place of arrival in Johannesburg both symbolically and factually. Our metropolis, known as the provincial capital of the Gauteng Province, has, due to its rapid expansion in its relatively short life, no recognizable place of arrival. The introduction of the Gautrain Station in the immediate vicinity of Park Station presented an opportunity to link the station to a hotel and creating a pedestrian throughway from the station that passes through the hotel and into the city. The passage way traverses an impressive square with features designed to create an ennobling introduction to the city.

The design realizes all the criteria of arrival into the city. It combines the railway station which is the mode of travel, the squares form the introduction to the city, the symbolic entrance is the opening through the hotel building, the hotel structure acts as the city wall and the hotel is the traveler's destination offering all the comforts and sustenance. All this serves to create the right ambiance to encourage tourists to remain in the city rather than proceed elsewhere in the area.

Johannesburg is unique and is irreplaceable, it has suffered abandonment and neglect but was once much loved and cherished, it is part of our identity, ours to regain and treasure and deserves a noteworthy place of arrival.