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City of refuge

Marcus, Asher

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This research aims to explore a new model that brings together a Post-Industrial landscape on the East Rand of Gauteng, and a remand facility for awaiting trial detainees, in a way that benefits all parties involved. There are two primary themes of enquiry. The first theme, the starting point, is an examination of the existing networks and infrastructure on the stretch of land between the Wemmer Pan Dam and Germiston Lake. The second theme, the commemoration of the site, is an investigation into the state of remand detention in South Africa. The secondary themes of research are the mechanisms used to marry the two primary themes. The first probe looks into alternative uses for the processed slimes dams. The second, examines means of rehabilitating a Post-Industrial landscape.

The site and network will accommodate awaiting trial detainees. Detainees are innocent until proven guilty, yet no sufficient model exists to contend with the complexity of containment as a means of justice. The current model of remand attaches itself to the prison. The system is not rehabilitative and simply holds detainees until their trials are complete. Almost half of these people are acquitted or found innocent, however, they still face the consequences of exposure to Tuberculosis, the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), rape, gangs, and isolation.

This research attempts to understand remand as a productive process which is intimately linked to the Court rather than to prison. The site has been chosen for three main reasons. The first is that the infrastructure and facilities for detainees already exist from the mining era. The second is that the landscape would benefit from an influx of temporary rehabilitators who can replenish its lacking parts. The third reason is, there is a commemorative aspect whereby the migrant workers, hostel life, and the extraction of gold begin to be expressed through this new relationship. The main design happens on an abandoned mine workers' compound in Germiston.

The primary sources that will inform my design are the specific elements of photography, copper plate etching, sketching, and collage. Research of the history of the site was also done physically through measuring and analysis. The historical understanding of the mining processes and hostel networks was gained from a selected set of reading, which focuses on the human aspect of mining. Books by Ruth First, Dunbar Moodie and others explore the life of the migrant workers who lived on the old mine workers' hostels. Books pertaining to commemoration and memory by Huyssen, Young and others were also explored. A special case study on Cedric Price and the Potteries Thinkbelt was conducted in order to explore how a Post-Industrial landscape could facilitate a new process and way of thinking. A close working relationship with the Wits Justice Project came about. The relevant literature and Government White Papers were examined and interviews with experts were conducted to research and understand remand detention in South Africa.