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Kwa Thema Plaza, Arts and Crafts Center

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KwaThema Plaza, Arts and Craft Center



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I Vusi James Phailane (0210691P) am a student registered for the course Master of Architecture [Professional] in the year 2008. I hereby declare the following:

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Date: 21 November 2008

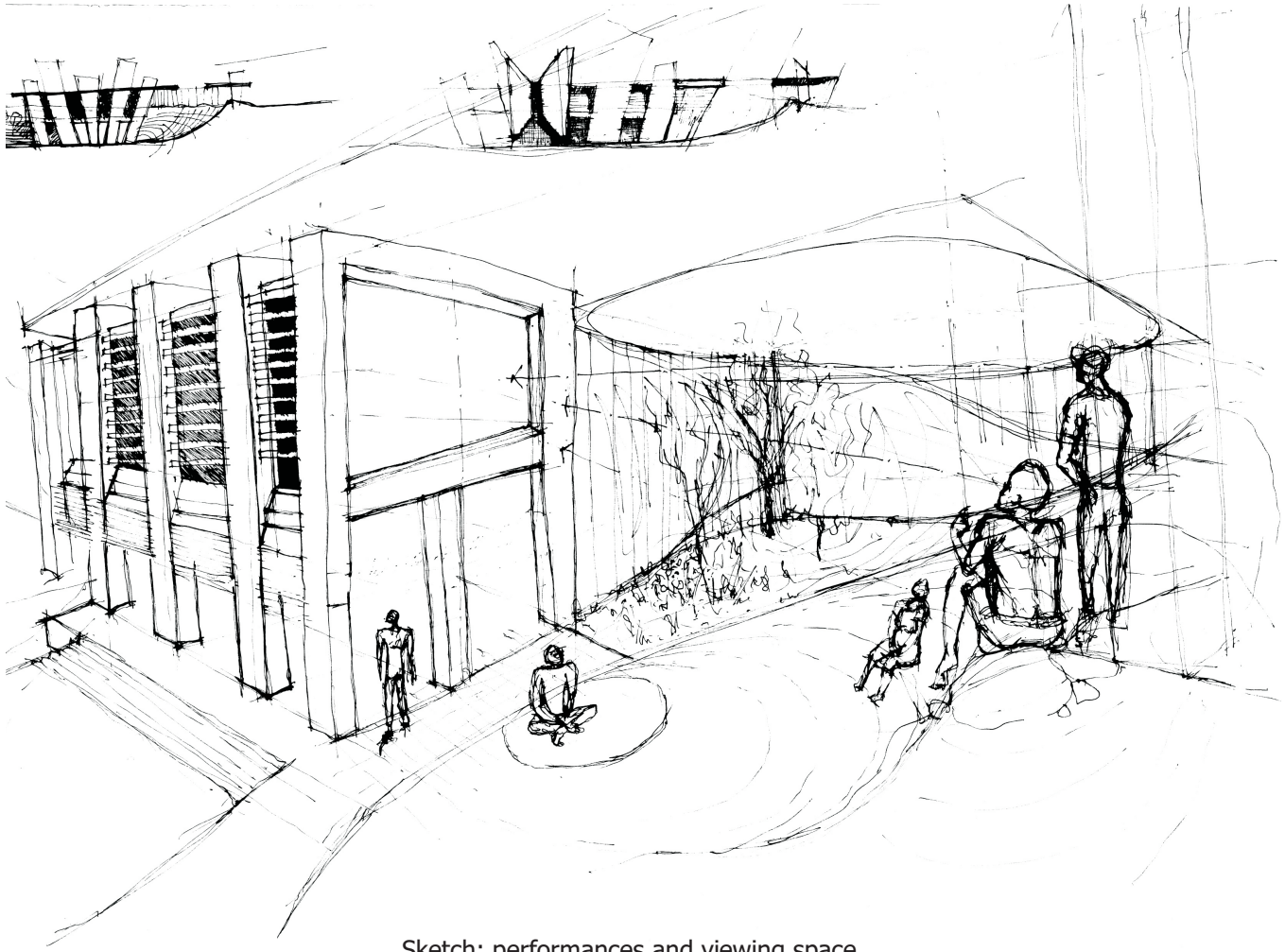
Preface

For me the internal spatial structures; user requirements and the manner in which people appropriate space has been a fundamental principle in deriving the form that the building takes. Understanding the manner in which people use spaces allows for one to design buildings that are in tune with the social context; the environment; and the user needs. Sustainable buildings that can accommodate present and future needs with minimal damage to the environment.

I am proposing to employ architecture in the design of an Arts and Craft Center to develop skills and training of the unemployed and under-employed to address scarce and critical skills of people living in Kwa-Thema township.

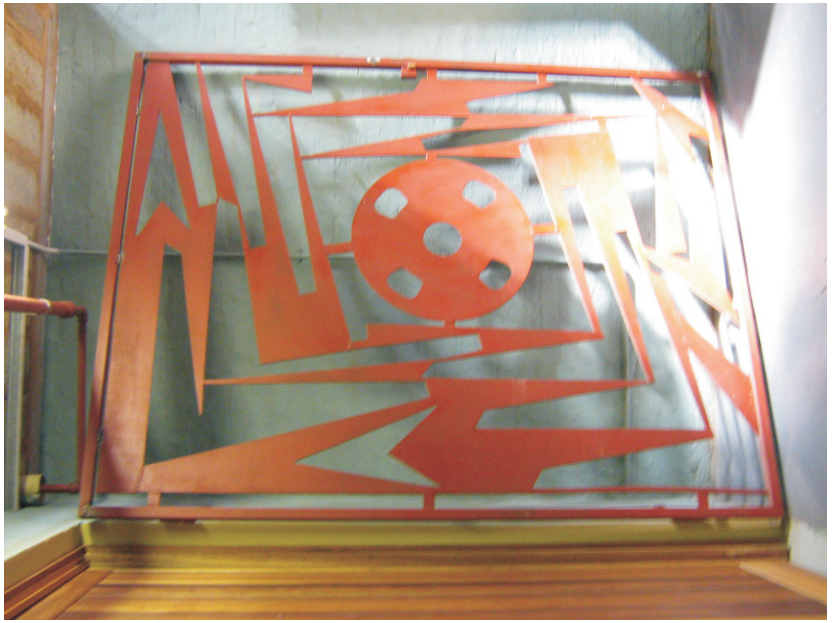
An Arts and Craft Center is to provide people living in previously disadvantaged areas (townships) the opportunity to further their interests and knowledge in the arts and crafts, improve their level of individual skills, and develop their creative abilities. Using architecture to create spaces that contribute to the cultural awareness and enhancement of the community and to offer a diversified program to meet the varied interests and needs of the community.

Architecture can be a tool in providing opportunities and dignified spaces for promoting and developing learning about art practice and culture. It is envisaged that the center will provide opportunities for artists and practitioners working on their own in the area, or in differing communities, to come together for support and information.



Sketch: performances and viewing space
(Author 2008)

Above
Artist Proof Studio:
Decorated steel gate
(Author 2008)



Below
Artist Proof Studio:
Decorated steel fence
(Author 2008)



Topic:
Architecture that recognizes the user requirements of artists living in Kwa-Thema. By researching the social and economic context; spatial organization of activities; Climate regulation; symbolic function; and how the "form of a building is derived from the user requirements and the possibility of achieving efficient construction with available materials and techniques and taking into account the urban design context. And this should be done in a way that is both stimulating and appealing" (Van der Voordt 2005:4).

Employing architecture to analyze the internal spatial structures (functional analysis) occupied by artists as a translation or expression of the form of the building.

Thesis Investigation:
Arts and Craft programme to develop skills and training of the unemployed and under-employed to address scarce and critical skills of people living in Kwa-Thema.

The effects of public transport, pedestrians, informal traders and public transport interchange facilities (Taxi Ranks and bus terminals) on the urban environment and how one can design positive public space and an arts and craft center responding to these spatial conditions.

Architectural solutions to build infrastructure which supports education, business and employment development associated with arts and crafts.

Siting:
An open public site on a public transportation spine, which is located in the vicinity of the main taxi rank in Kwa-Thema (Majola Taxi Rank, public transport interchange node). The site is on the east side of Ndabezitha Street and South of the R45, and is positioned north of the shopping center.

Programme:
Incorporating the informal traders and the Arts and Craft Center along a public transport spine in creating dignified and positive public spaces at transportation interchanges.

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Disabled People of Kwa-Thema,
in a bead work class
(Author 2007)

“Until lately the best thing that I was able to think of in favor of civilization, apart from blind acceptance of the order of the universe, was that it made possible the artist, the poet, the philosopher, and the man of science. But I think that is not the greatest thing. Now I believe that the greatest thing is a matter that comes directly home to us all. When it is said that we are too much occupied with the means of living to live, I answer that the chief worth of civilization is just that it makes the means of living more complex; that it calls for great and combined intellectual efforts, instead of simple, uncoordinated ones, in order that the

crowd may be fed and clothed and housed and moved from place to place. Because more complex and intense intellectual efforts mean a fuller and richer life. They mean more life. Life is an end in itself, and the only question as to weather it is worth living is whether you have enough of it.
I will add but a word. We are all very near despair. The sheathing that floats us over its waves is compounded of hope, faith in the unexplainable worth and sure issue of effort, and the deep, sub-conscious content which comes from the exercise of our powers”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, JR (Jacobs 1962:1).

Introduction

Background of the study_____01
Context of the design_____02
Objectives_____03
Academic context_____04
Methodology_____05
Structure of the Thesis_____06



"Wonder the Herdboy"
(Author 2007)

Introduction

Background of the study:
Kwa-Thema like most Townships lacks social facilities such as well established community art centers to cater for the needs of artisans and scarce skills development. As a result people are forced to travel long distances using public transport in attempts to reach and gain access to such facilities.

Some facilities that have been provided by government are located in inaccessible locations making it more and more difficult for artisans and majority of the population in disadvantaged areas to gain full access and sense of ownership and belonging to these facilities and which further hampers ones develop.

The theme of form, function, structure and construction of these centers also does not respond to the everyday social, living and workspace of artisans.

The thesis is about an exploration of the Arts and Craft Center in Kwa-Thema as a skill development programme for the unemployed and scarce skills development.

Context of the Investigation:
The issue of scarce and critical skills such as artisans has been raised by the Department of Labour and Education, and their objective is that skills development is now a priority in government's efforts to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty and inequality.

The Department of Arts and Culture has initiated a programme to contribute towards achieving the goals of social cohesion. The community arts centers are seen to function as arts incubators, where young people learn a variety of skills to create sustainable job opportunities in the sector. Focusing on the preservation of the family and the holistic development of people with disabilities, youth and children.

Considering the efforts that the Department of Arts and Culture are aiming to achieve, the thesis seeks to explore the arts and craft center as a space that is dignified and has value to it and which responds to the social needs of artisans in the Kwatsaduza (Kwa-Thema, Tsakane and Dududza) townships.

The aim of the thesis is therefore to design an Arts and Culture Center which will contribute towards social cohesion and bring together facilities needed for holistic development of artisans in Kwatsaduza.



Informal traders on Majola taxi Rank
(Author 2007)



Informal traders on Majola taxi Rank
(Author 2007)

The objective of this thesis is to describe an Architecture that can provide multi-functional framework, within which human activities can be carried out. These activities are socially determined, and therefore, give the building a social meaning. Noberg-Schulz refers to the "combination of a building as a piece of social environment and its cultural symbolism as a 'symbolic environment'" (Van der Voordt 2005:2)

Furthermore, the objective of the thesis is to explore the function of architecture concerned with function as a bearer of meanings. The Arts and Craft Center's **form** and **aesthetics** that the building uses as a means of expressing the user requirements of artists and the manner in which humans appropriate space, and representing the experiential values.

Further, to the above, the thesis objective is to define the architecture where the form of the building is derived from the user require and the relationship between form, function, construction, consistency and context is emphasized.

Objectives

The greatest concern, passion, and objective with the selected area of study is to analyze, evaluate, study, and to acquire a better understanding regarding the employ of mutual exposure in a township square; with three-storey housing and franchise, positioned on the perimeter and framing the square within the township center. Through exposure to 'others', a concentration of people in large numbers within cultural district center, and to encourage community participation and education, in order for the community and the previously marginalized to be uplifted and empowered. Furthermore, it seeks to enhance urban development within townships by integrating urban settlements to the natural landscape.

Furthermore, it is to question the credibility of Ubuntu principles and the web of life, learning how it feasible and viable to foster and reintroduce a paradigm shift into society, so one does not lose oneself and maintaining ones cultural identity. For one to foresee tomorrow and direction, one should have a clear understanding of one's past, the very characterization of individuality and exuberant diversity – identity, knowing oneself.

Architectural forms and language responding and corresponding to the needs, heritage and lifestyle of the people, to create identity and place making for the township square (cultural district) so it maintains its character and does not loose its essence. “City character is blurred until every place becomes more like every other place, all adding up to Noplace” (Jacobs 1962:338)

Dewar has describe regionalism as “a recognition of the inextricable interdependence between the characteristics of a place, peoples activities in that place and the emergence of cultural expressions [Ubuntu] and forms – the triad of 'PLACE, WORK, FOLK” (Dewar, Uytenbogaardt et al 1977:13). The wholeness which Lewis Mumford calls “the territorial basis of civilization” (Mumford, 1939). Mumford further describes the modern, expanding metropolis as “an image in place of the 'non-plan of the non-city,” (Sennet 1990: 34).

Constructing and inventing through architecture a 'place' or create an identity for the place. Geoffrey Scott's basic work, “The Architecture of Humanism” of 1914. The work “values before all else the actions of human beings and the effect of physical forms upon their spirit” (Robert Venturi 1966:14)



Aerial image of the road pattern in KwaThema
(Calderwood 1955:78)

Furthermore, it is aimed at learning how “urban growth should be accommodated and managed to the best needs of the inhabitants; and about what qualities should be encapsulated within our cities [townships: author}to ensure that qualitative rich, efficient and socially supportive environments emerge and are enhanced over time” (Dewar, Uytenbogaardt et al 1977:10)

As stated above, the site for the area of study is located at the epicenter of a township; “a center [is: author] the place of definition in the city.” (Sennett 1990:13). KwaThema is one of the first model townships in South Africa, whereby planners, architects, and engineers were invited to design the first township for the natives. However, the effects of time had withered away the Utopian garden city planning of the township that was first conceived of, and has now become an economic desert.



The-shebeen by Sam Nhlengethwa
(www.artists-press.net: cited06/2008)

At present townships have become living deaths, scattered far away from activity nodes and have since been forgotten. As, more individuals who are without employment, a shelter and means to make ends to meet, then society becomes a monstrosity, a tyranny, a living death "solidified chaos" (Jacobs 1962:21).

The overall aim of the study is to learn and acquire a better understanding on how Three-storey (self help production and transformation) incremental growth housing coupled with franchises around township square (People's Center) can better the needs of society. Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974, Architect) best belief that "To change society for the better … that bringing people together in domestic or collective settings would engender social good." (Robert McCarter 2005: 28).

Furthermore the objective of the investigation is to evaluate and study about the "… success and failure in real life" (Jacobs 1962:6) cities, and townships.

For a flourishing and successful neighbourhood and society Jacobs states that a neighbourhood should have three main qualities: "First, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space" (Jacobs 1962:35) and she further states that "the idea is that if no one from outside can peek into where you live – behold, privacy." (Jacobs 1962:59)

"Second, there must be eyes upon the street; eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street" (Jacobs 1962:35). To provide for the safety of the street there must be constant eyes on the street, "People on the street are what keep streets safe" (Sennett 1990:96). This point also reflects on how Ubuntu, which means humanity sharing and living together under one umbrella of human kind, can be used within societies for looking out (caring) for one another in mutual symbiotic ties (Masakhane: helping one another grow in reaching one's goals and objectives). These aspects can also positively contribute to the success of the neighbourhood.

Furthermore, the self-government functions of city streets is to "weave webs of public surveillance and thus to protect strangers as well as themselves; to grow networks of small scale, everyday public life and thus of trust and social control; and to help assimilate children into reasonably responsible and tolerant city life" (Jacobs 1962:119)

"And thirdly, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the numbers of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers" (Jacobs 1962:35). She also refers to the users as "the economic effects of people spread through time of day … (which gives the street its safety)" (Jacobs 1962:153).

Academic context

There is an ever growing need for artisans in rural and peri-urban poor communities, to gain access to Arts and Craft Centers.The research takes into consideration the realities facing people living in disadvantaged conditions in the East Rand.

As a result of few or none such social facilities in these areas people are forced to travel long and tedious distances to access these facilities. Therefore, the solution is to build these facilities closer to were people can easily access them.

The academic context chosen for the investigation will be based on fundamental principles and writings on the nature and behavior of cities, and the theoretical background of modern architecture will be studied. Since the area of chosen study is a model township, KwaThema, some architectural principles, concepts, and guidelines that would be followed through are: Eyes on the street, Ubuntu and its influence in society, Garden city planning, Open building principles and New Urbanism

The planning principles above would be analyzed and their failures and success would be carefully assessed, studied, and evaluated. Furthermore, Sustainability and its urgent need in modern society would also be integrated and interrelated into the investigation.

Furthermore, the “contradiction and complexities of urban experience [and architecture: author] at all scales” (Venturi 1966:12) would also form the academic context relevant to the investigation and study.

there is an urgent need for social facilities such as the Arts and Craft Centers to further help the development of society.Therefore, ensuring realization of empowerment opportunities through training and job creation in arts, culture and heritage sector.

The programme caters for school leavers, unemployed graduates, artisans, technicians and technologists, engineering graduates and managers from the manufacturing environment.



The-compounds by Sam Nhlengethwa
(www.artists-press.net: cited06/2008)

The Arts and Craft Center in Kwa-Thema will form part of the urban environment. The research will contribute and assist the Department of Arts and Culture in its efforts to minimize poverty and unemployment by providing skills development to the community.



Skipping by Sam Nhlengethwa
(www.artists-press.net: cited 06/2008)

Being an artist and growing up in Kwa-Thema I have first hand experience with the difficulties facing artisans in townships.

The methodological approach shall look at the following aspects: need, programme, idea, and context. These aspects shall be adopted as a methodology in structuring the argument for the thesis.

Research that informed the thesis was collected using: documented study of artists living in the area; semi-structured interviews; informal conversations; my own personal observation; and living conditions of people in the study area .

Literature was reviewed from the Kwa-Thema Local Spatial Development Framework, these data was used to inform and guide one on the development currently taking place in the study area.

Observations of Arts and Craft Institutions such as the Artist Proof Studio in Newtown (Johannesburg) and the Bag Factory in Fordsburg was conducted to inform me on the user requirement, spatial organization and functioning of the Arts and Craft Center.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the artists (who are mostly living in townships such as Soweto) from the Artist Proof Studio to assist in the research.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured in the following format.

In chapter one: **'Introduction'** the thesis introduces an overview of the topic of exploration. The chapter provides the reader with a theoretical argument an approach to the thesis.

In chapter two: **'Site'** an analysis and historical development of Kwa-Thema is presented. Social issues and mobility will be discussed.

In chapter three: **'Theory'** the theoretical argument is discussed, arts and Craft Center spatial organization will be discussed and presented.

In chapter four: **'Case Study'** looks at similar projects in the context of Arts and Craft Center and skills development.

In Chapter five: **'Programme and the Site'** the development of the programme is discussed, the restrictions of the user requirement's needs is defined.

In Chapter six: **'Design Development'** the exploration of the design concept is presented.

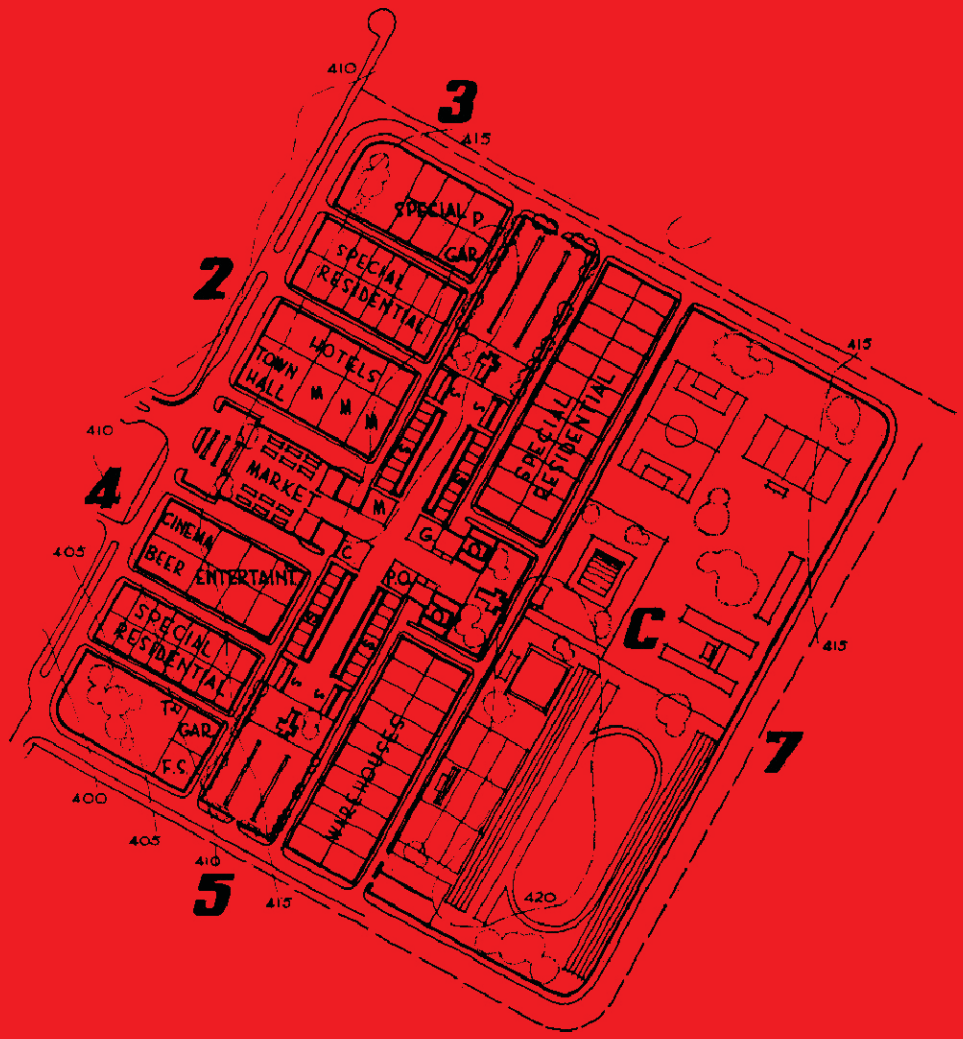
In Chapter seven: **'The Design'** documents the design exploration, development and final design.



Informal stalls on Majola Taxi Rank
(Author 2008)



Layout of Kwa-Thema neighbourhood
(After Calderwood 1953: 152,180,181)



Initial plan of Kwa-Thema Civic Center
(After Calderwood 1955:167)