

ACT V: TRANSFORMATION

_RE-THINKING CULTURE

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PREMISE

Accepting assimilation to a common culture through colonization, apartheid and currently through globalization, the result has been "sameness." "Globalisation astronomically expands the realm of possibility, and exponentially depletes the architectural imagination." [Koolhaas 1998:29]

Historically, because cultures were not regarded as equal, parts of original cultures and identities were lost. However the remaining elements of these different cultures, through assimilation, found a common thread in their own form of urban culture. These leftover traces form invisible lines and overlays dissecting or reinforcing one another, thereby suggesting potential relationships. Hence this project is based on challenging the basis of culture formation, specifically Contemporary Urban Culture, primarily through one cultural manifestation: Music. Thus there is a direct correlation from music to dance in traditional cultures.

RECIPROCITY OF REFLECTION

“Cultural forms can be either emergent or in decline, where only residual elements often detached from their original context remain active.”
[Tomaselli 1988:20]

The aim of this project is to facilitate a new form of public domain as a means of coordinating the local community within a densely populated space. A common interest shall be cultivated that encourages participation from a large group of people. By the spaces and cross-programming of functions, a cultural bridge shall be formed that communicates the diversity of local customs of the place through music. Hence the project becomes a catalyst for reflection using traces of history along a threshold space between two or more perceived boundary edges. “The aim is to produce a “poly-centric mosaic” to avoid the risks of social exclusion.” [Acebillo 2007:10]

An emergent form of culture is to be developed, with the residual element being the existing context and public arena through which musical permeation will occur.

The pragmatic result is a means to force conscious and unconscious public exchange. “Design must provide for overlapping territories, shifting use, and roles of tolerance.” [Lynch 1981:159] This therefore does not just refer to peaceful harmonies but also clashes; creating controlled aspects of different cultures that completely contradict or oppose aspects of others. However such spaces shall be in contrast to the basic harmonies with the constant changing and shifting of use allowing for changes in intensity of explosions/clashes.



FLEXIBILITY/BLURRING: QUESTION OF 'AFRICANNESS'



If inclusion is the basis of this project, then it is important to deal with the reality of those who were not involved in South Africa's history by heritage/ancestry, but who appear now as part of South Africa's current contemporary culture particularly in areas such as Hillbrow with a significant percentage of foreign nationals. These are people who play a role in the future of the country. As Bremner (2007) refers to Johannesburg as a rather conflicted mix of different mainstream cultures, the Inner City can be a point of opportunity in which to integrate foreign nationals and/or immigrants formally. Already accustomed to acculturalisation by being separated from their own dominant cultures, the sheer magnitude of the number of cultures in the Johannesburg Metropolis allows

for amalgamation into one already-assimilated culture; a shared knowledge of heritage and a common future goal using transcendence of music.

The 'new' culture and 'new' domain is looking to the future with the principles utilized in this project which are applicable to other contexts with similar premise. Contemplation is allowed for a glimpse into the past but the focus is the cultural future of the Inner City and the collective identity of its residents and users. Contemporary Culture is looking to a form of critical regionalism; embracing something of local culture through music but also including aspects and technologies of a Global culture.

“How does an African identity embrace those whose roots are not in Africa but partakes fully in the current democracy? ...how might Africans who are diasporic subjects in the “new South Africa participate in this assertion of African identity?” [Akrofi et al 2007:16]

TRANSLATION OF MUSIC



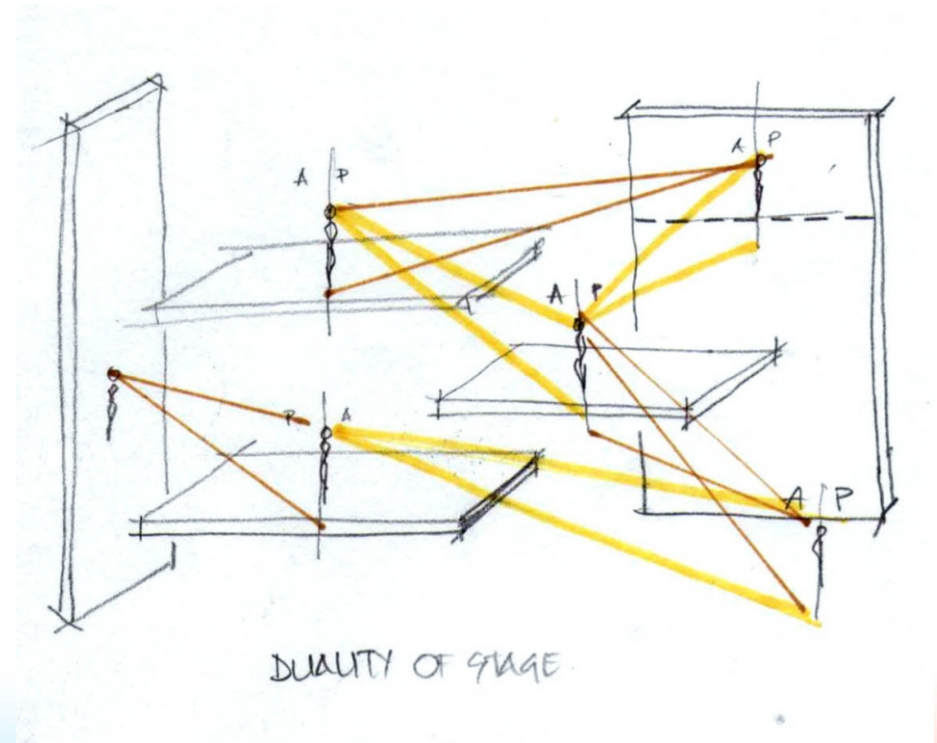
This section aims to unlock the project and introduce the reader to the lens through which to view the aspect of music. The idea is transcendence; that is elevating the individual and enriching the mind while providing educational and social benefit.

There is a twofold approach to this. The core shall be imploded with aspects designed within an autonomous environment and its impact on its surroundings, and then the context/environmental influence on the centre. This is to be explored through penetration and permeation of music into the surrounding context but also the impact and penetration of the society on this particular overlap.

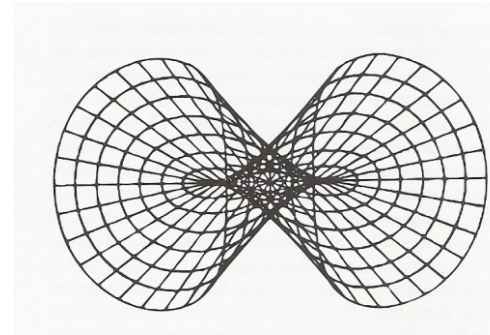
Aspects of music; harmony, rhythm and melody, have contributed to the mapping process by which the site has been located. On a smaller scale, that of a building on the site; it is to be viewed primarily from the aspect of performance. Because traditional music was all about performance and participation in a community, as still occurs in various rural areas, a cultural dance to traditional music was a source of pride. It is this pride to be instilled in the local Hillbrow community.

Performance can be defined as "an action carried out before an audience." (Collins Dictionary, 1999) This definition is expanded beyond that of just formal performances to include the informal and everyday idea of performance. Whether or not citizens are aware, actions in a public space are also a form of local performance.

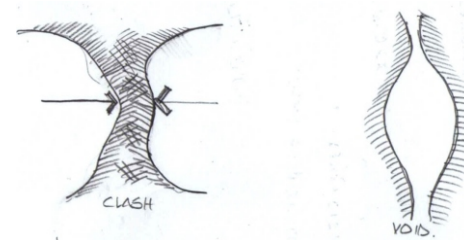
The duality of the individual in terms of these two aspects is to be explored.



DISSONANCE VS HARMONY: INVERSION AND VOID



Although this project is focused on the positive aspect of celebration, realistically it is not an all-encompassing place. It is also about unconscious exchange, being forced to interact and move through spaces in which there will inevitably be collision. This collision, however, is buffered and facilitated through a number of means in order to produce interesting spaces and interactions.



Hence some transitory spaces allow for clashes, to the point of inversion of sound. Many chords at varying frequencies at one moment may result in no sound or warping, shifting and doubling. When translated into space-making, this may be void or a space representative of several parts of the building and the importance of visual connections.

ACT VI: CASE STUDIES

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FUERZA BRUTA, MIAMI



This is a show that deals with the visceral emotions and draws the audience in by its unconventional style of delivery.

It originates in Brazil and is traditionally an outdoor evening event, where the audience stands and the stage is a virtual 360° view. From a visitors' perspective, the stage happens above them, below them and around them, tantalizing the senses and providing a thrilling experience. It has also been performed indoors in the United States, where the traditional Theatre concept has been shattered and platforms cover the raked seating to become the stage while the traditional stage becomes the space for the audience to stand and participate.

The combination of the dynamic performance coupled with the enveloping music makes the show altogether unique; each performance varies dependent on the audience, location and availability to create different platforms.



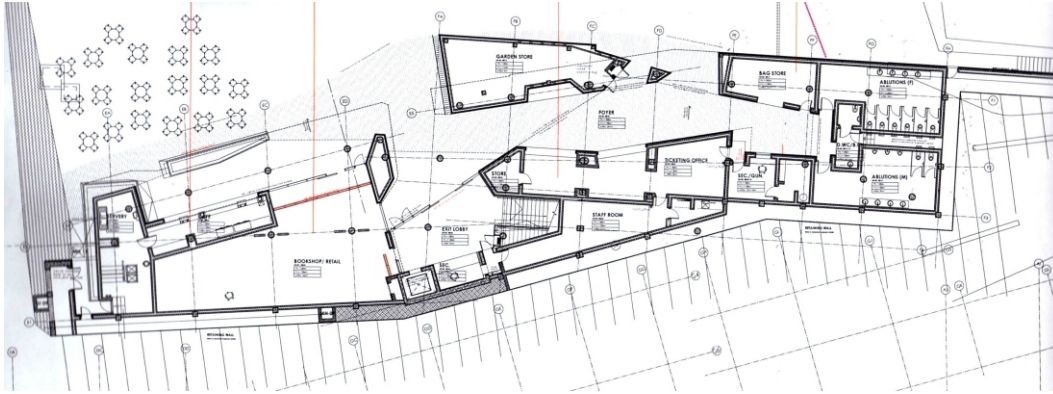
This is of relevance to my thesis through its breaking of boundaries and unity of audience achieved through a change in understanding performance space. The transformation aspect of the Theatre into a space for other functions, and alternatively also a focus on creating an element of formality in the informality of the everyday outdoor space.



[[www. Fuerzabrutamiami.com](http://www.Fuerzabrutamiami.com) Accessed 2010-10-22 at 1814hrs]

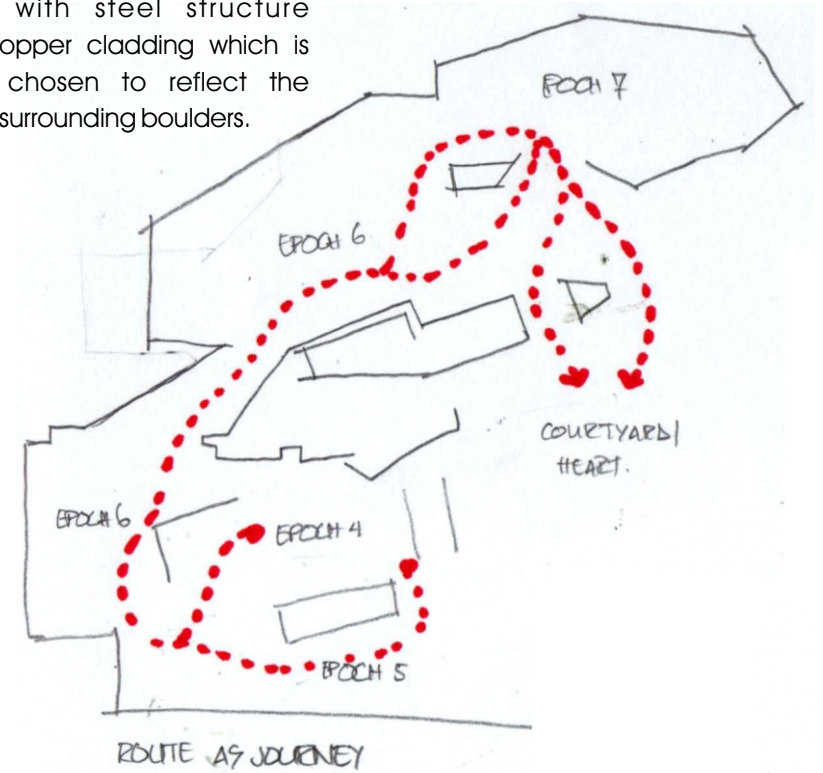
FREEDOM PARK MUSEUM, PRETORIA 2005-2009

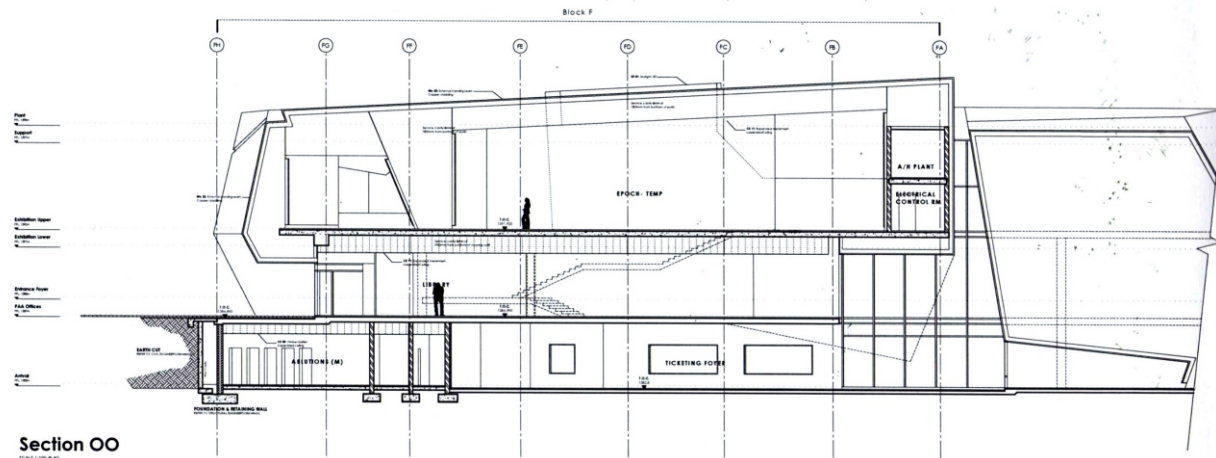
GAPP Architects, Mashabane Rose and Associates, MMA Architects



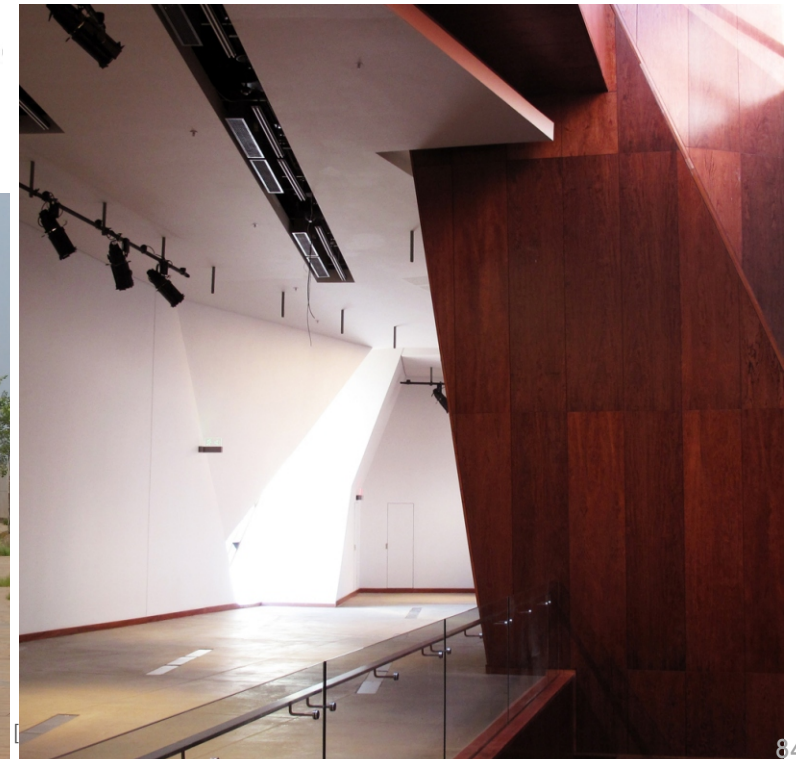
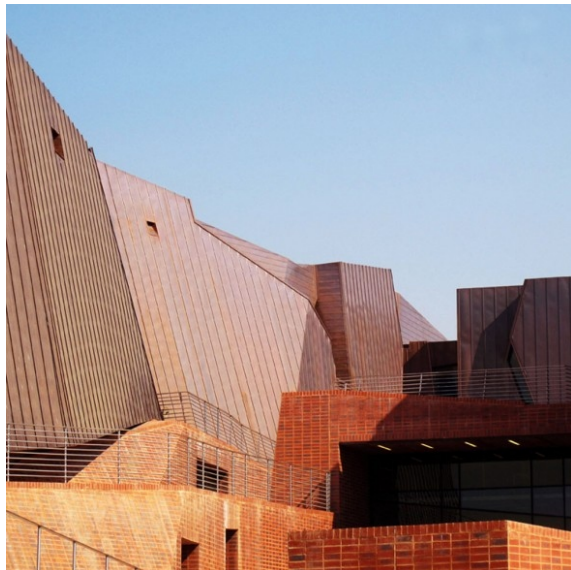
The museum is located on 52 hectares of hilly landscape, where the museum is set up to commemorate the history of South Africa. It has a graceful dialogue with the Garden of Healing and Remembrance in the Park. Through narrating the story, the way the building is designed is as a journey through the 7 epochs or eras of the country's history.

It has been designed to blend in with the landscape with steel structure supporting Copper cladding which is strategically chosen to reflect the colours of the surrounding boulders.





The interior resonates with the mountainous shelters of the traditional spaces, while the exterior has a direct relationship with the cracks and fissures of natural boulders found on site schoed in the design of the window deep-set openings.



KIASMA MUSEUM FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, 1998, HELSINKI, FINLAND

Stephen Holl Architects



The Concept is of particular interest as it deals with the link between a medical term determining intersections and that of physical form to be created by architecture.

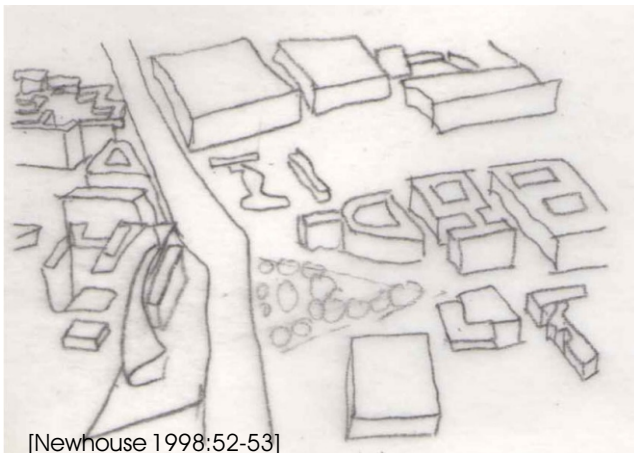
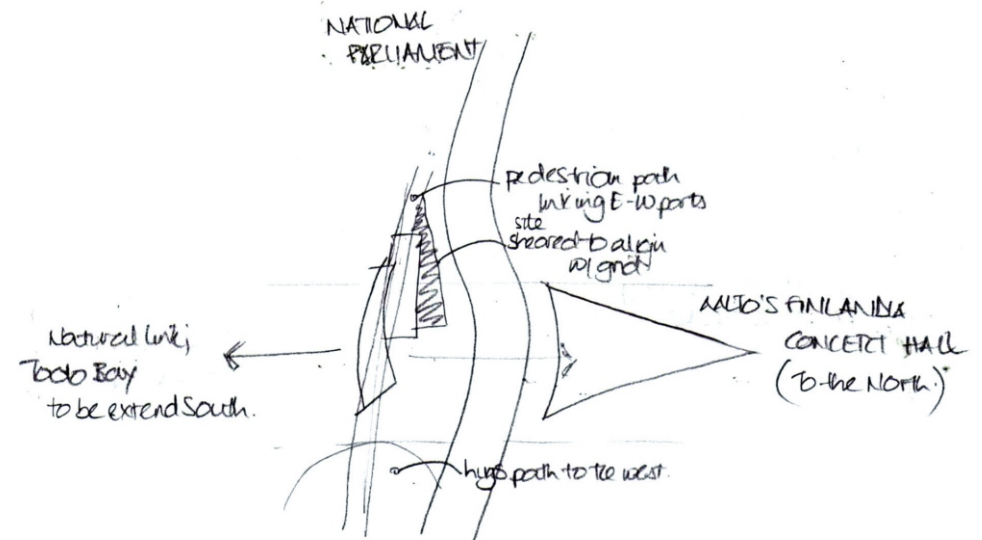
The Architect opted for 'silent and serene architecture' (Newhouse 1998:52) looking at the museum as a sacred space. It contains artworks from the 1960s to the present. The approach chosen was for the benefit of all artists within the space for maximum adaptability.

It is composed of two interlocking masses, a 5-storey curvilinear building with a 4-storey rectangle. The interstitial space is countered by using a skylit entrance and circulation routes such as ramps and staircases. The curve lets light in due to the low angle of sun in the area; allowing every gallery to have access to natural light.

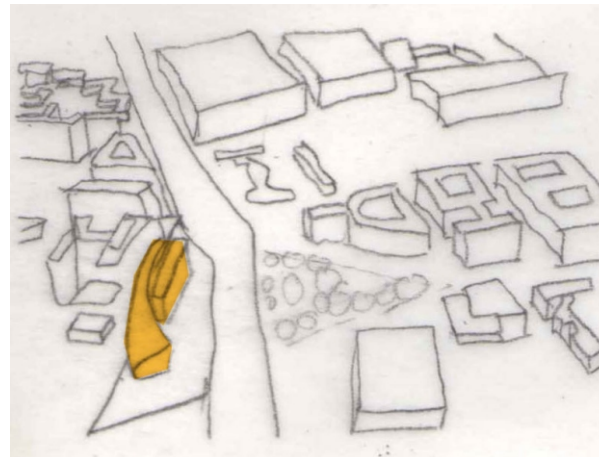
Its location of being at an intersection is also quite unique, as it is at the kink of a highway, while in the middle of several other landmark buildings in the area; all of which the architect drew particular attention to in his design.

It does not reflect everything but responds to the important landmarks that influence the design. The interiors instead are stripped of all distractions to allow visitors to focus on the artworks they come to see.

The materiality reflects the natural tones of cladding; strips of grey zinc offset with patches of brighter hand-sanded Aluminium. Structural glass planks evoke the image of ice while the interior functions dictate whether the glass is frosted or clear.



[Newhouse 1998:52-53]



CY WOMBLY GALLERY, 1995, HOUSTON, TEXAS

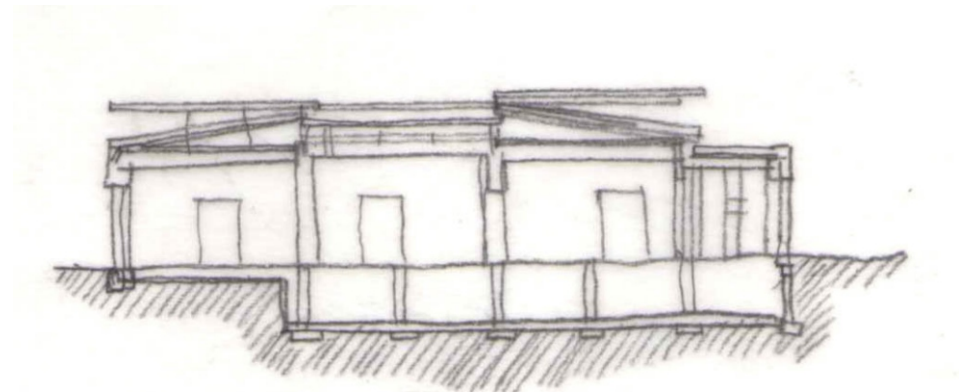
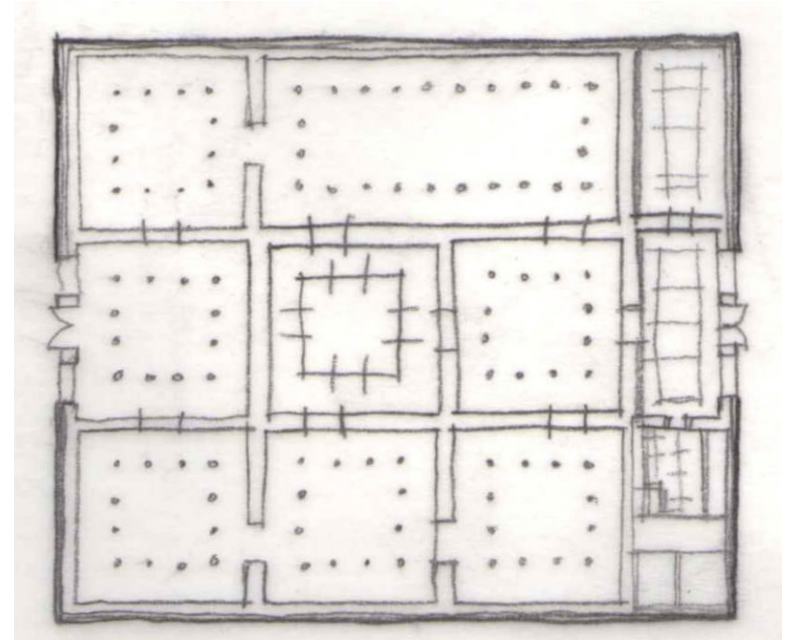
Renzo Piano Building Workshop



This gallery is located across the street from the famous Menil collection, and refers to the architectural traditional of the first monographic museums. It is directly related to the works being exhibited within, so Italian-type syntax is used as the artist's works are heavily influenced by his travels to Rome.

This gallery illustrates how there is beauty in simplicity; the complexity comes in the detail. This building also reads as a canvas or backdrops to the artworks within. The art instills life, while the simplicity of form results in the complexity of detail.

The principle of focal point versus backdrop can be extrapolated; where the art is the performer, and the building is the backstage. This allows the individualism of the artist to be perceived.

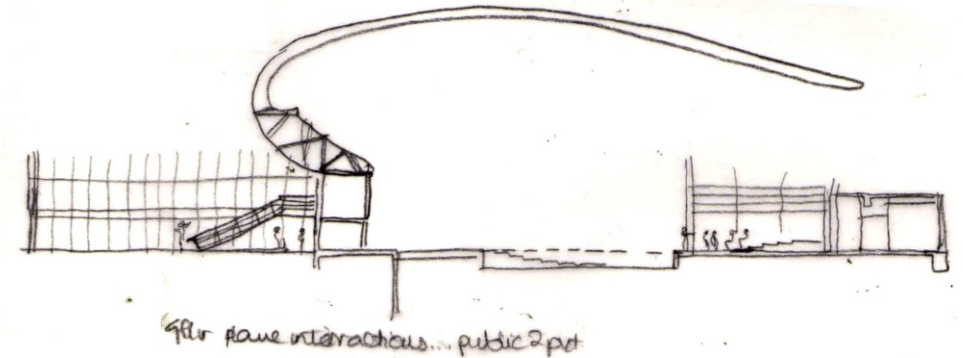
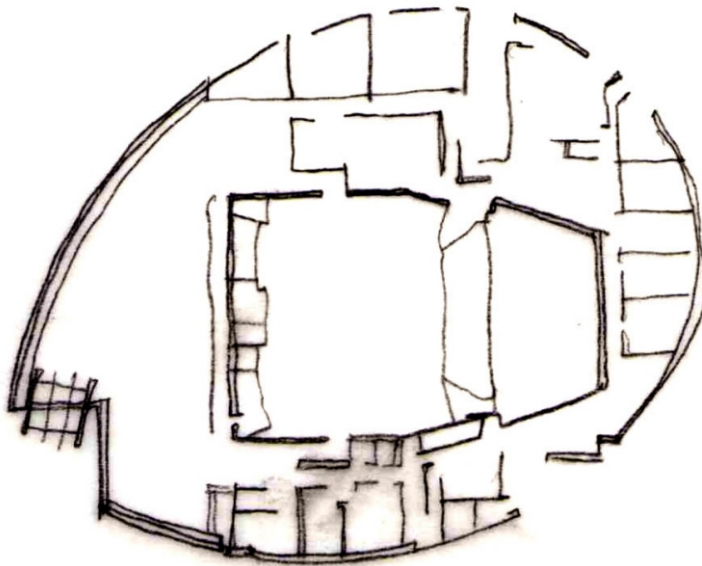


PERTH CONCERT HALL, 2005, AUSTRALIA

Building Design Partnership

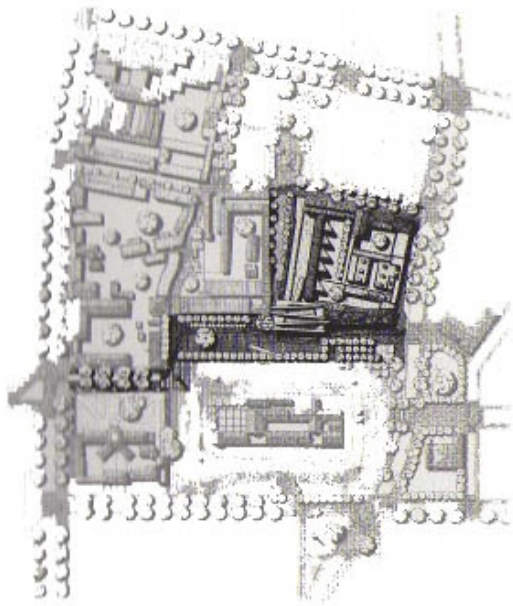
This is a Concert Hall located in the city of Perth, Western Australia. Because of its rather small population, it is targeted at visitors and tourists who often populate the city at strategic times of the year. For this reason, the hall becomes multi-functional and hosts the full range of music and conference facilities while also being open to being transformed into a banquet hall for city functions. The financial viability was the driver for the integration of many functions, but this has also resulted in interesting spaces for the architects to resolve.

It is owned and w
local authority.



CONSTITUTIONAL COURT_Johannesburg, South Africa [1997]

OMM Architects



It is one of the projects initiated during the rejuvenation of the Inner City, it is located on the site of former prison buildings bordered by Hillbrow and Braamfontein. The precinct was designed as a means of marrying cultural and legislative practices; housing various facilities including the Human Rights Commission, museums, offices, shops and performance areas.

It was formerly isolated from its context but this perimeter border has been broken down by allowing pedestrian routes across and through the site. There are a series of pavilions allowing for maximum sunlight penetration as well as hybrid open and closed courtyards facilitating movement.



The design was to be representative of democracy while showing the future efforts of the Legislature to allow for transparency and openness.

The Architects made the effort to hybridize the colonial 'court' perception with that of the traditional African courts.

This meant understanding the 'tree' as the basis of shelter traditionally and symbolizing that in the structure while also presenting the western interpretation in terms of internal functionality.

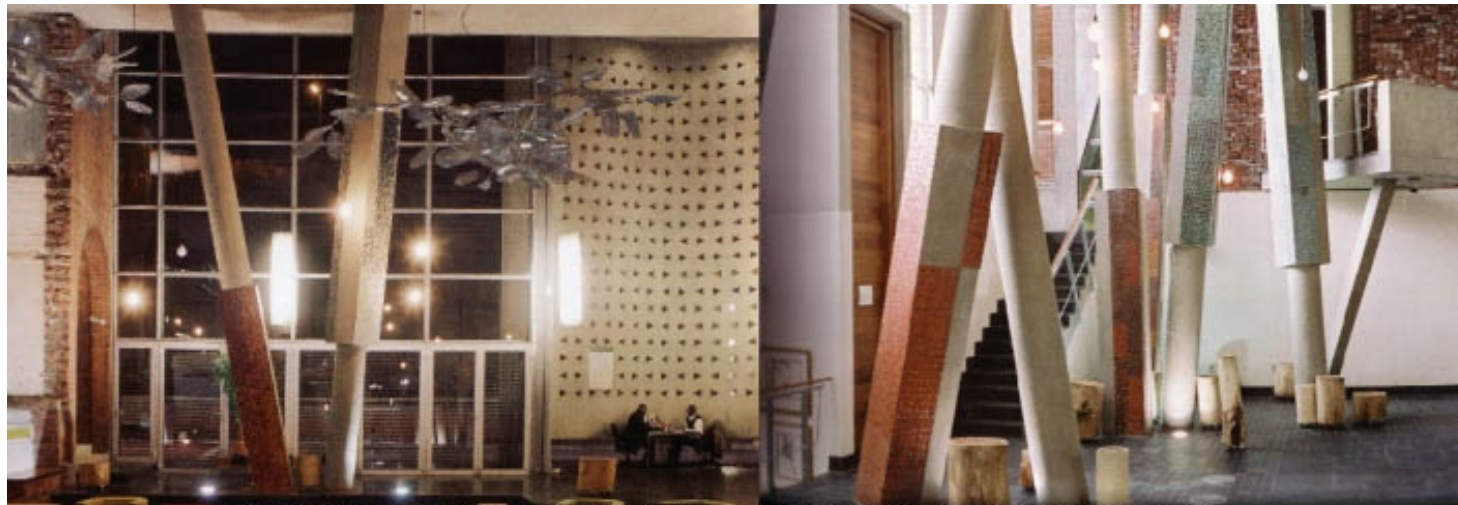


fig 4.14 Constitutional Court, Hillbrow Johannesburg (Makin 2006)

