



A[FR0]SCENSION

A NARRATIVE CURATING MYTHOLOGY AND ITS RELATION TO ARCHITECTURE
AS A CATALYST TO RADICAL SPATIAL EVOLUTION

DECLARATION

Thamir

Yoliswa Dlamini
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My thesis is dedicated firstly to the family I was blessed with: my mother Thandi, my older brothers Mongi and Dumisane, thank you for your guidance and support throughout the years. Secondly, to the family I created: Kim and Kio, mommy loves you, thank you for the late night pick-ups and for always helping me keep things in perspective. I would also like to thank my studio crew, the long nights would not have been the same without you. To my friends that have kept me sane through this process, my supervisor and all the wise men and women I have encountered on this journey of enquiry, THANK YOU.

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CONTENTS

Afroscension is a mythical construct, in search of a narrative that relates to repressed or forgotten African histories as a foundation for future possible scenario's, mediated by technology, politics and culture. Summarily the exploration of African mythology and its relationship to architecture becomes important as a catalyst for radical spatial evolution.

By basing this investigation on the Afrofuturist philosophy .Afrofuturism begins to forecast alternative scenarios of the past, present and future through investigating the relationship between time and humanity.

A(fro)scension can be understood as a portal of time travel. A concept of movement between certain points of time, analogous to movement between different points in space by an object or a person. A(fro)scension steps outside of the usual sense of the perception of time in order to engage public imagination.

Afroscension speaks to the idea of architecture as a portal of transcendence into Africa. Where we might eventually become inhabitants of an African universe. Opening portals or windows both into the mythological past of Africa, engaging with memory while projecting itself into the future of the built environment by understanding certain African futurist objectives.

As a young, African female I have constantly found myself having to navigate between what it means to black and or African in a western context. This was a question I was not aware had any bearing on my perception of my identity. Growing up in a culturally fluid environment I found myself questioning my "Africanism". I started questioning the African stereotypes associated with the African Identity. Afrofuturism is a movement that I gravitated toward as the movement has been calling for a new, re-imagined black identity. One defined for and by black people. My inquiry morphed into a quest I call A(fro)scension:

This thesis will begin by understanding the Afrofuturist movement: Investigating its relevance to contemporary Africa, through critical theory and its contemporary manifestation through art and space. Secondly, there will be an investigation to the current African cultural identity and analysis of how space and architecture have progressed on the continent. Lastly African Spirituality will be investigated as a way to understand what exists beyond the earth and how it impacts us as human beings first and Africans second. Questioning what it would mean to consciously become inhabitants of an African state of mind.

Begging the question of whether the notion of space can bring into existence a re-imagined African city and eventually recognizing African ascension and the role architecture has to play in this transcendence.

This sequence of inquiry has led me to the investigation of mythology and its relationship to architecture. A(fro)scension becomes a mythical construct based on the combination of selected fragments of African identity past and present.

Traditional western knowledge sharing combined with architecture has led to our present spatial condition. Can alternative African methods of knowledge sharing combined with an architecture that responds to it lead us to the future?

Fig 1.1.
"An Afrofuturistic Future" 2017
Adapted by Author

source: https://www.google.co.za/search?biw=1121&bih=799&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=0G14Uo6bNM-dkwU63q74A&q=space&oq=space&gs_l=psy-ab..



Fig 1.2.
"A new social construct " 2017
Drawn by Author

UNDERSTANDING A[FRO]SCENSION

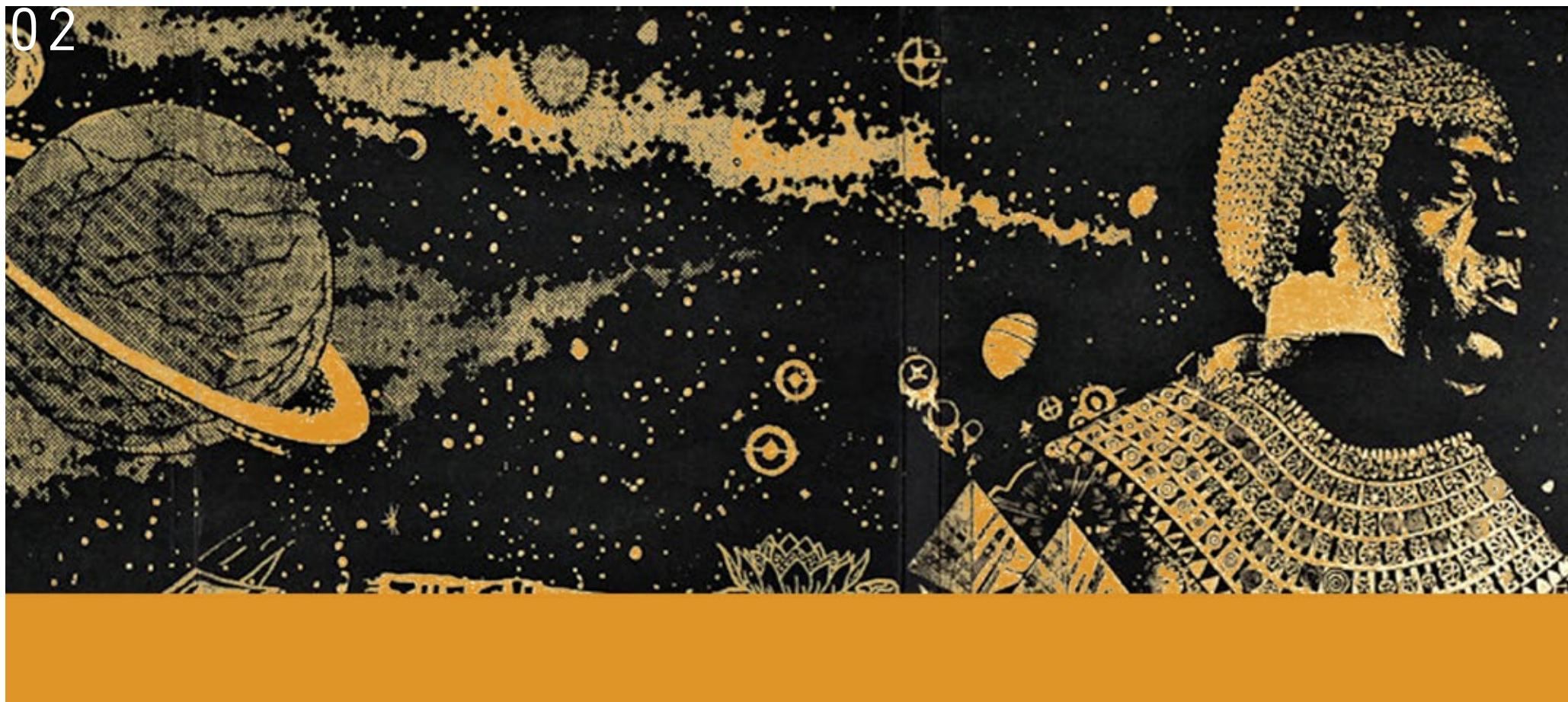


Fig 2-1.
"The Shadows cast by tomorrow" 1970

source:<http://www.hardformat.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/sun-ra-3.jpg>

An overdue message to Earth from Saturn. This image is a album cover to the vinyl copy Afrofuturist Jazz artist, Sun Ra's Jazz collection.

AFROSCENSION:

6 A WORD ON THE AFROFUTURISM OF ARCHITECTURE

A (fro)scension in the context of the future, is based on the Afrofuturist philosophy. A(fro)scension begins to bring into existence a collaboration between art, architecture and culture.

Afroscension gravitates toward the idea of a new state of mind that is investigated through an Afrofuturist lens. There has been calling for a new 'black' identity, one that begins to question the existing African stereotypes, (both negative and positive) associated with the African identity.

Questions of the origins of humanity and our connections to one another and the African continent, look to the notion of space as a tool to bring into existence an African city outside of

Specific time and space. By giving the leading role and power of governance to it's true African leaders Afrofuturism promotes an integrated and flexible co-existence between the past and the future.

Africa is a continent of many social complexities but she is based tradition, ethnicity and tribe which challenges her boundaries.

Can spatial intervention recover the knowledge embedded in the per-colonial African identity to address some of the current socio-political issues facing the African city as we understand it today?.

This essay is primarily centered around unpacking the Afrofuturist cultural and literary movement.

It begins with a review on the book The Black Atlantic, and discusses the significance of one of the major Afrofuturist theories, "Double Consciousness ". Unpacking the term as both a theme and theoretical approach, Paul Gilroy, in 'The Black Atlantic' examines terms such as "Black Atlantic" and "Double Consciousness". This conversation has generated discussions for years across a range of disciplines. Thus served as both the basis for further research and sparking the analysis of the more recent literary criticism and cultural theory of Afrofuturism.

A brief overview of how Afrofuturism originated and its relationship to science fiction and music is discussed over the third chapter: The Origin.

UNDERSTANDING

AFROFUTURISM

02 Afrofuturism is the culmination of the imagination, technology, liberation and the future. Through a black cultural lens possible futures are explored. As described by Ingrid Lafleur an art curator and Afrofuturist, who states:

"I see Afrofuturism as a way to encourage experimentation, reimagine identities and active liberation". (Womack:9)

In an attempt to redefine the modern day notion of "blackness" and culture for today and the future, Afrofuturism has become a fusion of "science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism". (Womack:9).

By allowing for a delicate dance between mysticism and social

commentary, there is a unique creativity born from rooting black culture in the realm of sci-fi fantasy. This exciting evolution that is Afrofuturism is not all pop culture and artistic aesthetic but a developing framework for critical inquiry and theory.

To define Afrofuturism, in the words of one its founding fathers, Mark Dery, a cultural critic who introduced the term. Afrofuturism is a "speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African- American concerns in the context of 20th-century techno culture - and more generally, African-American significance that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future" (Dery:136) to explore how people of color negotiate life in a

Technology intensive world.

Black identity, whether it is of African, American, Caribbean or European decent need not be a negotiation between existing stereotypes and dystopian views on race. These have thus far been perpetuating an overriding sense of powerlessness and hardened realities. As Womack sees it:

"Fatalism is not a synonym for blackness" (Womack:11).

She states further:

"I SEE AFROFUTURISM AS A WAY TO ENCOURAGE EXPERIMENTATION, REIMAGINE IDENTITIES AND LIBERATION".

As a lecturer of sociology in the early 90's, Paul Gilroy was of the opinion that "the history and the legacy of the Enlightenment were worth understanding and arguing about." (Gilroy:1994). Inspired by classic black writers he sought to inject Euro-centered material with the observations of dissonant voices of black authors on the topic of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment.

These concerns gave birth to his book The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness. In this cultural reader he discusses the complexities of "identity". He argues that the interaction of displaced ethnicities with other cultures has dynamically changed their sense of identity. In the development of this book he emphasizes that

"the experiences of black people were part of an abstract modernity". (Gilroy.1994:4)

Gilroy begins his book with a series of quotes that inspired his theoretical approach where he describes the notion of Dual citizenship. One of these quotes is an extract from the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, cultural critic, poet and philologist:

"We who are homeless, - Among Europeans today there is no lack of those who are entitled to call themselves homeless in a distinctive and honorable sense We children of the future, how could we be at home in this today? We feel disfavor for all ideals that might lead one to feel at home even in this fragile,

broken time of transition; as for "realities", we do not believe that they will last. The ice that still supports people today has become very thin: the wind that brings the thaw is blowing; we ourselves who are homeless constitute a force that breaks open ice and other all too thin "realities." (Gilroy.1994:1)

The "notion of modernity" is a complex one. By definition is ever era, not "modern" in relation to its predecessor? Edouard Glissant puts forth the idea that one of the components of "our" modernity is the fact that we have an "awareness" of it. "This "awareness" is our source of our strength and our torment." (Gilroy.1994:1)



Fig. 2.2 "Aspirations" 1936
source: www.tate.org.uk

A painting by Aaron Douglas depicting African Heritage as a source of pride and modern African-American life as a focus aspiration. (Tate Museum: Afro Modern Room. 2017)

Through the years there have been debates about modernity, about ideas of nationality, ethnicity, authenticity and cultural integrity. Arguments that these ideals are all characteristics of a modern phenomenon has had profound implications for cultural criticism and cultural history. In understanding the "counterculture of modernity" Gilroy explores the relationship between "race", culture, nationality and ethnicity.

In his opening paragraph, Gilroy refers to himself as being both European and black. He states that in striving to be both there is a certain form of double consciousness that is required. In unpacking the term "double consciousness" as both a theme and theoretical approach from Gilroy's perspective, it is important to understand that there is a constant negotiation between being both "European and black". The terms appear to speak to having a sense of dual citizenship or membership. Inhabiting both worlds at once means challenging "racist, nationalist or absolutist discourses which present these identities as "mutually exclusive"(Evans: 2009).

Gilroy proceeds to embark on the provocative act of "occupying the space between them" (Gilroy: 1). He explains that the image or metaphor of the ship imagery in the title Black Atlantic speaks to "the motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa and the Caribbean as a centralizing enterprise," (Gilroy:4). The image of the ship is a living, micro-cultural and political system in motion. The ship imaginary focuses on the middle passage as an attempt at navigating through the space and notion of duality. The dual identity is not one of historical roots because both the "original" identity and that of the European modern world have constantly undergone transformation and reconfiguration over time.

There is a notion of hybridity that is essential to modernity. "... the brutality of European cultures towards other cultures did not prevent them from being influenced by their subordinates" ,2010. Gilroy continues to state that the, "cultural historian could take the Black Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis" that might produce a Transnational and Inter-cultural perspective.

Gilroy's aim is to transcend both the "structures of the nation state" and the "constraints of ethnicity." He emphasizes that "black expressive culture is renegotiated in different Socio-political contexts." (Gilroy:79). It is not Gilroy's intent to unify the notion of black identity. He goes on to say:

"national and regional identities in the black Atlantic model: Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean remain just coordinates in this unit of analysis," (Evans:2009).

The aim of "transcendence" is not to replace one ideal with the other but to set them in a Dialogue.

The question of black identity is "lived as a coherent experiential sense of self" [Gilroy:102], that is based on moving through the limits of two antithetical outlooks and allowing for "syncretic complexity of black expressive cultures". (Gilroy:101)

Fig 2.3. "Inner Workings" 2016

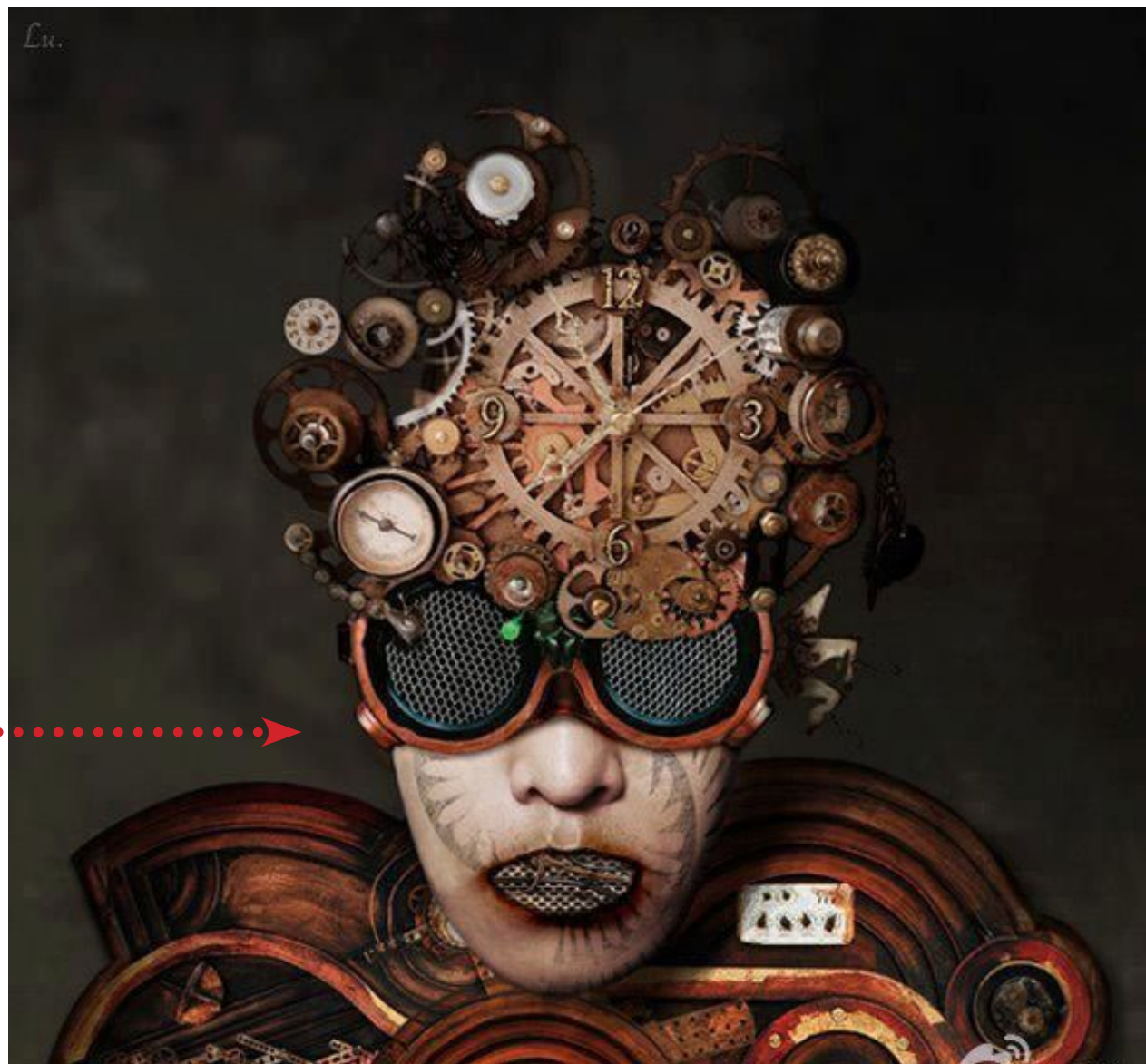
source: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/58/83/58/5883585248ad2d8dd122d4d42d1ad643--steampunk-fashion-the-state.jpg>

A digital Afrofuturist artwork created by Digital Artist Roofie

There is a constant
Reference to TIME in this
image and the
Afrofuturist tendency to
de-linearize it.

Reference to PAST:
Seen through the use of
time pieces

Reference to FUTURE:
Seen in the dystopian look
and feel of the womens
attire



AFROFUTURISM ON THE ORIGIN

Afrofuturism can be described as a method of storytelling, as the historian Yaszek states:

"a name for a literature predicated upon both realist and speculative modes of storytelling." (Yaszek, 2006:1). The Emergence of Afrofuturist studies in the 1990's was centered around science fiction themes and the techniques of many black authors, artists and musicians who had a shared interest in projecting black futures derived from Afro diasporic experiences.

Instrumental to the development of Afrofuturism as a "coherent mode of critical inquiry", sociologist Alondra Nelson and multimedia artist Paul D. Miller created the first listserv in 1998 and [www. Afrofuturism.net](http://www.Afrofuturism.net) was launched

in 2000. Including scholars, musicians, authors, and artists alike. In 2002, Nelson introduced

the groups work to new areas of scholarly inquiry. The new critical perspective allowed Afrofuturism to be understood as a narrative tradition in its own right. Afrofuturism has developed across time and space, both within and outside of science fiction.

20th century African Afrofuturists wrote a range of diverse proto-science fiction. Although American science fiction had its own authors, editors or magazines, black authors were more likely to publish in black magazines and newspapers.

Yaszek goes on to state: "The history of Afrofuturism parallels and intersects that of science fiction" (Yaszek:2010).

In her article Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future, Yaszek states that by making detailed reference to modern scientific theories and technological Developments Afrofuturism has taken important steps in relating science to society.

In that time authors generally did not write stories that addressed racial issues in a meaningful way, as was clear to an important black science fiction author. Samuel Delany. One of the reasons for that was the cultural status of science fiction at the time. Printed on cheap pulp paper and drawn in a crude style, science fiction was generally thought

AFROFUTURISM ON THE ORIGIN

to be immature and disreputable, (James 1994:37).

Therefore, authors who were into serious speculative literature about race in America did not see sci-fi magazines as ideal forums. As Yaszek saw it, "Early science fiction authors seemed incapable of writing stories about tomorrow that did anything other than reflect the prejudices of the current day," (Yaszek:2011). Afrofuturism did not make much formal contact with the science fiction community in the post war era.

However, Afrofuturist found their storytelling practices in another popular art form, jazz music. In fact, Afrofuturism can be found in 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s work of

Jazz musicians such as Sun Ra and "Scratch" Perry. These musicians depicted themselves as descendants of aliens, who were on earth to prepare humanity for its destiny to the stars. They projected a noble past to people of color as well as crafting a heroic black face for the future. Eventually storytelling became a frequent aspect of black popular music. Inspiring funk musicians such as George Clinton from the 1970s and rap artists such as Public Enemy in the 1980s. The Afrofuturist music explosion suggests that "science fiction had woven itself into the fabric of everyday life," as Yaszek describes. As a result, authors began to increasingly ally themselves with the science fiction community.

The term Afrofuturism emerged in the mid nineties in the thick of African-American culture and can formally be traced back to Mark Dery's 1994 edited collection *Flame Wars: The discourse of Cyberculture*, first coined by cultural critic Mark Dery, to affix the growing artistic movement and critiques that followed narratives of people of African descent, in response to the absence of cultural diversity in the world of science fiction. According to Womack, author and Afrofuturist advocate, Afrofuturists sought to hijack the imagination "inspire and forge a stronger self-identity and respect for humanity" (Womack,2012) through a reexamination of the surrounding environment and possibilities associated with a cross cultural future.

AFROFUTURISM ON THE ORIGIN

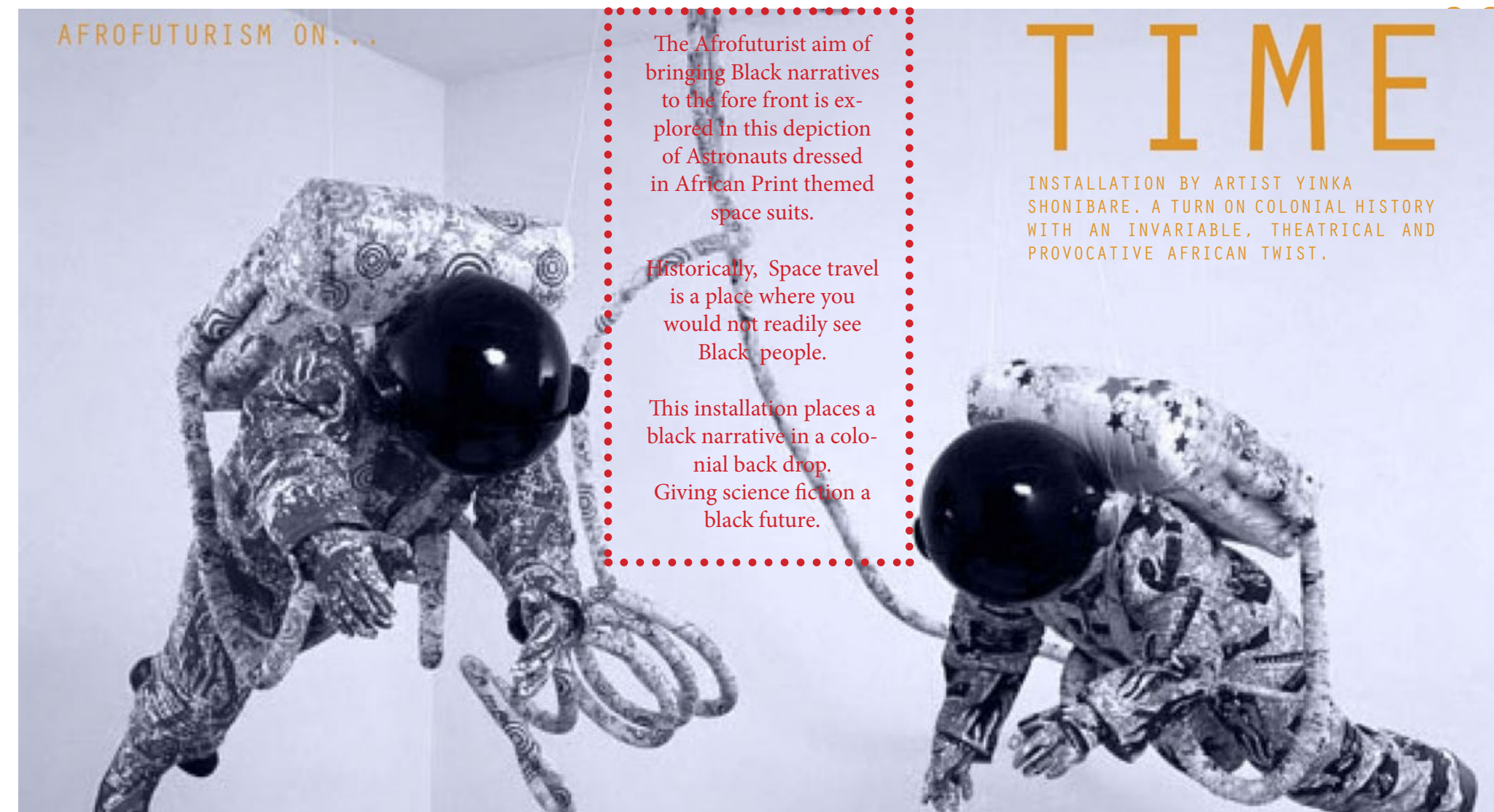


Fig. 2.4 "Astronauts in Space" 2013
source <http://metro.co.uk/2013/02/28/yinka-shonibare-the-banksy-of-sculpture-on-his-split-personality-3518844/#ixzz4skEzyCS3>

02 The paradigm that is Afrofuturism can be achieved when history is examined, and absent cultural contributions of non-European culture is recovered as a basis. Only then can the future be claimed.

The Afrofuturist aesthetic manifests in various mediums including music, literature, visual art, film and critical essays. Although there is a range in themes and storylines, works are characterized by both a cosmic and analytical critique into the black identity and beyond. The key concepts or themes explored in the cultural production of Afrofuturism can be described in how time, freedom and self-determination are conceptualized.

AFROFUTURISM ON THE AESTHETIC

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The time over lapse is based on the fact that Afrofuturism is inherently an adaptive network of ideas, that is forward looking in order to escape any fixed place or time, a "paradigm".

As the author Yehouessi declares : An Alternative representation of the world that challenges societies founding principles on time and humanity which are the two bases of our world. Can Afrofuturism becomes a journey to an otherworldliness?

In order to redefine the relationship between time and humanity, Afrofuturism must not simply distort time nor expand it, but dismantle our present concept of time. In doing this Afrofuturism refutes linearity. Space travelers of the movement

come and go, exploring the past, present and the future, able to both forecast and alternate.

In her article *Afrofuturism: the time overlapse*, Mawena Yehouessi states that "Afrofuturism originates from Afro- American voices, as the standard- bearer of black peoples fight for emancipation, between the recall for a forgotten/ despised legacy, the struggle for a present-time acknowledgement and the attempt to impose its right to be as equally part of future forecasts."



AFROFUTURISM ON...

Fig 2.5. "Dark Cosmos" 2016

source: <http://cdn2-www.craveonline.com/assets/uploads/2015/05/ManzelBowman2.jpg>

A digital Afrofuturist artwork created by Digital Artist Roofie

FREEDOM

17

By not denying black history or consciously settling for it, time defines the connection between us as human beings and what surrounds us. Therefore by reshaping the concept of time, Afrofuturism is able to impact the black identity and how we relate to the world.

Similar to the study of the African cosmology which explores cultural connections to the cosmos. Afrofuturism captures a curiosity and awe of the sky and uses this wonder as a connection to ourselves and others. Questioning what exists beyond the earth and in what way does it impact us becomes the subject matter of many Afrofuturist works.

The history of black people can be seen or understood as one of movement.

Black music has always articulated the need to envision freedom, whether it be through jazz, funk or hip hop. Afrofuturism on the concept of freedom becomes a play on a travel/escape narrative, which essentially becomes the representation of freedom. George Clinton, a musician explains that there has been a long line of African American utterances and articulations of new possibilities of liberation.

Black people have articulated black futures and dreams of freedom in a midst of black experiences as a mode of survival. The concept of self-determination, similarly seeks to unchain the mind. There is a sense of empowerment that comes with the possibility of what can be. By pushing against the stereotypes that have oppressed black people, one is

Able to imagine a whole new world.

An example of a digital Afrofuturist painting as described by Womack in her article, Afrofuturism: An aesthetic and exploration of Identity, depicts a "young African American girl in the future dressed in her metallic space boots and pants; her hair is styled in an Afro and she wore an ankh, an ancient Kemetic symbol on her green-friendly T-shirt."

This image graphically binds the past with the future and celebrates universality and culture. By placing the African American girl in the 21 century, a futuristic context at the time, challenge the absence of such cultures and world views.

With Afrofuturism being a catalyst of cultural production, what are its effects on spatial production. How can a shift in a generations mindset project the built environment into the future? Perhaps by looking at the relationship between time and humanity, the design of spatial intervention may draw from different fragments of a continents identity to redefine its future.

Fig. 2.6 "Women, Child and geometry" 2016

source: <https://img.huffingtonpost.com/asset/571e-24d0160000e90031c924>.

"Can a community whose past has deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures"

Atlantic Black Star



The concept on Afrofuturism extends into the genre of architecture, urbanity and the built environment. Where a social commentary on issues bound in Place and Separation are brought into consideration, addressing issues such as urban segregation. Author Samuel Delany, describes his concept of the 'inner city' by comparing it to an 'other worldly experience' in comparison to the rest of the city. He argues that spaces that may be viewed as 'other worldly' are generally culturally rich. Womack states: "Majority culture often calls certain areas overlooked spaces", according to her they often become matters of abandonment.

In the pursuit to create an alternate environment, Afrofuturism engages themes of imagination,

Liberation, technology and mysticism, which are reflected on the built environment.

The issues of urbanism and unused spaces has become a rich vein for African filmmakers, as described by Patrik Sisson, author of the article "space is place". Afrofuturist film making makes social commentary on dystopianism and corruption while exploring issues of the cities and, using them as a basis for rebuilding. In a city with a diverse identity A(fro)scansion will look to use overlooked and neutral spaces within the city as a backdrop for intervention. Culturally neutral public spaces may address segregation by allowing for social integration and expression. By creating a dialogue for cultural exchange, knowledge sharing is encouraged

and accessible. If the science fiction of the afrofuturist movement is a means of discussing present day anxieties and issues via the future, then it only follows that architecture and design of our fantasies can make a massive impact on how to experience our present day.



Fig. 2.7 "Hotel Ivoire" 1969

source: <https://www.curbed.com/2016/2/22/11092380/space-is-the-place-the-architecture-of-afrofuturism>



GRAPHIC ANALYSIS

"BROTHERS IN OUTER SPACE,
IN PLACES YOU WOULDN'T
USUALLY FIND THEM"

GEORGE CLINTON

THE HISTORY OF BLACK
PEOPLE IS ONE OF
MOVEMENT.

THEREFORE THE
TRAVEL/ESCAPE NARRATIVE
BECOMES A REPRESENTATION
OF FREEDOM.

Afrofuturism articulates
black futures and dreams
of freedom in the midst
of black experiences. This
notion of Ecapism becomes
a mode of survival in our
present.

Visual art as a cultural
production.

a digital artwork produced for
the jazz artist parliament,
for the album titled
"mothership connection".

in the artists words, "...the
mothership aint nothing but
a party..." in this example
the mothership becomes a
metaphor for salvation.

The backdrop for
this scenario this
that of a decaying
downtown city.
Putting the 'arrival'
of the black man into
a certain CONTEXT

The spaceship in
a downtown city
eludes to the
FREEDOM as a TRAVEL
narrative. A black
man landing on
earth as a metaphor
of MODERNISATION

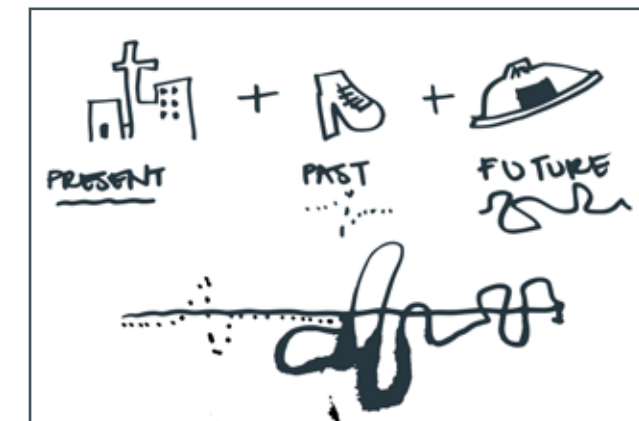


Fig. 2.8 "The Mothership Connection"
1975

source: <https://www.soulofblackfolk.com>

This Artwork is an example of
the critical theory,
'DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS'. A
graphic representation of the
negotiation between being
AMERICAN & BLACK.

There is a DUALITY in the works
reference to TIME, a layering
of the past present and future.



AFROFUTURISM

ON FREEDOM

TIME BECOMES A
'PARADIGM', AN ALTER
REPRESENTATION OF THE
WORLD.

IF TIME DEFINES A
CONNECTION BETWEEN HUMAN
BEINGS AND WHAT SURROUNDS
US.

BY RESHAPING TIME WE
BEGIN TO IMPACT THE WAY
WE RELATE TO THE WORLD.

AFROFUTURISM ON TIME

This digital
Afrofuturist
painting depicts
a young African
American girl, her
hair styled in an
Afro. Her face is
decorated in African
Bantu face paint.
Representing an
overlap in cultures.

This vehicle makes
reference to the
1920s,
although it is
surrounded by ancient
African warriors



Fig. 2.9 "Afrofuturism on Time"
2006

source: https://img.huffingtonpost.com/asset/571e-24d01b0000e90031c924.jpeg?ops=scalefit_970_noupscale

AIM:
DISMANTLE TIME.
BY REFUTING LINEARITY,
AFROFUTURISM BEGINS TO
FORECAST ALTERNATIVE
SCENARIOS OF THE PAST,
PRESENT & FUTURE.

02

SELF- DETERMINA- TION

AFROFUTURISM ON...



THE OBJECTIVE IS TO
UNCHAIN THE MIND.

SELF-DETERMINATION SPEAKS
TO EMPOWERMENT AND THE
POSSIBILITY OF WHAT CAN
BE.

AFROFUTURISM PUSHES
AGAINST STEREOTYPES IN
ORDER TO IMAGINE A NEW
WORLD FOR ONE'S SELF.

THE QUESTION BECOMES,
CAN AFROFUTURISM BRING
INTO EXISTENCE AN AFRICAN
IDENTITY OUTSIDE OF A
SPECIFIC TIME AND SPACE?

AFROFUTURISM

ON SELF- DETERMINATION



Africa is a continent of many social and political complexities.

The African identity itself can be defined as one that is lived in a coherent experiential sense of self. The African identity, while closely related to that of the black identity, is not solely defined by being black. As described by Mazrui, "to insist that nothing is African unless it is Black is to fall into the white man's fallacy."

By replacing "Grand rhetorical theories of racial similarities" with a "more modest conception of connectedness", [Gilroy:120]

Afroscension embarks on connecting the lives and experiences of being black in the Western hemisphere as well as being non-black in the African hemisphere.

If African is thought of, as not only a geographic location but as a collective state of mind that includes all races and ethnicities.

In Africans become accepting of the cultural hybridity that is Africa, we might try to get to the moon.

In order to compete with the rest of the world we need to accept our dual heritage and use architecture as a portal of transcendence into a new definition of Africa. In a true Afrofuturist fashion, architecture can be viewed as a time portal. A spatial reference to the many contexts of the elusive "African identity". Able to dismantle time and extract fragments of Africa's identity through time and make it accessible to everyone.



Fig2.10 "Black Atlantic Map" 2014

source:<http://criticallegalthinking.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Black-Atlantic.jpg>

Wikipedia defines the term 'African Diaspora' as a label to describe people removed and or exiled from a common, territorial, geographical origin, Africa."

Kodwo Eshun, a British-Ghanaian writer, theorist, and film-maker, in an attempt to press the future into the service on black liberation he wrote the essay Further Considerations on Afrofuturism. He states:

"Imagine a team of African archaeologists from the future— some silicon, some carbon, some wet, some dry—excavating a site, a museum from their past: a museum whose ruined documents and leaking discs are identifiable as belonging to our present, the early twenty-first century. Sifting patiently through the rubble, our archaeologists from the United States of Africa, the USAF, would be struck by how much Afro diasporic subjectivity in the twentieth century constituted itself through the cultural project of recovery. In their Age of Total Recall, memory is never lost. Only the art of forgetting. Imagine them reconstructing the conceptual framework of our cultural moment from those fragments. What are the parameters of that moment, the edge of that framework?" (Eshun. K 2000:287)

UNDERSTANDING

AFRICA

02 In its broadest dimension, Afrofuturism evolved into a coherent mode that is not only aesthetically but politically as well, being very active in historical recovery projects of all sorts. In this essay he projects readers into a possible future scenario based on the notion of "counter memories". This notion is put forth to contest the existing colonial archive in order to restore the history, denied to people of African descent. This project is one of many recovery projects that combat the erasure of black subjects from Western history. In his essay, Eshun demonstrates how "African slaves and their descendants experienced conditions of homeless, alienation and dislocation... as the founding conditions of modernization". (Gilroy 1993:178).

Eshun refers to slavery as "the Founding Trauma". In an interview with Paul Gilroy and novelist Toni Morrison,

Eshun describes Morrison's stance on Modernity and its effects on the African psyche.

Morrison argues, "African subjects that experienced capture, theft, abduction, mutilation, and slavery were the first moderns", (Eshun: 288). Slavery brought on conditions of existential homelessness, alienation, dislocation and dehumanization, characteristics that philosophers had associated with the definition of what it meant to be quintessentially modern. Similarly, the colonization of Africa can be seen as the beginning of African modernity and one of Africa's founding traumas. This shared diasporas offers the necessary link between Afrofuturism and contemporary Africa and demonstrates why a union of the two are essential to the concept of Afroscension.

According to Ali Mazrui, author of *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*,

African in the 20th century is in crisis. This is on account that she had made a poisonous contract with the her.

Mazrui makes the argument that the African is under the illusion of modernity and in a state of dystopia. By his definition successful modernization means development without dependency, "the promotion of innovative change and broadening of social horizons without excessive reliance on others". (Mazrui:201) At present however the result in Africa has been westernization without modernization. Julius Nyerere, founder President of Tanzania once commented on the African condition. He said "while the great powers that be try to get to the moon, we are trying to get to the village." (Mazrui:202). Although he was commenting directly on the conditions of decay in our general infrastructure, the metaphor might also be a comment on Africa in a state of social decomposition.



Fig.2.11 "Orisha Women" 2015

source:<http://www.ifawomen.org/blog/how-african-spirituality-empowers-black-women>

02 "[CULTURE] IS A DIFFERENT VALUE SYSTEM. LIKE GOD, IT FAILS US CONTINUALLY LIKE GOD, WE HAVE LEGITIMATE DOUBTS OF ITS EXISTENCE, BUT, LIKE GOD, IT LEAVES US WITH FOOTPRINTS OF BEAUTY. WE SENSE THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN THE MATERIAL WORLD CAN PROVIDE AND [CULTURE] IS A CLUE, AN IMITATION – AT ITS BEST IT'S A TRANSFORMATION. "

JEANETTE WINTERSON

02 The concept of culture can be defined as a process rather than a fixed unchanging state of being. [Lokko:74]. Culture is fluid and constantly transforming. Lesley Lokko is an architect and academic currently based at the University of Johannesburg. In her essay 'Suspectculture', one of a series of essays written by various authors discussing culture from an African perspective, Culture and civilization are the predominate themes. By her definition, culture can be defined as "man's historic shift from rural to urban existence.", [Lokko:75]. Documenting the progression of man's connection to the land at an agricultural base, to a more "refined" state, which is founded on the arts, learning and science, or else urban civilization.

Therefore, a modern western interpretation of culture understands culture as a medium or "tool that contemporary society uses to validate, test, re-evaluate and position itself".

Societies are then able to reflect upon their progression as a collective through cultural productions such as architecture, art, literature, music and film.

Lokko argues that there is a distinct difference in the Western and African approach to culture. According to him Africa has a complex relationship to culture. She argues that culture in Africa finds its roots in tradition and therefore cannot perform in the same way.

A rather outdated view of Africa is that she is the "least Cultured" and most "natural". On account of her raw materials, unspoilt nature and large labor force. Traditional images of drumming, weaving and dancing are associated with a static understanding of the relationship between tradition and culture.

So if culture is a process rather than a fixed, unchanging state of being, African progression or culture is one of shape-shifting and transformation and can no longer be associated with tradition alone. How do we make sense of modern life? If culture is not just works and endeavors of the past but what is about to come, what does a transformed future African society look like?

Graphic Analysis



An exploration and analysis of Post-Independence African Architecture.

Fig. 2.12
"Ghana, Accra" 1961

source: Webster 2015:18

02 Modern Africa

"We watched and wondered while the buildings were run up. And then we began to understand that what the President was attempting to do was so stupendous in his own eyes that even he would not have wanted to proclaim it. He was creating modern Africa. He was creating a miracle that would astound the rest of the world. He was by-passing real Africa, the difficult Africa of bush and villages, and creating something that would match anything that existed in other countries" (Naipaul:1).

This extract was taken out of the novel 'A bend in the River' set in an unnamed African country after independence. Written in 1979 by novelist Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul the novel is a narration of the rapid changes in Africa in a small growing city.

The late 1950's and early 1960's saw two thirds of Sub-Saharan Africa gain their independence and fittingly architecture became a principle means of expression for these young African nations. As author Manuel Herz describes in his essay 'The new Domain', Ghana is usually credited in the starting the journey of decolonization. Promptly followed by Guinea, Cameroon, Mauretania and seventeen other countries.

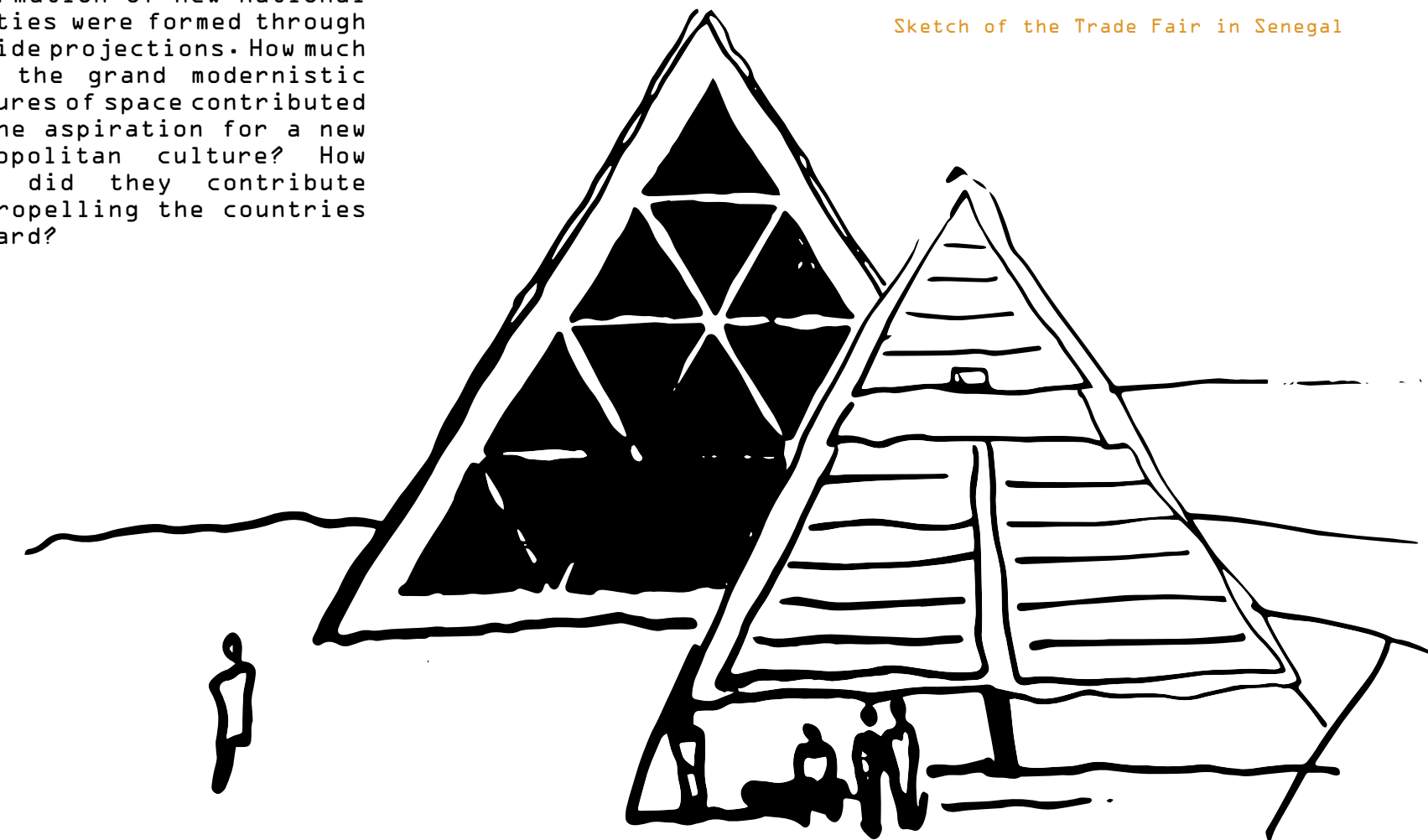
National identities were being reclaimed through civic buildings such as parliament buildings, central banks, stadiums, conference centers, universities and independence memorials were constructed through "heroic and daring designs" as described in the book African Modernism: Architecture of Independence. Modern and futuristic architecture became shaped by the aspirations and forward-looking spirits of the time.

A period of economic boom happened to run parallel to this liberation and made the elaborate construction possible.

Architecture designed for tropical climates allowed for blended inside and outside spaces and an architecture focused on form and expression of materiality.

Although countries such as Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, Kenya and Senegal house some of the best examples of 1960s and 1970s architecture worldwide, their architecture expresses some of the difficulties, contradictions and dilemmas faced and experienced in the process on independence. In most cases the architects involved in the projects were not local and were usually from European countries such as Poland, Yugoslavia, Israel and other former colonial powers.

It might be said that the formation of new national identities were formed through outside projections. How much have the grand modernistic gestures of space contributed to the aspiration for a new cosmopolitan culture? How much did they contribute to propelling the countries forward?



Sketch of the Trade Fair in Senegal

02 Ghana's Independence Square is inconceivable in the extent. Situated in the coastal land in the south of the government district, the site commemorates Ghana's independence. The Massive scale of the project is suitable a range of events which encouraged mass participation and parades.

The wide independence Arch was placed at the edge of the square where it symbolically meets the ocean, eluding to a new horizon. Herz states that the arch was not just a ceremonial framework for the presidential box, but was also a triumph arch positioned at the edge of the African continent.

The monumentality of the site points toward Kwame Nkrumah's broader aspirations for Ghana as a leader leading the independence movement within Africa. Advocating his Pan-Africanist vision, the square is a space matching the significance of the dream.



AFRICA
MODERN AFRICA

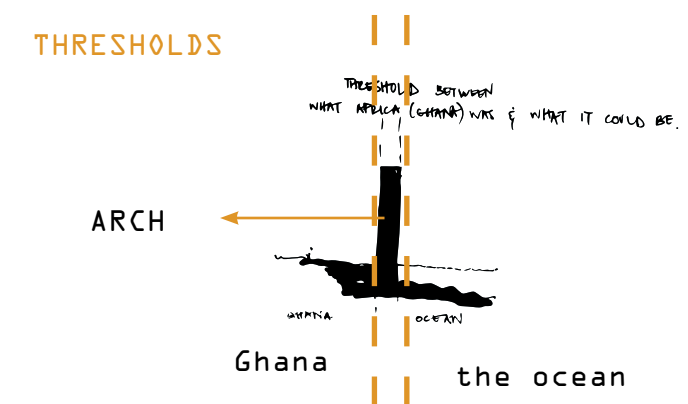
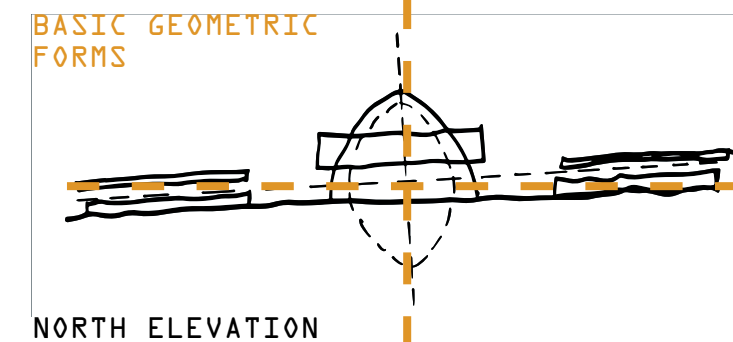


Fig. 2.15
"Site Context" 2015
source: Webster 2015:18

The building and its pavilions are symmetrical in their positioning.

The independence Arch is of Monumental scale making the building an iconic symbol of pride.

A symbolic Threshold between what Ghana was pre-independence and what she could be moving forward.





An Internal long view of the
exhibition pavillion

Fig. 2.16
"Senegalese Pavillion" 2015
source: (Baan 2015:203)

Senegal post-independence architecture boasts a city's International Trade Fair the compound occupies sixty hectares to the North of the city. "The compound consists of a layered ensemble of pavilions and exhibition halls that give the project symbolic clarity" (Herz 2015:192). The trade fair compound is renowned for its spatial complexity and formal exuberance that is characterized by the repeat use of the tall triangular roof structures.

The program consists of exhibition halls that fan out from the Western main spine. This spine forms a network of outdoor courtyard spaces that act as exhibition space as well. The compound can be accessed from a number of directions but has a formal access in the north end that accommodates Admin spaces. Toward the southern end of the complex there is a more informal arrangement of exhibition spaces.

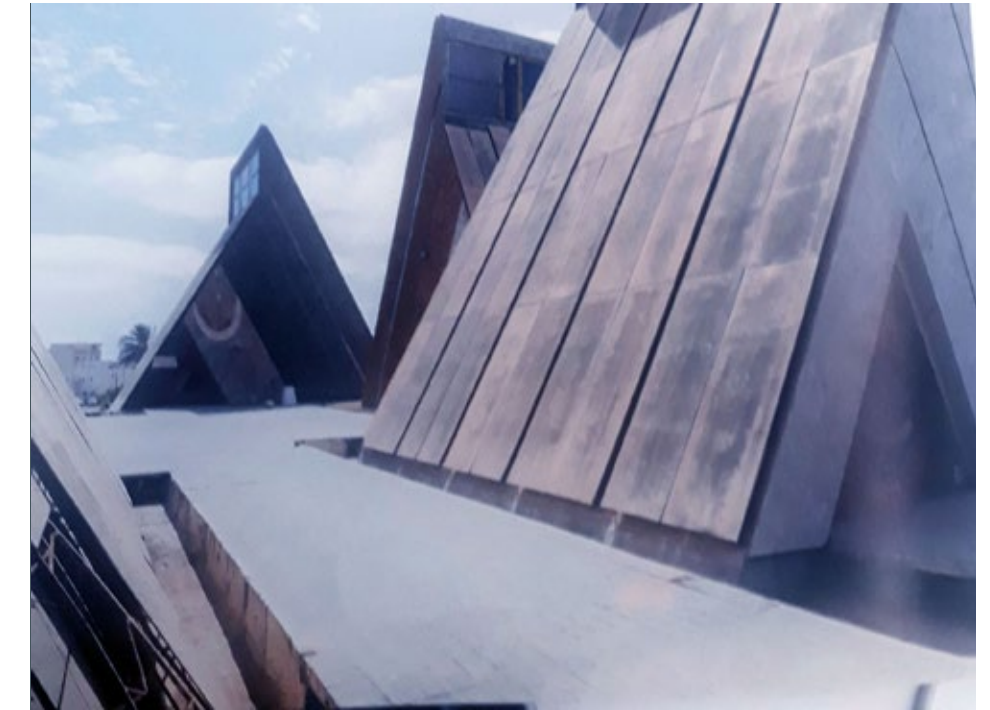


Fig 2.17 "Plinth level courtyard between regional pavillions"
2015,
source: (Baan 2015: 196)

Foire Internationale De Dakar
Fidak Dakar
1974
Lamoureux, Marin and Bonamy

The central area houses a selection of small pavilions that represent the various regions of the country.

The landscape is achieved through an offset and shift of the triangular structures. This form offers a broad range of functions as it subtly changes in scale and detail to create an intricate building language. The central regional pavilions share a roof that diffuses light and offers natural ventilation. The extensive warehouse roof structure is constructed from a series of inverted concrete trays. In some areas the roof structure is light weight and comes off as an airy tent-like enclosure.

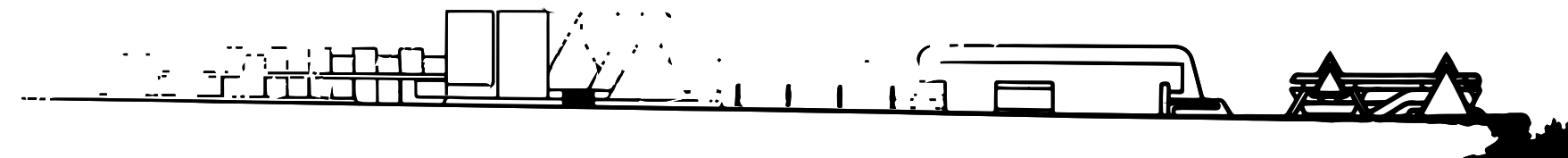


SITE PLAN



LOCATION PLAN

NORTH ELEVATION



The elevations of the pavilions are treated with stones, pebbles, tiles and plaster that produce murals that speak to their origins. "The attention given to the design of this project is significant. Its resourcefulness and formal organization distill a number of key objectives of Independent Senegal." (Le Roux 2015:192) The inventive structures and new expression of Senegal's symbolic objectives: "an understanding of vernacular techniques and the formal abstraction of Late Modernism" (Le Roux 2015:192).

Fig. 2.18
"Site Context" 2015

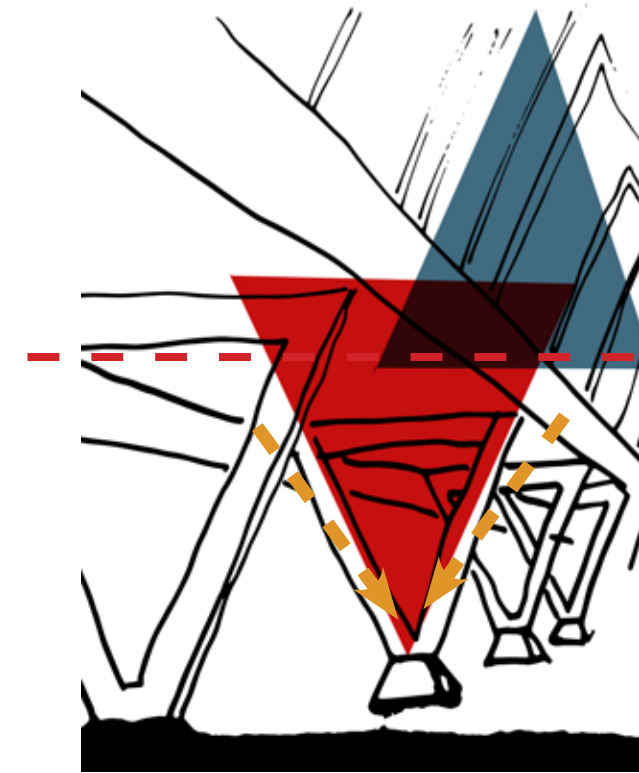
source: BAAN 2015:195

The Post-independence era produced an architecture that was expressive and celebratory. The architecture was symbolic of a new Africa and her national identities. African modernism produced an architecture that was "built meaning". A spatial manifestation of future aspirations focused on form and expression of vernacular materiality.

Basic Geometry's



GEOMETRIC FACADE RYTHM



STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

Inverted triangle concrete Supports for light weight roof.

Axis of symmetry



FIG. 2.19 "Spirituality in the city" 2017

source: Collage by author

Spirituality implies a concern with the human spirit and soul, it is said that spirituality connects one with the profoundly powerful and divine force that are present in this universe. The external world is ephemeral, temporary and ever changing, it relates to a more personal search by finding a greater meaning and purpose in one's existence. Understanding spirituality and the path to spiritual enlightenment can be described in so many ways, however one definition defines enlightenment as the complete dissolution of one's identity as a separate self with no trace of the egoistic mind remaining.

Attaining spiritual enlightenment is usually accompanied by the detachment of all things impermanent and with the complete awareness with everything that is. Enlightenment can be attained through various forms: Meditation, prayer, chanting, dancing, pilgrimages and sensory deprivation.

Spiritual enlightenment is said to transcend religion, thought, mind and its senses. Conveying a level of wisdom and knowledge about life, place and the universe. The concept of enlightenment implies an understanding of life and the universe. Similar to the concept of Afroscension for there to be an understanding of African life and place.

Looking to architecture and structures as a way to comment on society.

Buildings and spaces are the building blocks of our environment. By engaging in the pursuit for a spiritual enlightenment, Afroscension looks to African spirituality and mythology for indicators into how our African context could evolve.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL TRAVEL

"ARCHITECTURE IS 'BUILT'
MEANING. IT FATEFULLY
EXPRESSES WHO WE ARE".

CHARLES JENCKS

The concept of spirituality is loaded with complex and different meanings, as introduced by Professor Mohammed Arkoun. Said to be one of the influential secular scholars in Islamic studies, Arkoun has contributed to contemporary intellectual reform. In his article 'Spirituality and architecture' he explores the relationship between architecture and spirituality.

Over time the spirituality has loosely been associated in various contextual landscapes; religion, architecture, music, painting, literature, philosophy and alchemy. Arkoun begins to define the meaning of spirituality as a collection of

"human psycho-cultural aspects which encompass visions, conceptions, practices, and discourses" (Arkoun:116). These aspects interact within the undefined realm of spirituality which force the overlapping of notions, concepts and spheres and fields on coverage.

Arkoun unpacks the three approaches or levels of conceptualization involved in the spiritual approach to design or creation. The first level of conceptualization addresses art and architectural criticism. With the main objection to "deliver or make explicit in rationale, analytical discourse or 'harmonic proportions' inherent in the work of artists or architects" (Arkoun:116). As a result there is an emergence of cultural production in the form of poetry, pictures, symphony or a building.

The second level of conceptualization is defined by Arkoun as the 'lyrical-romantic expression', where the artist or creators' intent is to articulate a projection and feeling. This type of approach produces a work of art that is more complex and abstracted. The speculation of the intent is usually more complex than the work of art can convey to the observer or receiver. The third level follows a religious discourse. Conceptualization is transformed by generations of believers and as a result a source of spiritual experience is projected onto the "revealed word of God" (Arkoun:117) as described by the professor. As a historian, Arkoun believes that "the efforts of art critics, philosophers, theologians, historians and anthropologists are essential to achieve precision and coherence" in the matter of spiritual conceptualization.

SPIRITUALITY

ON BUILT MEANING

Through criticism, problems such as the "power of the reigning paradigm" (Arkoun:117) which is translated through given language and the "power of words" which stems from a creative use of words in new languages. According to Arkoun these problems arise due to the in his words "the developing story of cosmosgenesis".

Issues faced in the spiritual search for the origin or evolution of the universe demonstrates the profound gap and historical discrepancies that exist in the African and West contexts, as a regard to the critical confrontation of spirituality and architecture.

It can be said that there is an absence of critical approach to spirituality in contexts today. Within the confusion in ideological discourses, architects have, in the past often been

commissioned to revitalize, restore and preserve certain religions within their cities. As understood by Arkoun, Architecture would strive to design urban patterns, which are often stereotypical and insert them into modern landscapes filled with airports, universities, banks, hospitals and parliaments. Whether or not the architect has priority in whichever religious background is not an issue. "what matters more is the content and the functions they give to spirituality in the present cognitive, anthropological mutations that are imposed upon the human conditions." (Arkoun:117)

Arkoun questions the fact that many leading architects who have endeavored to build mosques in the "spirit of Islam" do not have the critical historical understanding of the difficult concept associated with the 'spirit of Islam' Or the anthropological

approach to what Arkoun refers to as the metamorphosis of the sacred. Similarly approaching architecture with the intent of encompassing the African spirit is a daunting task.

One that is a complex combination of subjective desires, hopes, and representations of rites and words that have been projected into spaces, places, time and cultural works.



Fig.2.20 "River Ritual" 2009

source: <http://www.AfricanSpirituality.com>

Traditionally, individuals have been born into a tradition or culture and as a result a trained sharing of inherited values, beliefs,

Psychological mechanisms of spiritualization and sacred isolation. Therefore "spirituality in tradition has not yet been analyzed and re-interpreted with new conceptual tools." (Arkoun:18). Tools of spiritual conception that "are elaborated in the neurosciences to 'map' the spiritual functions of the brain.

Arkoun states that 'intellectual modernity' has generated two psychological postures within the mind: the spiritual attitude, that sticks to the mythical, metaphorical and lyrical system taught by traditional religions and the empirical scientific attitude that does not negate spirituality and its various manifestations." Important architectural approach to the design of spiritual architecture can be separated into two.

The first being architecture that is meant to strengthen an existing ideology or secondly architecture that is designed with the intention of "creating a breakthrough in an inherited imposed system." (Arkoun:19). However said 'breakthrough' is always faced with historical, intellectual and cultural obstacles. Artistic and architectural expressions translate the main trends of a dominating cognitive system, along with the cultural representations in a given tradition. Arkoun concludes his essay with the statement that the built environment in contemporary societies is under the influence of a generalized ideology, which can be described as the semantic disorder. Where for example spiritual public buildings are placed in more or less stereotypical city centers.

SPIRITUALITY ON SPIRITUAL TRADITION

According to him a rift between technology and the quest for authenticity and identity has arisen. A rift between hard and social sciences. A rift between the demands of modern society and dogmatic rigidity in moral and juridical authorities.

Arkoun and I share a similar contention when it comes to the subject of spirituality and architecture. Because of human desire for better life and affective, aesthetic environments the search for unpacking the role of spirituality in architecture is most promising and rewarding, to achieve pluralist manifestations in the future African city.

SPIRITUALITY THE GEOMETRIES OF SPACE

THE GEOMETRIES OF SPACE

"Religion is belief in someone else's experience. Spirituality is having your own experience."

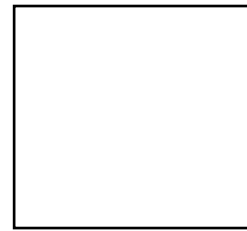
Deepak Chopra

The meaning of spirituality has developed and expanded over time. By modern definition spirituality speaks to the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical possession. The traditional view of spirituality referred to a religious process of re-formation but in modern times there has been a shift in its focus. Notions of spirituality gradually became increasingly disconnected from traditional religious organizations and institutions around the 19th and 20th century.

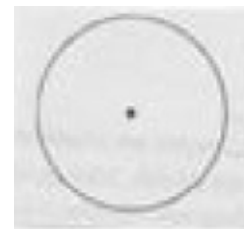
An emphasis has been placed on the subjective experience of a sacred dimension which is concerned with "the deepest values and meanings by which people live".

Some of the oldest evidence of "the Great Knowledge" or inner teachings have been expressed through sacred geometry otherwise known as the divine law of physical manifestations. People who had access to higher dimensions have seen geometric shapes emanate specific energies that sustain and support the physical dimension. For this reason there have been many similarities in the symbolism of various world cultures. "The oldest evidence of the use of Sacred Geometry dates back into the 70 000 BC and originated in South Africa", (Eternal symbols, 2011). By using sacred geometries our ancestors have depicted both creation and the make-up of our universe. Sacred geometries have aided in the construction of the ineffable.

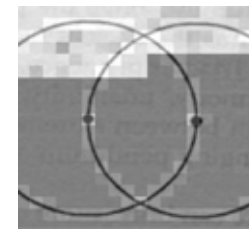
02 In the world of natural phenomena as described in the article, 'Sacred geometry in building', there have been underlying patterns of geometric form and proportion in the practice of architecture. It has defined our fundamental capacity to relate, interpret and to know. There is a profound influence that space making has on human health, psyche and spiritual state of being." harmony and balance, light and color, relationship to landscape, ecological sympathy and geometric form have contributed to shelters that aspire to nurture. Human beings have resonated with the environment on a cellular and consciousness levels. In order to create environments that are supportive of our inner as outer senses, humanity link to nature needs to be enhanced. There is a need for spaces of transcendence and contemplation in the contemporary built environment fabric.



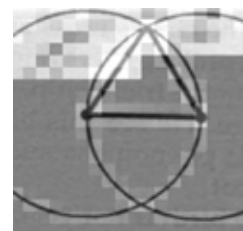
1. Calmness
+
Darkness
=
Water



2. Cosmic
Energy



3. Polarity
Energy
(Yin and
Yang)



4. Tension
-
Life



5. Principal
of
regeneration
(Golden
Ratio)



6. Cosmic
Energy



7. The Virgin



8. Hexagon
Marriage

Fig.2.21 "Eternal Symbols " 2017

source:<http://www.eternalsymbols.com>

SPIRITUALITY ON THE GEOMETRIES OF SPACE



Understanding African Spirituality

Fig.2.22 "Voodoo Ritual" 2009

source: <http://www.AfricanSpirituality.com>

02 African spirituality is very closely related to her natural environment. As the cradle of mankind, Africa is home diverse cultures varied across geographic regions the "practice a wealth of spiritual and religious belief systems", (SAFCEI, 2017). Overtime indigenous belief systems have been altered and traditions lost to more secular religion. Traditional African religion is largely based on oral traditions, where basic values and ways of life were passed on from the elders to the younger generations. African tradition however is not based on religious principles like our Western counterparts. African traditions encompass a cultural identity that was passed on through stories, myths and tales. Passed on from generation to generation.

Because African religious practices have always largely been based oral tradition, knowledge and custom, ceremonies and rituals have become vulnerable to change.

Many sacred environments hold the veil of secrecy over some of Africa's mythology and spiritual practice. Rituals such as the rites of passage, traditional healings, divination and rites to connect with the African ancestors are strongly related to sacred spaces within the environment. As a result of pollution, mining, deforestation and some of the natural sacred spaces have been lost along with some of the African belief systems and forgotten knowledge.

"Nature is like the autobiography of God. He is encountered through it. God created the universe full of rocks, trees, mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes and oceans to show his very majestic presence in the world."

(Bakanja Mkenda)

Scholar of African Traditional Religion, John S. Mbiti stated that "Africans are notoriously religious". He describes African religion as having a focus on the "preservation of human wellbeing and the enhancement of life on earth". There are traditional spiritual values attached to land and water that give insight into the practical conservation ethic.

SPIRITUALITY

AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

The connection between a healthynaturalenvironment is acknowledged as an essential for a harmonious life, this connection is deeply spiritual. A peaceful co-existence between human beings, living creatures and nature is imperative to ensure a harmonious and sacred web of life.

Water is an essential core of African value and it is the source of both life and spirituality. According to writings on African tradition, water is recognized an essential life force and source of spiritual power. African ecology has had to adapt to the impacts of mankind. The devastation caused by the demand for the resources during industrialization, capitalism and now climate change have resulted in sacred areas across Africa being protected by traditional customs and have subsequently been restricted for use.

These spaces have been are new recognized as ecologically important and culturally significant.

"Contemporary Africa would do well to borrow a leaf from traditional African spiritual beliefs to further environmental conservation for the wellbeing of humanity and out of respect for God's gift of creation."

(Bakanja Mkenda)

Afroscension becomes a story of transcendence. One that manifests spatially evoking spiritual and cultural enlightenment and knowledge. Transcendence is defined as the "existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level ". The Merriam Webster dictionary goes further by defining transcendence under four categories: Firstly, the term speaks to exceeding or surpassing usual limits that lie beyond the limits of ordinary experience.

Addressing some of the limitations that are facing Africa as a continent while trying to propose an alternate future is a daunting task. In the Kantian philosophy, transcendence meant being beyond the limits of all possible experience and knowledge. Afroscension is concerned with exploring the esoteric and transient realm associated with what it means to be African. Secondly transcendence spoke to being beyond comprehension. The third definition literally speaks to transcendence of the universe or material existence, understanding the African cosmology and its relation of mankind while taking the Afrofuturist lead in proposing and alternative scenarios for an African narrative. Finally transcendence means to be universally applicable or significant. In Afroscension pursuit of ascension and transcendence and hopes to embody everything discussed and explored.



SOUTH AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY SPATIAL ANALYSIS

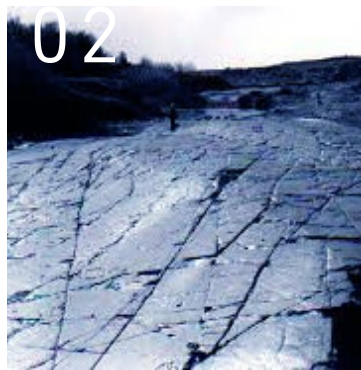


Fig 2.24 "The River Bed" 2009

When the lake dries out the ancient engravings are visible.



Fig 2.30 "Temple of Understanding Interior" 2009

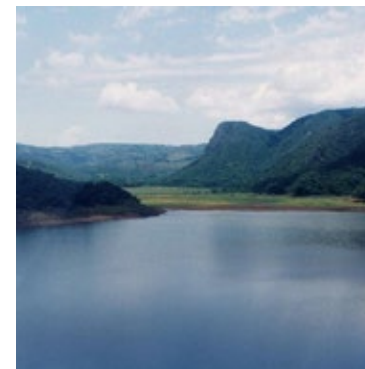


Fig 2.31 "Vha- Venda Lake" 2017

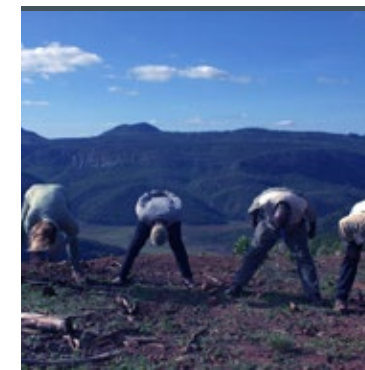


Fig 2.26 "Ukodola" 2017

Introduction Ritual of viewing the Vha Venda lake for the first time.



Fig 2.27 "Kwa-khaya Sculpture" 2017

Storytelling sculptures to assist Credo's Zulu Mythology.



Fig 2.28 "Lake Funduzi" 2017

Mountainous view of the Mythical Vha-Venda lake.

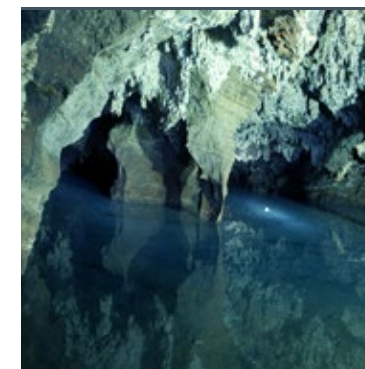


Fig 2.32 "Lake in the Cave" 2017

The cavenous space with the Sterkfontein Caves.

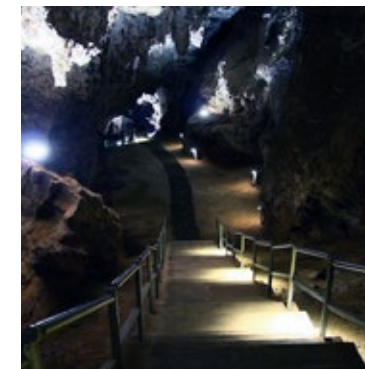


Fig 2.33 "Kwa-khaya Sculpture" 2017

Storytelling sculptures to assist Credo's Zulu Mythology.

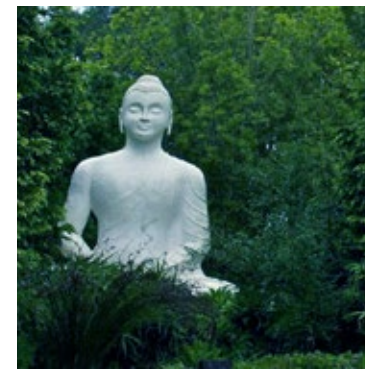


Fig 2.34 "Buddahist Gardens" 2017

SPIRITUALITY
SPATIAL ANALYSIS



Fig 2.36 "The Rock"
2017

Rock engravings along
the river bed.



Fig 2.38 "Temple of Un-
derstanding" 2017

Entrance to the temple



Fig 2.37 "Sterkfontein
Electricity" 2017

The electricity and
emotive energy of the
space.



Fig 2.25 "Buddadist
Monks" 2017

Meditation space for
chanting monks.



Fig 2.39 "Rock engrav-
ing site" 2017

"God bless Africa, guard her
people, guide her leaders -
and give her peace."

Father Trevor Huddleston

South Africa is a country
of extraordinary beauty,
rich in the diversity
of cultures. A professor
of Urban and Regional
Planning, Philip Harrison
ventures into the world of
African spiritual heritage
with a specific interest in
South Africa's top travel
destinations.

SPIRITUALITY

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Our spiritual journey
begins in Limpopo, a
region in which "traditional
African religious practices
have been the most durable..."
(Harrison:41). The land of
the Vha Venda is tucked away
in the northeastern corner
of Limpopo and is renowned
for its mystical elements.
Home to the Vhatatsindi
or 'People of the Pool',
Lake Fundudzi has been safe
guarded for centuries by its
Venda keepers.

According to Harrison, in
the early 1700's, groups
of migrants crossed the
Limpopo River from what
is now known as Zimbabwe
to settle and establish a
royal kraal known as Dzata
(Harrison: 42). By the end
of the century the various
clans united under the Vha
Venda, South Africa's last
indigenous peoples to lose
their independence.

LAKE VHA VENDA

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Vha Venda folklore is
centered around ancestral
spirits and their link
to the land. One of their
most sacred sites is Lake
Fundudzi, South Africa's
largest in land lake.
Said to be created by a
prehistoric landslide, as
described by Harrison, the
lake is largely hidden in a
deep valley. Three rivers the
Mutale, Godoni and Muiladi
flow into this geologically
unique lake which holds a
wealth of information about
the geological history of
the area.

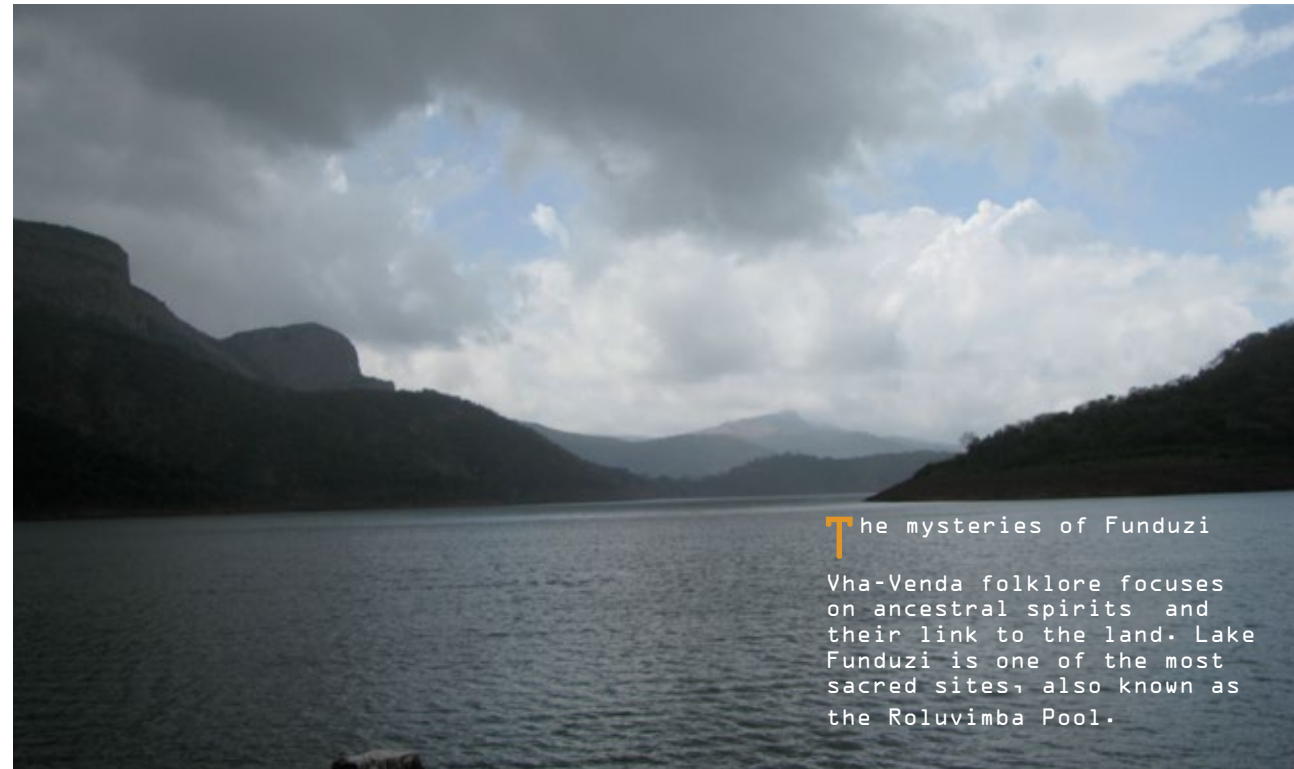
The mysteries of Fundudzi
say the lake is "defended
by a Venda Python God". The
sacred python is said to be
the bringer of fertility who
dwells beneath these waters,
as described in the article
Bewitched Forests and Waters
of the VhaVenda . Described
as a 'Zombie lake' where
buried ancestors are said to

come alive at night and play
drums beneath the water, in
the 1999, October 28 Mail
and Guardian.

A revered sacred site that
is home to the Vhatavhasindi
ancestors, the python god
of fertility and the White
Crocodile, protector of the
ancestral spirits of the
lake.

"...This snake once required
human wives. When it lived
on the surface, it visited
them at night, when it could
not be seen. One day, an
inquisitive wife did see it,
and her terror so mortified
the python that it fled
into the lake. This caused
a terrible drought, which
only ended when the curious
wife walked into the lake to
join her serpentine husband.
To prevent more droughts,
maidens in subsequent years
were sacrificed in the same
way. "

Today, the Lake is said to have healing properties and the mood of the ancestors can be seen by the fullness of the river and color of the water as a prediction of the coming rainy season. Lake Fundudzi was the first sacred site to be declared a National Heritage site as of 2014, declared in the National Heritage Site List. The holds intangible heritage value and is closely associated with the heritage of the Vha Venda people. Due to its sacredness and therefore relatively unaltered natural environment the site is of scientific significance, a focus point of folklore, myths and ceremonial rituals.



The mysteries of Funduzi
Vha-Venda folklore focuses on ancestral spirits and their link to the land. Lake Funduzi is one of the most sacred sites, also known as the Roluvimba Pool.

Fig.2.40 " The Sacred Lake of Funduzi" 1995

source:<http://www.southafrica.net/za/en/articles/entry/article-southafrica.net-limpopos-lake-fundudzi>

SPIRITUALITY

SPATIAL ANALYSIS



Aerial Map



The lake presents itself as a link between the East and West.





FIG. 3.1
 "The Conical towers"
 1997
 source:
www.greatzimbabwe.com



FIG. 3.2
 "Shanghai Planetarium"
 2015
 source:
<http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/>



FIG. 3.3
 "Aerial View of Valley Complex"
 1997
 source: < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Zimbabwe#/media/File:Great-zim-aerial-looking-West.JPG>

The architectural design found in the study of Great Zimbabwe is one of symbolic display. The people of Karanga illustrated the fundamental cosmological and phenomenological difference between cultures. A study into their architecture will further explore the link between mythology and architecture. There is a realization of the parallel concepts at play: the ideas of the disparate nature of "temporal and special", the alternate ideas of "place", as well as the nature of material objects, landscape and architecture. (Maape, 2011: 20)

The Great Zimbabwe is an ancient city in the South-Eastern hills of Zimbabwe, thought to be the Capitol Kingdom of Zimbabwe in the late Iron Age. The city was constructed between the eleventh and fifteenth century and believed to be a palace for the monarch at that time. In order to analyze or interpret the architectural style of the Great Zimbabwean city one must first understand the mythology associated with region which includes ancestral rituals and symbolism association.

Through study of the Great Zimbabwe, the Author Aspinall establishes a connection between Mythology and architecture through interpretation. He implies the Karanga 'messages' or storytelling are visible within the architecture. He elaborates;



FIG. 3.4 "Link between Mythology and Architecture Diagram" 2017
source: By Author

"At Great Zimbabwe, the 'design-talk' could be seen as the symbolic language, the unique and powerful syntax of symbolic forms and their arrangement referring to ancestors and the mythological time. This dissertation explores the way the Karanga 'messages' are 'uttered' through the architecture. In Heidegger's terms, it is the conveyed message, not merely the object from which it is uttered, that is of creative value.

Creativity in architecture could be seen as not merely the object itself but as the 'record' of its creative process, and, in the case of Great Zimbabwe, this 'record' could be considered to be the oral narrative. This reveals the similarity between what Johnson terms 'design-talk' and the oral narrative, in that it is not the object itself that defines the nature of that object, but the way the object is 'brought forth'. Similarly, in architecture, the nature of the object is defined by the.... attitudes that have allowed it to be." (Maape, S. 2011:21; Aspinall, 2000:50; Johnson, P-A. 1994: 50;)

UNDERSTANDING KARANGA6 MYTHOLOGY

ESTABLISHING A LINK BETWEEN MYTH AND ARCHITECTURE

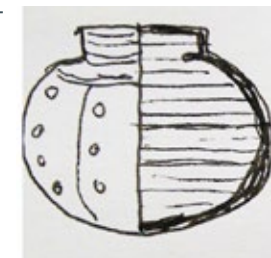
Therefore, architecture becomes a tool to communicate an oral narrative.

According to author Sechaba Maape, understanding the Karanga symbolism is necessary for the interpretation of the Great Zimbabwean Myths. He describes the reality of Karanga symbolism as one that depends more on the subconscious mind of the observer and how they render the object, and less on the object itself. Similar to Arkouns second level of Conceptualization which is more concerned with the object of creation can convey to the observer or receiver.

In one instance the example of the calabash becomes symbolic of the woman's uterus. Maape explains;

"in many situations, the calabash actually becomes a uterus in the mind of the Karanga, and possesses all the qualities of the human life forces of the uterus. The uterus itself, as symbol of the sacred pool, actually becomes a sacred pool, and the sacred pool adopts the life-giving nature of the uterus. The symbolic object adopts the qualities and life forces of the original symbolized object".

THE POT



THE UTERUS



THE CALABASH



FIG. 3.5

Karanga symbolic association between the calabash and the uterus

source:
MAAPE, 2011 20

03 THE TALE OF GREAT ZIMBABWE

In a certain wood there once lived an old woman. She had only one tooth left, and they called her the thin old woman who tears children into pieces (Varukweguru bande). She dwelt in a cave where there also lived a gentle snake, the puff-adder (bvumbi.) This snake at first knew nothing of the woman, and it produced an egg every month. But the eggs never hatched because the old woman ate them. One day the snake went to see a doctor. He advised: "From now on eat only worms. Then chase the old woman from the cave and close up the entrance". - The snake took this advice. However, the old one knew exactly what the doctor had said because, being able to fly, she had followed the snake.

She decided to eat no more eggs because they were now mixed with worms. But she planned to wait for the children and then eat those. The puff-adder was terribly disappointed when it realized that the old crone always ate its offspring when they were three or six months old. It again went to the doctor, and this time he advised: "Build a fence around the cave so that the old one can never again enter it." - The puff-adder obeyed and produced its next egg after having eaten many worms. From that egg came a young one which grew and grew until even the puff-adder became afraid of it. One day the snake even noticed that the child had grown four legs and that it swam about happily in the pool. When one day it opened its eyes, the puff-adder was so frightened that it began

Chasing the young one away by trying to bite it. Then the child was afraid also, and it began to scratch the walls of the cave. It was looking for a door but, of course, the door was shut. The puff-adder's child had a very strong head which it beat against the wall until the door suddenly opened. Thus, it came into the world before the snake could bite it. This is why most children are born head first and why women have to suffer pain when giving birth: a frightened child moves about the cave looking for an exit."

(Schwann, 1989 as cited in Aspinall, 2000:101).

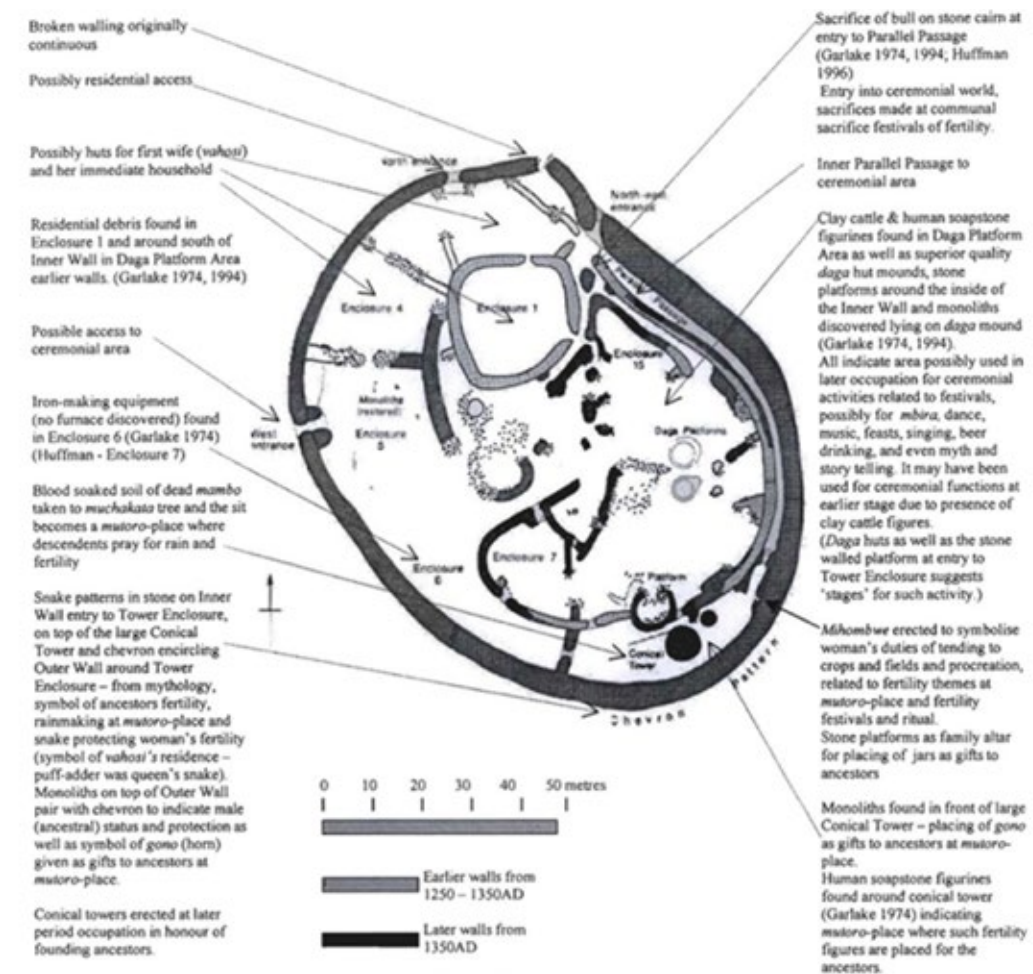


FIG. 3.6 "Aspinall's Mythological associations to the Great Enclosure"

source: ASPINALL J.K (2000:263) as cited by MAAPE S (2011:22)

Maape highlights the fact that Karanga Mythology is deeply rooted in the main themes of birth and fertility. He states that they relate to the biological process of "conception, pregnancy, and birth".

He equates:

'the cave' > 'the uterus'
'the door' > 'the entrance'
'the snake' > 'the oviducts'

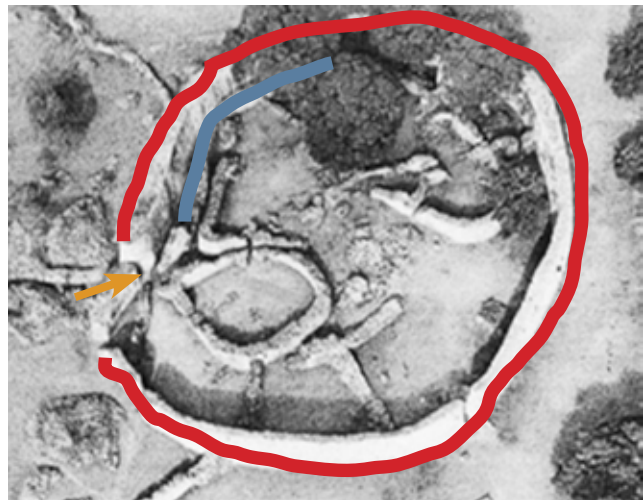
According to Aspinall the design of the Great Enclosure is symbolic of child birth.

ANALYSIS

UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT ZIMBABWE DESIGN

GREAT ZIMBABWE

UNDERSTANDING THE SYMBOLOGY



ENTRANCE SNAKE /
OVIDUCT CAVE/
GREAT WALL

FIG. 3.7

"The Great Enclosure" 1997

source: ASPINALL, J.K (2000:i)
as cited by MAAPE.S (2011:22)

Aspinall describes the narrow entrance to the enclosure and snake-like path created by 'the oviduct' wall.

She equates the sequence and movement through these thresholds and the fact that they end with a 'release' as one approaches the Tower Enclosure.

She follows with a further analogy by making the connection to Karanga mythology:

While examining the 'Oviducts' and the structural walls of the Great Enclosure. Karanga mythology believe that a child's body is formed in the oviducts, therefore it plays an important role in the construction of body and the building itself.

The themes of life, birth and origin of creation are embodied in the Great Enclosure.

The mythology is literally built into the thick walls of the enclosure to protect fertility itself. The Great Enclosure can be perceived as a center for fertility and could have been a space for fertility rituals associated with Karanga cosmological outlook.

Aspinall (2000:101) states:

.."the thick, massive and protective cave-like walls and processional routs of the Great Enclosure may reflect a desire to express a world associated with the dead, or with rituals related to the ancestors, to enhance the concept of an embryonic protective spatialisation inherent in the Karanga concept of death as a symbolic birth."

ANALYSIS



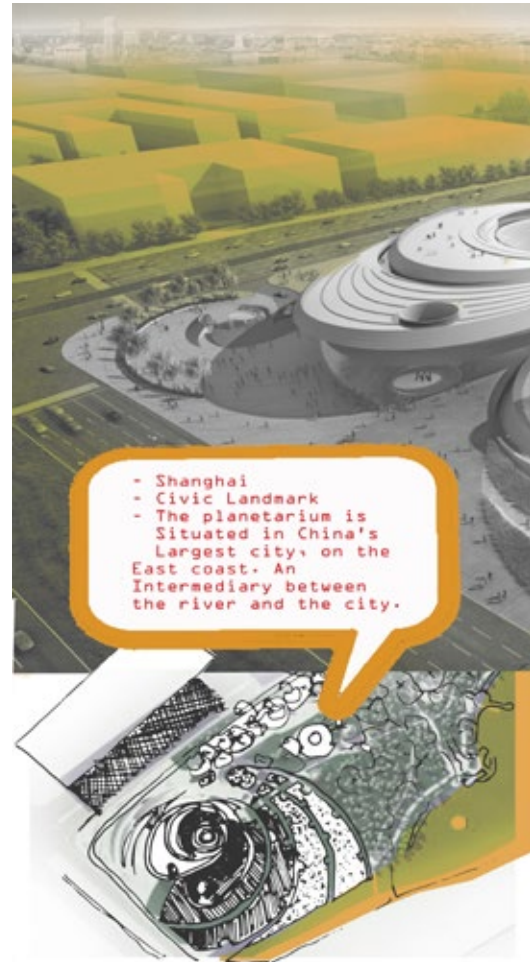
The planetarium is a celebration of time and space. It is a symbol of what is globally "modern" and "forward" but at the same time it is a link to the past.

A combination of the Chinese history of astronomy and the future ambitions of China's space exploration link a new museum to a scientific purpose with celestial reference. By using exhibitions and architecture to communicate scientific content, this is a successful example of a successful hybrid program.

SHANGHAI PLANETARIUM "CELESTIAL BODIES"

FIG. 3.8 "The Sphere"

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/>



CELESTIAL BODIES

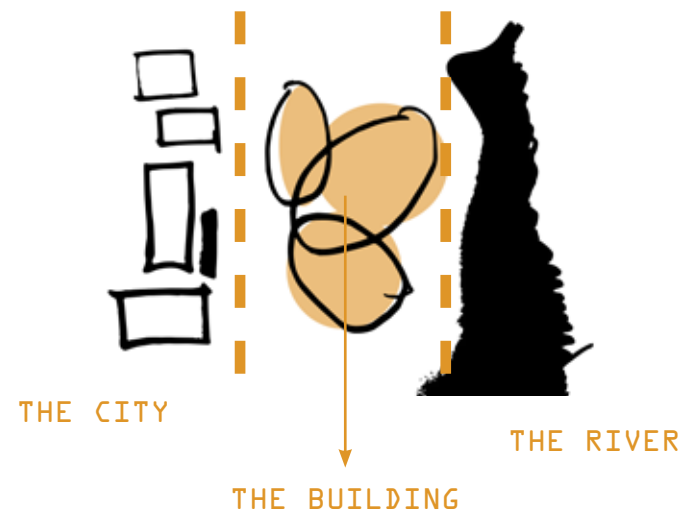
THE CONTEXT

Design Brief: China introduces its latest civic landmark, a 38 000 square meter of a cosmic museum. The buildings function is to educate and inform the Chinese public on the history of Chinese astronomy as well as China's future innovations in scientific research and space exploration. The building will be complete in 2018 and will host planetarium theater, an IMAX cinema, a solar telescope, an observatory, a youth observation camp, and education and research centers.

FIG. 3.9 "The Context" 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/> and sketch collage by author

THE CONTEXT:



This sketch diagram explores the relationship the building has to both the city and the river.

The Planetarium becomes the intermediary between the two.

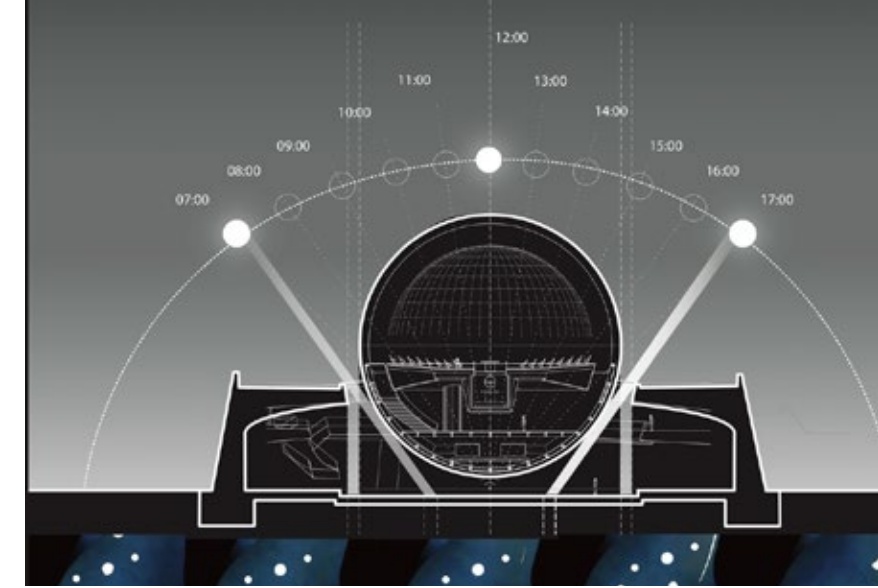


FIG. 3.10 "The Celestial Bodies" 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/>

Concept:

The design is inspired by astronomical principles that consist of three "celestial bodies" that manifest in architectural form: the Oculus, the Inverted Dome and the Sphere.

The three components become metaphors for extraterrestrial program and the forms create an environment for astronomical observations, which draws the public's interest closer to space and its mysteries.

As Ennead Architects state: "Each major element acts as an astronomical instrument, tracking the sun, moon and stars – reminding visitors that our conception of time originates in distant astronomical objects and enriching the museum exhibit experience with actual encounters of celestial movement."

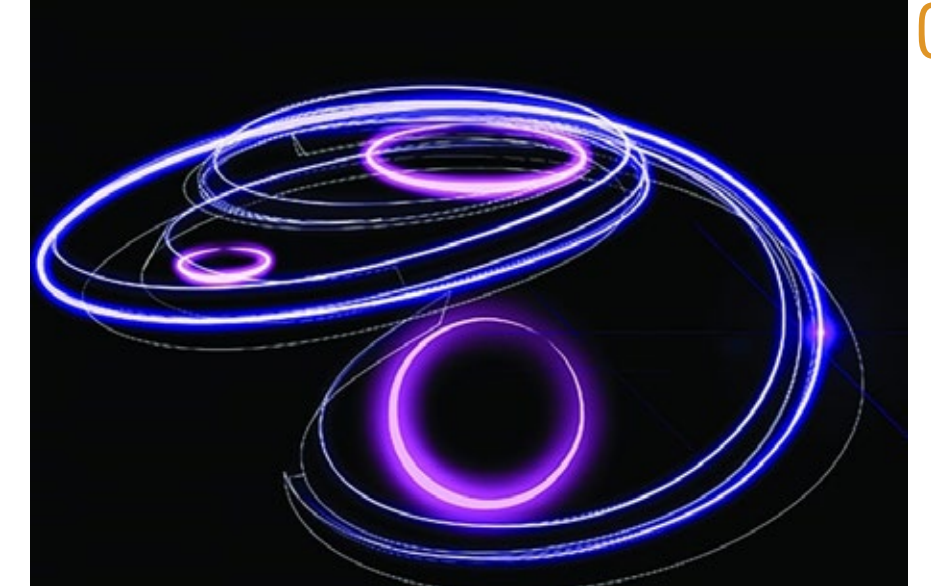


FIG. 3.11 "Conceptual Diagram Paths" 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/>

03 THE SYMBOLOGY

The Oculus: Ancient architectural element which turns the building into an astronomical instrument. The Oculus visualizes time with circular light moving slowly across the gallery floor.

The Inverted Dome: The focal point of the museum offering a sublime spatial experience by bringing the sky into focus. The atrium houses most of the museums permanent exhibits.

The Sphere: Is the positive counterpart to the inverted dome. "A pearl in the heart of a concrete shell". The exterior of the planetarium boasts spiral landscaped pathways leading toward the sphere which houses the Planetarium theatre.

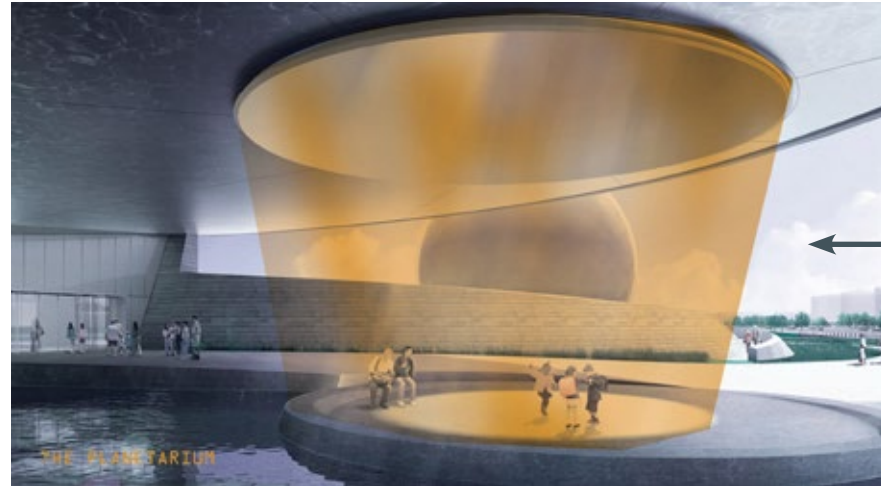


FIG. 3.12 "The Oculus" 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/> and sketch collage by author

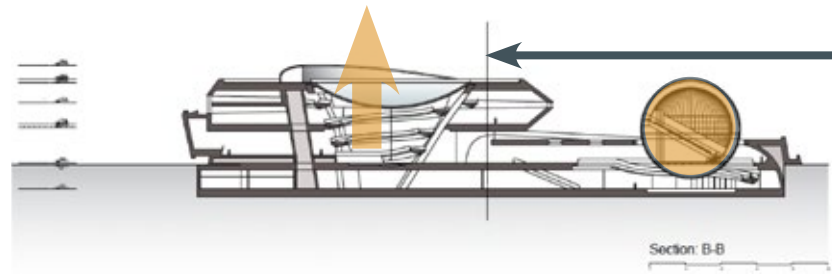


FIG. 3.13 "Section b" 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/> and sketch collage by author

The spatial quality created by the the atrium creates a emotive space for reflection and Contemplation

The constant reference to the sky and its symbolism is reinforced in both the circulation created by the inverted dome and the direct view of the sky through the atrium

CELESTRIAL BODIES

68 UNDERSTANDING THE MYTHOLOGY

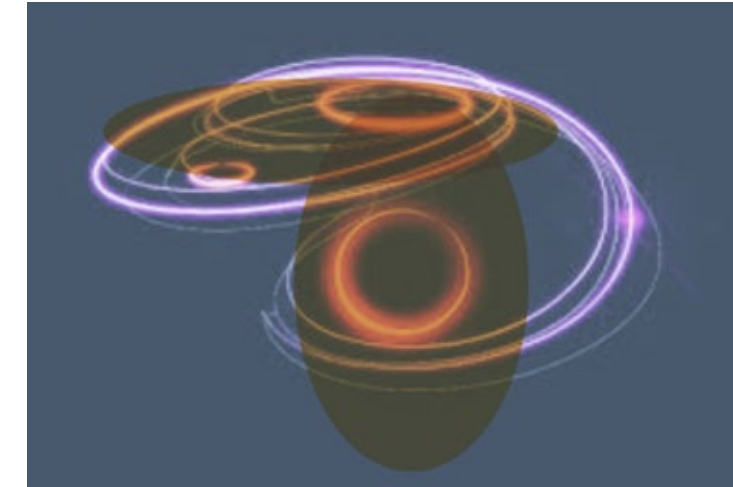


FIG. 3.14 "Conceptual Geometry " 2015

source: <http://architizer.com/blog/shanghai-planetarium/> adapted by author.

Conclusion

Maape describes ritual as a manifestation of myth and the Great Enclosure as a spatial manifestation of the ritual associated with Karanga mythology. In the same way that the Shanghai planetarium is a spatial manifestation of Chinese astronomy and symbolism.

Or symbolism are physical objects. Architecture could also be seen as existing in both realms of cognizance, having dual citizenship to the realm of physical matter and the esoteric. "the interpretation of myth allude to the post-colonial ideas, particularly regarding material phenomena in relation to man and the universe. " (MAAPE.S 2011:24).

Myth reveals the irrefutable relationship between the natural world and the meta-physical in the same way architecture illuminates what it means to be human.

CONCLUSION

69 RITUAL AND SPACE

THE MYTHOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE

Gavin Macrae-Gibson, is a New York based architect, set in 1920's lecturer and author interested in the emergence of a critical theory capable of analyzing Modern architecture through an American lens. In his opening paragraph of 'The Secret Life of Buildings', Macrae-Gibson states:

"The influence of scientific method has increased rapidly since the end of the sixth century at the expense of other, less materialistic methods of knowing.". He goes on to propose the theory that, until recently the identity of Modern architecture has been based on function, technology and

the spirit of the times perceived through a material terms. Further stating that the realization the "our architecture is based on a belief in materialistic cause"(Macrae-Gibson:1). According to Macrae-Gibson, because the science had drastically altered the world, its method had meaningfully been applied in architecture.

However for the first time "architectural culture became capable of distinguishing between the methods of science and that form of knowledge necessary to successfully express the experience of life...".

Gibson proposes the idea that faith put into the scientific method on which we based modern architecture, is a myth. A myth constructed to explain man's relation to the world. However this inconvertible myth allowed modern architects no concern with the poetic method of thinking even though that was the method they used. "As a result the myth was the end of the myth", (Macrae-Gibson). It has increasingly become apparent that the necessity of modernism is in a form of transcendence, as it looks for causes beyond that of the material realm.

The challenge of an architecture that is of the ongoing machine age is that it needs to "proceed from the observation of the diverse effects of the industrial culture on man to the development of a new mythology.."(Macrae-Gibson). A new mythology is required, one created of a body of stories that together convincingly elucidate the predicaments of the African man in the twenty-first century. This new construct can only be achieved through a poetic logic. As Macrae-Gibson states, the embodiment in architectural form of mythological knowledge having the power to address

the ambiguity and mystery of human life, is what I call the secret life of buildings."

Macrae-Gibson and I both share the belief that architecture should be made in a sequence where in the beginning: architectural intent should be based on the observation of reality and culminated in the unified expression of experience.

In the African context, it is important to emphasize the importance of oral history and tradition in the quest to find the origins of African mythology. Understanding that African ritual and spirituality are largely

Associated with the natural environment. Contemporary African architecture and its spatial constructs have been explored within the urban and rural contexts.

And the question of Mythology's relevance to contemporary architecture has been discussed through the analysis and exploration of the spaces that provoke human transcendence through the use of emotive space.

There is a need for a new social construct that is accommodating of the ever transforming black identity. The previous formula of traditional western knowledge- sharing methods

Combined with architecture have resulted in our present spatial condition.

One that is not always accommodating of all races, sexes and generations. Afroscension proposes a new formula that recovers the knowledge embedded in the precolonial roots of the African continent.

Adopting alternative methods of knowledge sharing and combining that with architecture in the hope of promoting an integrated and flexible co-existence between the past and the future African cities.

“... FOR AN (AS YET) UNNAMED AFRICAN ARCHITECTURAL STUDENT,

IN AN (AS YET) UNNAMED AFRICAN LOCATION,

... WHICH FUSES ART, CULTURE AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO DEMAND A RADICAL, POST AFRO URBAN EXAMPLE.”

LESLEY LOKKO, 2014 “CUT AND PASTE” TECHNOETIC ARTS

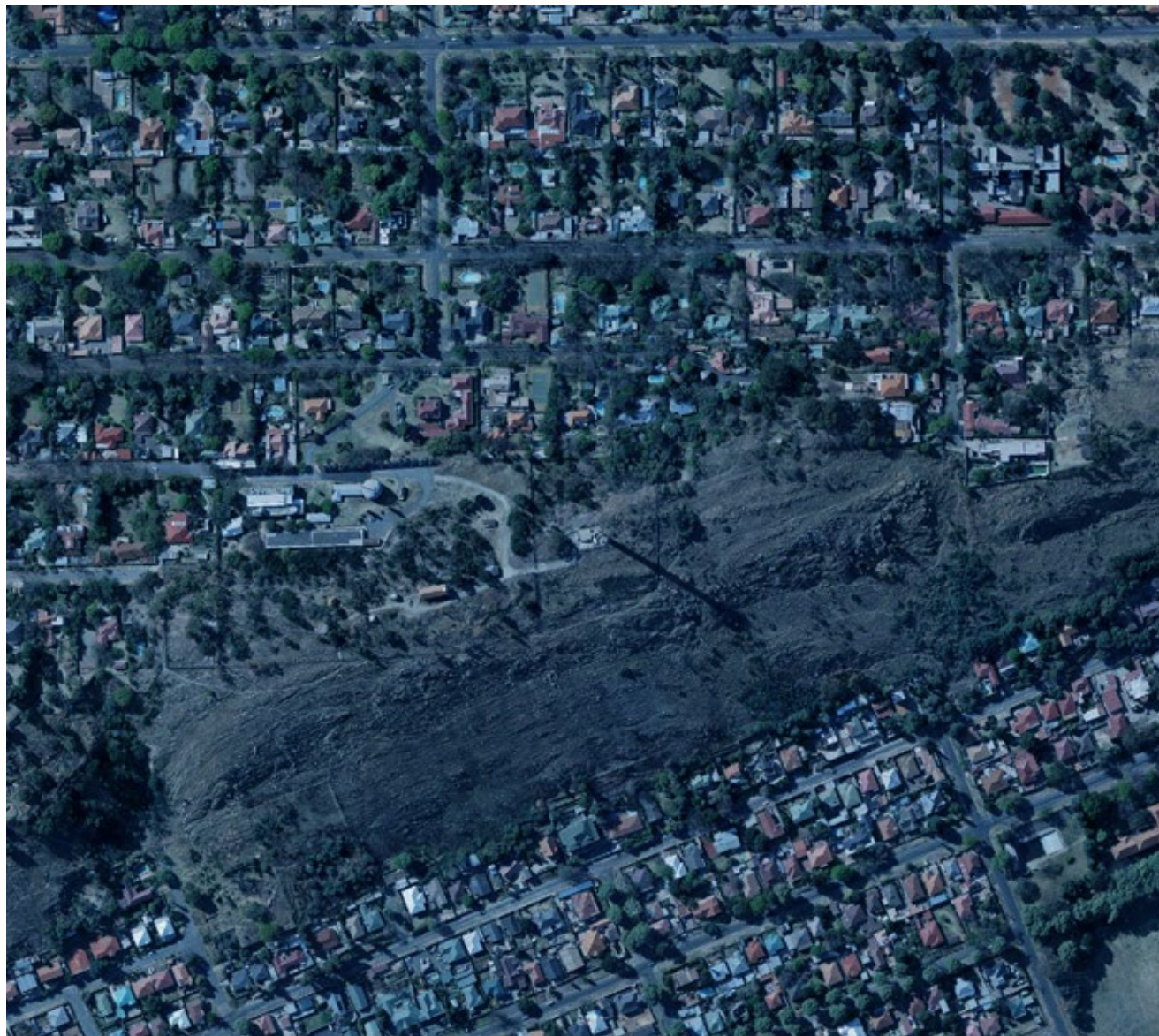
05

FIG. 5.1

"Observatory Ridge"
1905

source:
<http://www.eduvideoafrica.com/wp-content/gallery/johannesburg-observatory/telescope-dome.jpg>





THE SITE 05

Observatory ridge, situated on the highest point in Johannesburg, at 2208 meters above sea level. With the aim of transitioning this suburban ridge into a cultural landscape.

The intervention becomes an addition to the existing Johannesburg Observatory which is situated on the current headquarters of the South African Agency for Science and Technology.

The site is in close proximity of the Johannesburg CBD but is also surrounding by various suburbs that have diverse economic, cultural and racial roots. The ridge becomes a suitable neutral "in-between" space.

FIG. 5.2

"Aerial Map"

source: GIS Maps.
Adapted by Author

The Witwatersrand region is a long broken up ridge that extends for 56km and excludes a small set of parallel ridges. Made of quartzite and shale.

Johannesburg was established in the immediate vicinity between the northern and southern ridges of the Witwatersrand Watershed, which eventually drain into the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

As described by author Keith Beavon in his book 'Johannesburg: The making and shaping of the city', Beavon unpacks the founding factors of the city. The English translation of the Afrikaans word 'Witwatersrand' is 'Ridge of White Waters'. A romantic phrase that has been coined by historians and writers when referring the ridges with their "steep northern scarps



FIG. 5.3 "Johannesburg Ridges" 2004
source: Beavon, K 2004: 96

that looked down on what was originally an area of rolling grassland or veld". The Witwatersrand was a source of a number of small streams that are referred to as spruits, these water spruits were clear and rapidly flowing 'white waters'. From a distance the reddish-brown quartzite along the northern face of the ridges, the water appeared white in colour.

Quartzite ridges are limited in distribution and are characterized by a unique plant species found nowhere else in South Africa. A ridge or mountain ridge is a geological feature that consists of a chain of mountains or hills that form a continuous elevated crest from a distance. The interplay between topography and climate has contributed to the high biodiversity of southern Africa. Ridges have a direct effect on temperature, surface airflow, humidity and soil types (Samways, 1994).

UNDERSTANDING THE RIDGE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JOHANNESBURG RIDGE & ITS TOPOGRAPHY

WHY THE RIDGE?

For years ridges have been providing aesthetically pleasing environments for surrounding inhabitants, they attract tourists and recreational users. Ridges have also been viewed as a source for spiritual renewal, mental equilibrium and confidence building (Eber, 2000). Natural environments within urban areas have been providing opportunities for human recreation, relaxation and education.

Observatory ridge is situated in Johannesburg East and is home to South Africa's first observatory.

FIG. 5.4 Superimposed OBSERVATORY Ridge with the stars as a back drop



FIG. 5.5
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

CONTEXTUAL MAPPING: SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES





FIG. 5.6
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

ACCESS & MOBILITY: MAIN ROADS, MAJOR EAST-WEST CONNECTORS

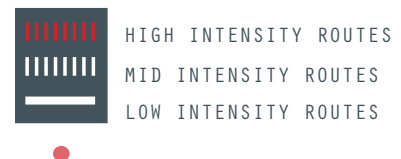


FIG. 5.7
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

MACRO GREEN SPACES THE RIDGE & SURROUNDING PARKS





FIG. 5.8
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

GREENERY & VEGETATION
TREES, PUBLIC SPACE & PARKS



SCALE 1:10 000

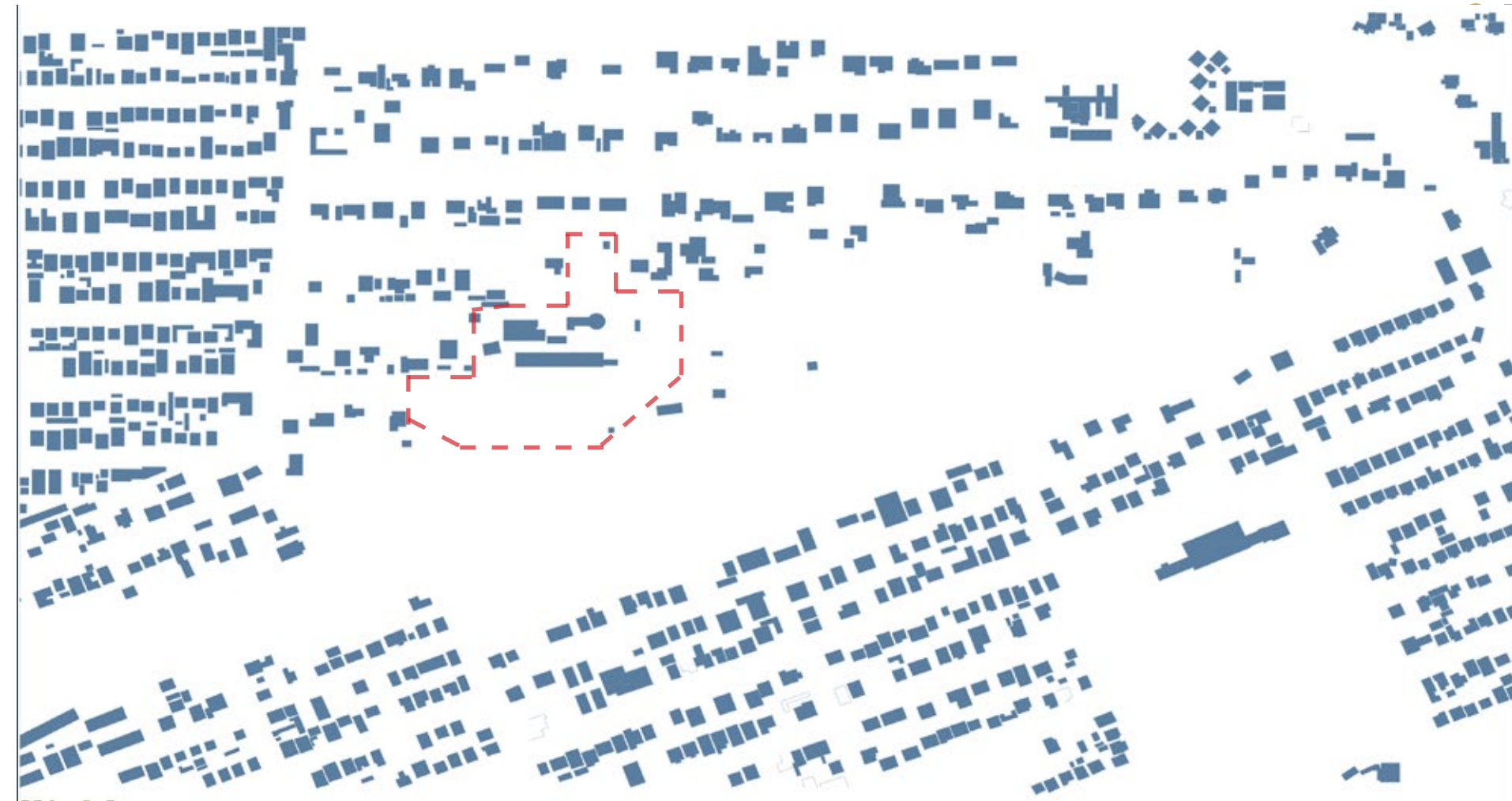
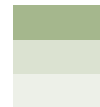


FIG. 5.9
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

FIGURE GROUND
BUILT/POSITIVE SPACE



SCALE 1:10 000

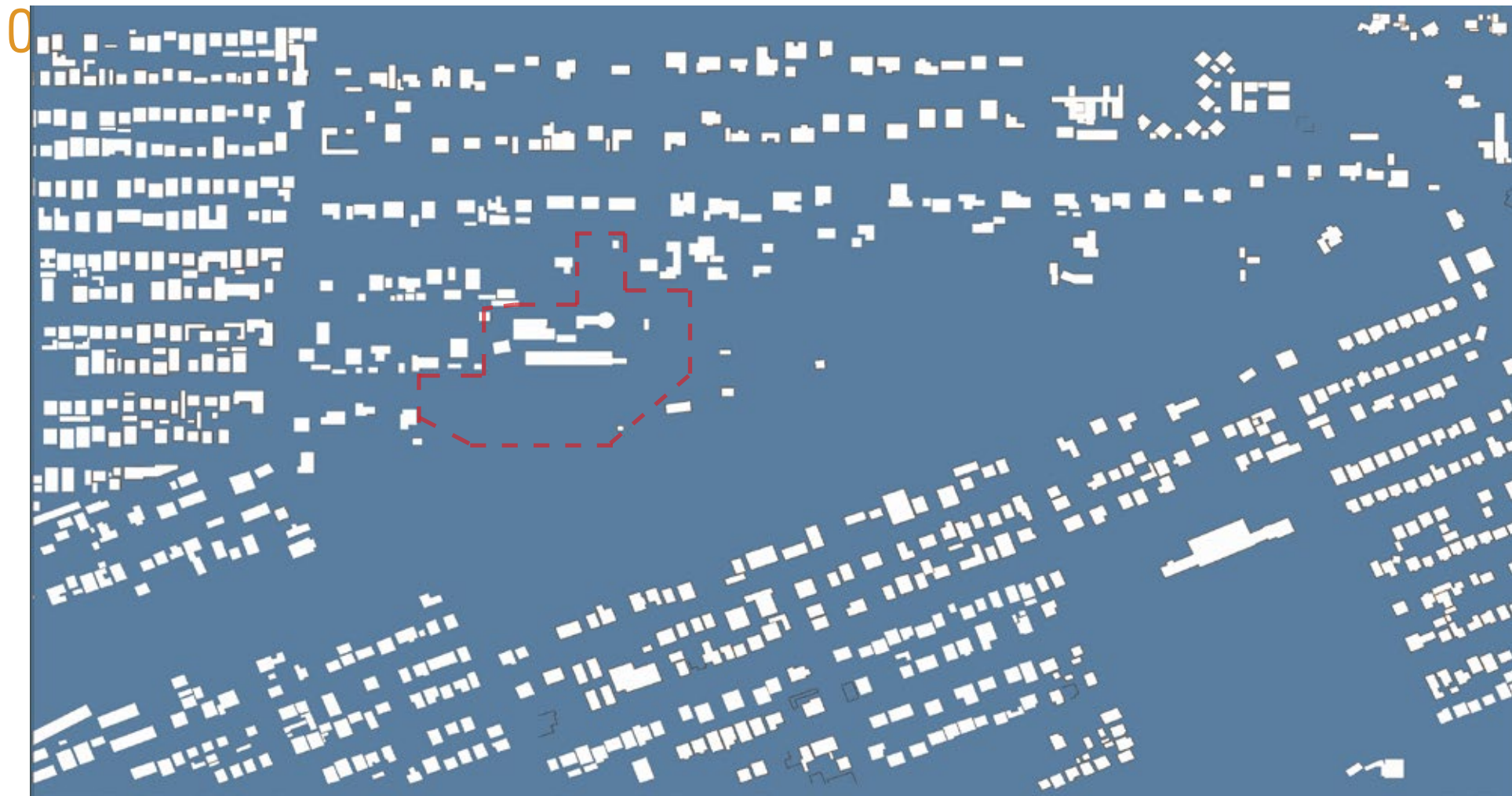
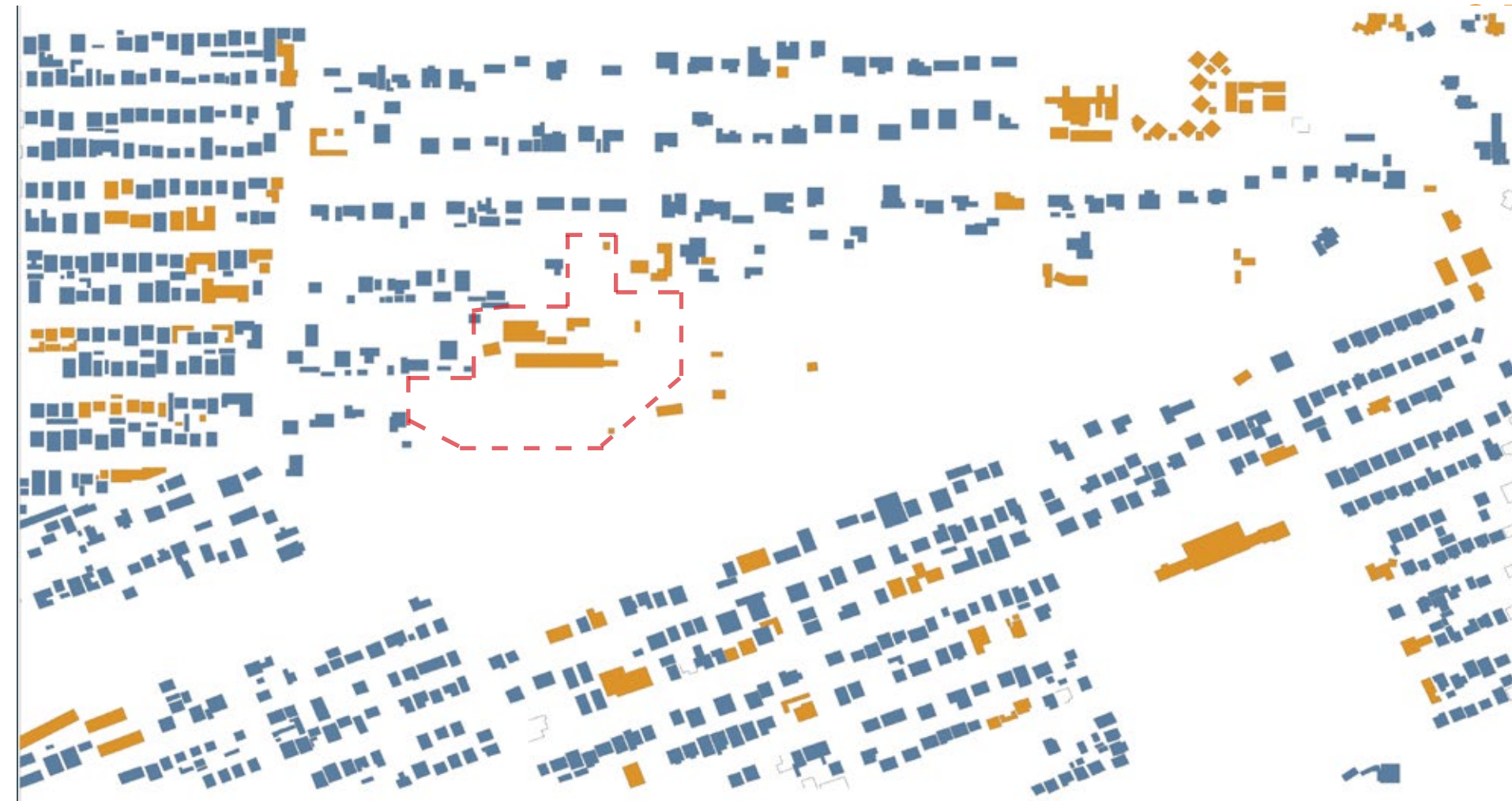


FIG. 5.10
source: Base map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

FIGURE GROUND
UNBUILT/NEGATIVE SPACE

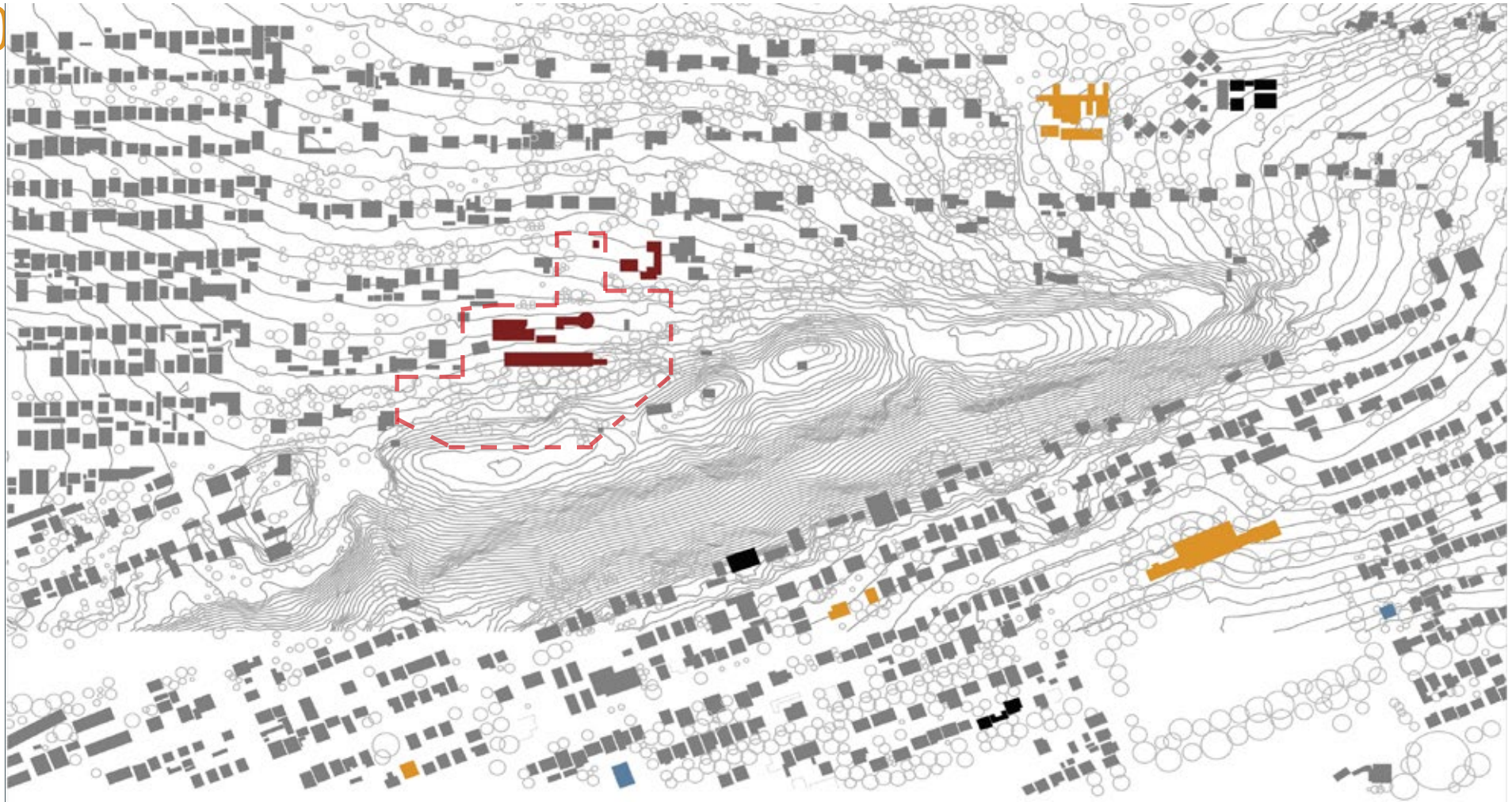
SCALE 1: 10 000



LAND USE
COMMERCIAL & INSTITUTIONAL, RESIDENTIAL

SCALE 1:10 000

RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL & INSTITUTIONAL



SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME

SCHOOLS, CHURCHES, INSTITUTIONS, HISTORICAL



SCALE 1:10 000

	CHURCHES
	SCHOOLS
	INSTITUTIONS
	HERITAGE & CHILDRENS HOME

By transitioning the suburban ridge of Observatory into a cultural ridge. The ridge becomes accessible to all as a neutral space.

With the use of civic architectural intervention the ridge maintains a link to the city. While penetrating the various communities surrounding the ridge.

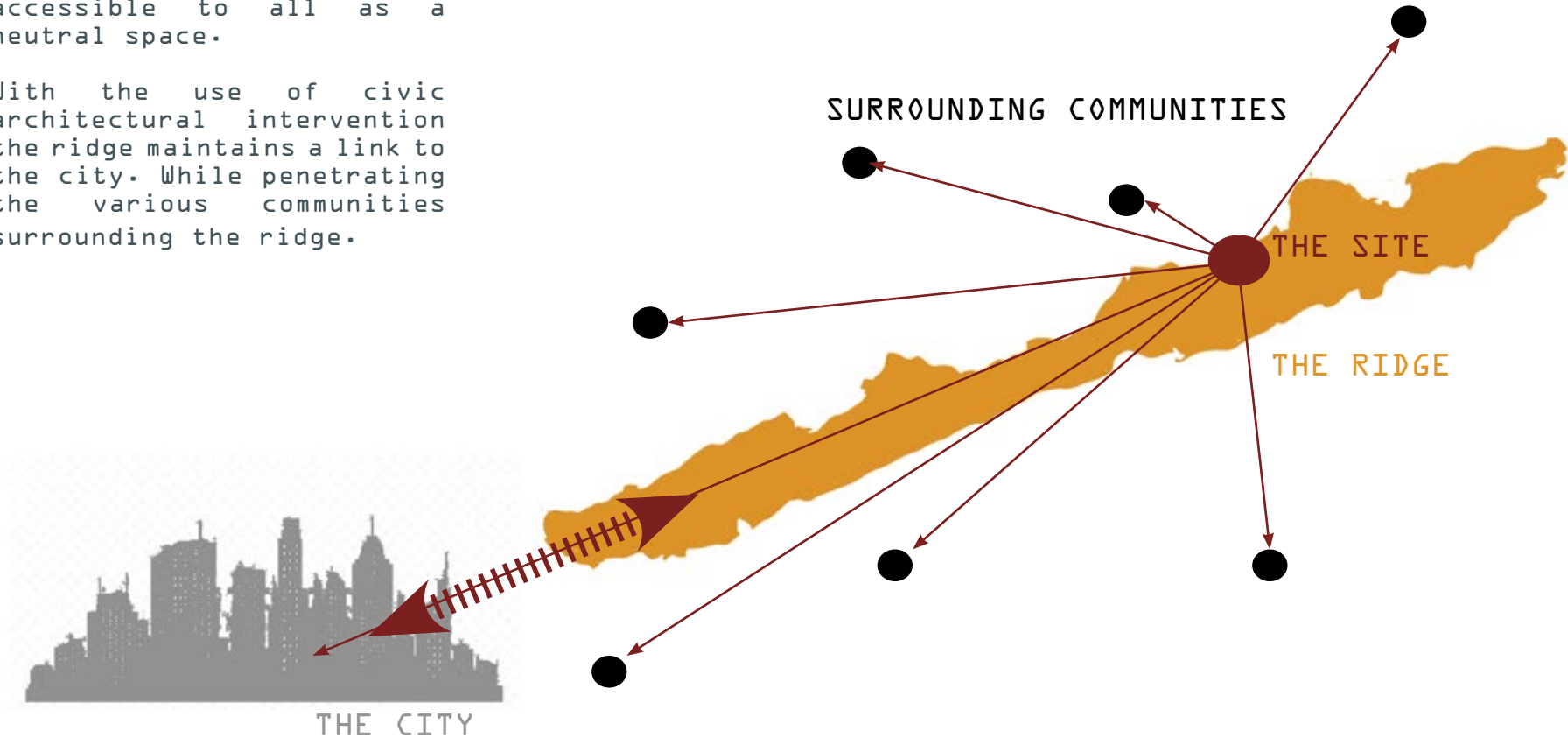


FIG. 6.1
Urban Diagram by Author

URBAN APPROACH
BASED ON THE CONTEXTUAL MAPPING

06

Small architectural intervention along the ridge will aid in connecting the city and public to the suburban ridge. These interventions will lead toward the civic gesture that will be my architectural intervention attached to the existing Johannesburg observatory site.

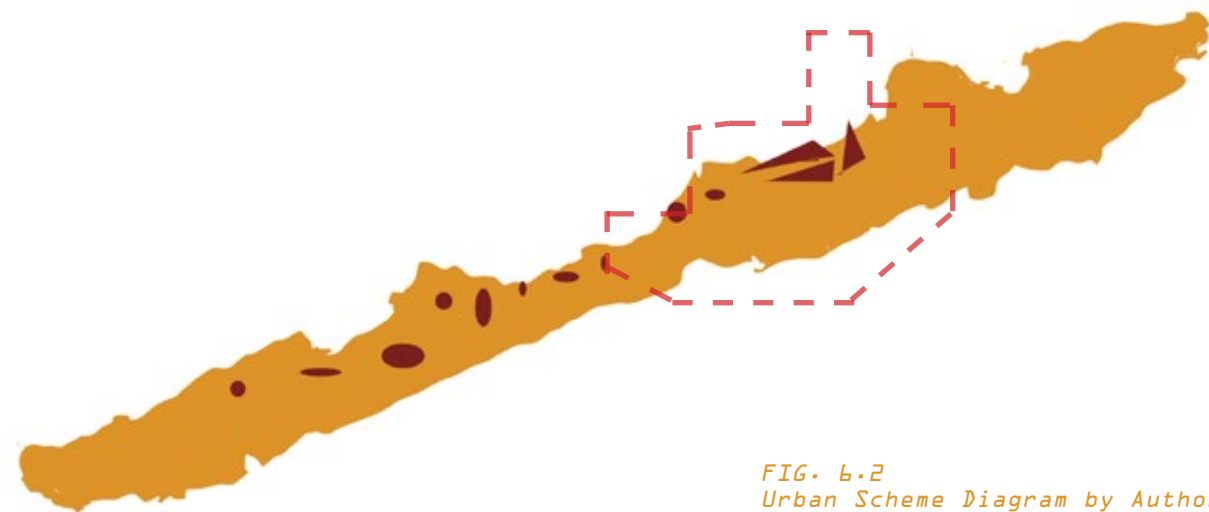


FIG. 6.2
Urban Scheme Diagram by Author

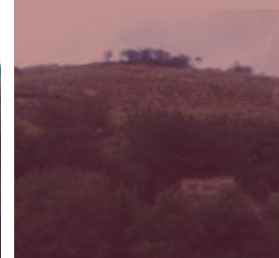


FIG. 6.3
Panoramic View of Ridge
Photographed by Author

URBAN APPROACH

RIDGE PANORAMIC & CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM

86

WHY THE EXISTING JOHANNESBURG OBSERVATORY SITE

In the same way astronomy is used to illuminate knowledge of unknown universe, I intend on using architecture to illuminate what it means to be a human being, what it means to be African and an African futurist.

The Johannesburg Observatory has experienced many name changes since its opening in 1961 as a reflection of the political changes in South Africa.

One of the first observatory's in Southern Africa, between 1911 and 1938, the observatory detected 579 new minor planets one of its most popular detection was the discovery of Proxima Centauri.

In 1910 South Africa became a union and Meteorological field became more concerned with astronomy. The Observatory name was changed to Union Observatory in 1912 and acquired its first telescope. Astronomy is a natural science that studies celestial objects and phenomena. It is the application of mathematics,

physics and chemistry to explain the origin of celestial objects and their evolution.

The Johannesburg Observatory becomes the perfect site as it offers both a link to the past and the future.

"How can we capture our curiosity and awe of the sky and use it as a connection to ourselves and others?"

06

UNDERSTANDING THE OBSERVATORY

A BRIEF HISTORY ON THE OBSERVATORY AND SITE



The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) is the business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) which has a mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science and technology. All programs and strategies toward science promotion are approached through education, communication and awareness through exhibitions and actual experience.

My architectural intervention is both a spatial entity and on-going philosophical journey, creativity and innovation are powerful tools that manifest what would otherwise only be in our minds.

The SAASTA site would benefit from this initiative as the project would bring added revenue and awareness to their cause.

FIG. 6.4

Conceptual Collage
exploring the relationship
between the existing
Observatory and the
Afroscension center

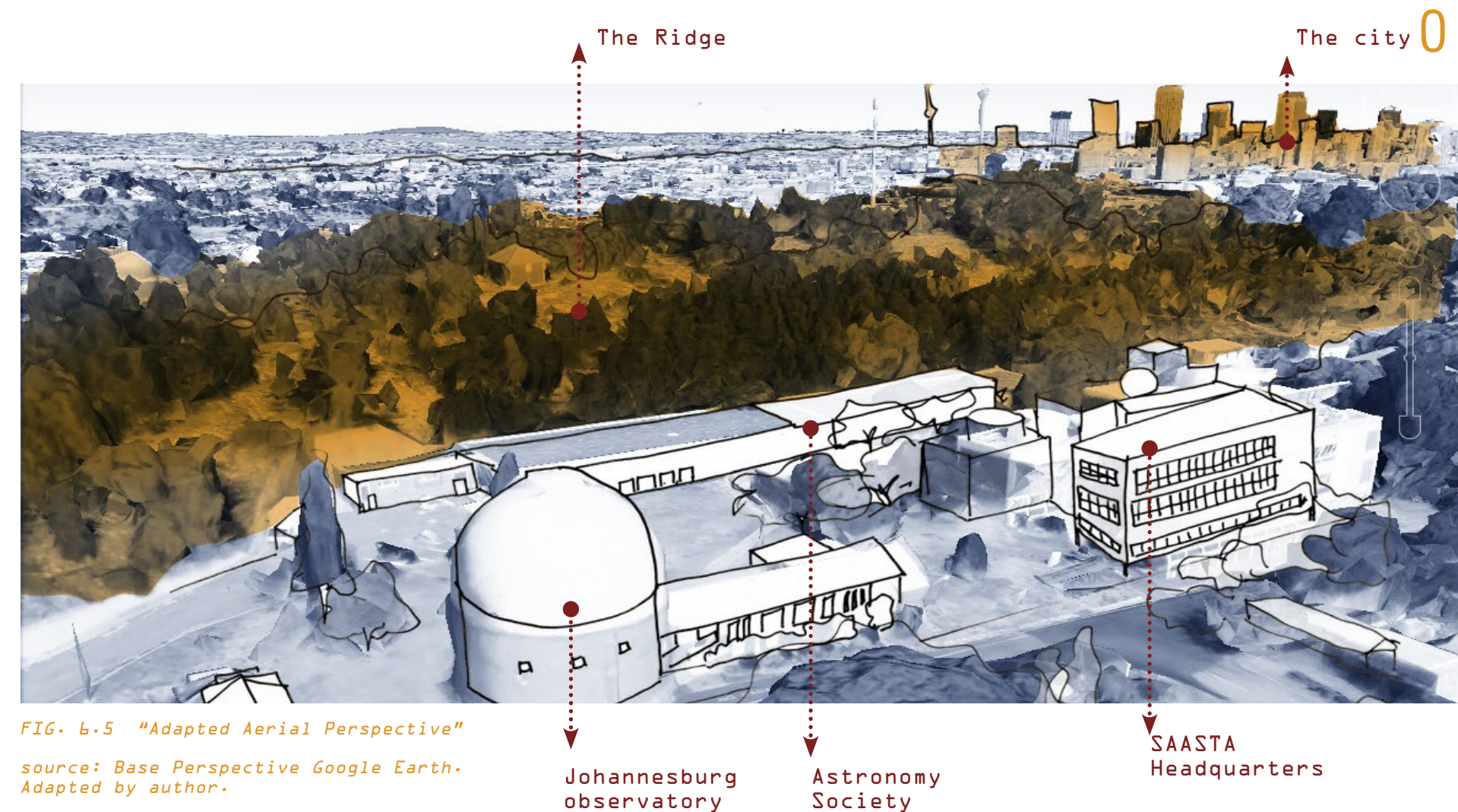
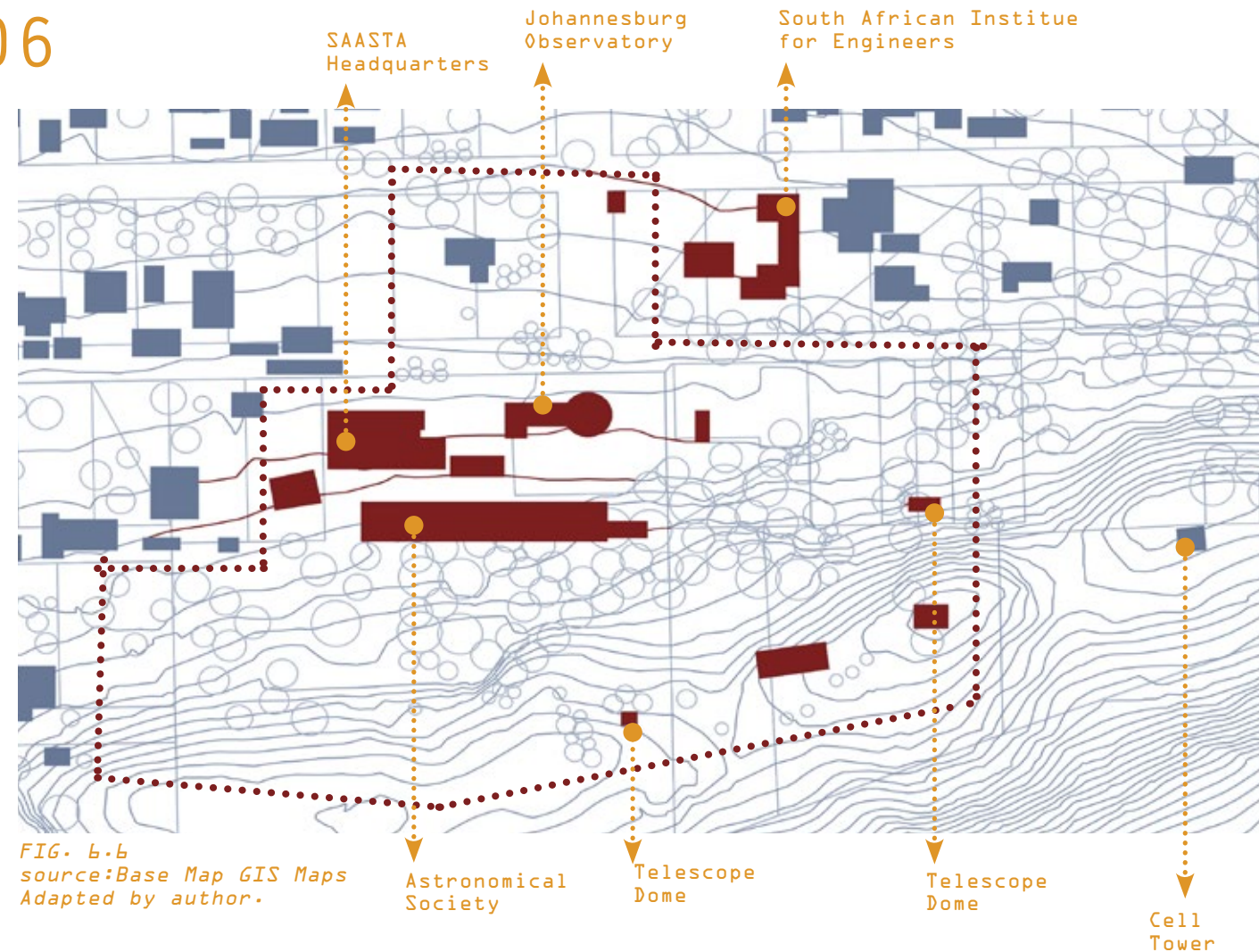


FIG. 6.5 "Adapted Aerial Perspective"

source: Base Perspective Google Earth.
Adapted by author.

SITE ANALYSIS

THE EXISTING SAASTA SITE

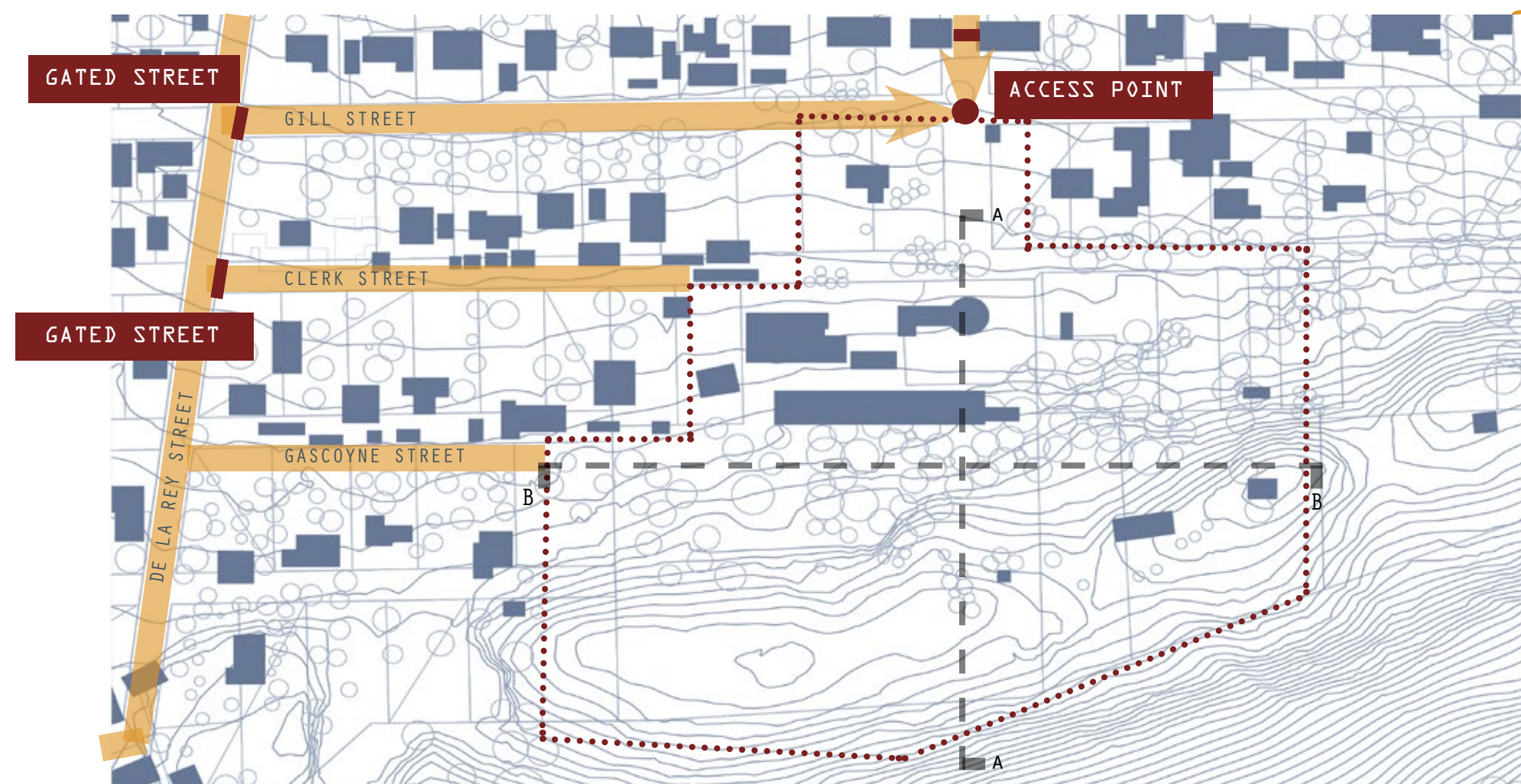


SITE ANALYSIS

EXISTING & SURROUNDING PROGRAMME



FIG. 6.7
"Telescope Dome"
source: <<http://www.eduvideoafrica.com/wp-content/gallery/johannesburg-observatory/telescope-dome.jpg>>.



SITE ANALYSIS

ACCESS, ACCESS CONTROL, URBAN SECTIONS



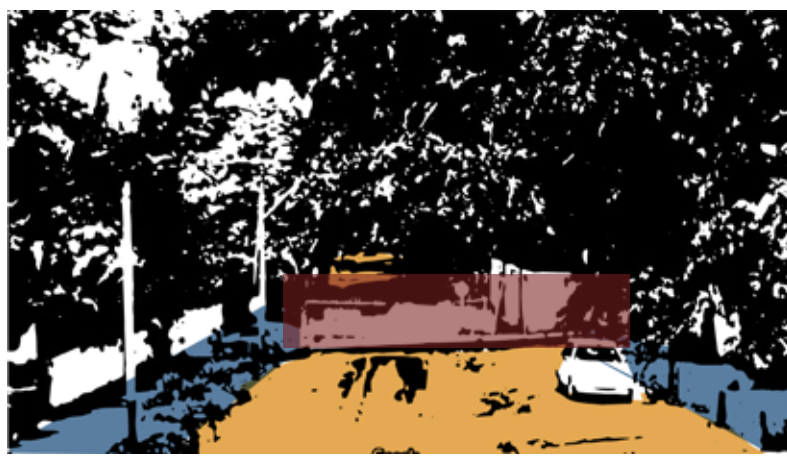
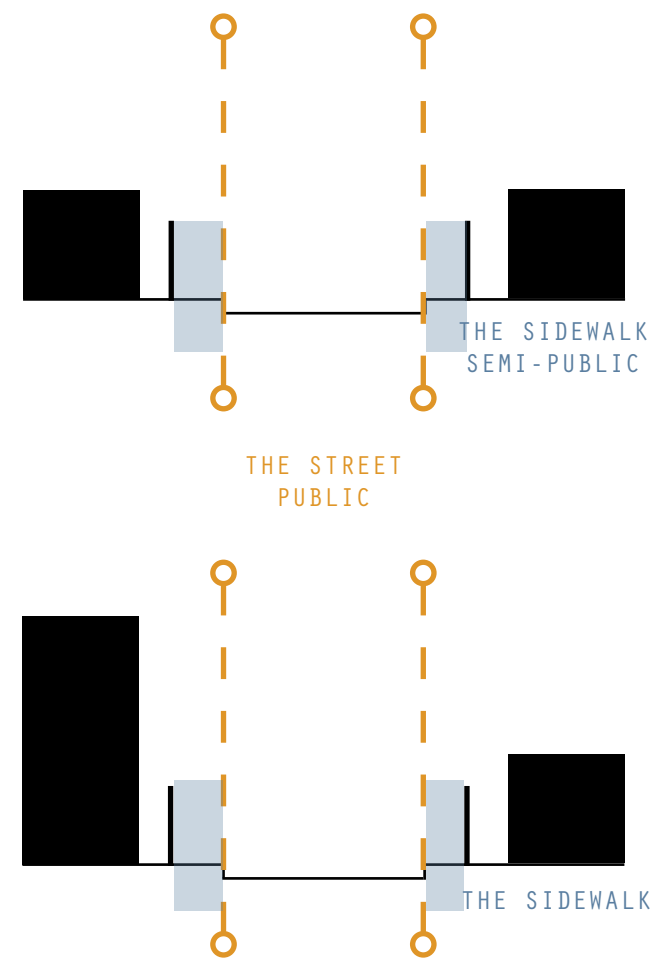


FIG. 6.8 Street Sketch



FIG. 6.9 Street Sketch



The SAASTA site is situated within a gated community. All access roads have placade fencing or a boom gate.

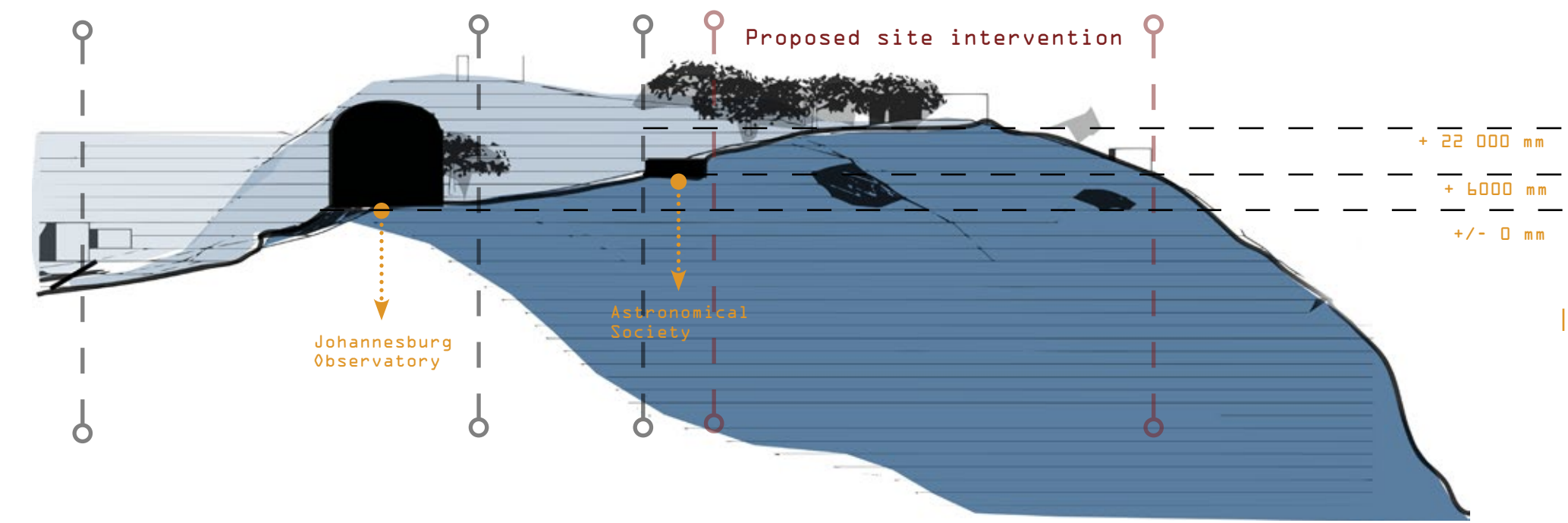


FIG. 6.10 Urban Section Sketch

URBAN SECTION A.A

CROSS SECTION THROUGH THE OBSERVATORY

SCALE 1:500

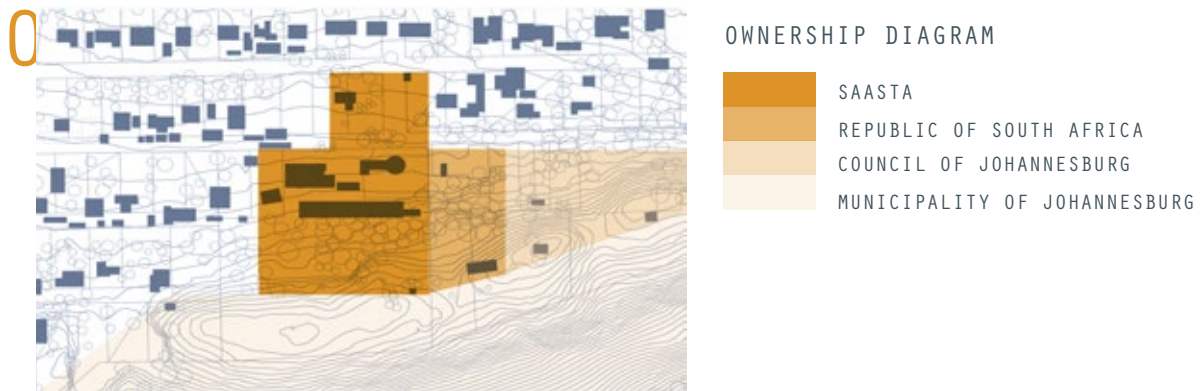


FIG. 6.11 Base Map- GIS Maps. Adapted by Author

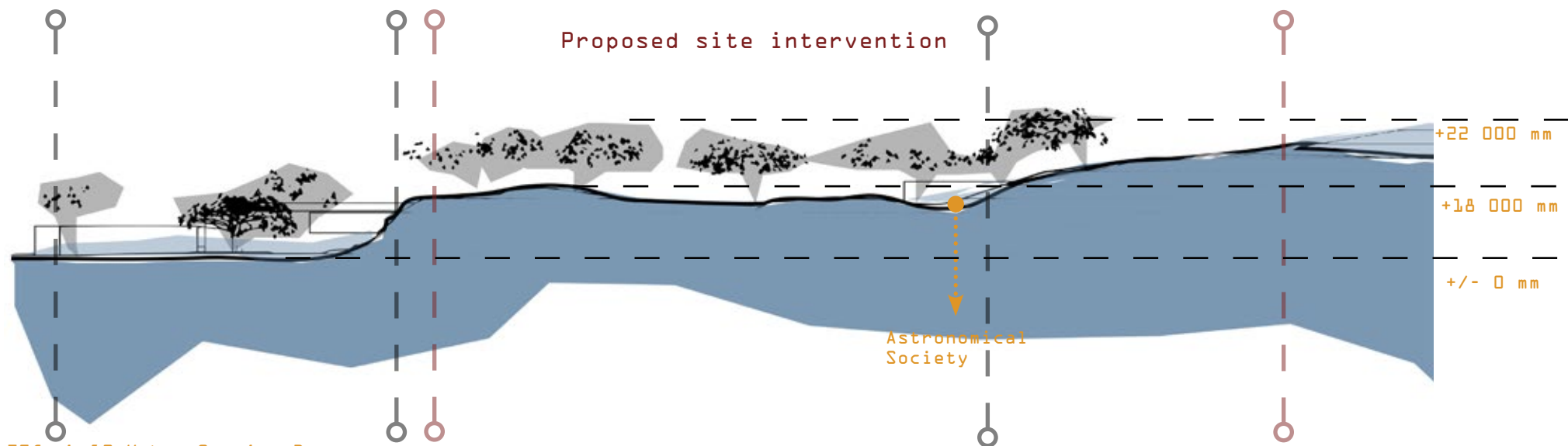


FIG. 6.12 Urban Section B

URBAN SECTION B.B

LONGITUDINAL SECTION THROUGH ACROSS THE RIDGE SCALE 1:1000

INFORMING ARCHITECTURE: LESSONS FROM THEORY

07

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Black identity one of constant movement and evolution. The concept of TIME TRAVEL through the an exploration of the different FRAGMENTS of African identity that contribute to progressive black cultural production.

African mythology is rooted in RITUAL and SYMBOLISM. Informed design would directly engage with this duality to ground the inquiry into the origins of African culture.

Mythology

Transcen-

Afroscension is about creating spaces that are emotive and transient. Architecture has a history with spirituality. There are spaces that promote transformation. In what way can space help the user attain spirituality.

1_SITE SELECTION

Many places mentioned in the theory have a sacred cultural association. In the African context there has always been reference to nature in relation to sacred myth.

The RIDGE is a reflection of this.

2_FORM

The form will reflect the idea of providing PORTALS or windows into the existing and historical African Identity through myth and storytelling. Capturing ideas of historic fragmentation.

3_PROGRAMME

- A place for MYTH & STORYTELLING
- Facility for cultural development
- A place for performing RITUAL
- A place for connecting to NATURE

CONCLUSION

THEORY RESOLUTION 95

07 INFLUENCES OF THE SITE :



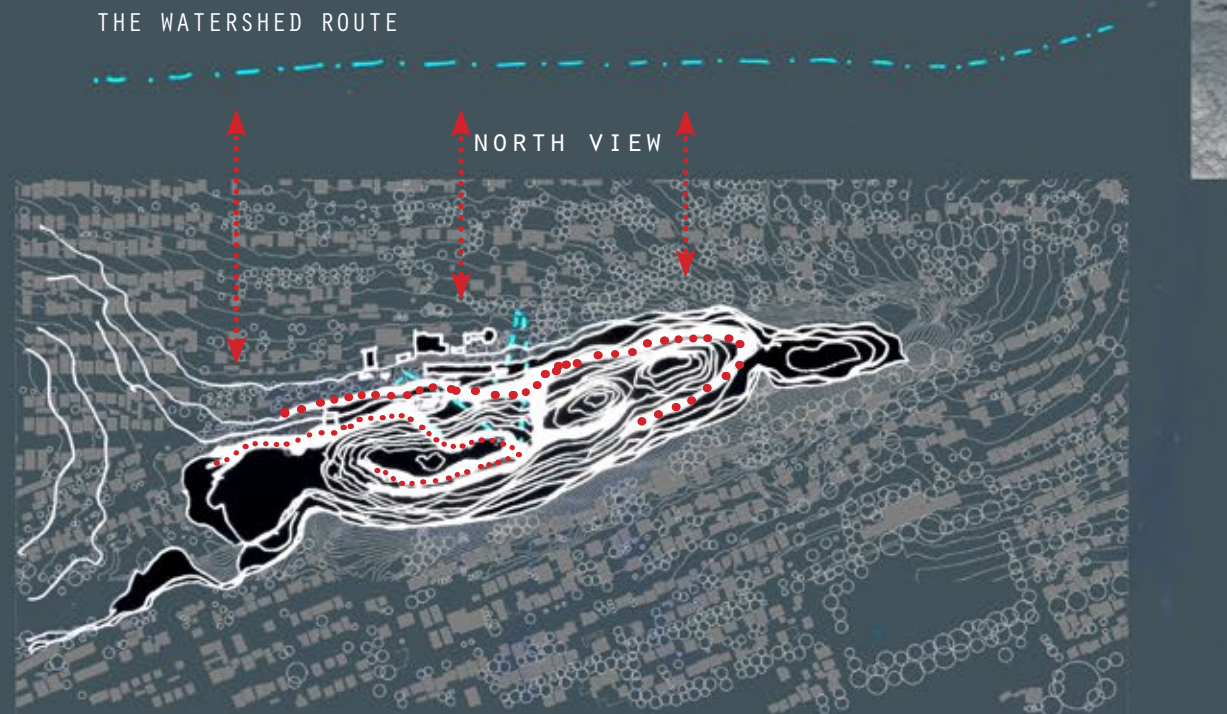
WEST VIEW

Western view
Offers a view toward the CBD , highlighting iconic buildings such The Cell C tower and Ponte.

- VIEWS
- ORIENTATION
- TOPOGRAPHY

CONCLUSION

96 SITE RESOLUTION



SOUTH VIEW

The watershed is the existing natural water source linking rivers in Johannesburg to the ocean.

Introducing a water element to the site will link the building to its spiritual journey



North view
Offers a view toward the "man-made" city northern suburbs & the booming Metropolitan that is Sandton City in the horizon

South view
Offers a view toward the "natural city", with a view toward the mine dumps & scenic southern suburbs

1_SIT

As discussed in the site selection, the ridge is a neutral & thought to provide RENEWAL

2_FOR

The form will respond to the topography of the site and the EXISTING views & orientation in relation to the city. Offering windows or Portals of the city.

2_PRO

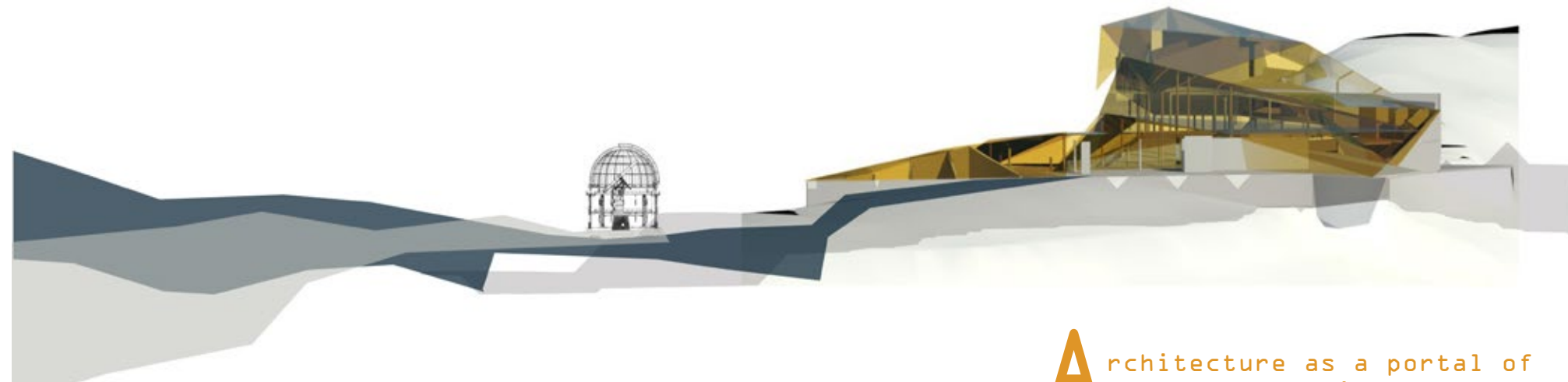
- A place where the community can find information about themselves.
- A place to keep African historical records
- A facility that science and cosmology to promote innovation.

SITE RESOLUTION 97



FORM DEVELOPMENT

98 MODEL EXPLORATION



Architecture as a portal of transcendence into the city, extracts of the African identity and her future ambitions.

CONCEPT

100 COLLAGE



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



DESIGN BRIEF

EXPLORATION OF SPACE AS A PORTAL OF
TRANSCENDENCE INTO AFRICA

The design brief is to transition a suburban ridge into a cultural ridge by designing a building that connects the user to their past, their ancestors and their future. Promoting black cultural production.

The building will act as time portal that promotes a flexible co-existence of the cultural heritage of Africa's past with her future astronomical ambitions, able to dismantle time and extract fragments of African identity through time.

The Centre will preserve ancient wisdom and facilitate the art of storytelling while celebrating new life through ritual and customs. Finally Centre will facilitate the co-existence between the past and the future by attaching its self to the existing South African Agency of Science and Technology to promote awareness of cultural astronomy.

DESIGN DRIVERS

1_AFRICAN RITUAL & NATURE

2_PORTAL TO THE CITY &
AFRICAN IDENTITY

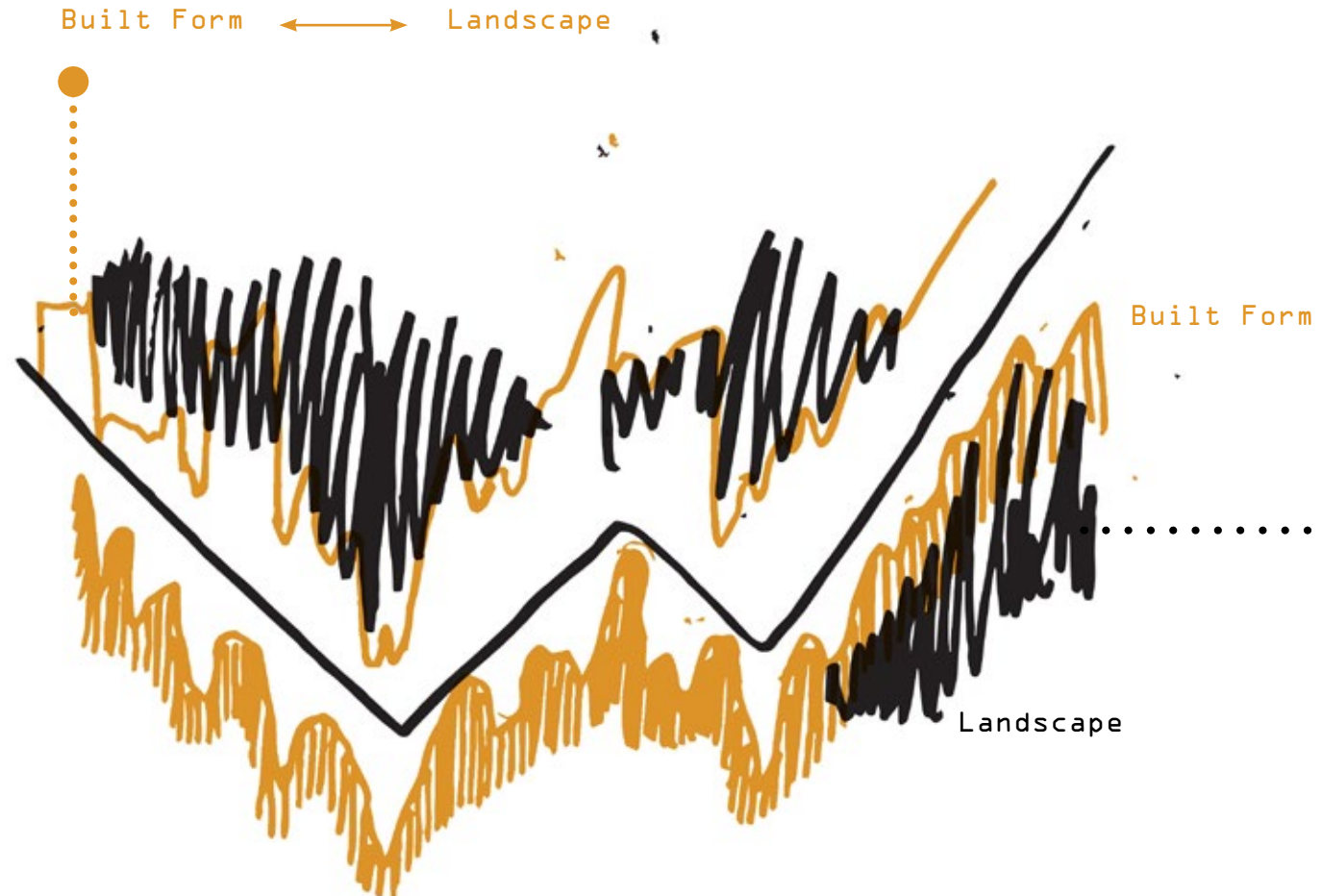
3_SACRED GEOMETRY & SPATIAL
IMPLICATIONS

4_SEQUENCE OF STORY TELLING



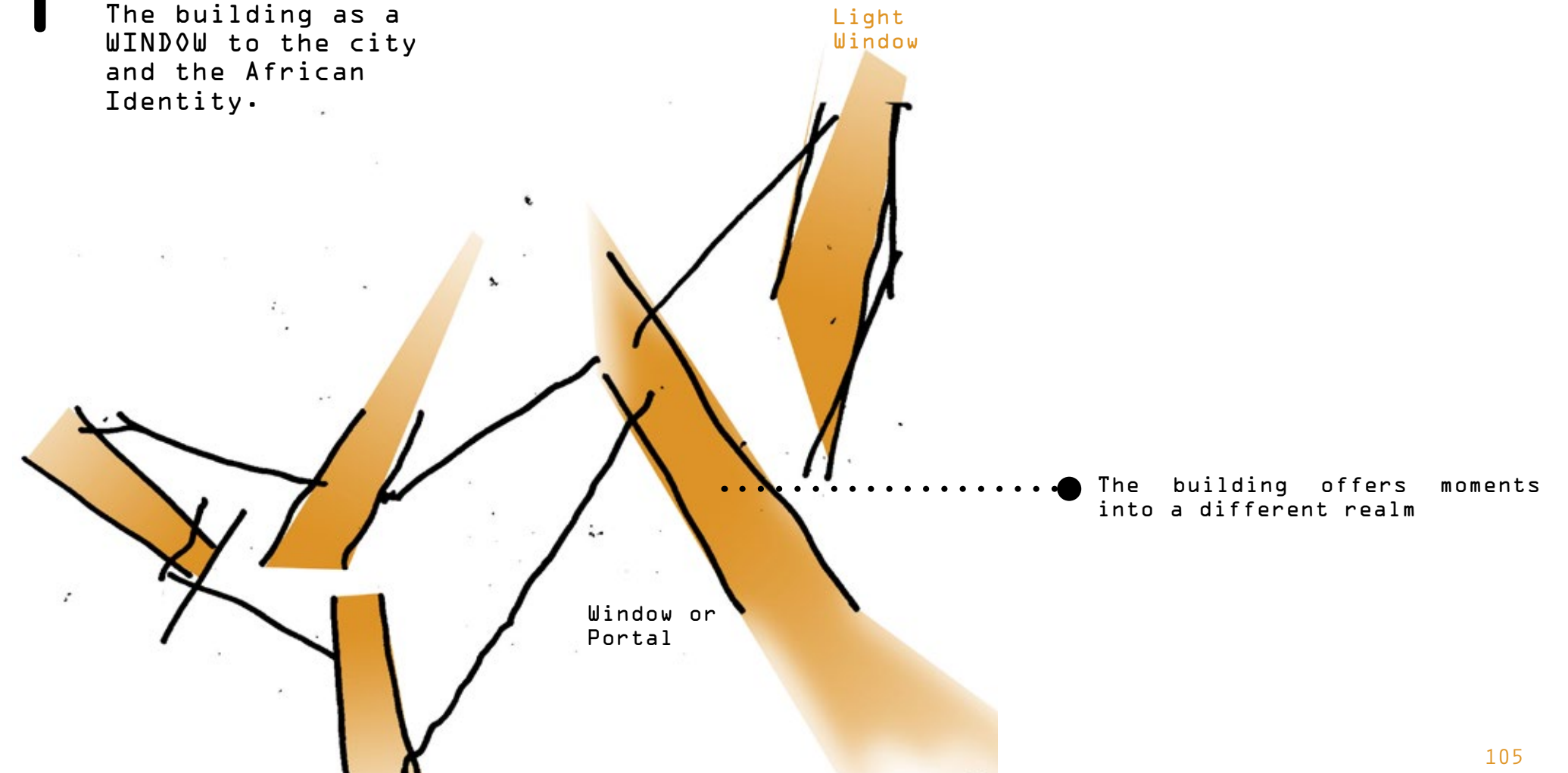
Ritual

As a LINK between
African spirituality
and nature.



Portal

The building as a
WINDOW to the city
and the African
Identity.

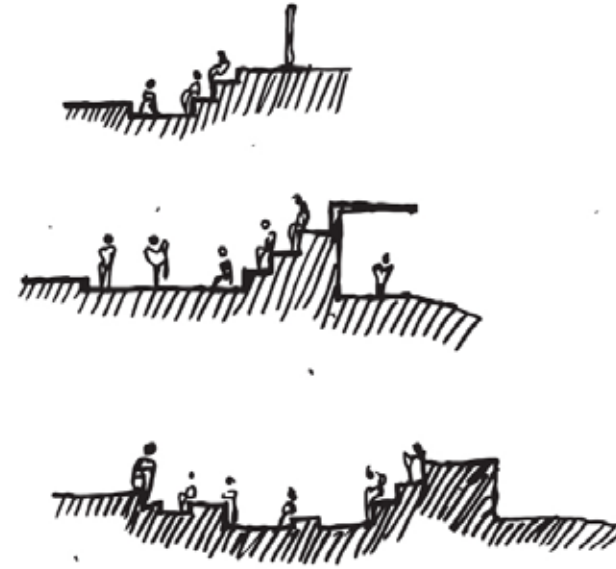




Sequence

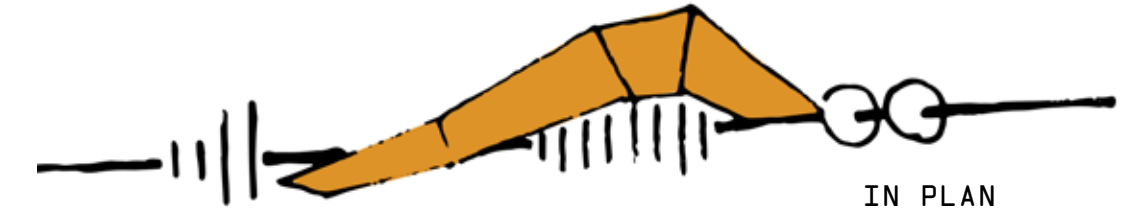
SPACE As a tool for
Story telling

Storytelling spaces

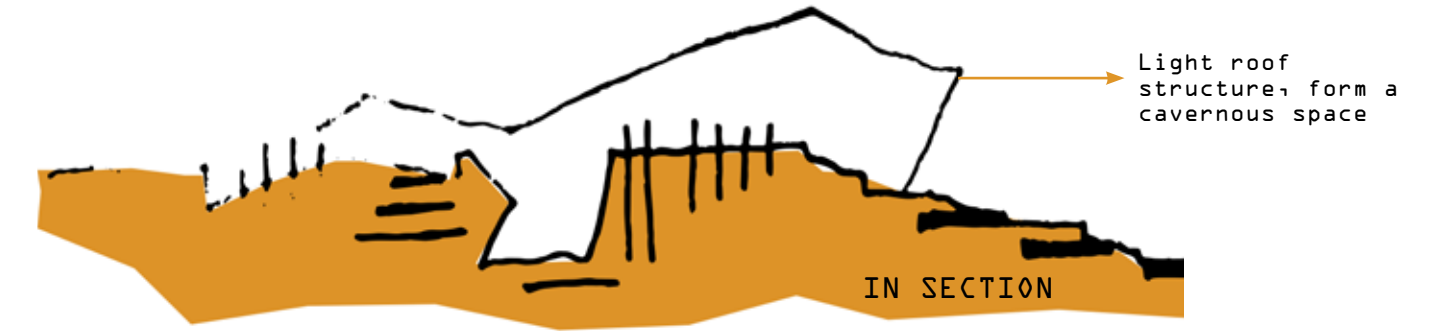


Sacred Geometry

As a basis of Spatial
Intervention.



IN PLAN

Light roof
structure, form a
cavernous space

IN SECTION

DESIGN DRIVERS
EXPLORATION OF DESIGN INTENT 107

07 THE TIME PORTAL

A Landscape of the present state of mind



A new identity begins to emerge from the existing landscape



Morphing from the landscape in preparation



The spaceship enterprise is in search of the new world



07

The initial concept models are an exploration of a number of concepts.

Firstly, African nationalism is explored in search of a form that is both iconic and a celebratory.

Secondly, it explores links between the city and the landscape.

Finally, an exploration of forms that might accommodate ritual spaces.

Fragments of the African identity.



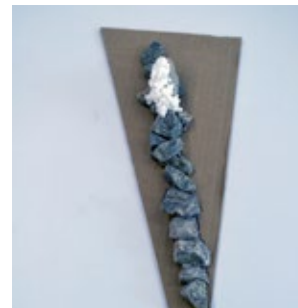
Geometric form meets prescribed route.



Organic / fluid storytelling form.



Built form emerging from the rocky ridge.



Organic prescribed route in geometric form.



Transparent circulation linking story pods.



Iconic geometric form.



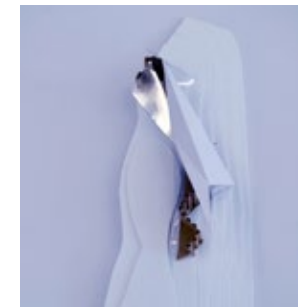
Organic/fragmented form growing from the ridge.



Linking the ridge to the city.



Geometric form meets organic storytelling.



Indigenous foundation for futuristic ambition.



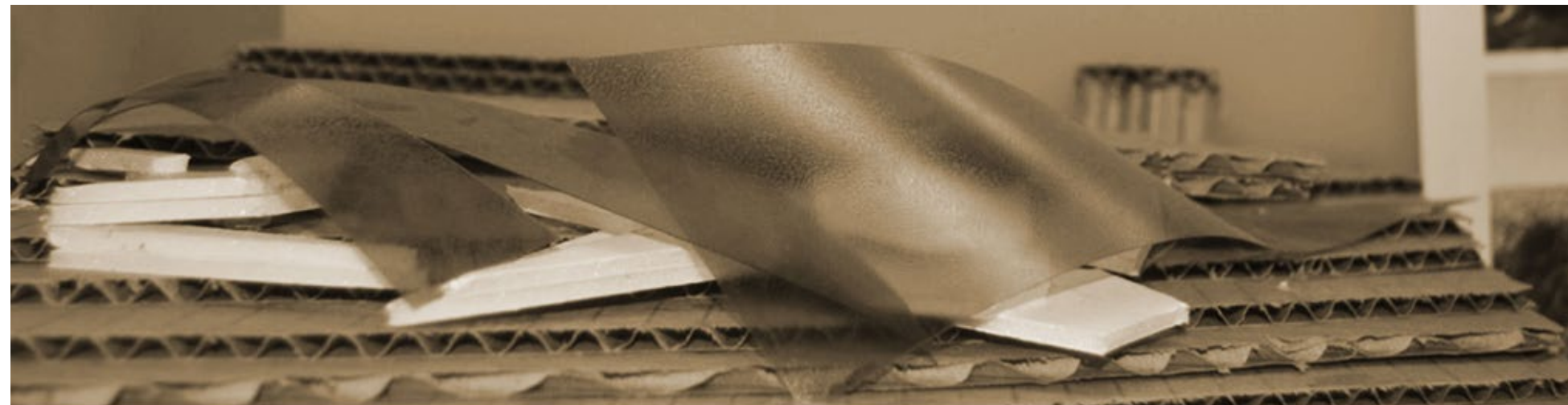
FORM DEVELOPMENT

108 MODEL EXPLORATION

DEVELOPMENT OF FORM

EXPLORATION OF FORM

109



FIRST ROOF ITERATION

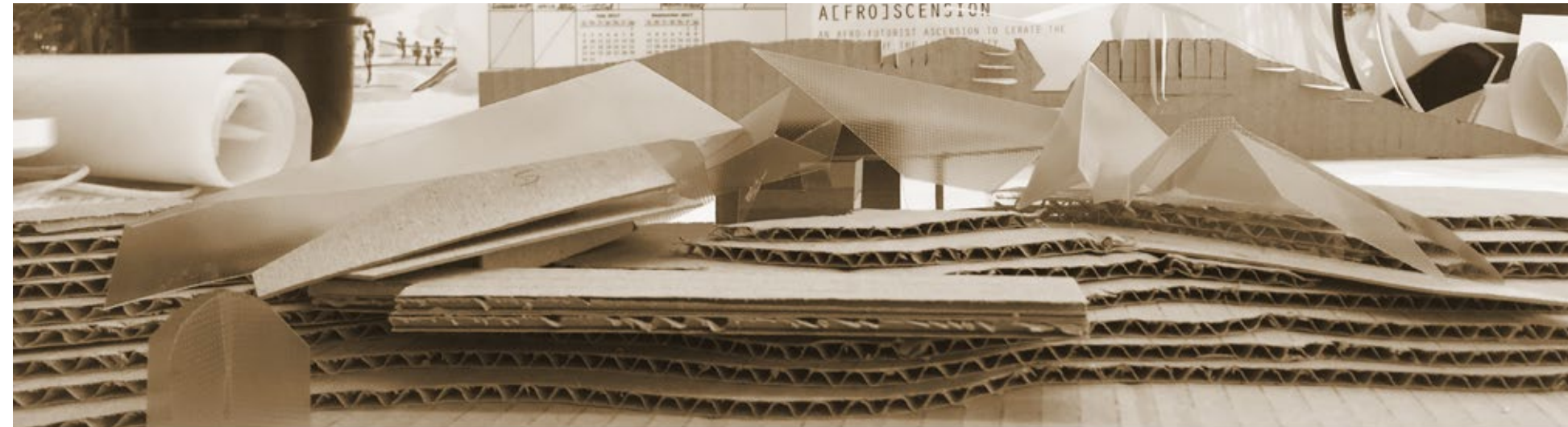
- PERFORATED
- SEMI PERFORATED
- SOLID



ROOF SHADING DIAGRAM

FORM DEVELOPMENT

110 ROOF EXPLORATION



ROOF SHADING SECTION

- PERFORATED
- SEMI PERFORATED
- SOLID

ROOF DEVELOPMENT

IN SECTION 111

07 The Afrosension center will be a combination of both formal and informal spaces. That are integrated with the landscape.

Mainly divided into:

A **FORMAL/NORMATIVE** programme

Including:

- Interactive studios
- Workshops
- exhibitons
- archive center
- library
- conference spaces
- performance spaces

And a **INFORMAL/ESOTERIC** programme including:

- social exchange spaces
- story telling spaces
- transcendence & meditation spaces
- performance spaces
- ritual spaces



GROUND LEVEL



FIRST LEVEL



SECOND LEVEL



ADMIN & COMMERCIAL

- Conference Hall
- Offices
- Reception
- Retail Stores



EDUCATIONAL

- Library
- Archive Center
- Geographic Center
- Seminar



CULTURAL

- Art Studios
- Exhibition spaces
- Workshops
- Information Centre



RITUAL

- Transcendence Spaces
- Meditation Spaces
- Performance Spaces
- Storytelling Spaces



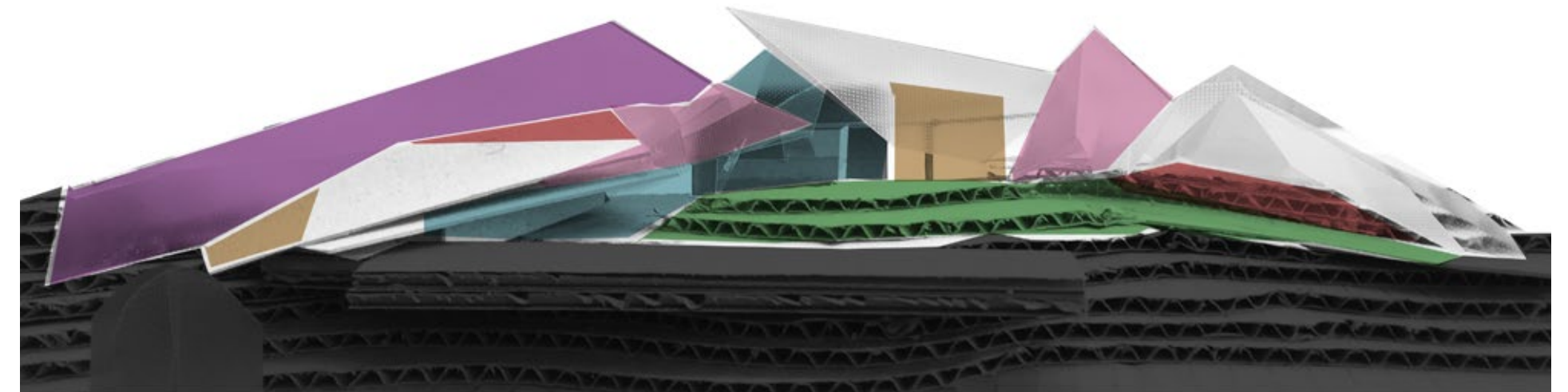
PUBLIC

- Public Forecourt
- Garden Court



SERVICES

- Ablutions
- Service Core
- Loading Docks
- Storage



LONGITUDINAL SECTION

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

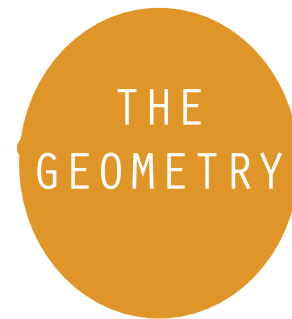
112 IN PLAN

DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMME

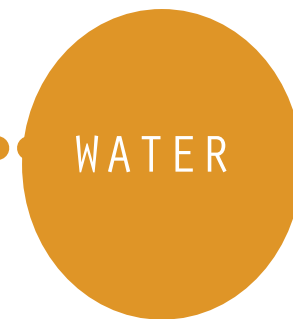
IN SECTION 113



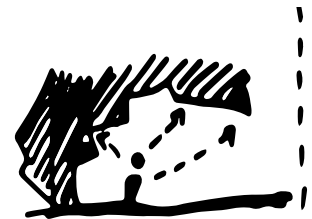
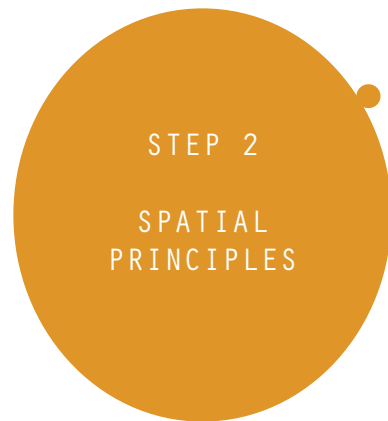
Caves have long been spaces of shelter and seclusion in African Mythology.



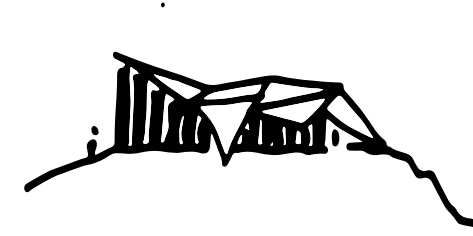
The sacred geometry originates in Africa and its energy can be seen in nature and often in the spatial planning of ancient societies



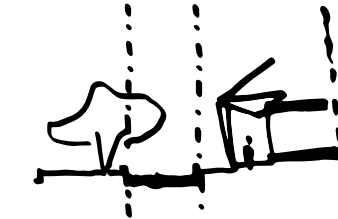
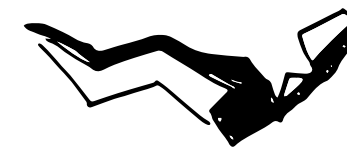
In African mythology, water has always been associated with spirituality & becomes a symbol of spiritual hygiene.



Cavernous spaces are able to desensitize user. Offering a threshold to outside world.



There is constant associated with the scared triangle in spatial planning



Water is used as a threshold between the building and nature.

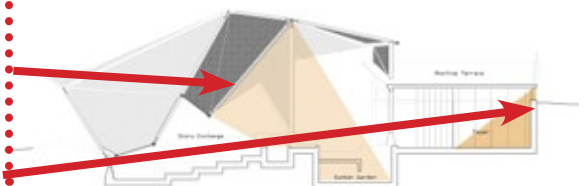
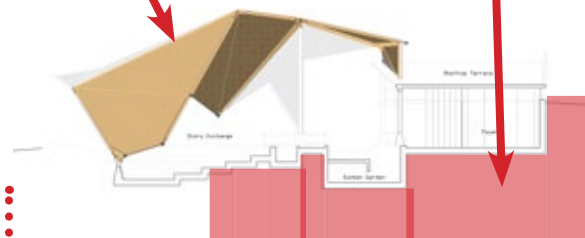
STEP 3
ARCHITECTURAL
IMPLEMENTATION

CAVERNOUS STRUCTURE / LIGHT

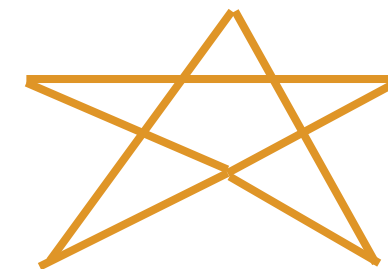
The design of the roof offers a cavernous quality the space

The Structure is sunken into the ground

Light is control is explored through varied methods including use of roof perforations and small windows.

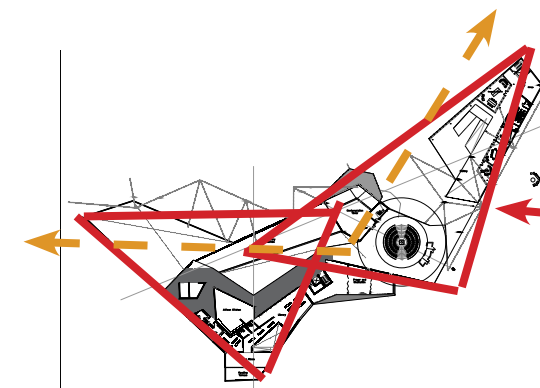


CONCEPTUAL GEOMETRY

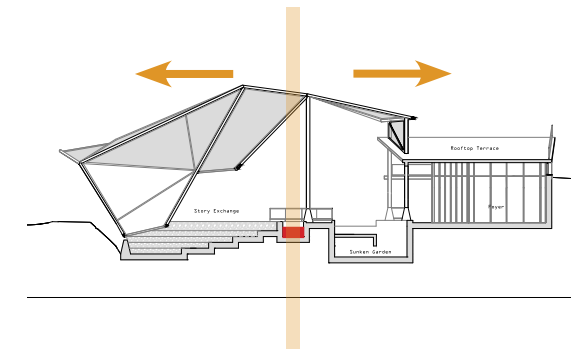


Symbol of Cosmic Energy

The geometry of the design becomes a play on that symbol



Plan is two intersecting triangles, with single spine circulation.



In section the water element becomes a threshold between inside/ outside.



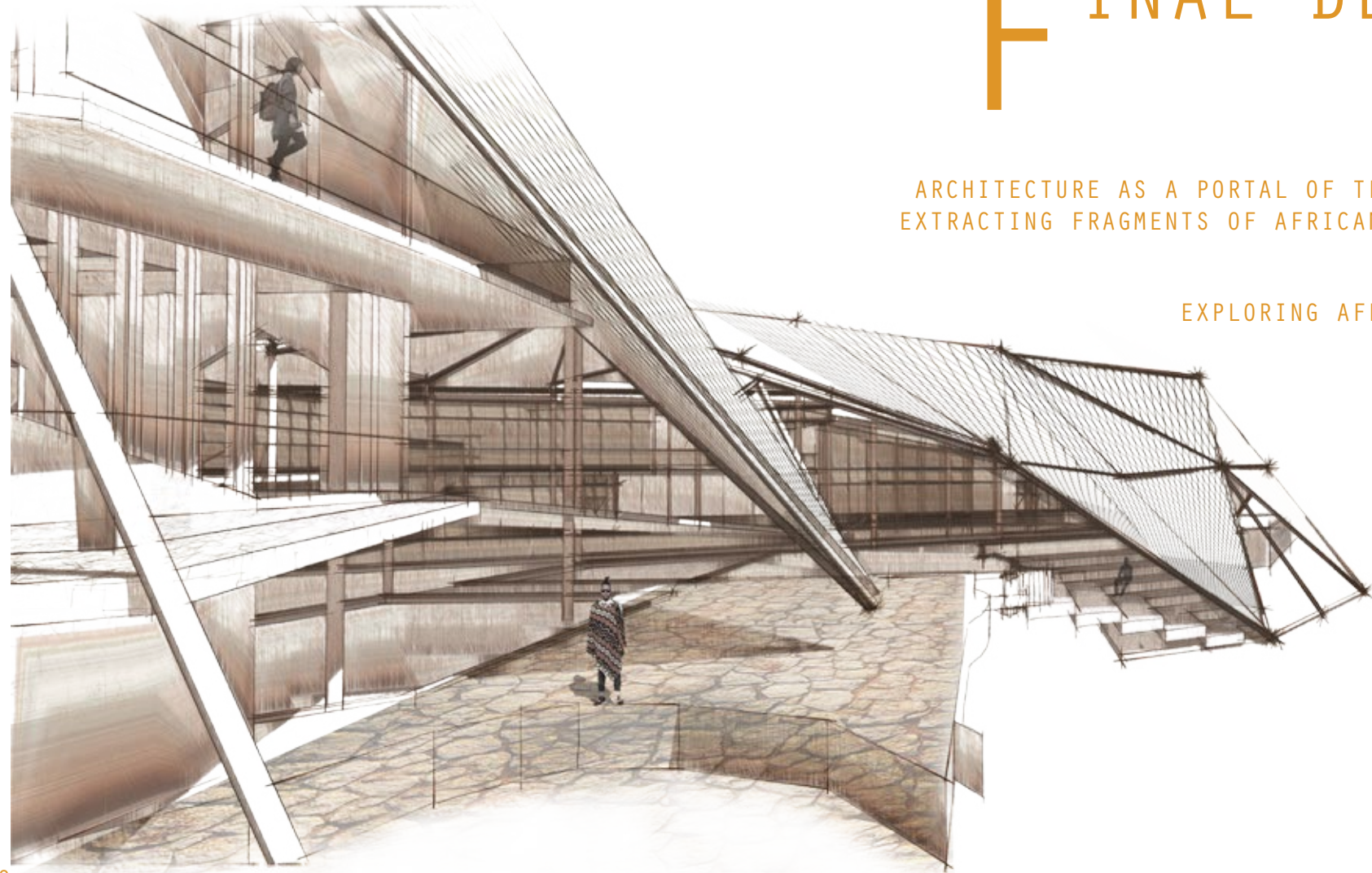
In plan, the water element becomes a threshold o the natural / unnatural

MYTHOLOGY AS SPACE

FINAL DESIGN

ARCHITECTURE AS A PORTAL OF TRANSCENDENCE,
EXTRACTING FRAGMENTS OF AFRICAN IDENTITIES,

EXPLORING AFRICAN FUTURES



THE A[FRO]SCENSION CENTER 08

AN AFROCENTRIC SPIRITUAL EXCHANGE

REMOVAL FROM
THE OUTSIDE
WORLD

SECLUSION



KNOWLEDGE
SHARING SPACES
TO EXPOSE NEW
IDEAS

LUMINALITY



INCLUSION INTO
THE CREATION
OF THE URBAN
PROCESS

RE-INCORPORATION



DESIGN CONCEPT
CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAMS 119

SPIRITUAL TRAVELER



>>>>>>

Is a person
on a personal
spiritual journey
of growth and
understanding.
In search of
spiritual
enlightenment.

THE ARTIST



>>>>>>

The artist,
interested in
the critique of
African society,
one of the
pioneers of the
production of
black culture.

THE TRADITIONALIST



>>>>>>

Elders from
various cultural
backgrounds,
who are capable
of conveying
African oral
tradition through
storytelling.

SPIRITUAL HEALER



>>>>>>

Existing
spiritual
Practitioners
with the need
for spaces
for cultural
practice.

THE SCHOLAR



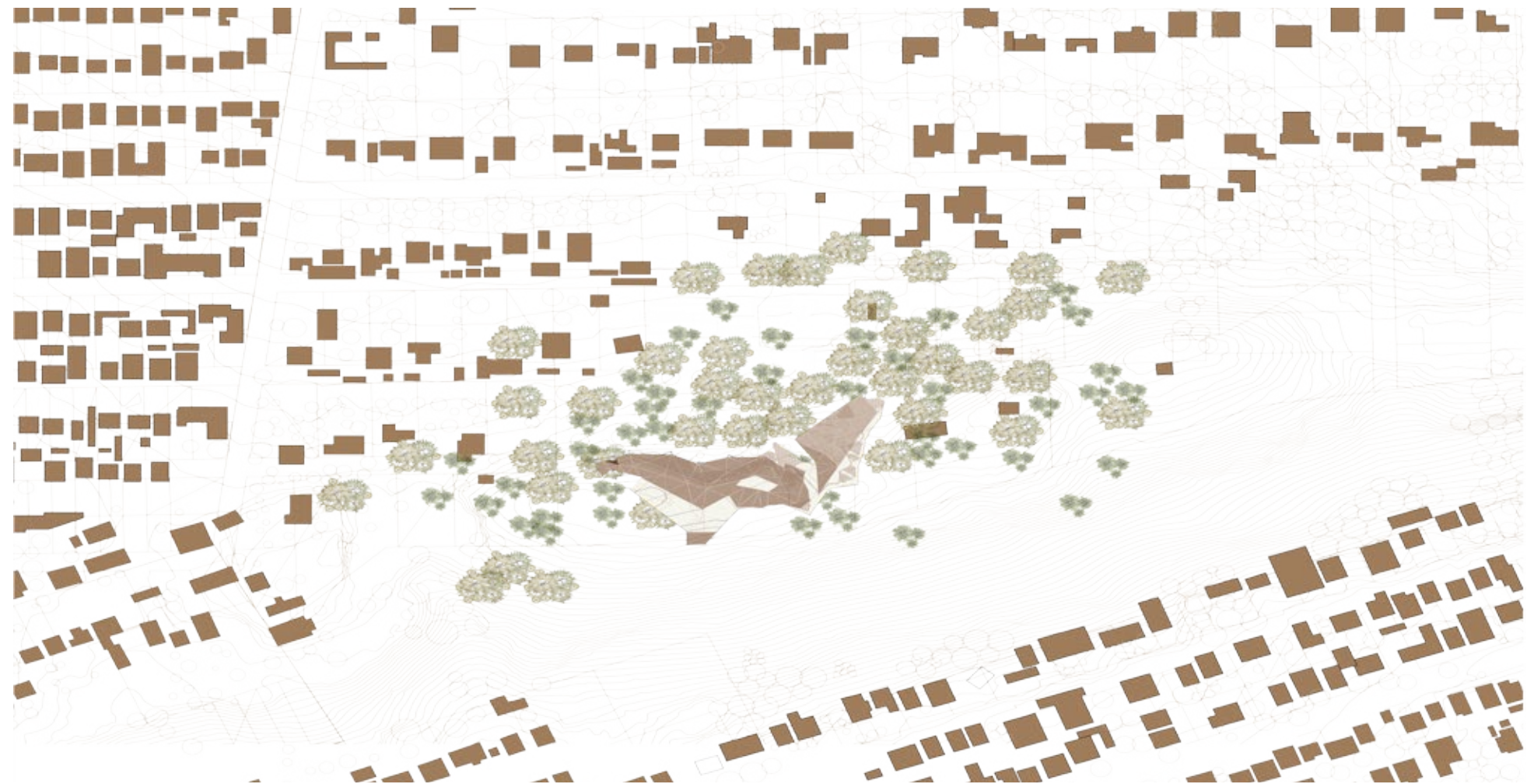
Students of all
ages looking to
for precedence
and reference on
African critical
theory

DESIGN CONCEPT
BUILDING USERS NARRATIVE ¹²¹

THE USER

THE BUILDING AS A ROUTE/TRAJECTORY.

THE A[FRO]SCENSION CENTER BECOMES A JOURNEY
OF SEPARATION, LUMINALITY AND
RE-INCORPORATION.



LOCALITY SITE PLAN

FINAL DESIGN

ROOF SUN STUDY

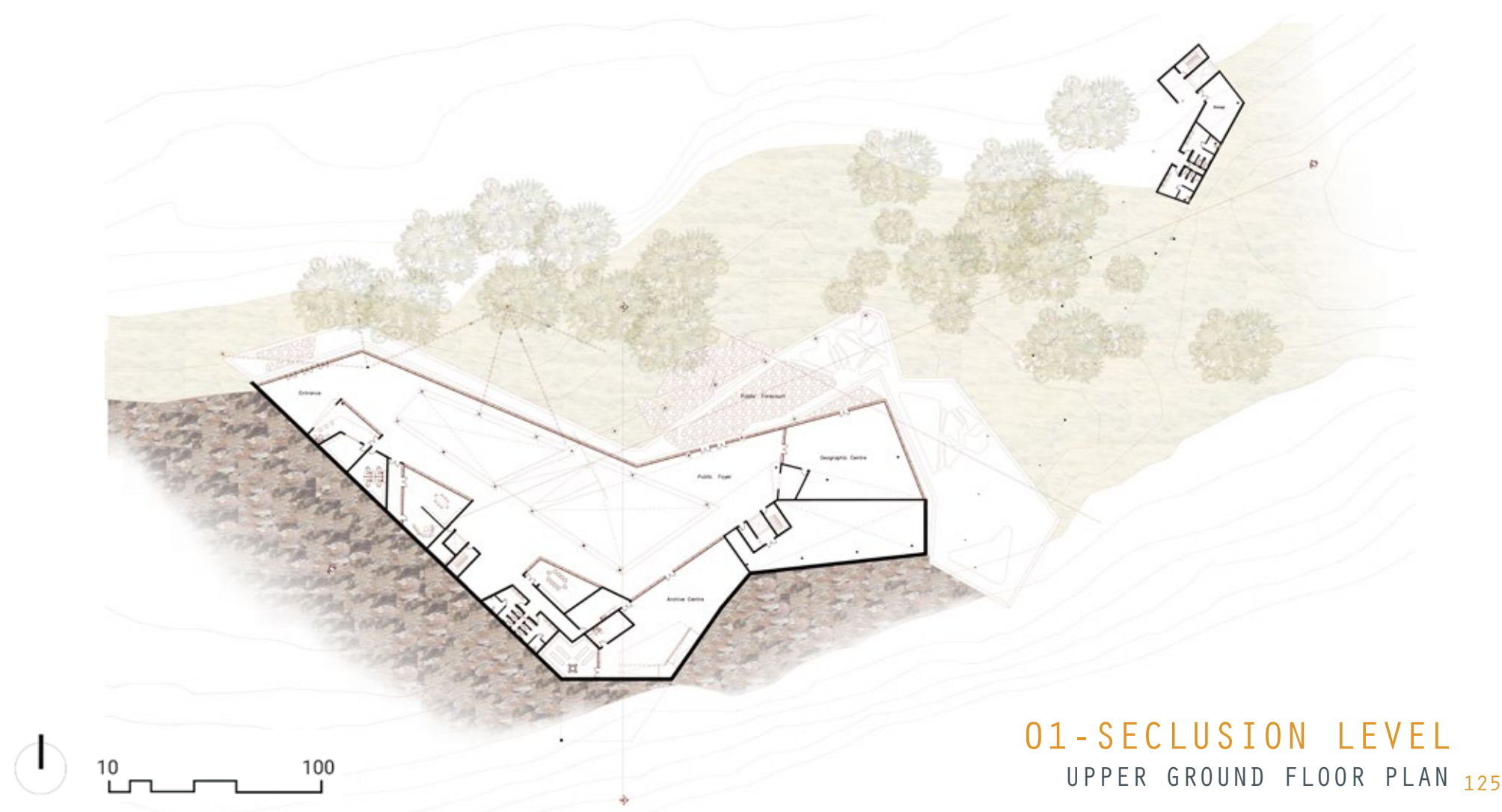
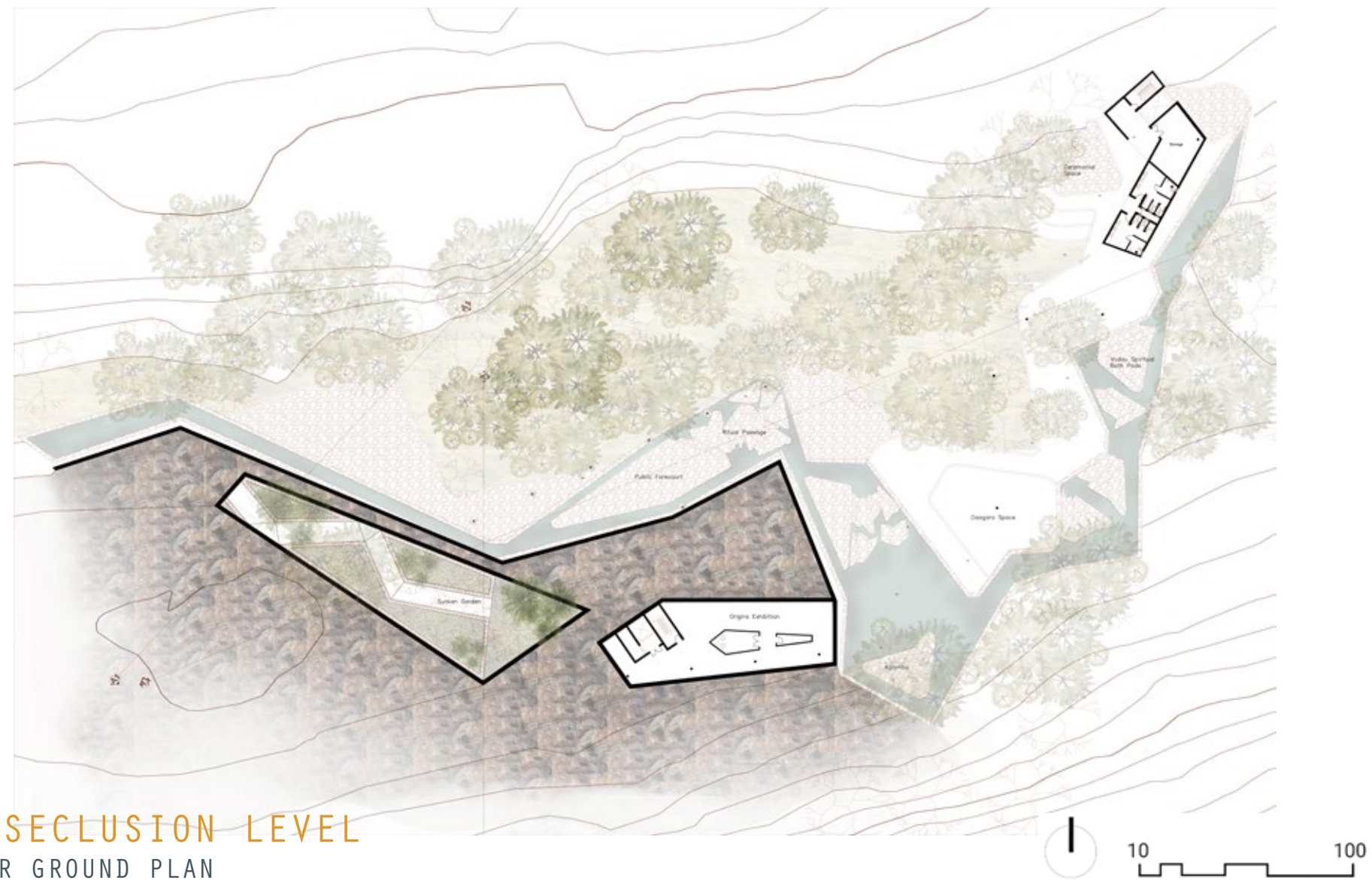
SUMMER

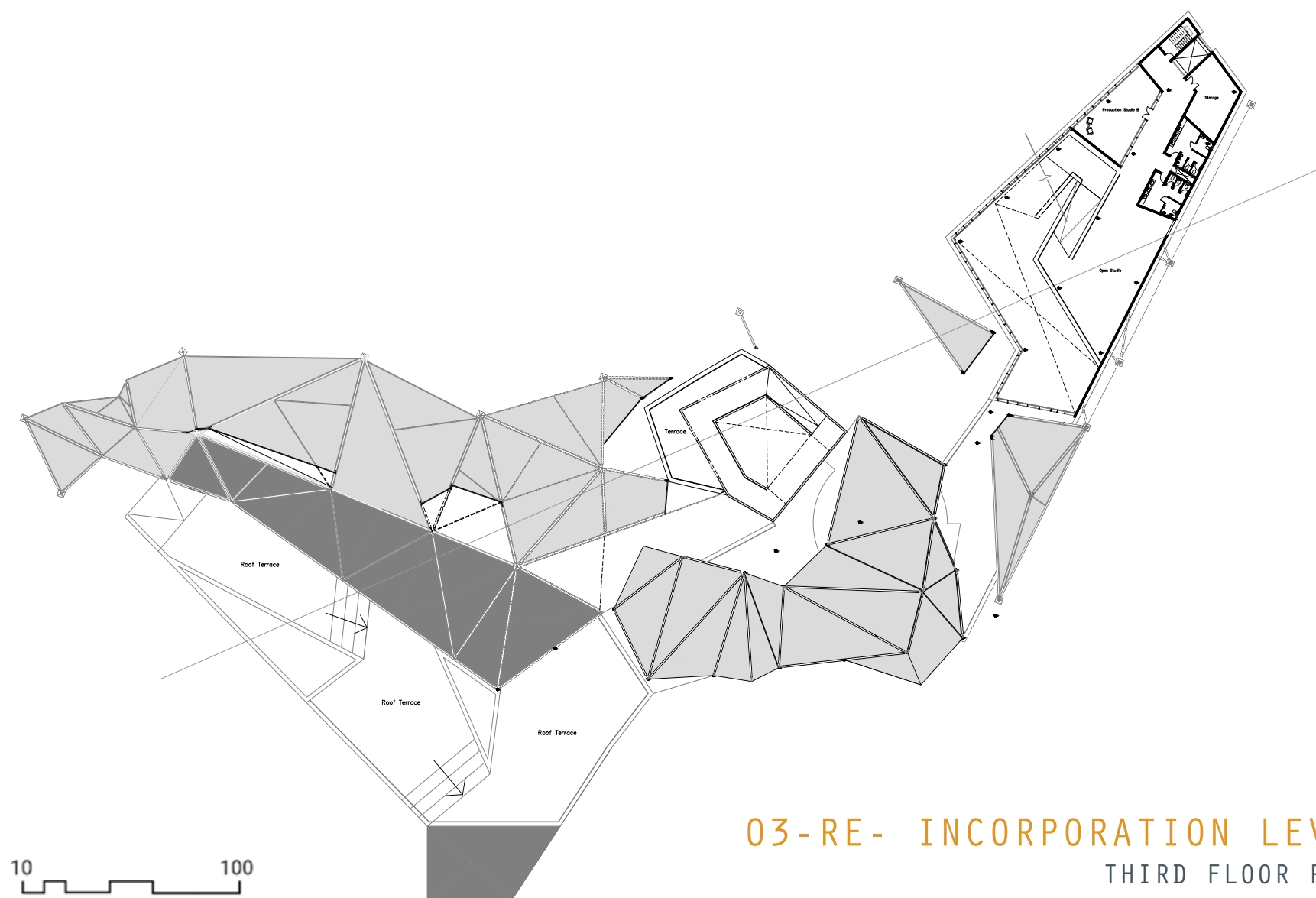
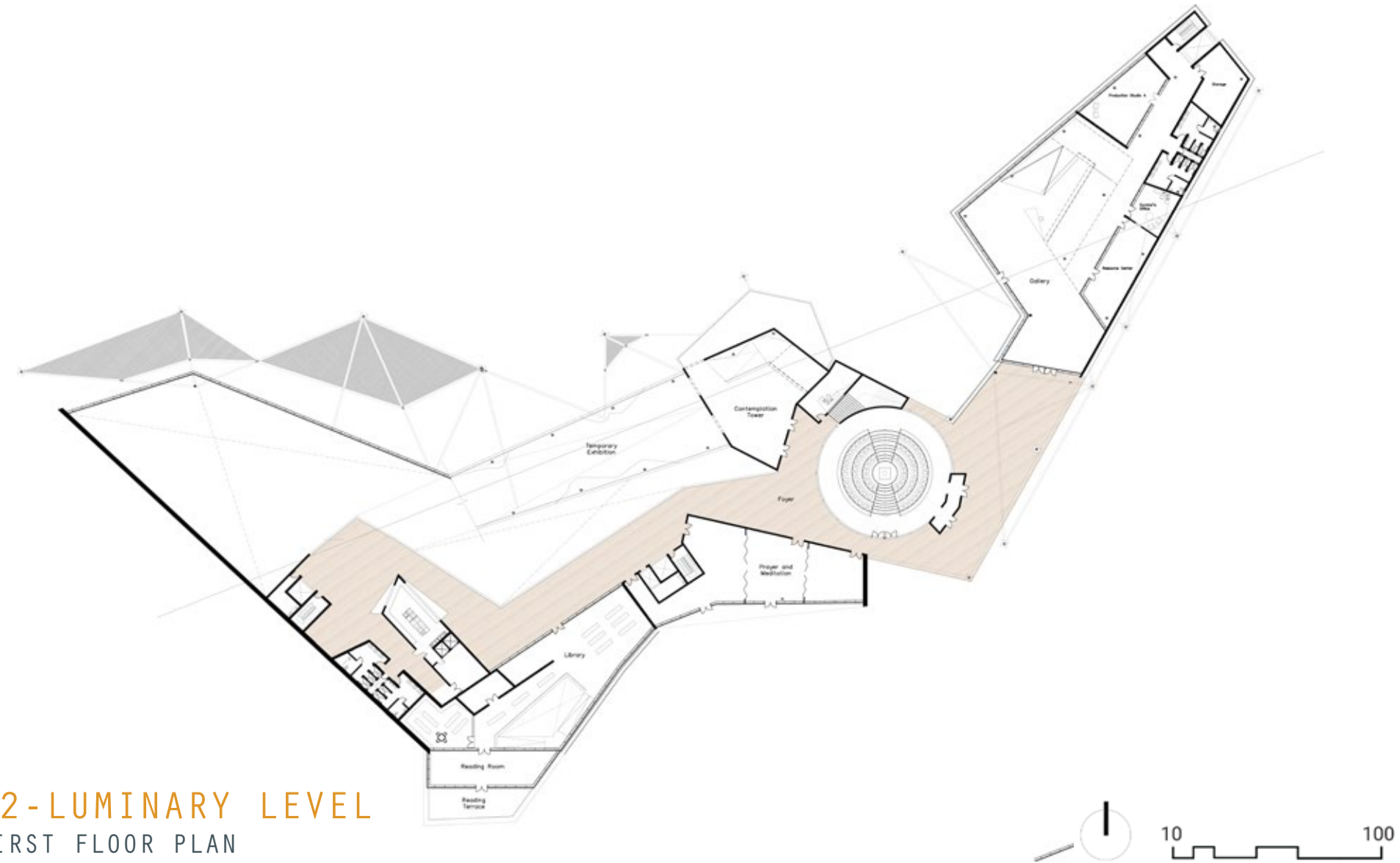
WINTER



ROOF PLAN

FINAL DESIGN



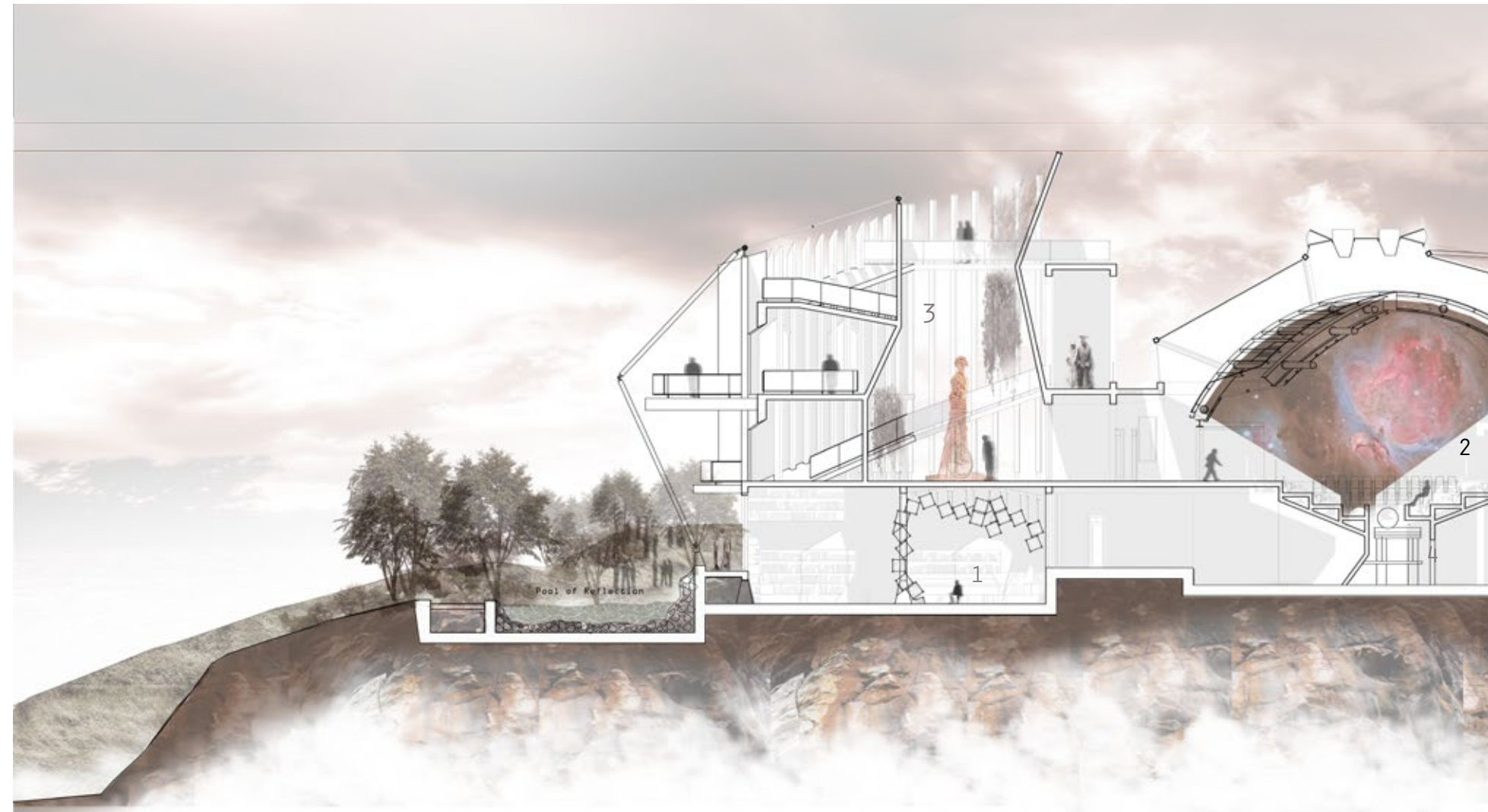




URBAN SECTION A-A
FINAL DESIGN

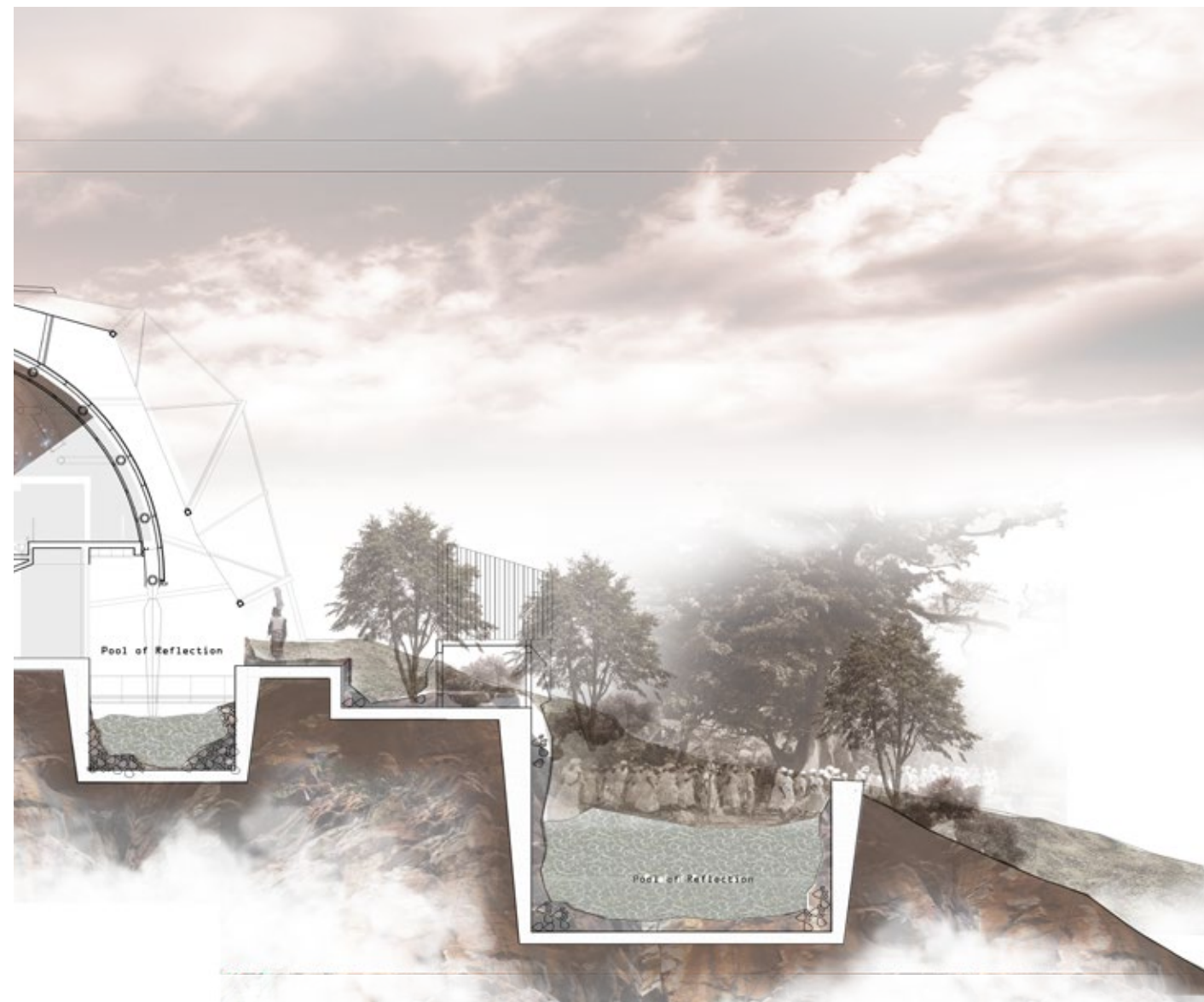


- 1 - ORIGIN EXHIBITION
- 2 - GEOGRAPHIC CENTRE
- 3 - TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION
- 4 - MEDITATION STUDIO
- 5 - STORY EXCHANGE

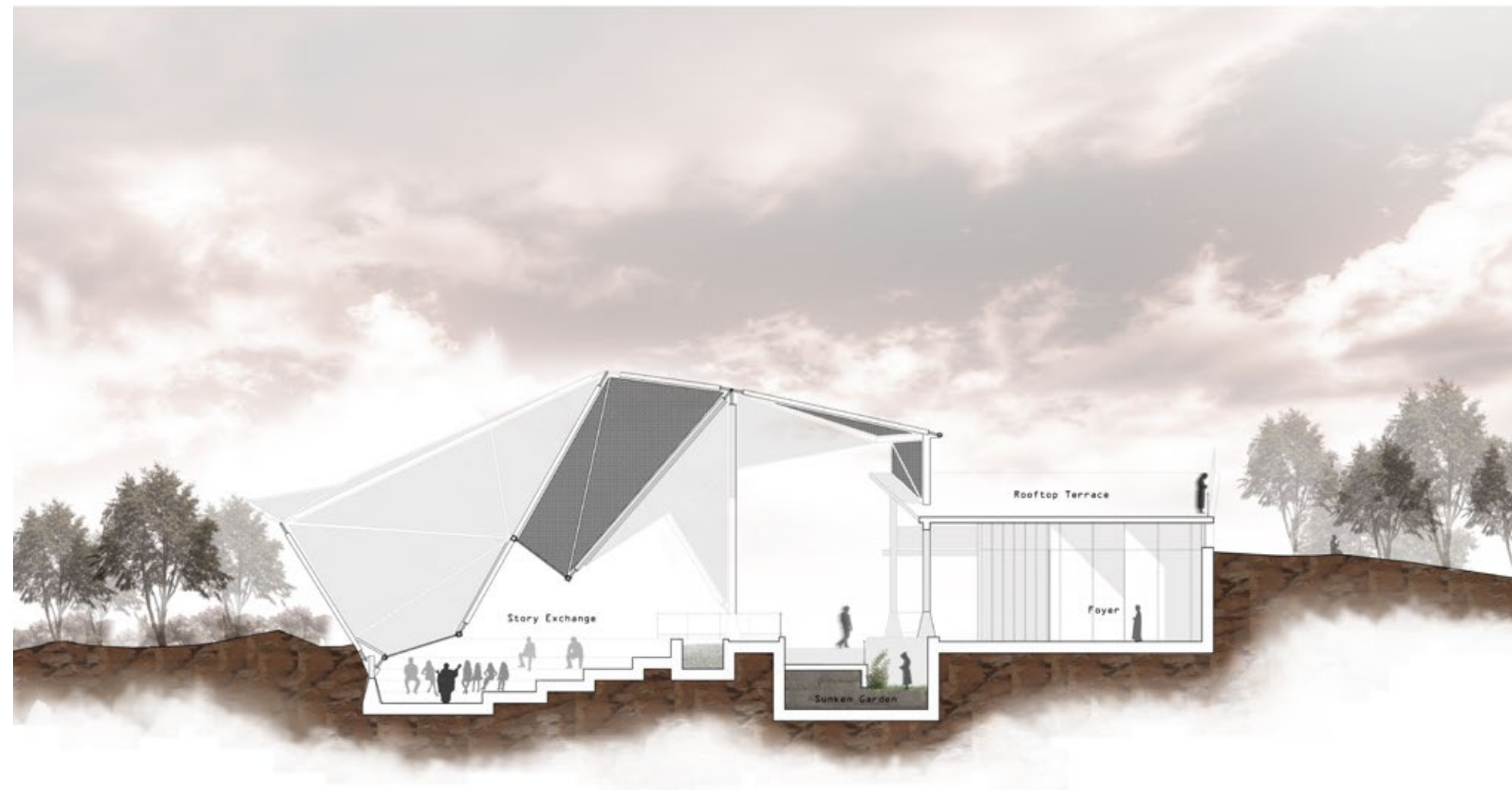


ASTRO-PROJECTION SECTION B-B

FINAL DESIGN



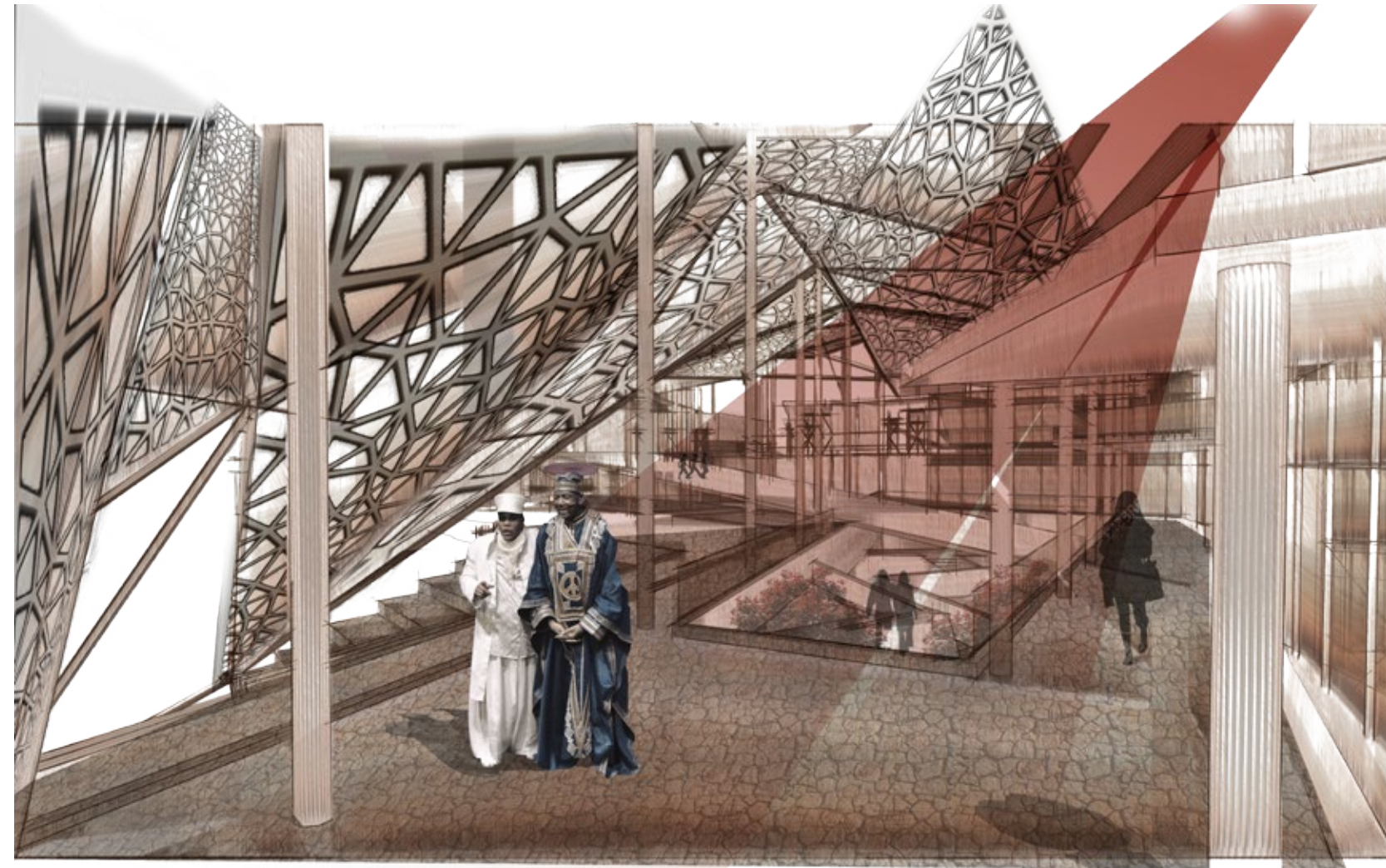
- 1 - GEOGRAPHIC CENTRE
- 2 - ASTRO-PROJECTION DOME
- 3 - TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION
- 4 - SERVICE ROOM



SECLUSION SECTION C-C

CROSS- SECTION THROUGH THE ENTRANCE OF CENTRE

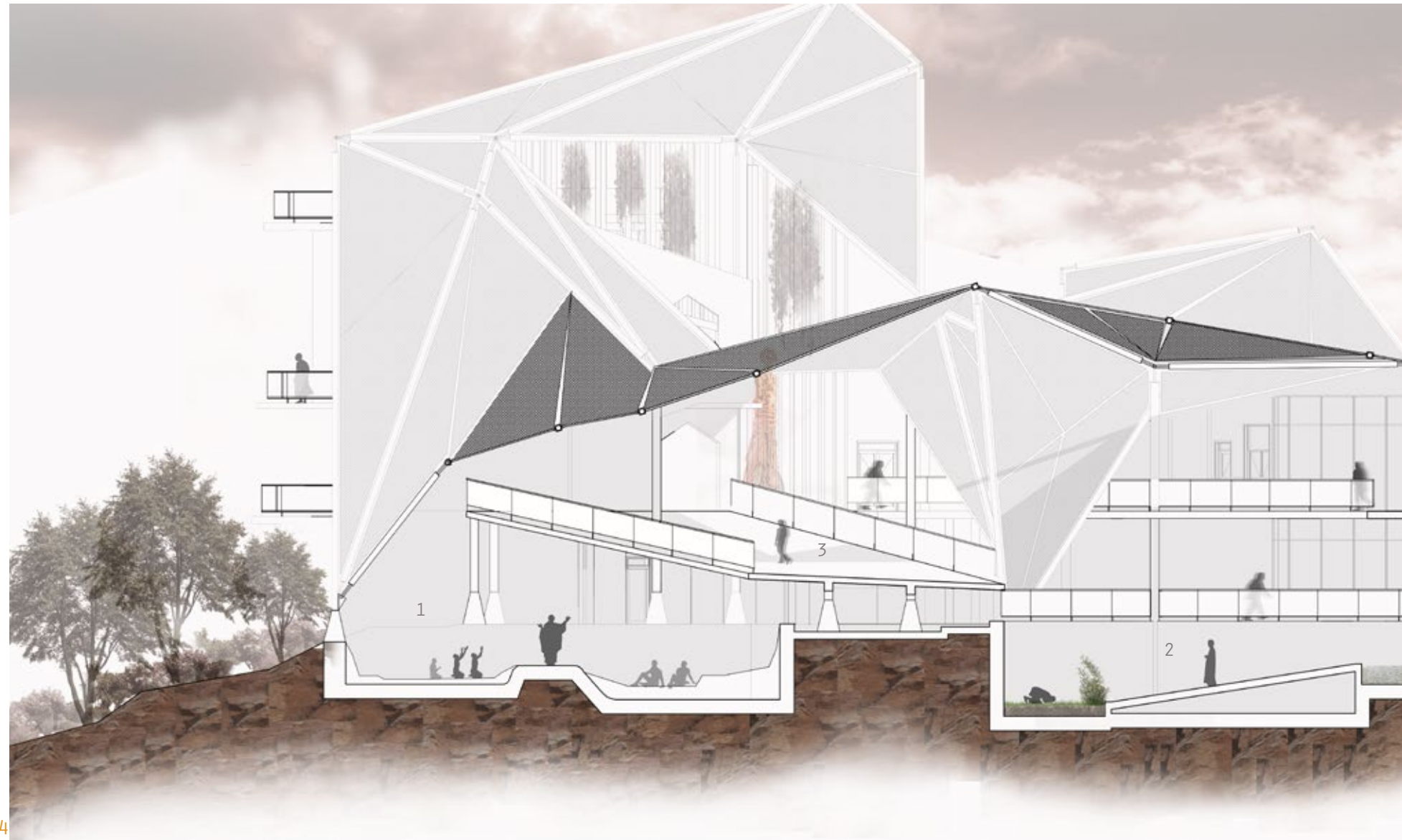
132



INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

ENTRANCE OF SECLUSION PHASE OF THE CENTRE

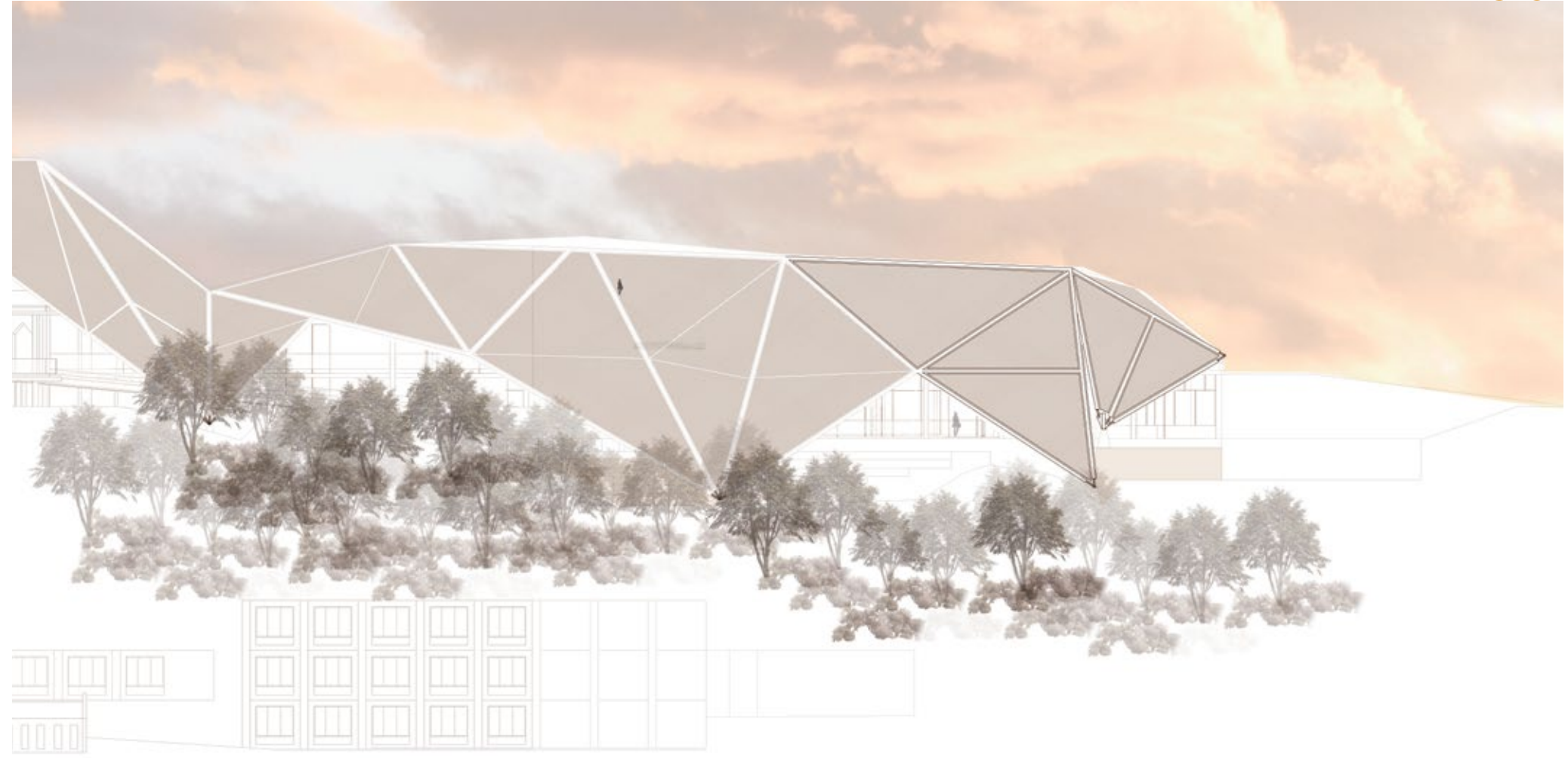
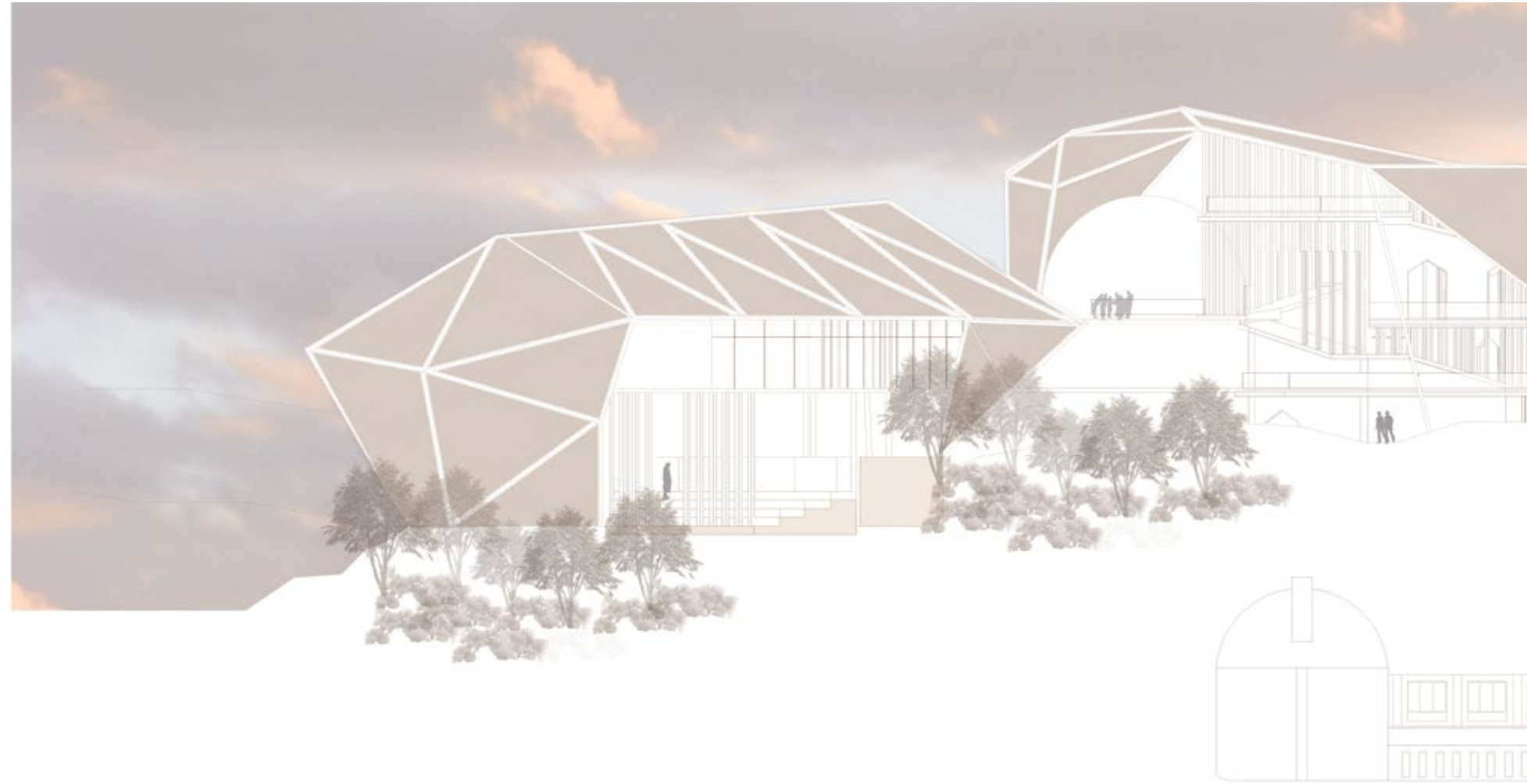
133

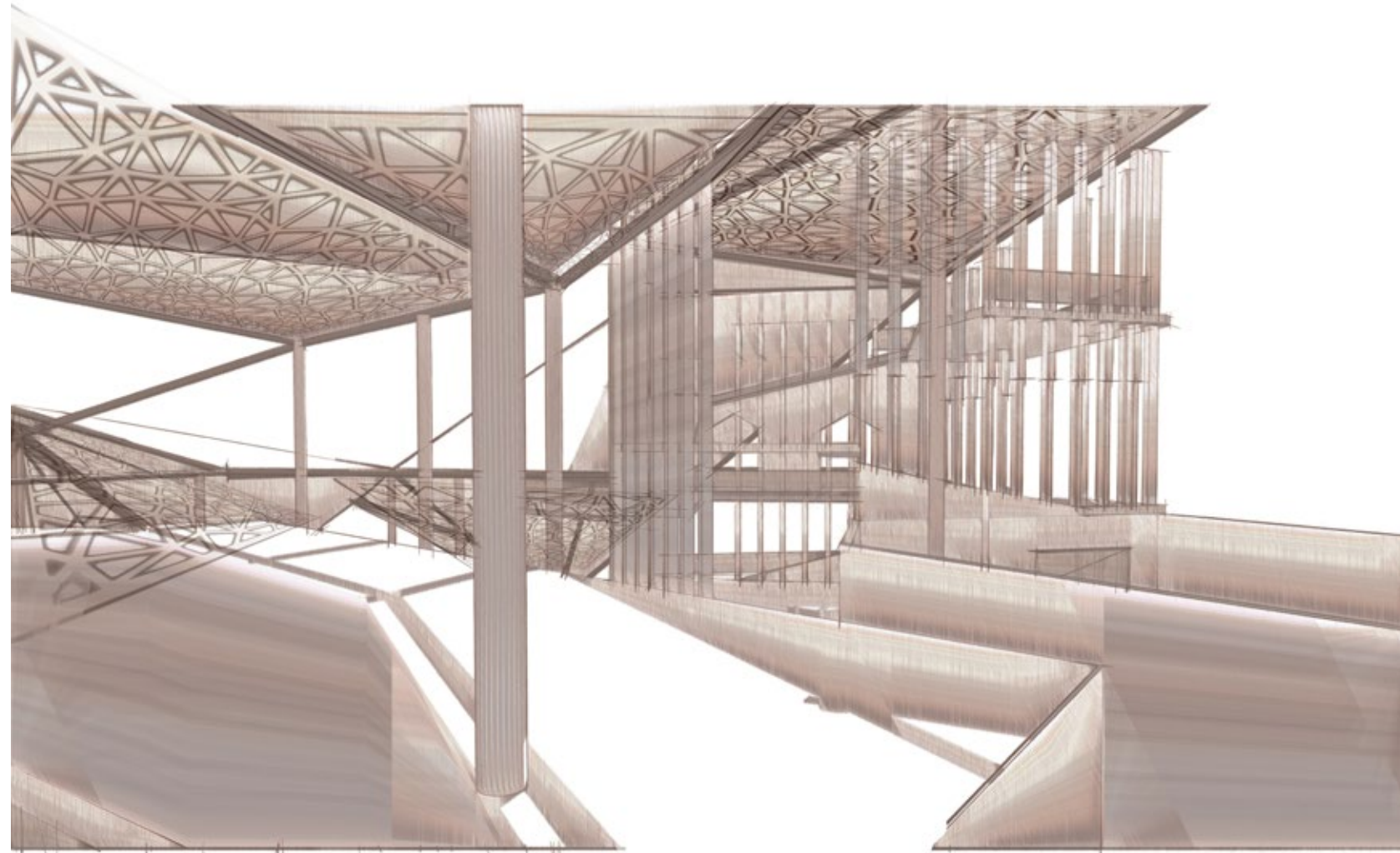


- 1 - PUBLIC FORECOURT
- 2 - SUNKEN GARDEN
- 3 - TEMPORARY EXHIBITION
- 4 - RECEPTION
- 5 - READING TERRACE



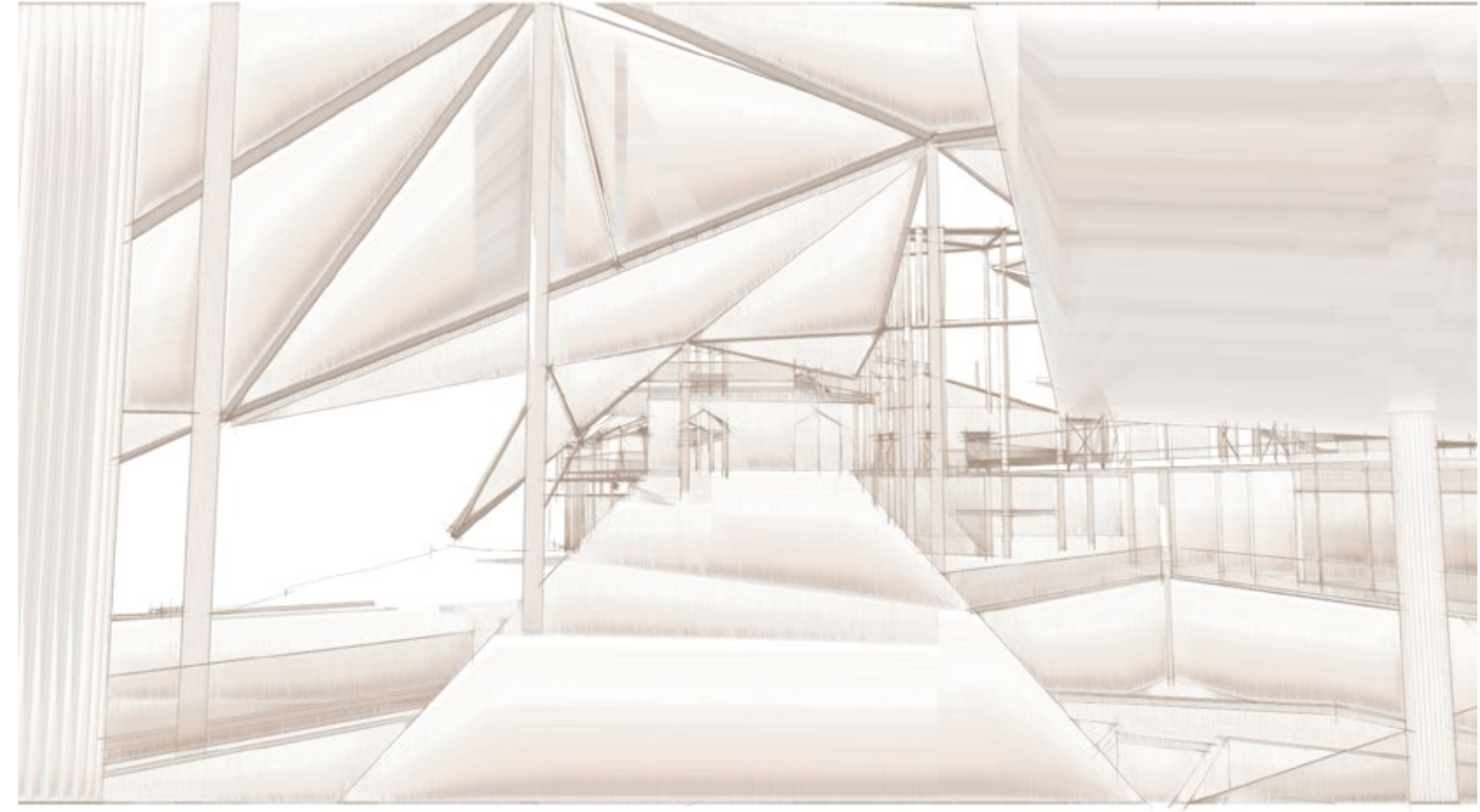
LUMINARY SECTION D-D
CROSS SECTION





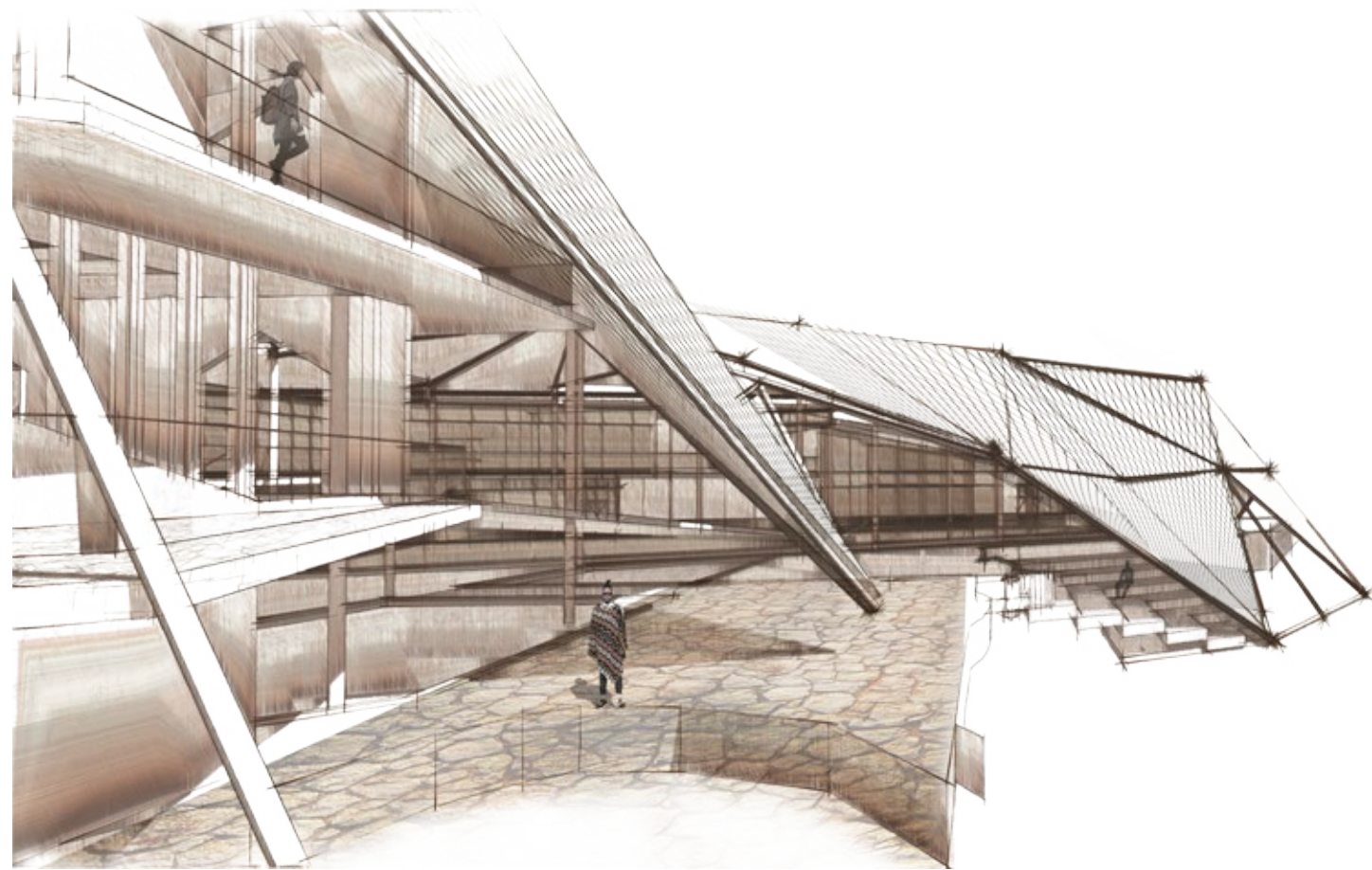
INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

138 VIEW OF THE TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION



INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

VIEW OF PUBLIC ROUTE TOWARD TOWER OF CONTEMPLATION 139

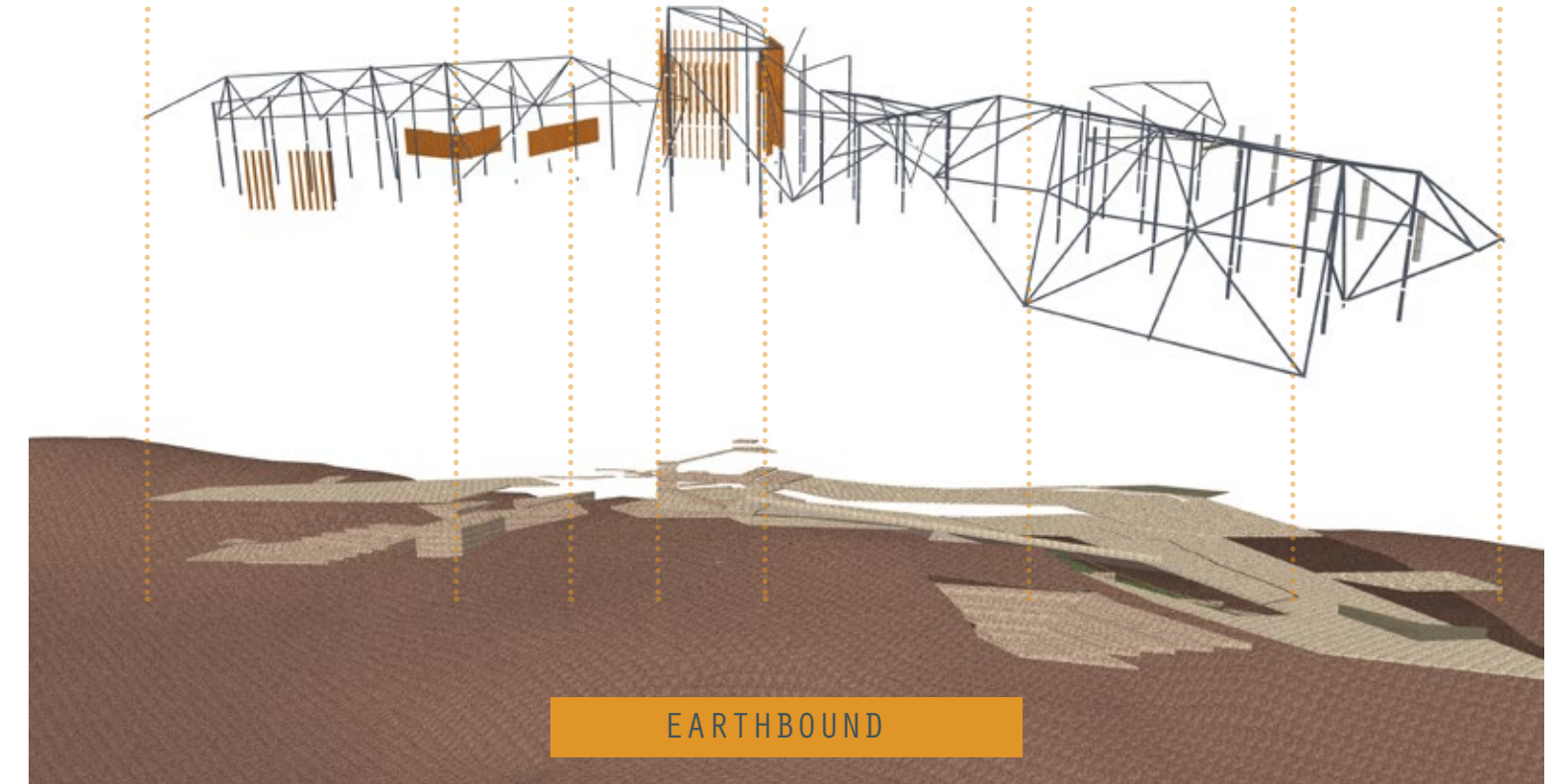


EXTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

VIEW OF THE ROOF TERRACE

TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION 08

EPHEMER -



EARTHBOUND

AN EXPLORATION
OF A LIGHT STEEL
STRUCTURE GROWING
OUT OF THE RIDGE
WITH A STONE,
EARTH AND CONCRETE
BASE.

TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION

TECHNICAL CONCEPT 141

08 BUILDING MATERIALITY - STEEL

Steel roof construction contributes to a lightness intended in the ephemeral conception. Perforated steel sheeting permits the penetration of light. By composing various steel elements waterproofing is ensured.

ArcelorMittal supplies perforated steel sheets for the envelope and the roof structure is constructed from tubular steel beams and columns.

However due to the interesting geometry of the roof, there are many different inclinations and assembly is complicated.

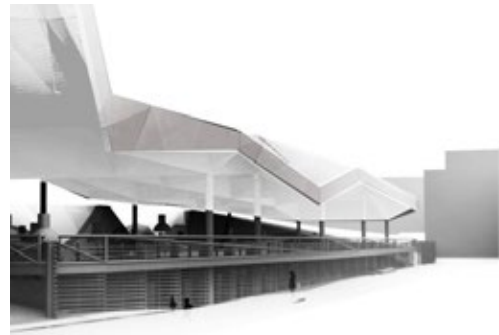


Fig 8.1
"El monlinete Archaeological Park" 2011

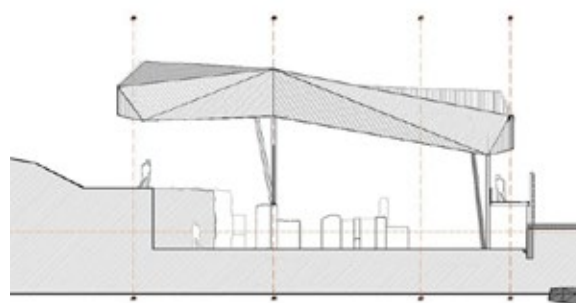


Fig 8.2
"El monlinete Archaeological Park: Section" 2011

STEEL ELEMENTS



Fig 8.3
"Tubular Steel" 2013

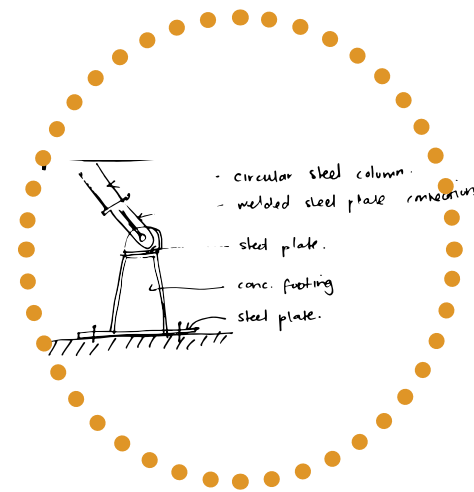


Fig 8.4
Proposed Conc. column and Tubular Steel connection

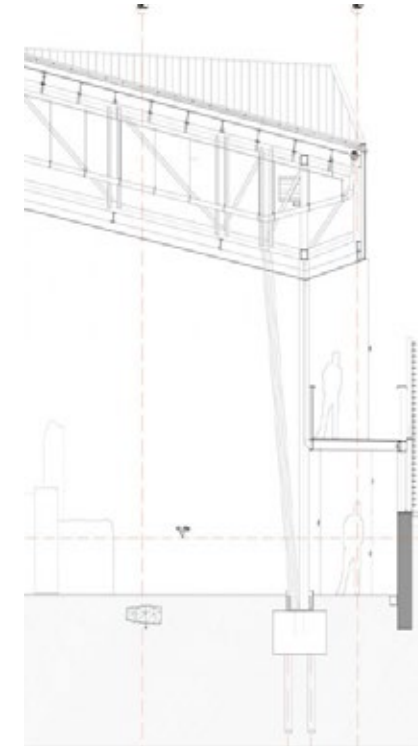


Fig 8.5
"El Moline Archaeological Park: Perimeter Section" 2011

PERFORATED STEEL SHEETING

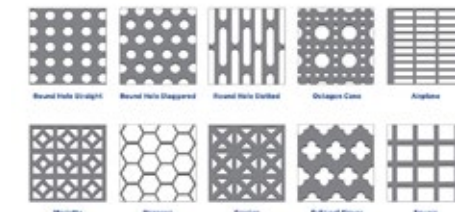


Fig 8.6
"Typical Steel perforation pattern " 2013

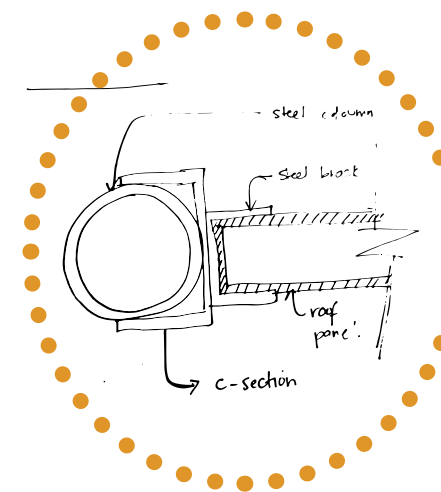


Fig 8.7
Proposed tubular connection to Perforated Steel Sheeting

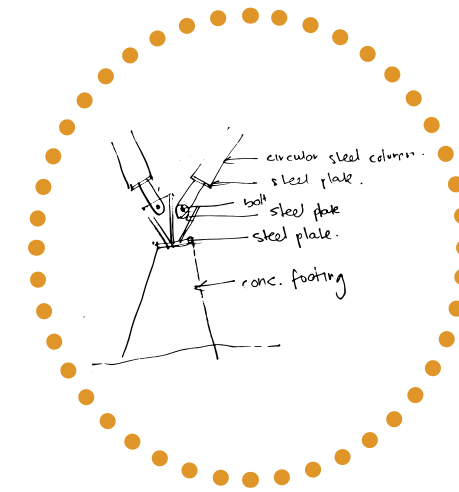


Fig 8.8
Proposed Multiple tubular connection to tubular columns



Fig 8.9
"ArchelorMittal Roof Aerial view" 2011



Fig 8.10
"ArchelorMittal Roof Connections" 2011

BUILDING MATERIALITY PERFORATED STEEL SHEETING & STEEL CONSTRUCTION

08 RAMMED EARTH WALLS

Rammed earth is a mixture of sand, gravel, clay and concrete, and its construction has a history of being used during economically challenging time.

This material has the advantage of high thermal mass, low embodied energy, fire resistance, temperature regulation, and load bearing qualities and pest deterrence (Edmonds 2025)

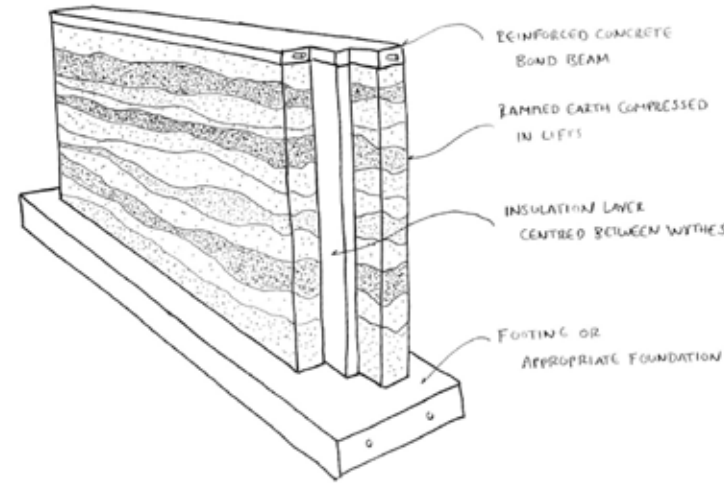


Fig 8.11
"Rammed earth sketch"



Fig 8.12
"Rammed earth wall"

BUILDING MATERIALITY

144 RAMMED EARTH WALL

08 CORTEN STEEL CLADDING

Corten Steel is a weather resistance steel and is more accurately known as an "Atmospheric Corrosion Resistant Steel". It is a copper alloy steel that has a greater level of resistance to atmospheric weathering.

Its chemical composition promotes the formation of a protective layer of rust when exposed to the elements.

Corten is pleasing to the eye and is a popular finish, boasting a variety of applications including fascias, architectural sculptures, bridges, walls and roofs.

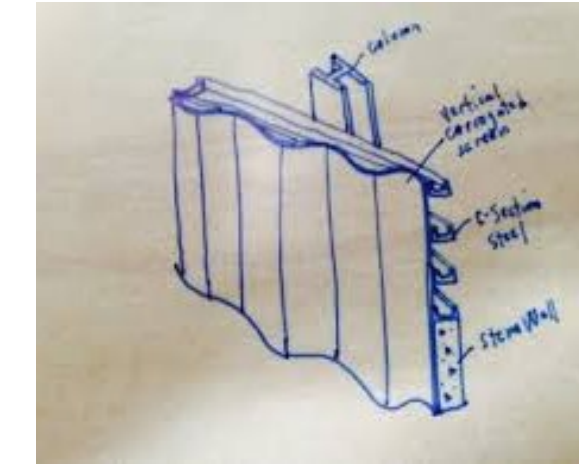


Fig 8.13
"Corten Steel Cladding connection to Walls Sketch"



Fig 8.14
"Corten Metal Cladding" 2011

BUILDING MATERIALITY

WALL AND ROOF CLADDING 145

Members in trusses and posts as well as traditional columns. Three basic types of wood columns as illustrated in Figure 9.5 are (1) simple solid or traditional columns, which are single members such as sawn lumber, posts, timbers, poles, glued laminated timber, etc.; (2) spaced columns, which are two or more parallel .

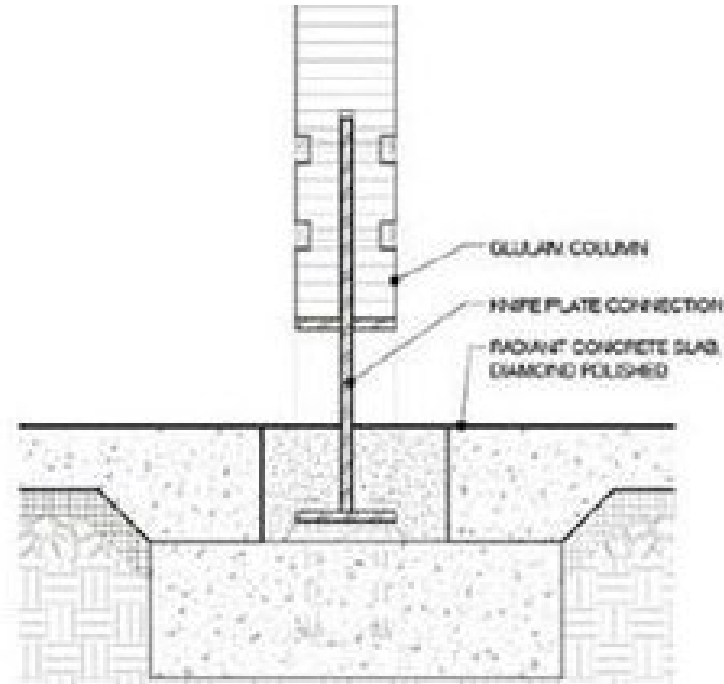
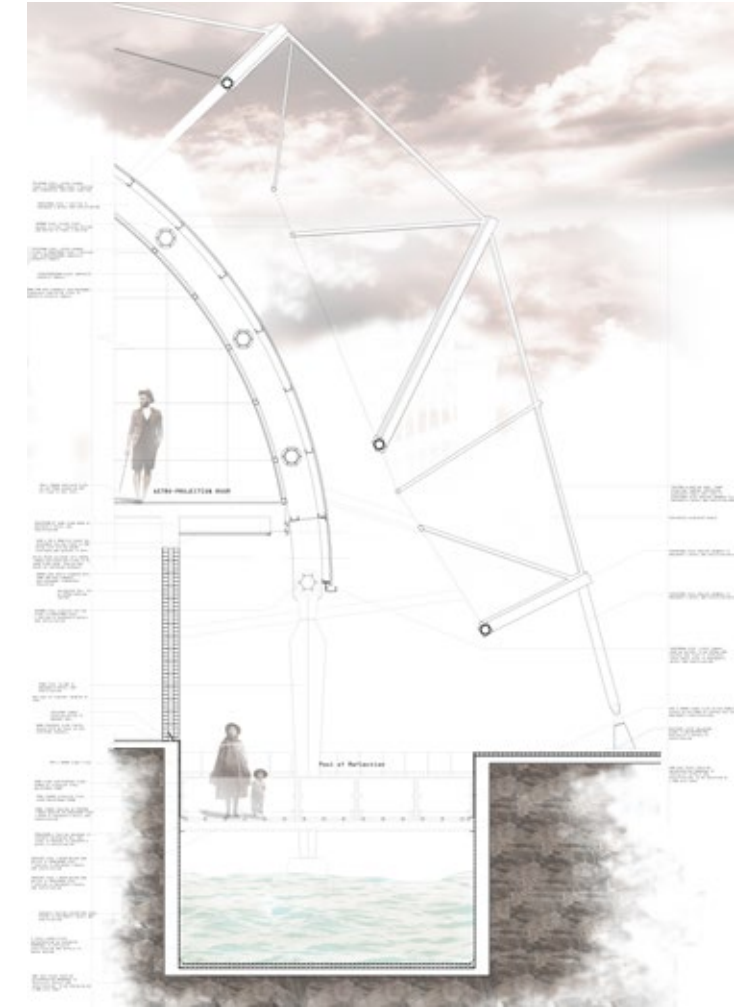


Fig 8.15
"Timber connection to concrete footing" ,2013



Fig 8.16
"Floating Columns" 2013



08 PERIMETER SECTION

75x150mm steel lipped channel fixed to 608x178mm steel I-section and corrugated iron roof sheeting

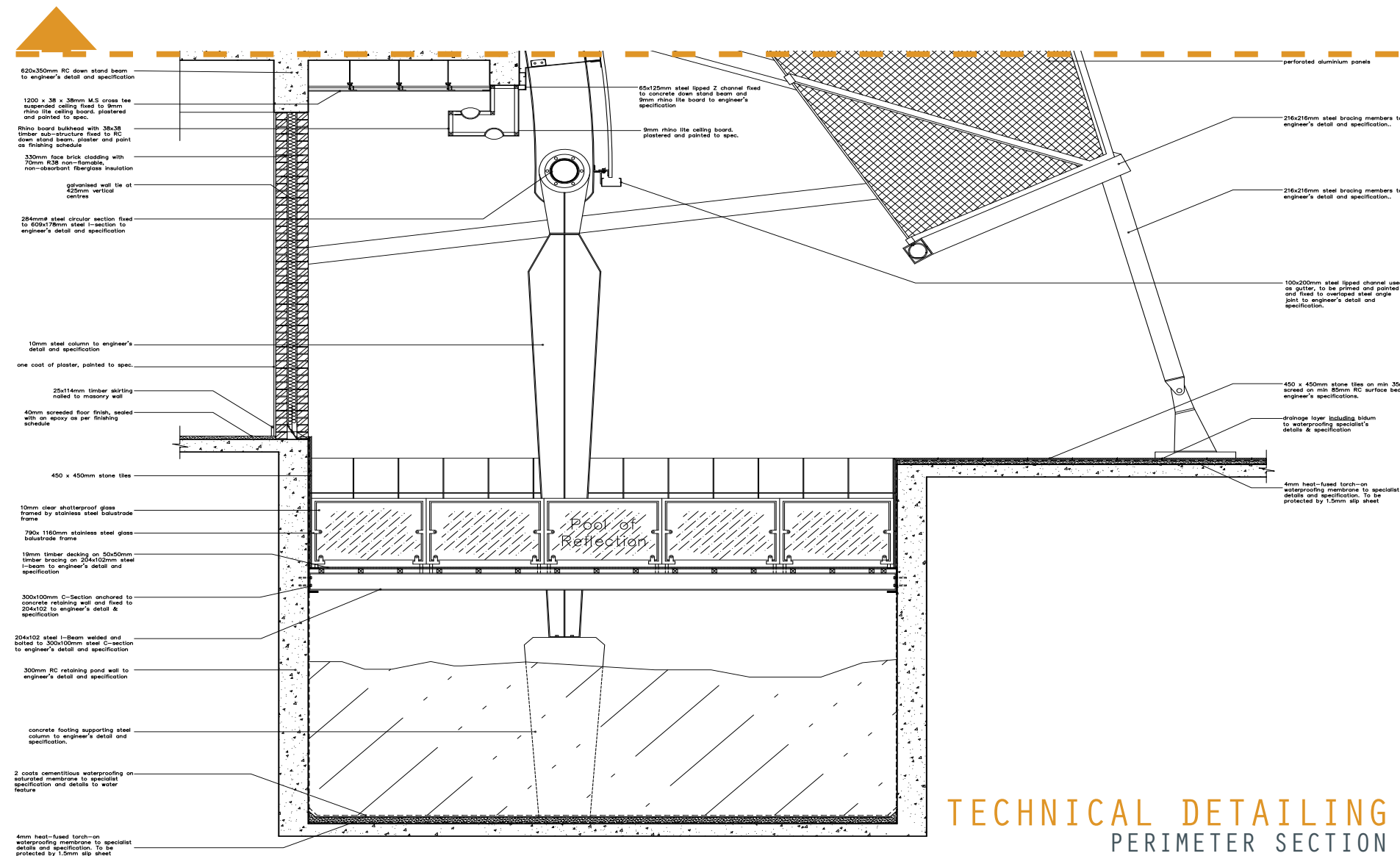
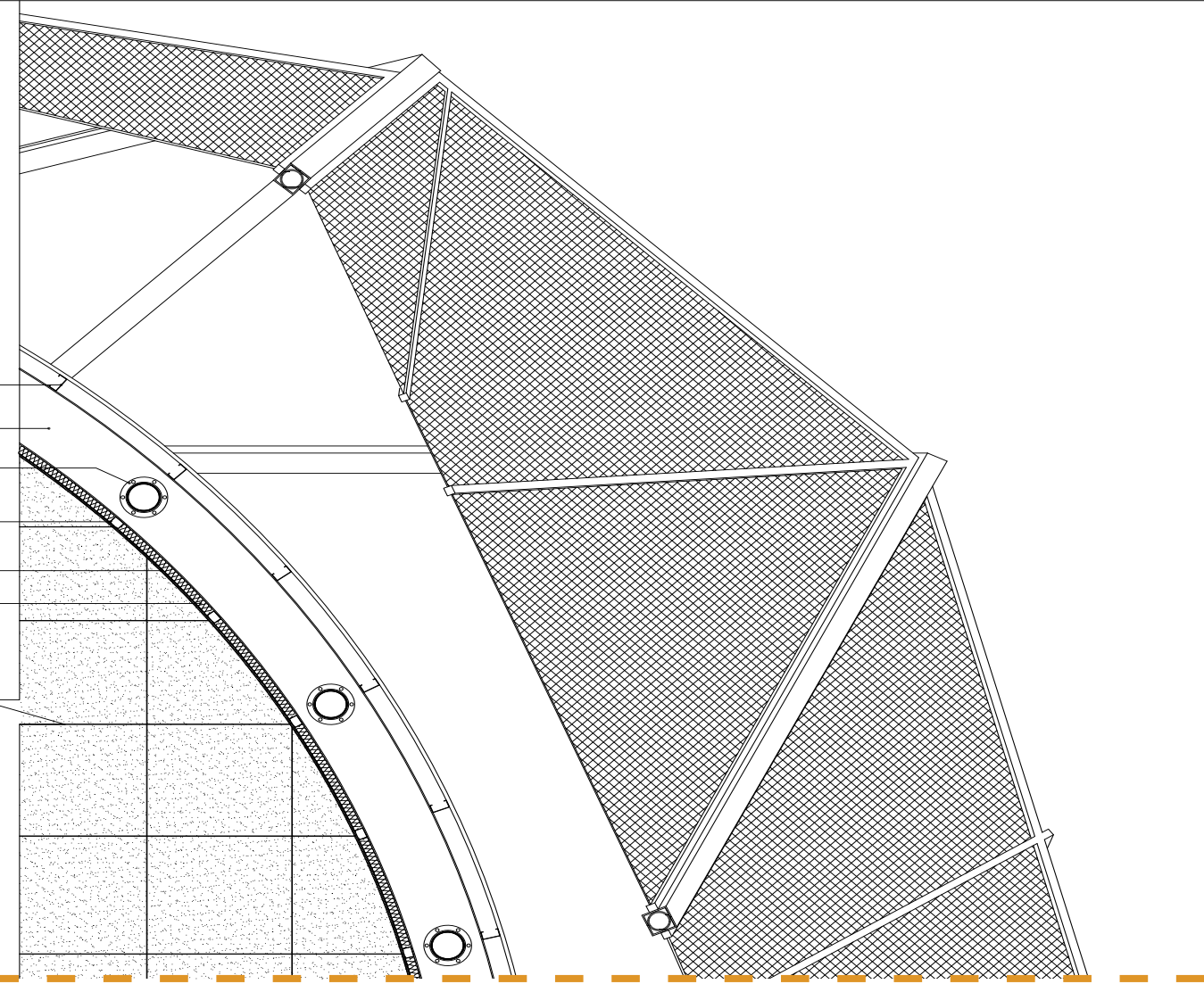
608x178mm steel I-section to engineer's detail and specification

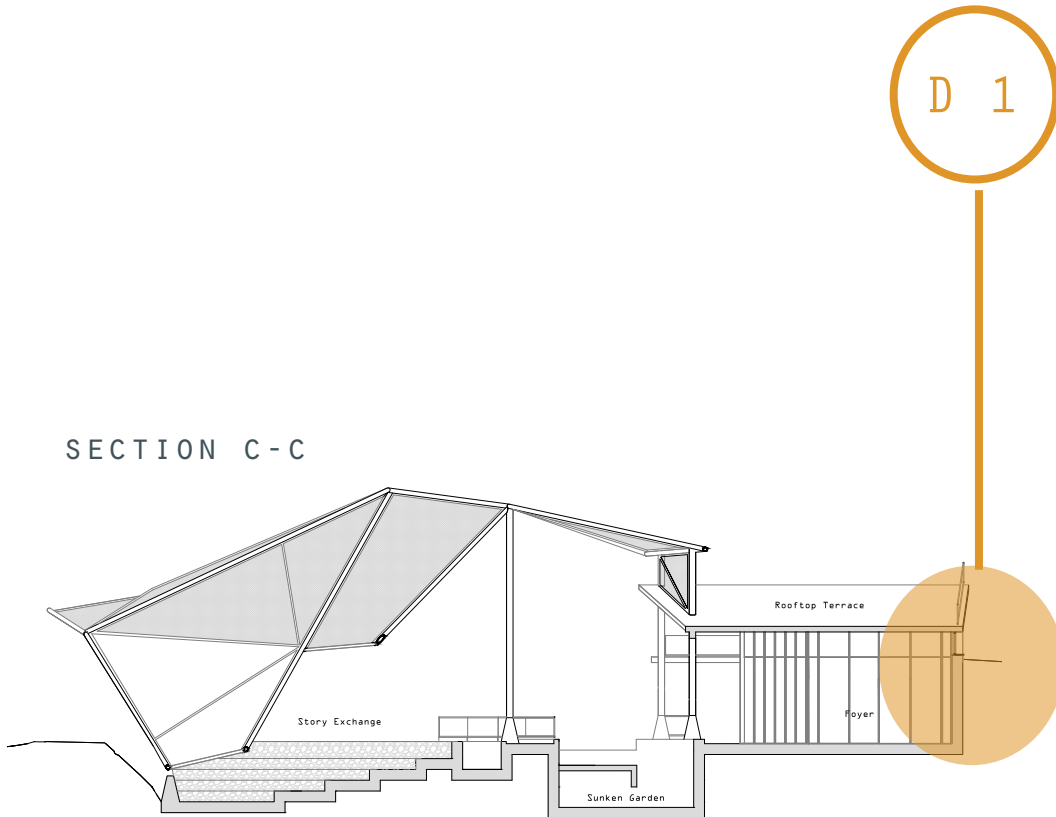
400mm ϕ steel fixing plate, welded to steel circular section and bolted to steel I-section

75x100mm steel lipped channel fixed to 608x178mm steel I-section and 1100x200x20mm composite acoustic panels

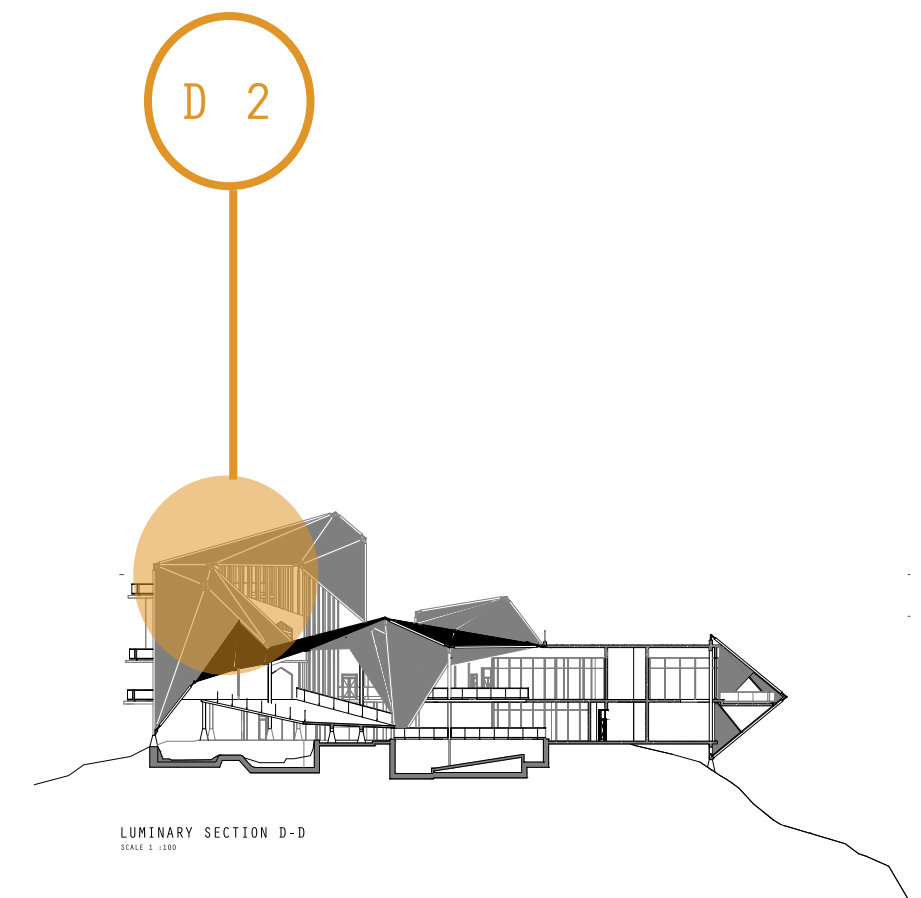
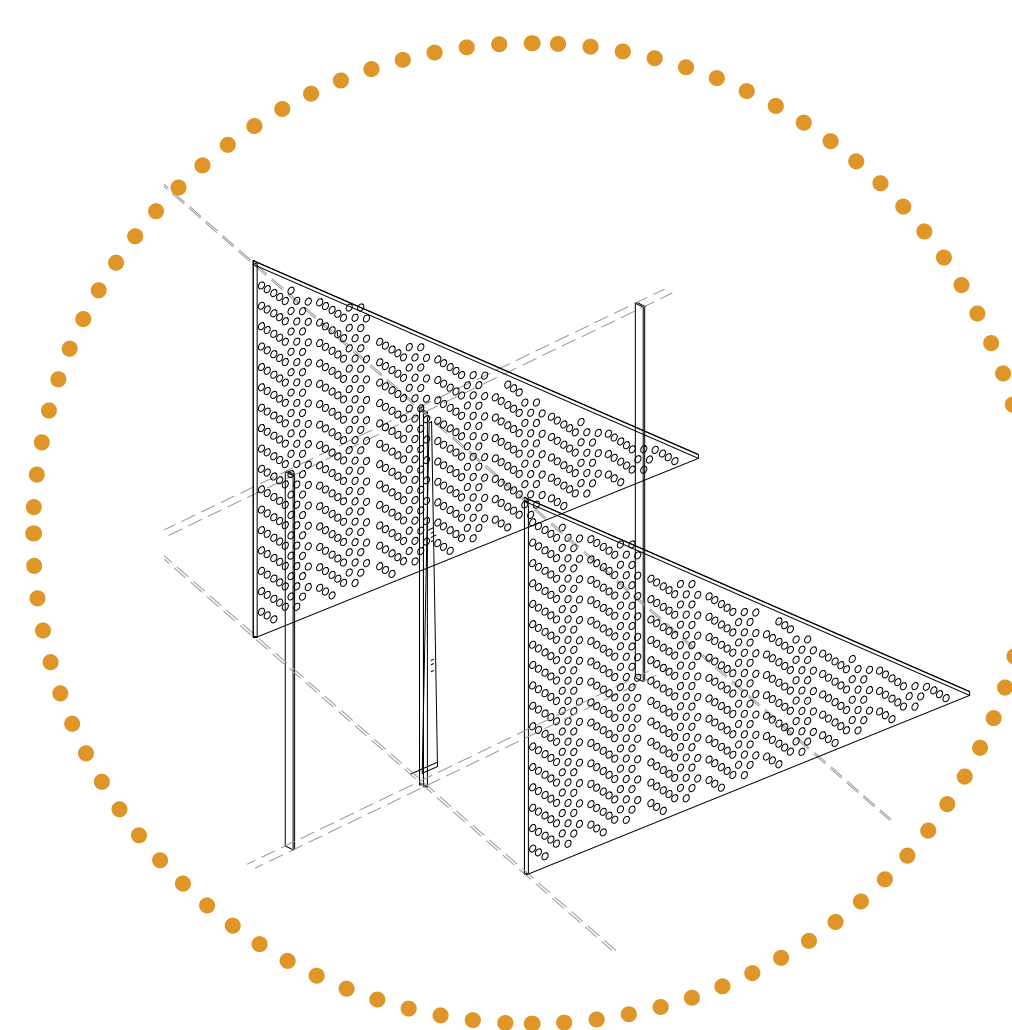
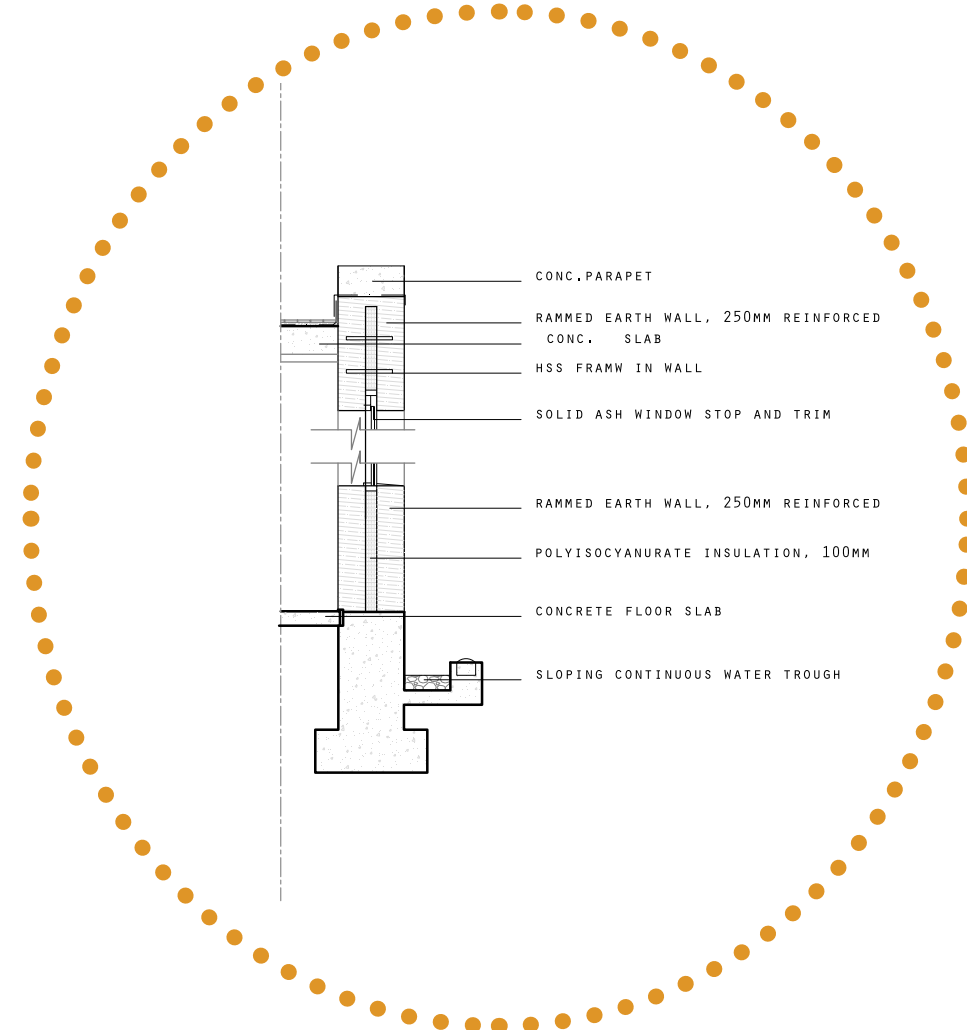
1100x200x20mm black composite acoustic panels

70mm R38 non-flammable, non-absorbent fibreglass insulation fixed to composite acoustic panels





TECHNICAL DETAIL 1
150 RAMMED EARTH SECTION



TECHNICAL DETAIL 2
EXPLODED PERFORATED STEEL PANEL
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08 SUSTAINABLE BUILDING METHODS

I aim to increase water efficiency by collecting rainwater and reusing indoor wash water.

Run-off rain water will be collected in the both in courtyard water feature and wetland courtyard then channeled into on site cisterns where the water will be stored. These collection tanks will then serve as an on site supply for watering the site greenery and flush toilets.

IRRIGATION

Irrigation of the lawn, garden and greenhouse can consume up to 50% of the portable water we bring up onto our property,

most of it ends up as run off rather than being absorbed by the plants being watered.

Programmable sprinkler systems and moisture sensors are options to measure the amount of water needed at any given time. It also allows central control of the irrigation system.

GREEN COLUMN WATER HARVESTING SYSTEM

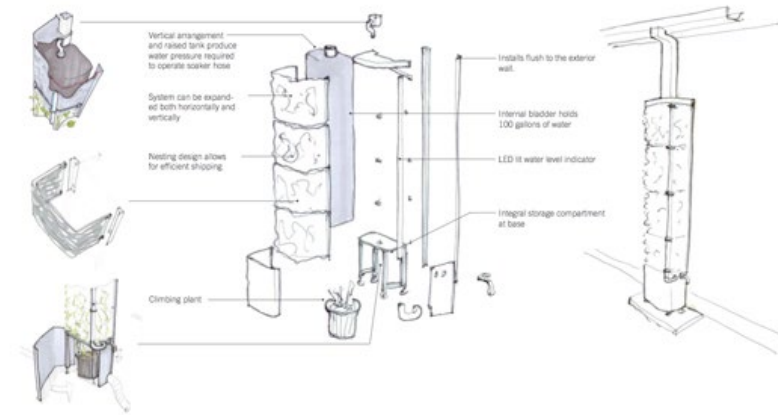


Fig 8.17
"Modern Rainwater Harvesting Sketch" 2013

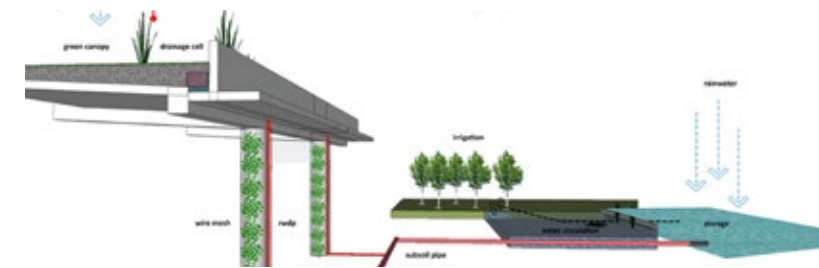
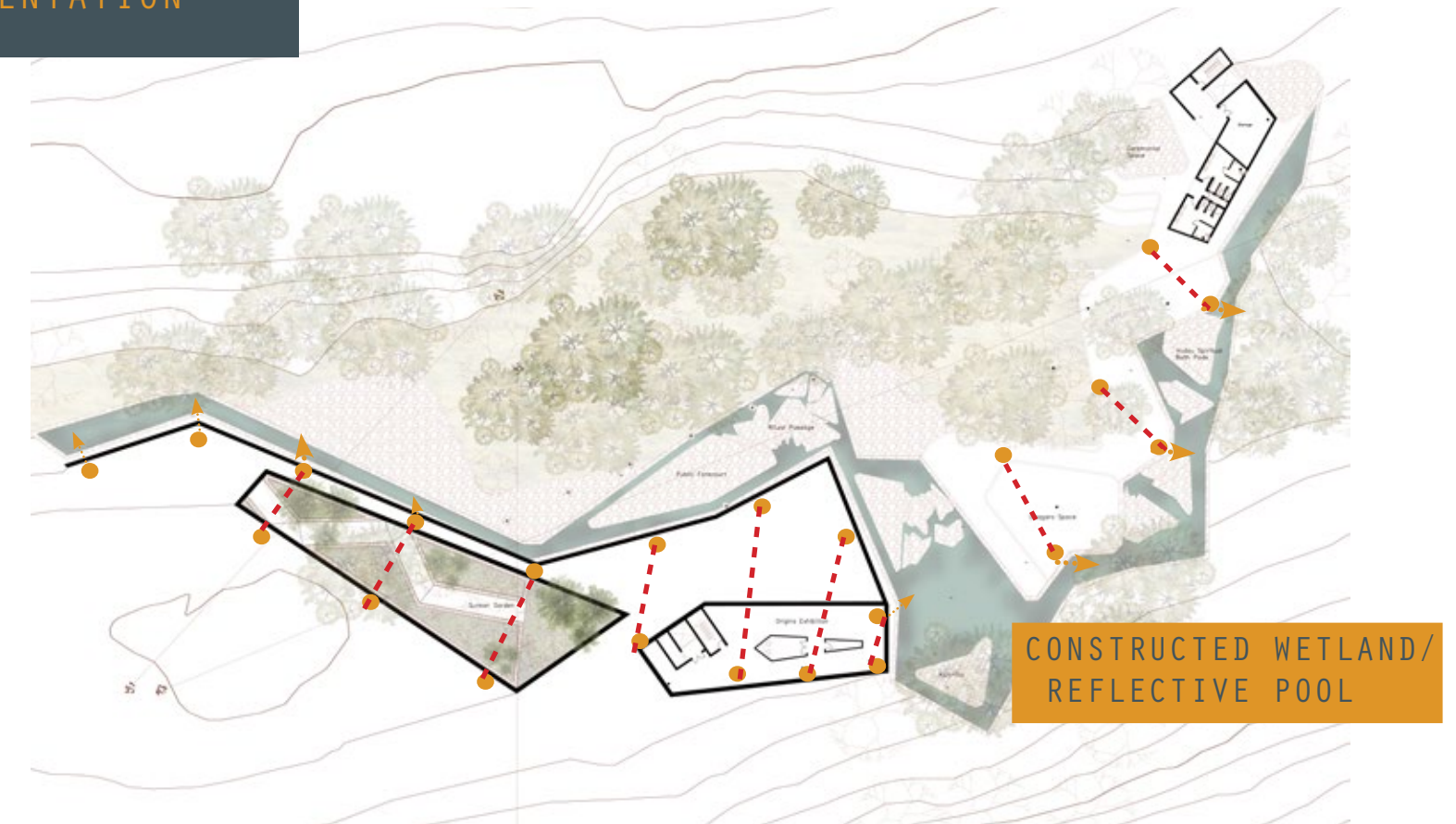


Fig 8.18
"Are at Bandar Green Column Diagram" 2013

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION

KEY

- Diagrammatic Green columns
- Secondary water feeder
- Pipes feeding harvested water from Green columns pool to the wetland pool.



SUSTAINABILITY GROUND FLOOR WATER COLLECTION DIAGRAM

The constructed wetland or reflection pool will collect and treat the harvested rainwater. It is a natural system that uses natural functioning vegetation, soil and organisms to treat wastewater.

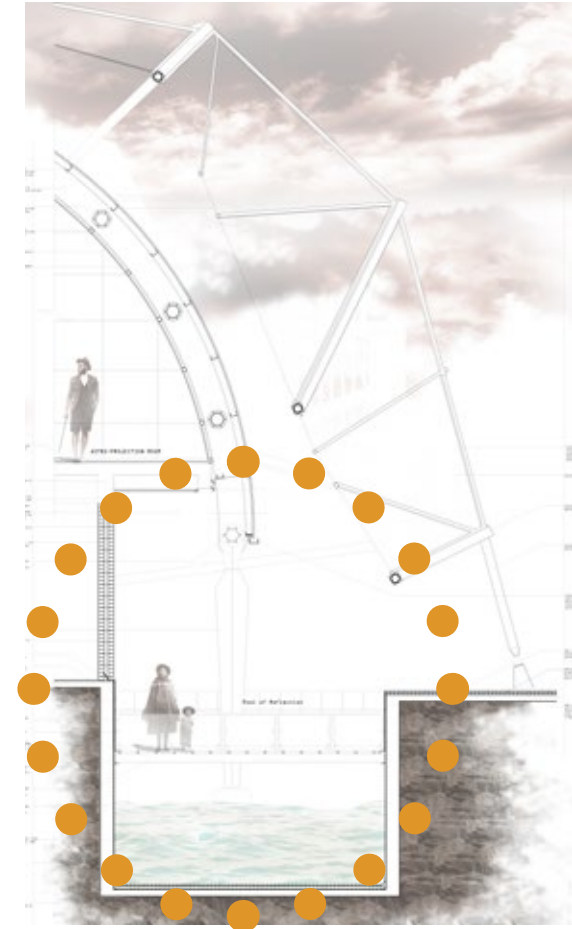
“There are two main types of constructed wetlands: subsurface flow and surface flow constructed wetlands. The planted vegetation plays an important role in contaminant removal. The filter bed, consisting usually of sand and gravel, has an equally important role to play. “

CONSTRUCTED WETLAND SYSTEM



Fig 8.19
"Constructed Wetland Sketch Diagram" 2009

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION



SUSTAINABILITY CONSTRUCTED WETLAND

All 3d base maps retrieved from Google Earth and any unreferenced images are by the author.

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- Fig 3.6 Aspinall, J, K 2000, "Aspinall's mythological associating to the Great Enclosure" Durban: School of Architecture Housing and Planning, University of Natal.
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