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Olfactory an atmospheric city experience for the filtration of the environment

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OLFACTORY

An atmospheric city experience for
the filtration of the environment

Abstract

The atmospheric perspective of a city is not only prompted by visual and sensory processes, but is inclusive of the inhabitant's emotional response to space. It is these responses that evoke sentiments of familiarization, forming the identity of the space. In the same manner in which we identify the scent of perfume, the atmosphere of a city can be identified by its urban materiality. This is influenced by a variety of factors such as location, historical fabric, socio-economical status, and the broader characteristics.

Beyond the emotional sentiments of creating space, the earth's atmosphere is responsible for the supporting of life, as it is the largest shared resource known to humanity. Yet, as the human-driven activities relentlessly spew pollutants into the atmosphere, the paramount role of bestowing such life is under consequential danger.

Today, Johannesburg has one of the highest concentrations of air pollutants in the southern hemisphere. According to the World Health Organisation, this has resulted in approximately 10 000 deaths annually (WHO, 2018). Ilanit Chernick, who wrote an article called 'Gauteng's toxic time bomb',explained that "one of the reasons is that Johannesburg lacks adequate urban planning controls, which has led to industrial sources of air pollution in close proximity to densely populated areas" (Chernick, 2015).

The research report explores the notion of how atmospheric space relates to human response and the environmental condition, which creates place identity within the context of the leftover industrial spaces of New Doornfontein. It therefore presents the question: how can architecture capture the atmosphere of a place and respond to its environment that has severe implications for human health and life in the city?

The strategy in this project is to improve the environmental atmosphere of a district through sustainability to make the control or reduction of air pollution the catalyst for a new urban typology. The intervention is a mechanism to 'harvest' the air pollution in the New Doornfontein area and improve the overall condition of the space and health of its inhabitants and visitors.

The typology of the intervention relates to a more intangible sense of space, and an atmospheric sensibility of architecture. It will act as a vehicle of knowledge for the user. It will educate the community of air quality and what can be done to improve their immediate environment. This interactive mechanism forms the grounds for discussion on the future of architecture. It highlights the environmental conditions of a space that is not visible and it does this through the experience, manufacturing and filtration of the cities aromas. The aim is to provide a deeper knowledge and experiential understanding of an environmental problem through phenomenological space.

Air quality is an important factor when it comes to the quality of life in the city; it has an indirect impact on numerous disciplines, such as: access, accommodation, jobs, general health, food and open space, movement and transport, etc. An atmospheric architecture questions the role of the architect with regards to the sense of intangible space. How can architecture create space that resonates with different individuals experiencing space in their own way? How do we create an understanding of an environmental condition through olfactory senses in architecture? How can this project provide an answer for declining in air quality and our life in the city?



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