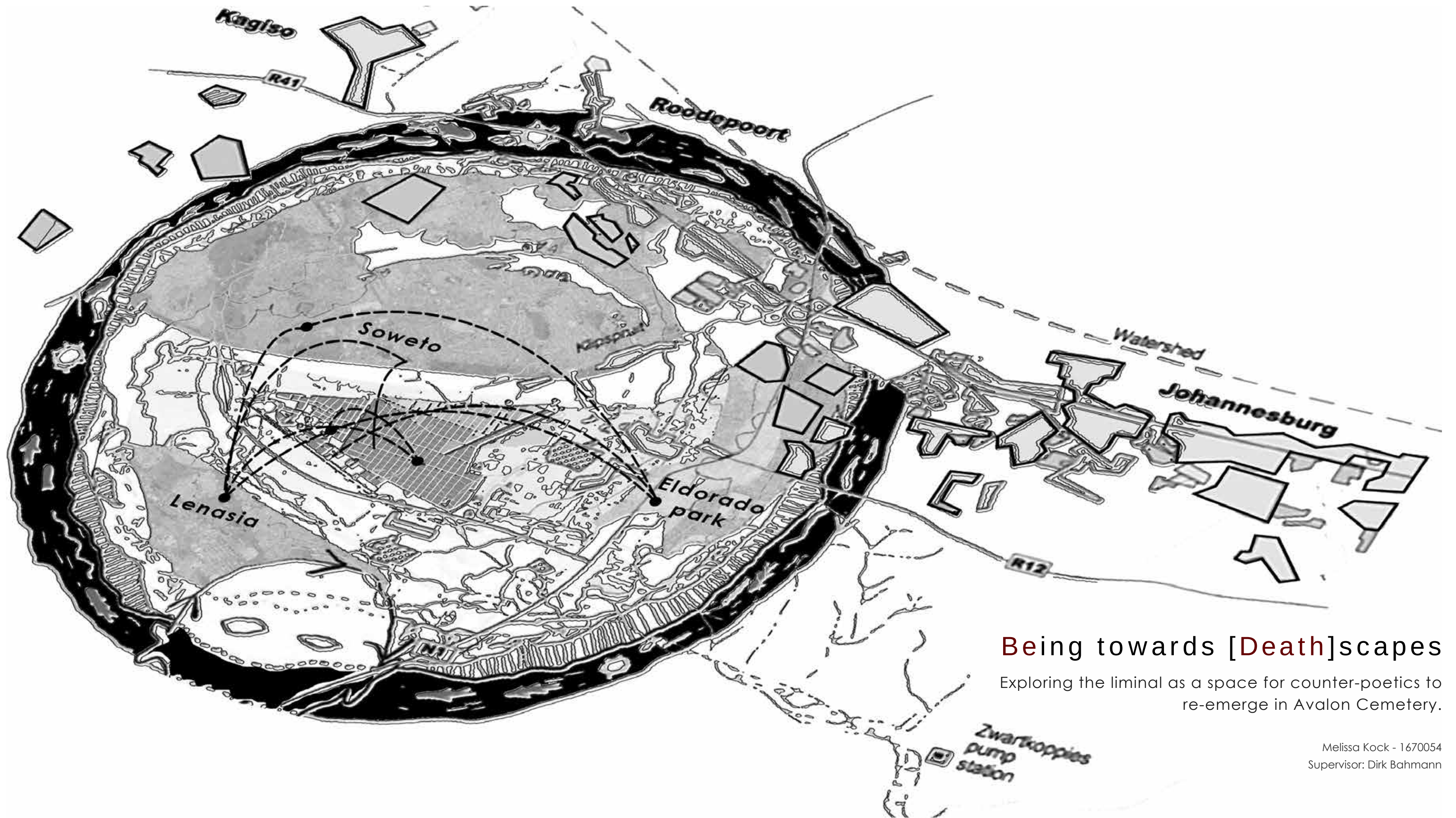




Being towards [Death]scapes

Exploring the liminal as a space for counter-poetics to re-emerge in Avalon Cemetery.

Melissa Kock - 1670054
Supervisor: Dirk Bahmann



Being towards [Death]scapes

Exploring the liminal as a space for social intergration in Avalon Cemetery

Supervisor: Dirk Bahmann

This document is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree:
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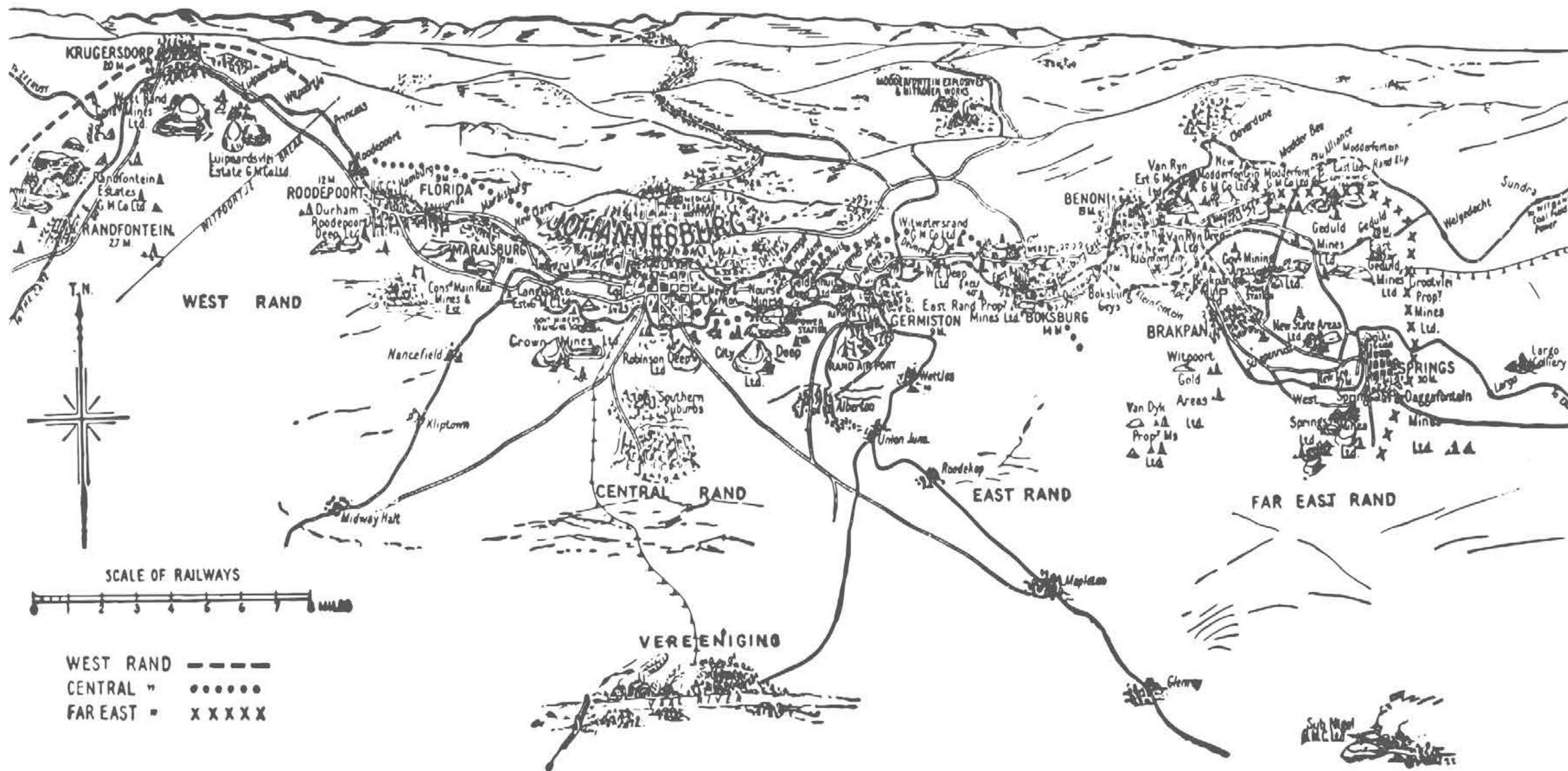


Fig 0.1:
Cover
Being towards [Death]scapes
Author, 2024. Derived from Maape, 2021; Arnold et al, 2007; NGI, 2018

Fig 0.2:
above
Witwatersrand
Unknown, 1936.

Declaration

I, Melissa Kock - 1670054 am a student registered for the course Master of Architecture (Professional) in the year 2023. I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism [the use of someone else's work without permission and/or without acknowledging the original sources] is wrong. I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have stated explicitly otherwise. I have followed the required conventions in referencing thoughts, ideas, and visual materials of others. For this purpose, I have referred to the Graduate School of Engineering and the Built Environment style guide. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my own work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Kock', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Melissa Kock
4 May 2024



“Life imitates art far more than art imitates life”. (Wilde, 1889)

“African Architecture and urbanism are often embedded in complex cosmologies, histories and philosophies about the place of the human in the universe, which have increasing relevance to my own understanding of city-ness and ecology”. (Matsipa, 2021)



Abstract

The Self. + Ritual + Place.



Avalon Cemetery. A buffer zone that possesses substantial political agency alongside cultural significance. Its liminality withholds the spatial practices of individuals across the diaspora, revealing to us how individuals construct what some may consider unconventional “counter cartographies of sociality, imagination and liberation”. (Matsipa, 2020)

By delving into the multi-layered relationships between surface-level terrains and underlying subterranean structures using visual art, light is shed on the hidden inscriptions of past legacies duly rooted in the urban fabric as well as its people. Seeking to challenge these structures, “Being towards [Death]scapes” aims to reimagine how individuals navigate physical spaces within the liminal realm of death, resulting in a reignition of one's sense of self through the use of counter-poetics.

By reconstructing the divide with the understanding of counter-time, between Black African, Coloured, and Indian territories, a structural backbone is formed, allowing new counter-spaces to emerge in a post-apartheid context.



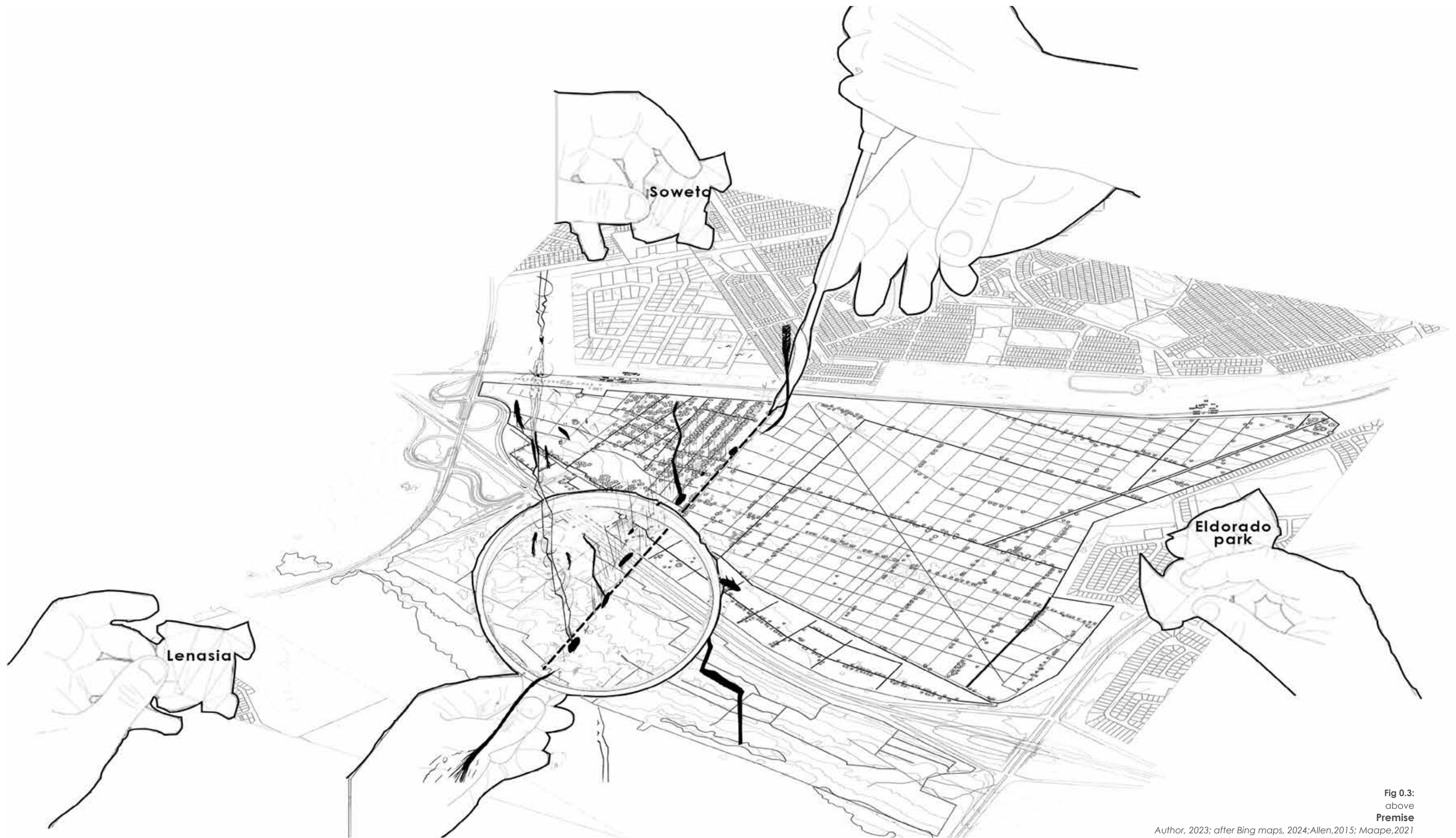


Fig 0.3:
above
Premise

Author, 2023; after Bing maps, 2024; Allen, 2015; Maape, 2021

Glossary

Key words.

Counter

The capacity of a system to withstand collapse and recover its fundamental integrity when externally disturbed. (Matsipa, 2023)

Edges

Geographic and social peripheries that share similar characteristics to liminality. (Buys and Farber, 2011)

Hauntology

Hauntology is a concept that delves into the realm where time seems to fold in on itself and our recollections of the past and the connections, we make with them persist in our present thoughts, much like apparitions. (Macintyre, 2022)

Liminality

The transitional phase during a ritual is where a participant has moved away from their self but hasn't fully embraced their new identity. This concept is also applicable to ecological, cultural, and psychological liminal situations. (Turner, 1974)

Place

A concept originating from phenomenology that pertains to the shared perception of geographic spaces, influenced by emotions and social interactions. (Maape, 2021)

Underground

The concept should not be limited to infrastructure and underground areas. It also encompasses the lives of the underprivileged, the neglected parts of society, and hidden dreams of a better world, beneath our feet. (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008)

Ritual

A series of symbolic and physical actions carried out by an individual or a group often associated with ceremonies, events, and services. (Maape, 2020)

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below
Physical orientation of the project
Author, 2023;after Maape, 2021



The Locus

Navigating the thesis

chapter 00



Fig 0.5:
above
Physical orientation of the project
Author, 2023; after Maape, 2021

Preface

The art in architecture

“African architecture and urbanism are often embedded in complex cosmologies, histories and philosophies about the place of the human in the universe”(Matsipa, 2021)

In the “First Draft”, interview column by “The Republic”, Mpho Matsipa (2021) gives her opinion on the misconception that some individuals hold when it comes to African architecture – a topic that I have been grappling with throughout the entirety of my academic journey. With a profound appreciation for artistic visualization paired with the temporal experiences of life, Being towards [Death]scapes marks the start of my journey to uncover an alternative view of architecture in an African setting.

In agreement with my supervisor Dirk Bahmann (Bahmann,2023) - I believe that art has the power to convey, stimulate, and connect with us on an emotional and sensory level that surpasses the confines of traditional academic writing. Academic writing excels in presenting information and structured arguments. However, art delves into the depths of human experiences and emotions, often creating an immediate and profound confrontation within us- revealing ourselves to ourselves.

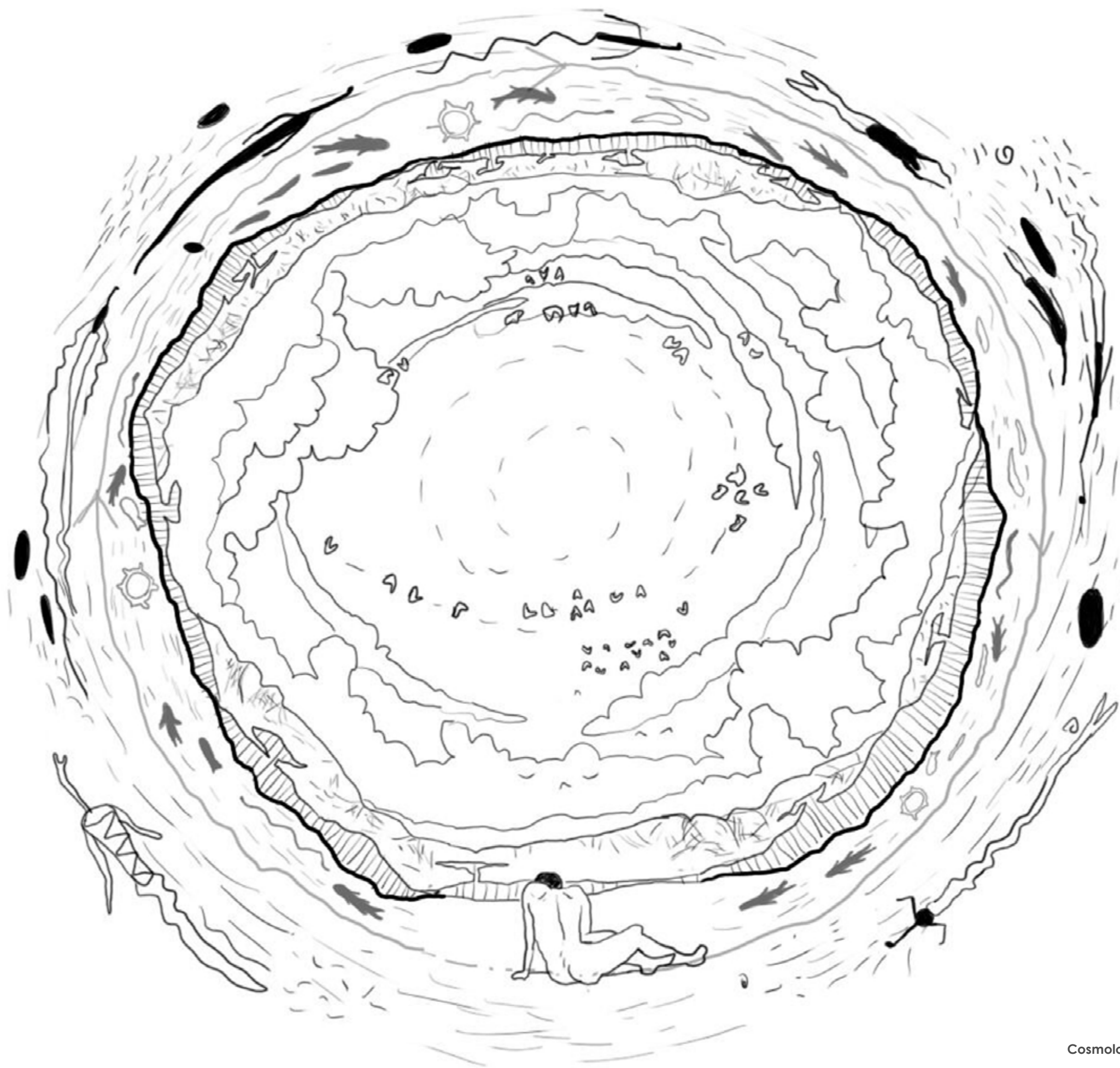


Fig 0.6:
above
Cosmological worldview of Kuruman and the ritual posture
Maape, 2021.

Introduction

Physical orientation



Fig 0.7:
above
Locality

Author, 2024; derived from: Bing Maps, 2024

Context

Johannesburg is a city woven with diverse narratives that bear witness to its mining legacy etched upon both its landscape and people. However today it stands scarred - resembling an open wound stripped of life's nurturing essence or so it may seem at first glance.

Burrowed just southwest of these scars, as depicted in figure 0.8, lies a cemetery that transcends mere physicality to hold profound meaning beyond what meets the eye. Its liminality serves as an entry point into the impenetrable cityscape of Johannesburg – It has the potential to invoke a feeling of rootedness that restabilizes us from the worldly turbulence, by re-connecting people to the physical land, their intangible history, the history of their community, and the cultural and emotional aspects of their surroundings.

The site selected for this project is made up of 172 hectares of land that was and currently is utilized by the Black African, Coloured, and Indian communities that border the site due to the Groups Area Act established on the 7th of July, 1950. Today, it is known to have reached its full capacity making it a passive burial site.(JCP, no date)

This cemetery serves as a remarkable archive, preserving fragments of the complex social fabric that thrived before us. It safeguards the diverse tapestry of identities, cultural expressions, infrastructure, and networks that shape one's experience of time and space amidst sorrow.



Fig 0.8:
right
Locating Avalon Cemetery within the Urban deathscapes
Author, 2023;derived from: Bing maps,2023; Tarmohamed, 2021.

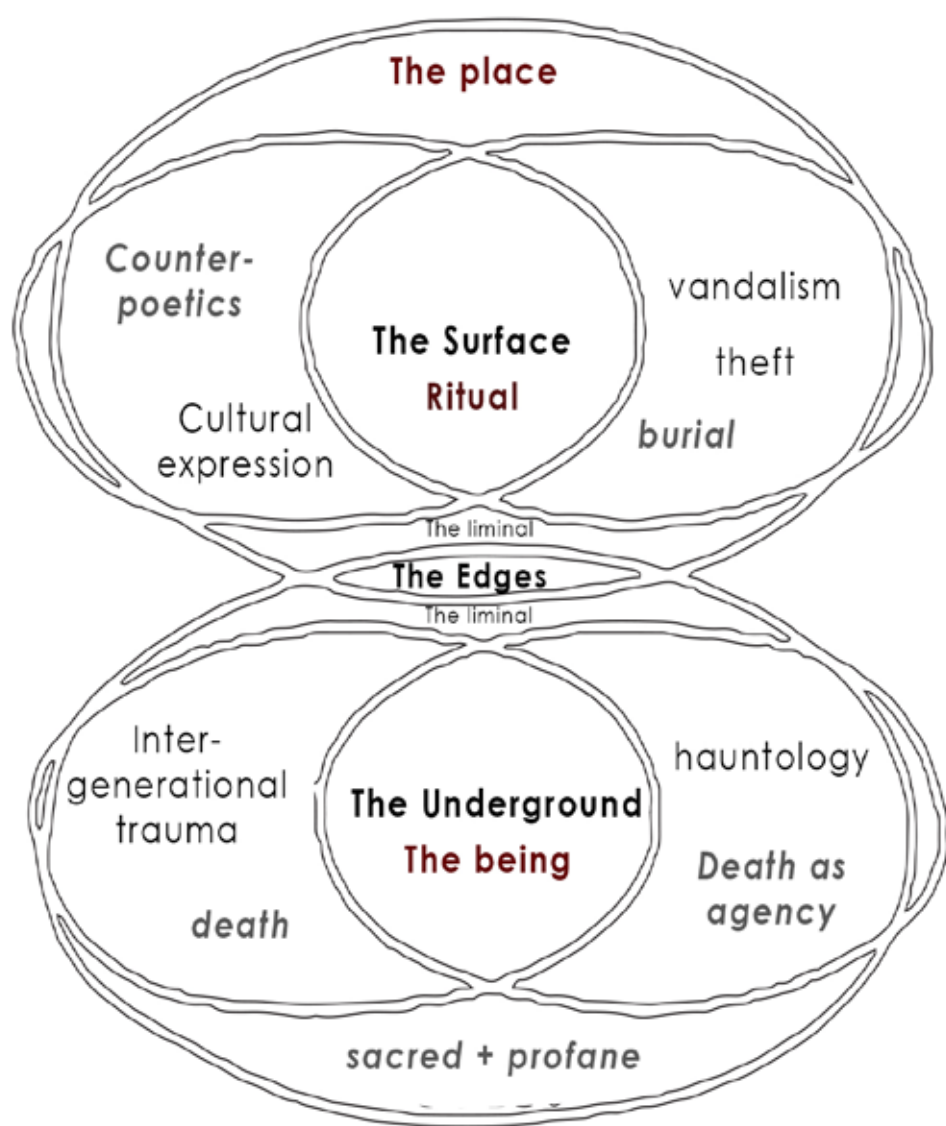
Regrettably, within the same embracing confines lie undercurrents of division inherited from the same fabrics soaked in stories of diaspora- reinforcing new class distinctions among those laid to rest. These divisions and disruptions mirror the systemic prejudices that continue to haunt our contemporary society.

The thesis "Being towards [Death]scapes" aims to counter these continuous inscriptions of past legacies witnessed throughout Avalon Cemetery. Encompassed by three marginalized communities, namely Eldorado Park, Lenasia, Soweto, and a burgeoning informal settlement; this site's geographical placement plays a crucial role in its evolution.

During apartheid's apex, Black African, Coloured, and Indian individuals faced limited prospects, encountering marginalization, discrimination, and displacement- this cemetery emerged as an avenue for challenging their constrained existence. Through funerary rituals serving as cultural expressions, they reclaimed their rightful place within society. In contrast to today, whereby a different group of marginalized individuals seek to take control of the landscape once more; a solemn scene unfolds illuminating a crime scene that is like no other. Countless graves have suffered desecration and vandalism (Simelane, 2022).The cemetery now remains only as pillars with no palisade as security breaches have resulted in its downfall. (Singh and Nelles, 2023) Despite the impact of this event that has prompted a change in perspectives on belonging, influenced by sentiments of insecurity, fear, migration, and uprootedness (Bremner, 2004) -it offers an opportunity to question and challenge these perceptions.

Hence, this project utilizes architectural design to undermine historical means of division and disorientation by reconfiguring spaces that facilitate diverse cultural expressions in the realm of death while promoting tolerance.

Figure 0.9 establishes the project's core themes and its relation to one another by highlighting both tangible and intangible elements that impact the site and its inhabitants today.



Expanding our view towards Johannesburg's southern communities reveals a bustling built fabric overflowing with life and activity. However, beyond its visible features lies a complex subterranean layer where a concealed network offers solace to those seeking refuge from the busy streets above ground. The space adopts fluidity and porosity as individuals inhabit the in-between spaces.

It is vital to recognize that although architecture cannot wholly rectify all existing challenges at this site; it does, however, hold the potential to alleviate some of them. Through an unconventional approach to understanding place and bodily expression; this architectural intervention presents an alternative interpretation of spatial expressions of culture.

Fig 0.9:
above
Mapping the tangible vs intangible elements of the site
Author, 2023

The Report

Liminality in art

Johannesburg as an Interstitial realm

The central argument of the thesis is built on the ideas presented by Anthea Buys and Leora Farber's journal article titled "The Underground, the Surface, and the Edges; A Hauntology of Johannesburg" (Buys and Farber, 2011) to explore the concept of "the modern" with Johannesburg being seen as its epitome. This interplay between perspectives gives rise to a space known as "the edges" as conceptualized by Buys and Farber. The structure of my argument will follow similar aspects to Buys and Farber (2011) where I will focus on the utilization of spatialities in relation to infrastructure throughout Johannesburg's history. This includes their establishment during apartheid and their continued relevance in recent times- post-apartheid. Specifically, I will explore the interconnectedness between the layers of Johannesburg that shape the city's marginalized surface life, its underground spaces associated with wealth, and the emergence of a third space known as "the edges". (Buys and Farber, 2011)

Chapter 1 begins with a short reading by Mbali Mazibuko that eloquently captures the disruption of place and of oneself within the evolution of Johannesburg. Further accompanied by an evaluation of the chosen site and a video still by Steven Cohen highlighting the issues of having no sense of belonging within a context like Avalon.

Chapter 2 delves deep into Johan Thom's video still; highlighting the counter-poetics rooted in Avalon's past struggle heroes who have challenged the surface reality with its "subterranean subversiveness" (Yusoff, 2018) during the height of Apartheid.

This leads to a conclusion based on Bearnie Searle's visual work and Kirk Sides's interpretation of it through a liminal lens – alluding to a need for a spatial experience that challenges the norm. With the help of Sarah Nutall and Achille Mbembe's concept surrounding Johannesburg as a whole as well as 'archives' in the books titled, "Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis." and "The Power of the Archive and its Limits" respectively – a foundation is set for the establishment of an architectural query and solution.

Chapter 3 builds upon these ideas by incorporating Jacques Derrida's (1994) concept of "hauntology." These observations highlight how concepts like ghostliness only exist within dichotomies like life versus death. Ontology, which is the study of existence and being is shadowed by Derrida's concept of hauntology—a state of non-being. "Hauntology represents that zone where time collapses and our past memories and associations linger in our minds, like ghosts". (Macintyre, 2022)

Through the lens of Buys and Farber (2011)- Avalon Cemetery is transformed into a necropolitan, with an interstitial realm that exists in-between the surface and underground. This realm offers an entry point into a complex social fabric of diaspora inherited by individuals living on its boundaries today. These edges are known as Johannesburg's south-western townships, and originated due to the practicality and importance of the mining industry, below ground. (Harrison and Zack, 2014, p. 182) "A catacomb where the dead, the corrupt and the allied are hidden." (Buys and Farber, 2011) Unfortunately, this subterranean dystopia continues to reinscribe its principles onto the surface-level above - a terrain used to navigate oneself, through the inevitabilities of life – Death.

Chapter 4 utilizes Mpho Matsipa's concept ideas On Spaces of Possibilities and African Mobilities (Matsipa, 2019) in order to capture an architectural project that expresses the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. This is expressed through the use of precedents and site analysis.

Finally arriving at an architectural vessel documented in Chapter 5 aimed at answering the question posed at the end of Chapter 2.

The Edges

Theoretical beginnings
chapter 01

Similar to the research conducted by Buys and Farber, (2011) this architectural project does not aim to capture every detail of the intricate nature of a city as complex and multi-faceted as Johannesburg, it rather explores a set of spatial relationships that contribute to its complexity in relation to Avalon. According to Buys and Farber, it suggests that this threefold spatiality is intrinsic to the city highlighting a recurring pattern of fluctuation between what lies beneath the visible landscape, the surface of the metropolis, and the hidden elements embedded in different layers of visibility. Consequently, offering a perspective, on Johannesburg that paradoxically reveals the inadequacy of any understanding or portrayal of the city. (Buys and Farber, 2011)

Fig 1.0:
below
Physical orientation of the project
Author, 2023; after Maape, 2021





“He found himself standing on the edge of a piece of land where two paths intersected. The ground seemed to move from him as he was overcome by a sudden bout of dizziness. He had no idea where he was or how he had ended up there, however, he knew these were common effects of time travel.

The physical symptoms, like loss of balance were temporary and manageable unlike the disorienting side effect, a complete loss of spatial awareness. It became almost impossible for him to judge distance, shape or size let alone navigate or remember a route. He had been informed that the city was designed in a grid pattern on a triangular plot of land.

It was separated from the surrounding area by what seemed like a wall or curtain. Translucent yet opaque. Of shifting and moving with different weather conditions. It might even be penetrable resembling some sort of barrier. He couldn't determine the material it was made from but noticed a radiation emanating from it—a defensive mechanism he concluded.

His journey into the city would commence via the highways a network resembling a complex system of arteries encircling an absent heart. As he approached it appeared both colossal and intricate akin to a diagram depicting the orbits of an entire galaxy. However, upon drawing nearer it diminished in scale becoming a speck amidst the vast expanse that seemingly enveloped the city – though he couldn't be certain if it was truly a desert. During this timeframe doubt clouded his perception; he was skeptical of everything he saw.

Proceeding cautiously and deliberately, each step forced him to readjust his point of reference. The landscape before him morphed into bands of color that defied distinction between sky and ground merging lines with surfaces. Through endeavors he had acquired the ability to interpret these vivid hues as three-dimensional space, with varying degrees of accuracy. The challenging adaptation was learning not to rely entirely on his own perception; perspective came rarely”.(Mazibuko, 2016, p. 33)

Fig 1.1

previous page(19)

Quake

(Vári,2007, video still, single channel digital video installation, duration: 3 minutes, audio 6 minutes 23 seconds, looped. Special edit or a screening to an audience, duration 6 minutes.)

The Built Edges

Navigation

As indicated in figure 1.2, Johannesburg was situated on a piece of surplus land known as 'uitvalgrond' strategically positioned at the point where various trade routes converged and were redirected to cross the east-west horizon of the gold conglomerate reef. (Mazibuko, 2016)

Right, from the start the town's grid plan accommodated two influences: a north-south passage shaped by economic factors and an east-west route influenced by geological considerations. For these directions, the Main Reef and the low ridges to the north of the town floor served as reference points. (Mazibuko, 2016)

Its remarkable growth can be attributed to the discovery of a gold deposit just below the ground's surface in the late 1800s. This discovery is linked to the Witwatersrand Basin, an area in the Southern African landscape which existed as a sort of inland sea. It was fed by streams from the surrounding areas, which brought eroded material into the basin. According to Nechama Brodie (2014), it is not clear as to how gold found its way into this basin. It could have come from deposits within the earth or seeped in through fault lines beneath the surface. (Brodie, 2014)

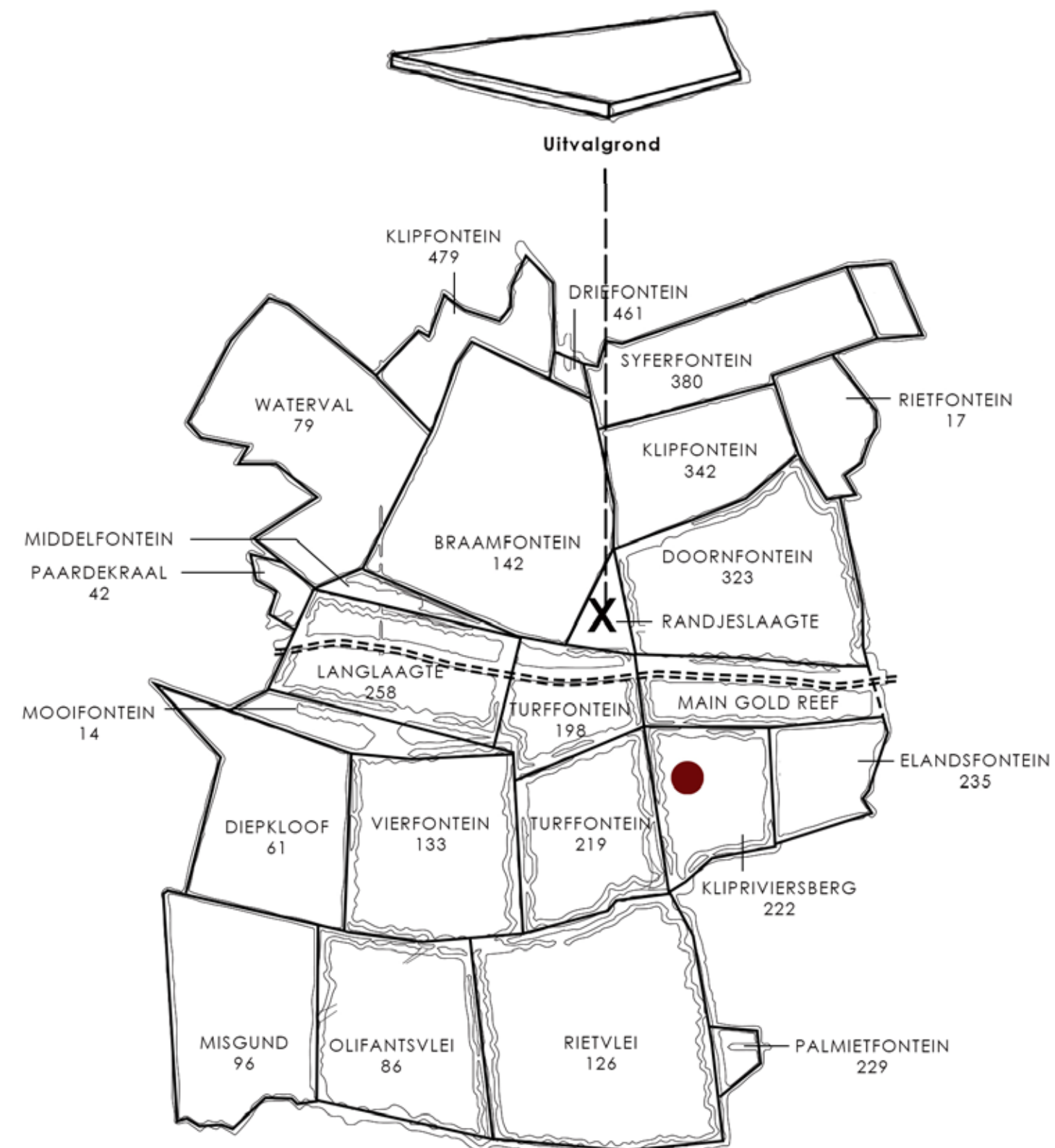
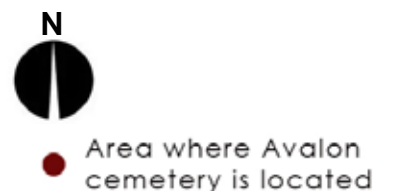


Fig 1.2
right
The boundaries of historic farms, and the location of the 'Uitvalgrond'
(Author, 2023, after Meiring et al, 1986, p.11)



Consequently, the combination of these deposits and the remains of marine life forms created dolomite rock, which can be found underneath parts of the basin similarly to Avalon Cemetery. At some point during two billion years ago, a dislocation of magma caused gold to concentrate in the basin. Around that time a meteorite struck the earth. This impact caused a tilt, in the basin and buried any gold deposits that were previously exposed.(Brodie, 2014)

This significant event provided mining tycoons with both the resources and motivation to establish a contemporary city above ground. As stated by Nuttall and Mbembe(2008), the history of Johannesburg's urban development not only reflects its integration into Western urban aesthetics but also highlights the inherent tension, between what lies beneath its surface what exists above it and its boundaries.(Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008)

This tension manifests itself into a intermediate dimension which Stephan Greenblatt (1995) refers to as liminality, whereby "the subject is rendered invisible on the threshold or margin that exists but is not a place" (Buys and Farber, 2011, p. 5) Similarly to Buys and Farber,(2011) this thesis utilizes the term "edges", to symbolize geographic and social peripheries that share similar characteristics as Greenblatt's concept of liminality. Rather it being strictly separate entities these edges are liminal spaces. In a city like Johannesburg those who reside on these edges withhold the narratives of a multifaceted society. A social fabric born from the mining belt, where the dust of the earth would flow. This is where the story of Avalon Cemetery begins- where I believe counter temporalities manifest.

Figure 1.3 places the video installation, Quake by Minnette Vári into context, as it sets out an atmospheric framing of the displacement of communities in question, across Johannesburg. As noted by Mazibuko (2016), by 1937 around 60,000 individuals who were classified as non-European and living in Doornfontein, Denver and the Malay location were relocated to Orlando, Western and Eastern Native Townships and Klipspruit (later known as Pimville). According to Mazibuko - this forced relocation seemed to have happened without resistance except for the Malay Location (also known as Pageview) where Indian owners strongly opposed losing their tenants. (Mazibuko, 2016) The people who initially adorned this newfound fabric had their origins in spaces confined by barriers created through oppressive standards found in the books that governed society.

Such standards include the Native Land act of 1913 and the Native Urban areas act of 1923. When they ventured to new territories they carried along their roots—the essence of their identity tightly held within their being.

Katherine McKittick(2013) suggests that these types of individuals experience a particular kind of temporal suspension which signifies what I refer to as counter-time and space in the document. Mpho Matsipa further explains that these experiences of a counter- time deviate from linear constructs since they manifest in various directions at once – “twisting, stretching, deepening, suspending, wasting away, living in liminal spaces or timescales”. (IRAAS Black Counter Cartographies w/ Emanuel Admassu and Mpho Matsipa, 2023)

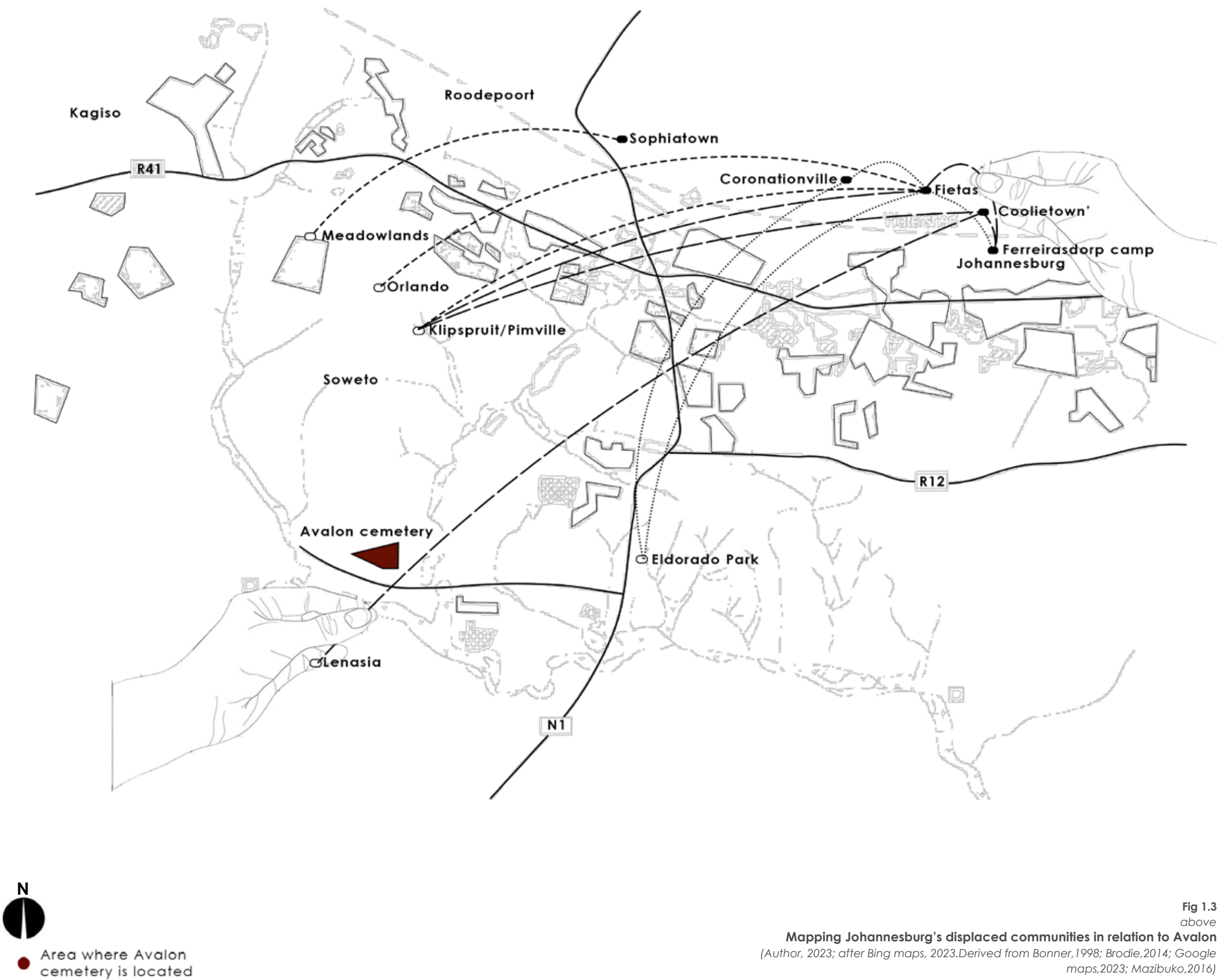


Fig 1.3
above
Mapping Johannesburg's displaced communities in relation to Avalon
(Author, 2023; after Bing maps, 2023. Derived from Bonner, 1998; Brodie, 2014; Google maps, 2023; Mazibuko, 2016)

Moreover, this viewpoint highlights the power dynamics embedded into the fabric that haunts contemporary society today when considering the concept of time in relation to space. As Matsipa(2023) expresses it, waiting is not a uniform experience –it is rather distributed unevenly amongst individuals. There are those who must wait, and there are those who hold positions where they are being waited upon. This distinction draws our attention to the old tale of power underlying forces that aim to separate, oppress, and disorientate; deeply embedded in Johannesburg's landscape, which continues to manifest itself through one noticeable example - Infrastructure.

The individuals who first marked this fabric had difficulties with navigating their way through the model township, a place that was well known for its role, in enforcing control and surveillance during the apartheid period.(Mills, 1989)This led to a continuous fluctuation in identities and sense of self. All of which was inherited by the current generation of today.

The Disruption

of Place

Site analysis

The surface

Avalon Cemetery was established in 1972 for the Black African community of Soweto (established in 1931) therefore the utilization of the site is mainly by the Black African community due to the Groups Areas Act(which became law in 1950) whereby “cemeteries came to be developed along racial lines”(JCP, no date) which is depicted in figure1.4

As highlighted in “Not No Place: Johannesburg. Fragments of spaces and times”; the nationalist government took inspiration from architectural theory and landscape urbanism utilizing racialized appropriation as a means of influence.(Mazibuko, 2016) It can be confirmed that the Apartheid government utilized the surface as a means to enforce separation continuously stretching its way into the present day – evident in the site.

The site itself acts as a buffer zone between the three main communities that utilize it. Avalon and Lenasia Cemetery were strategically designed, to separate and define different areas within the landscape ensuring that people remained in their respective places. Ensuring that there is a layer of disruption between people and place. A place that holds large amounts of memory and ancestral connection.

Figure 1.5 on the following page provides a visual representation of its location within its urban context, revealing an interstitial space situated amidst four displaced communities. Upon further examination, this sacred place that has an ability to contribute to existential encounters, still withholds the lingering effects of biased policies and racial discrimination through the use of infrastructure highlighted in red, which continuous to forge a sense of separation and disruption between people and place in the realm of death.

Henceforth, the site selection is apt, as it serves as a locus to counter the continuous inscriptions of past principles onto the landscape which affect the bodies who engage with the site in a meaningful way. The bodies interred on these grounds bear the scars of a diasporic social fabric that came before us which was inevitably inherited by the generations that followed. As such, it is little wonder that many people still experience feelings of marginalisation and express grievances regarding their social standing - all while navigating complex issues like intergenerational trauma or widening socio-economic inequalities borne from land dispossession.

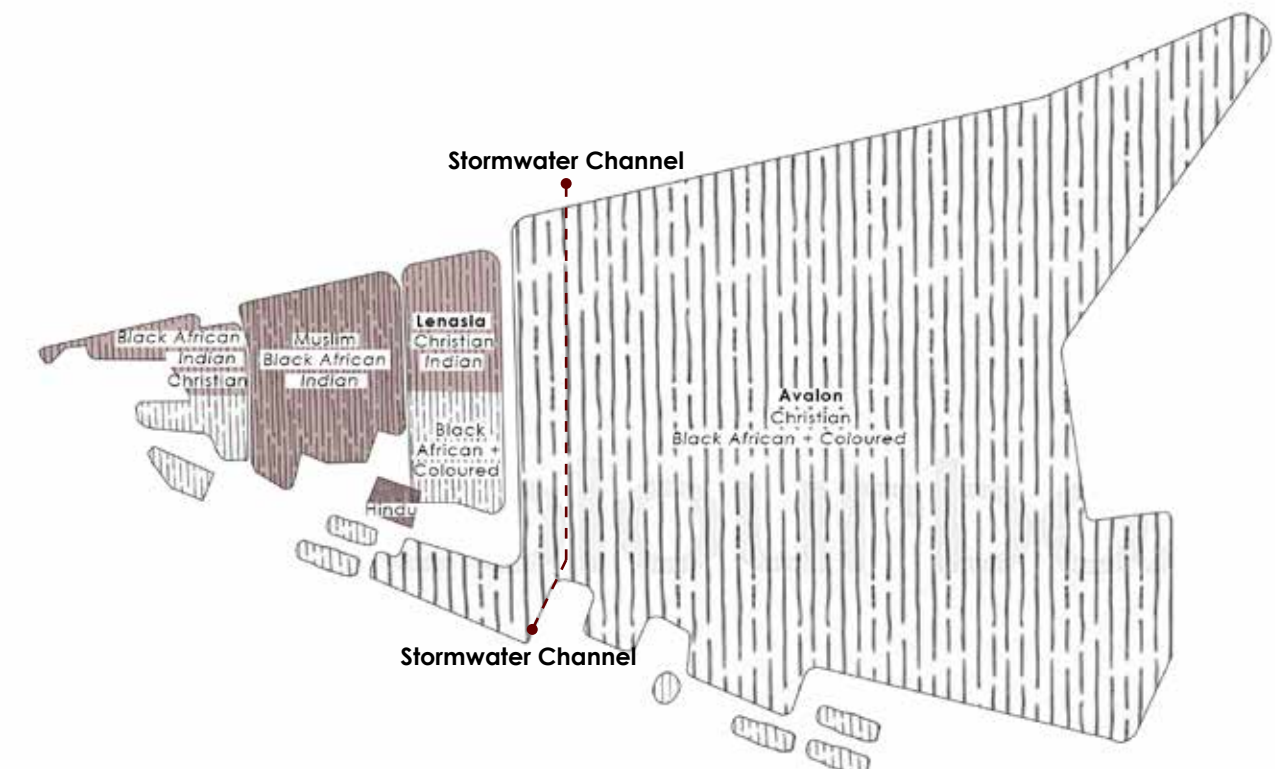


Fig 1.4
right
Mapping of the gridlines.

(Author, 2023; derived from Bing maps, 2023; Tarmahomed, 2021)



Following this placement is the design of the grid, which leaves individuals feeling disoriented as they navigate their way through the site. With no means or tools of guidance, individuals are left to navigate through the site with a feeling of insecurity and confusion. Adding to this strain is the lack of amenities, there is currently no usable ablutions on site for users.

A harsh strip of steel forming the railway system can be found on the northern side of the site preventing any seamless connection to the site from Soweto; keeping it in full isolation with the help of bordering roads and highways like the M10 and M12. Leading to separate access points for the different communities.

In addition to this, is an exposed concrete stormwater channel that marks its way through the two cemeteries acting as a barrier between the communities that utilize the area. Providing a clear distinction between Avalon cemetery and Lenasia cemetery. Lenasia cemetery was established for the Hindu and Muslim communities of the township of Lenasia, established in 1963. (JCP, no date)

This 30-meter-wide stormwater channel adds to the toxicity of a prominent wetland in the area, which is abundant with the common reed, commonly known as the Kliprivier.

Positioned southwest of Johannesburg, the site is situated to the south of the mine dumps, ensuring that harmful substances from the waste had the potential to be carried into the channel in the past. The vegetation, including the reeds is known to play a vital role in purifying the water that has been contaminated upstream. (McCarthy et al., 2007) However, due to the river accumulating large amounts of heavy metal and other pollutants since the founding of Johannesburg- it is currently an environment risk to the surrounding communities. (McCarthy et al., 2007)

Due to the flatness of the site, water has also become an issue since the site has a dolomitic geological profile. Something that will have to be kept in mind during the design development.

The present-day world has become a mirror image of the past with its shaped edges resembling symbolic elements, from bygone eras. The way people engage and express themselves today reflects the repercussions of past events. The generations that emerged from displacement have now blossomed into a society with a multitude of identities that cannot be neatly categorized under one label. As people have settled in limited geographical areas, traditions, beliefs, and cultural expressions have also undergone significant transformations. Steven Cohen's performance titled Chandelier brings attention to the evolving concepts of belonging and identity within these current social fabrics (edges) and most importantly - the development of new ones.

Fig 1.5:
right
The Locus
Author, 2023; after Bing maps, 2023



Chandelier

Case study

Steven Cohen

"By my moving in a chandelier-tutu through a squatter camp being demolished, and filming it, I'm creating a digital painting of a social reality, half beautifully imagined, half horribly real." (Cohen, 2001)



Fig 1.6
left

Chandelier

(Cohen, 2002; video still, duration: 15 minutes 54 seconds,
dimensions variable; derived from Stevenson, 2010)

Cohen embodies a character, within an informal settlement in a video performance whilst wearing a drag ensemble comprising a skirt resembling a tutu made from a crystal chandelier along, with corset stockings and suspenders.

In agreeance with Buys and Farber(2011), Cohen's performance highlights the nature of home in the transitional areas of Johannesburg. The way he interacts with the community positions him as an outsider or someone who doesn't quite belong - a feeling I also experienced as I navigated my way through Lenasia cemetery on a site visit. Unlike Faber(2011) who suggests that his identity is enigmatic even ghostly or messianic, I perceived my own identity in the same such a way. Even though I had dressed in a manner that was appropriate for the context.

According to Buys and Farber, this perspective aligns with the concept of the 'uncanny,' which refers to encounters with aspects of our consciousness.(Buys and Farber, 2011) In Cohen's work, this is partially symbolized by the lingering presence of apartheid that cannot be overlooked or suppressed. Perhaps I can also attach this feeling to my experience and multiple individuals who roam the streets of both cemeteries.

Unlike academic writing, I believe that mediums such as film can portray this contrast vividly. As highlighted by Buys and Farber(2011), Cohen's work indicates the difference between the secure enclaves found in the affluent northern suburbs of the city and how the homeless use the liminal spaces. This division is evident through the sprawling settlements found on the outskirts of the cemetery. The unique nature of this location provides access to individuals in a city that is otherwise difficult to navigate. These unconventional forms of housing reflect a changing perspective on what it means to create a home. When foreign individuals like Cohan and myself interact, with a site frequented by marginalized people they are often perceived as "other." Lenasia is directly connected to Avalon, however, there is a sense of disconnect between the community that utilizes this space and me as an outsider, which leads to a feeling of insecurity and not fully belonging. This could be attributed to the fact that the space was originally designated for the use of the Indian community of Lenasia, and I had nothing that could tie me to the space.

As an individual who is often marginalized in a community that is also disregarded, Cohen intentionally emphasizes his queerness through his performance. This action stirs up discomfort among the individuals who hold influence over him at that moment. While the community (informal settlement) is facing displacement due to home demolitions, Cohen's message goes beyond that and delves into the intertwined societal, cultural, and political issues of displacement and belonging. This raises questions about who should have access to public spaces.

These questions prompt us to reflect on what it means to claim space and have a sense of cultural belonging. It becomes evident that feeling "at home" in Johannesburg is a matter worth exploring further.(Buys and Farber, 2011) All these aspects are closely tied to the challenges surrounding Avalon and Lenasia Cemetery. This observation leaves me to question what the type of tools that can be used to reclaim the feeling of belonging in architecture.



Fig 1.7
left
The disturbance of the highway
between Informal settlement
near Avalon Cemetery
(Author, 2023)

Avalon and Lenasia were established with the intention of catering to two separate communities. To maintain separation a stormwater channel was implemented to prevent crossover between the two areas. Today, as showcased in figure 1.7 is another reoccurrence of the past. Individuals living in the newly developed informal settlement are now separated from the cemetery by the N12 highway. The residents who access the site for amenities like water are viewed as a disturbance to the site. The historical use of infrastructure, for enforcing segregation continues into the present constantly interrupting any feeling of belonging.

The apartheid system had a huge role in disrupting the relationship between people and their surroundings. It divided communities, enforced spatial segregation and widened economic disparities through unequal infrastructure development. Nevertheless, one noticeable thing that we can learn from history, is that the act of waiting and embracing counter-time yielded exuberant and reparative gestures, arising as responses to the eroding colonial/apartheid historical narratives and denial of settler futures. The liminal nature of waiting, along with its defiance against oppressive mechanisms of power, brought forth a condition of radical uncertainty and noble indeterminacy. This rich narrative, lies beneath the surface of Avalon Cemetery, rooted within the bodies whose lives are woven into its story. It's a tale intertwined with activism, tragic violence and the ultimate sacrifice made in the name of freedom. These individuals challenged notions of clear hierarchies and binary oppositions that demanded transformation from one way of existence to another in the sphere of death in an apartheid context.

The Underground

Introduction

chapter 02

The subterranean level of Avalon, as noted by Nuttall and Mbembe(2008) extends beyond just physical infrastructure and below-ground spaces. It rather encompasses the marginalized individuals belonging to the lower class, who are often looked down upon as remnants of societal norms. Buys and Farber add to this idea by suggesting that the underground can symbolize what is hidden or suppressed in our awareness. These ideas are related to Jacques Derrida's concept of Hauntology, which discusses the persistence or return of elements from our societal and cultural history. Like ghosts, such elements may seem to haunt us and refuse to disappear completely. (Fisher, 2012)

David Bunn eloquently describes this by stating:

What sets Johannesburg apart, from other cities is the way in which its surface rhetoric has been intertwined with acts of historical repression. It signifies a failure to acknowledge the sources of surplus value the labour practices of colonialism and apartheid and most notably the hidden experiences of black individuals who were treated as instruments and forced to work deep underground in the coal mines or ore seams. (Buys and Farber, 2011 p.3; Bunn; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 2008)



Fig 2.0:
above
Physical orientation of the project
Author, 2023; after Maape, 2021

Challenging Mud

Case study

Johan Thom

By navigating through the lives of past beings that are embedded within the landscape of Avalon, it feels as if something new is being added to the underlying texture that we cannot directly see. The present experiences the traces of the cityscape in an indirect way as if the current ashes settle on the recent past revealing faint outlines. (Bunn, 2008, p 156)

These outlines can be read through the work of Johan Thom's, Challenging Mud; as it highlights the counter-poetics rooted in Avalon Cemetery, these poetics eventually challenged the surface reality with its "subterranean subversiveness" (Yusoff, 2018) during the height of Apartheid.

Fig 2.1

below

Challenging mud

(Thom, 2008; after Shiraga, 2008; video still, duration: 10 minutes 42 seconds, dimensions variable)



Back in 2008, Thom took part in a private event and during this performance, he decided to cover his body with a mixture of honey and gold leaf, in addition, Thom's wife and close friends then proceeded to bury him alive. This extraordinary display of art was initially commissioned for an exhibition known as JOZI and the Mother City thoughtfully curated by Carine Zaayman. The exhibition itself took place at the Michaelis Gallery in Cape Town spanning from September 8th to the 26th. Thom's performance served as a homage, to Kazuo Shiraga's groundbreaking presentation titled 'Challenging Mud,' which took place back in 1956. (Unknown, 2008)

What captivates me is how Thom's work delves into the deep-cast mining history of Johannesburg which can be linked to the lived experience related to Avalon cemetery. He chooses to depict the burial of gold instead of its extraction. Buys and Farber (2011) notes that this decision highlights our deep entanglement with the past- our roots. The artist himself is covered in a layer of golden leaf while he lies in a grave-like hole. As earth mixed with gold dust is shovelled over him, it becomes clear that Thom has placed himself in a position of vulnerability similarly to the struggle heroes laid to rest at Avalon, to emphasize the inseparable link between Johannesburg's gold economy, the apartheid legacy and human fragility. (Buys and Farber, 2011)

In present-day the subterranean layer of Avalon becomes a living entity nurturing elements of a past life within its layers. It carefully preserves fragments of existence as it occupies its space in the present moment. Similarly to Thom's work, over time these layers become part of the landscape's history paving the way for new layers to form. Unearthing this soil unveils an archaeological tapestry characterized by layers of diverse colours, identities, and culture. Each layer speaks volumes about the legacies embedded in the earth's soil. Legacies that we are deeply entangled in and cannot escape.

Fig 2.2

below

Challenging mud

(Thom, 2008; after Shiraga, 2008; video still, duration: 10 minutes 42 seconds, dimensions variable)



So, the question would be how we can meaningfully engage with this issue. How do we confront the past? How do we navigate this liminality, between life and death while also addressing the present with architecture? Perhaps, in some ways, by changing our perspective we have the potential to influence the way we perceive and shape the past as well.

Possibly, the answer can be found if we depict the realm of death as an act of agency through the lens of counter-time and space.

Similarly to the struggle heroes such as "Hector Pieterse, Tsitsi Mashini, Joe Slovo, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and many more" (JCP, no date) buried at Avalon, Thom challenges the concept of "Thanatophobia," which is the fear of death and the process of dying. (Fritscher, 2023) He also challenges the idea of the body existing in a state of 'living dead'. As Paul Gilroy states, in Mbembe's work:

portraying a living body as lifeless has a contrasting implication for a black body. (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008)

This is evident by Thom's act of willingly burying himself in the challenging mud, and the evident reflex of resistance seen as his face gets progressively covered, which in return, exemplifies a distinct form of the uncanny. (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008) It is also worth noting that Thom's instinctive resistance reflects Gilroy's intention to depict death as an act of agency especially when it represents liberation from slavery and the associated fear.

Fig 2.3

below

Challenging mud

(Thom, 2008; after Shiraga, 2008; video still, duration: 10 minutes 42 seconds, dimensions variable)



This observation effortlessly delves into the depths of Avalon Cemetery's subterranean level, where one can discern instances of disease, marginalization, and mortality. However, amidst these realities, there exists evidence of recurring acts of human resilience—a testament to enduring strength etched beneath the very fabric of the landscape. Additionally, in the realm of mortality, there exists a sense of universality and interconnectedness, among all living beings that eventually fade away.

As Dennie aptly elucidates, Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds found solace in laying their loved ones to rest at Avalon; defying resistance and honoring old age customs. In doing so they forged new cultural expressions of death and a profound homage to their ancestry—an integral aspect of numerous African traditions. (Dennie, 2009)

Similarly to Thom's work, the moment of death or the process of dying does not merely distinguish, between a living body and a deceased body but also represents a contrast between powerlessness and power respectively. (Buys and Farber, 2011)
According to Johannesburg City Parks," during the height of the struggle in the 1970s and 1980s, funerals became one of the most powerful expressions of defiance against the apartheid government. In many ways, Avalon is associated with a history of defiance and struggle" (JCP, no date).

Thus, Avalon Cemetery symbolizes a counter-space through which individuals can experience counter-time. While one can observe displacement and mortality within its landscape it also serves as a continuous testament to survival and resilience. By delving into the thoughts of Mpho Matsipa (2023) who highlights, Tina Campt and Kathryn Yusoff's ideology, it can be confirmed that the seemingly chaotic actions, carried out with an artistic touch within the funerary rituals, transformed into a new form of poetic expression that gave rise to alternative ways of belonging in the present. Their acts defied categorization and redirected their untamed energy towards a new sense of potential.(IRAAS Black Counter Cartographies w/ Emanuel Admassu and Mpho Matsipa, 2023)

I return to Kathryn Yusoff(Feral, no date) who further examines the 'Blues' ability to redefine time in contrast to the European sense of time. She suggests that the concept of 'Blues' time creates a space within a subversive realm, and similarly to Matsipa(2023) I am intrigued by the artistic practices that demonstrate how transforming time into space can establish territoriality independent from oppression and segregation. As stated previously, this counter-poetics challenges the surface reality with its subterranean subversiveness. (Yusoff, 2018)

Colour me series

Case study *Berni Searle*

It prompts us to consider whether this counter ethic can be translated into design practices. To explore this perspective further, this thesis delves into Berni Searle's installation series called "Colour Me" showcased in figure 2.4 below.

Fig 2.4

below

Untitled

(Searle, 1998; handprinted colour photograph, one of a set of 4 untitled photographs from the Colour Me series, 42 x 50 cm)



In her artwork titled "Colour Me" created from 1998, to 2000 the artist portrays herself lying with her unclothed body adorned in spices like turmeric, ground cloves and paprika. Her gaze is directed towards the audience using her story to symbolize the history of merchant shipping, in Cape Town during the era. (Paulhan, 2019)

Kirk Sides (2011) identifies how Searle's use of spices creates a collection of records that both complicates the intersections of coloured identity in South Africa and challenges the dominant historical models of apartheid in the post-apartheid era. Simply put by not imposing present day perspectives onto the past; Searle unveils archives that can be used to examine current racial identities, in South Africa.(Sides, 2011, p 120)

I am keen on viewing Searle's work as an archive (as it transforms time into space) that bears similarities to Mbembe's concept of a divide within archives.Mbembe(2002) notes that an archive not only preserves knowledge but also functions as a monument that imposes a coherent structure, on fragmented narratives.(Sides, 2011; Mbembe, 2002) I claim that this can also be linked to Avalon cemetery; due to it being an archive in its own right.

According to Mbembe(2002), an archive's status is also "imaginary". This indicates that no single archive can comprehensively encompass the history of a society or document every event that took place within it.In my view - archival materials such as tombstones and ash walls, provide us with glimpses of moments, in time which need to be pieced together like fragments of life to construct a narrative that holds significance.With this in mind,I believe that it would make be viable to consider a mausoleums as counter-spaces as it transforms time into space.

Sides's reading highlights that the coherence of this narrative primarily resides in its capacity to establish connections between periods through something Mbembe refers to as "crafted links"(Mbembe, 2002). Consequently, it presents itself as a montage, where fragmented shards come together to form wholes through techniques akin, to those employed in architecture.(Sides, 2011)

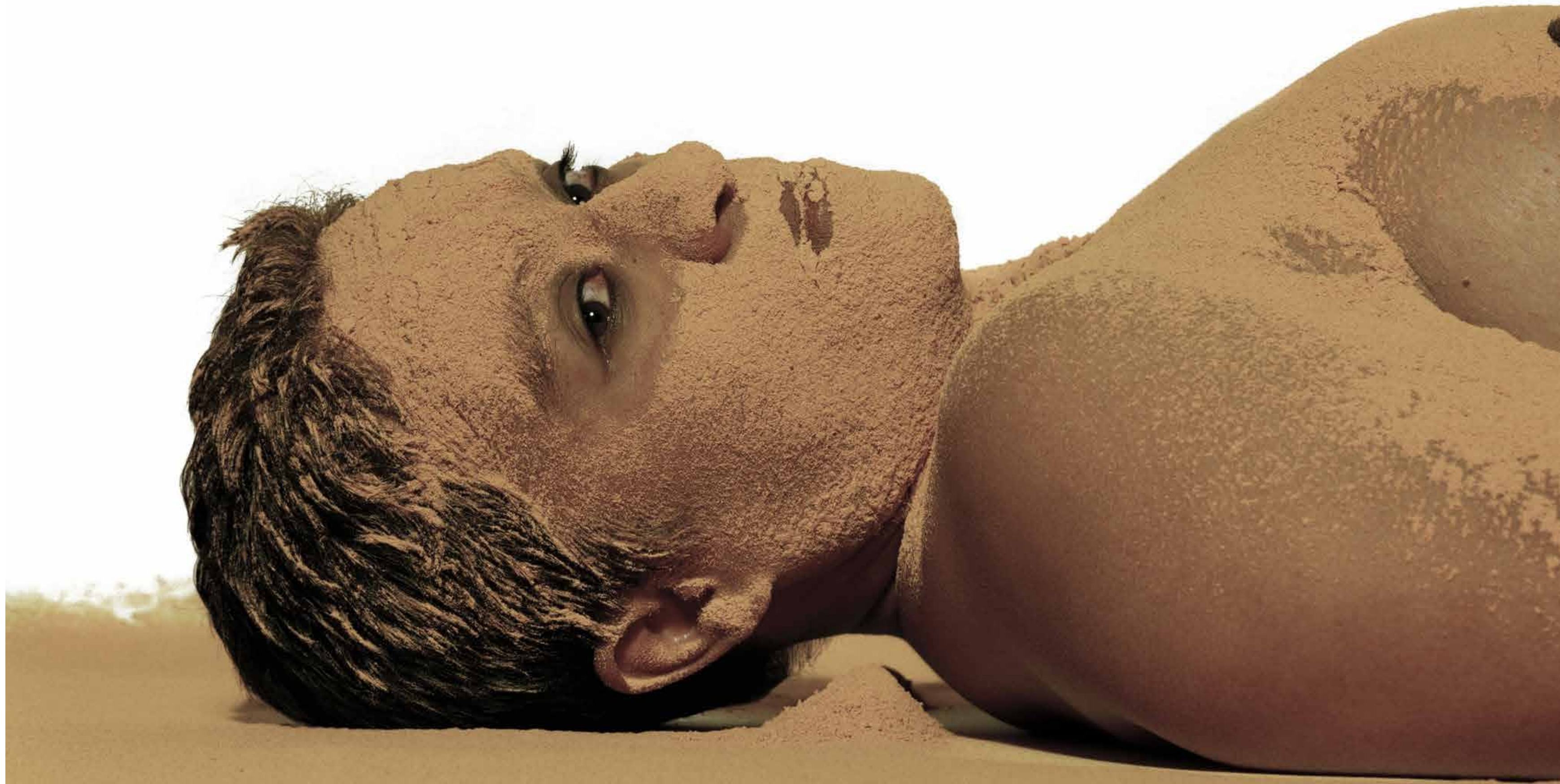


Fig 2.5
above
Untitled

(Searle, 1998; handprinted colour photograph, one of a set of 4 untitled photographs from the Colour Me series, 42 x 50 cm)

Additionally, Sides (2011) explores how Searle's work conveys an idea suggesting that bodies can also be regarded as "imaginary." This differs from perspectives that consider bodies as entities rather than fragmented ones that carry diverse narratives within each component. Over time these fragmented pieces are intricately woven together to form a whole.

By adopting this perspective, it is possible to deconstruct certain perceptions of space like the cemetery and understand how local and international influences collaborate to shape them.

To illustrate this concept Searle's Untitled prints, from the Colour Me series (shown in figure 2.4 and 2.5) depict the body covered in spice powders accentuating the nature of the artwork. Each frame portrays sections of the body exposed and concealed by spices resulting in a unique and distinct landscape. To comprehend the body the observer must establish a connection, between the body and the spices thereby constructing a narrative that completes the overall experience.

My aim is to do something similar. In order for the body to comprehend the full experiential aspect of the architectural project, one has to first establish a connection to the place. In this case, the process of ritual could be the link.

Mbembe (2002) describes this process as "crafted links." Similar, to how architectural archives house documents this new narrative wholeness can be formed in the space where Searle's body intersects with the coloured spices. The intricate composition before us presents a range of frames accompanied by spices each, with its colour. (Sides, 2011)

One can agree that this captivating display presents viewers with a challenge: to achieve an understanding amid complexities. Mbembe (2002) refers to this as constructed connections highlighting the interconnectedness of all elements that require the viewer's insights to comprehend the implications that emerge within. Sides notes that when considering Searle's body within this context one must acknowledge the varying compositions and colours of each spice originating from sources. (Sides, 2011)

I am captivated in how Searle doesn't simply challenge existing notions but also inspires new directions. She encourages adaptation that transcends boundaries avoiding an excessive reliance on external frameworks. By employing themes related to the spice trade she delves into the intricacies of experiences in the southern hemisphere, offering a critique of race relations in South Africa.

The concept of liminality holds relevance in facilitating discussions on transitions and historiographical paradigms concerning encounters and connections. As highlighted by Sides (Sides, 2011) Searle's scholarly contributions propose that liminality encompasses not only changes like the establishment of "the New South Africa" but also moments when global influences shape national narratives. This assertion effectively expands the scope of visual art and possible architecture; beyond the confines imposed by its post-apartheid context enabling reflections, on global histories crafted through relationships and exchanges. (Sides, 2011)



Fig 2.6
above
Untitled

(Searle, 1998; handprinted colour photograph, one of a set of 4 untitled photographs from the Colour Me series, 42 x 50 cm)

Counter approach

Following this discussion, the design approach aims to explore these dynamics by delving into how the marginalised body navigates through spaces of history that have not been recognized or mapped conventionally. These absences raise questions about adequate responses to indeterminacy while highlighting new possibilities for spatial practices and social interactions amidst abandonment. Looking beyond European models may offer valuable insights into embracing both survival instincts and innovative approaches when shaping our world with repair serving as an underlying principle alongside notions like justice.

“Do archives create the starting conditions for history? No characterization could be as fitting—or as wrong. Certainly, the archive stands at the beginning of memory and history, of facts and knowledge. But on the other hand, archives also hinder the production of knowledge about the past, privileging specific forms while suppressing others.”.(Workshop: Archive, Non-Archive, Counter-Archive - e-flux Education, 2022)

Hence, the term “counter-space” seems more fitting in this context. A space that provides different viewpoints, narratives, and interpretations of history. Its purpose is to challenge prevailing narratives, bring attention to marginalized voices, and offer different perspectives.

The idea of a counter-space arises from the acknowledgment that traditional spaces that preserve history often reflect the biases and viewpoints of a dominant culture. In the context of Avalon, this can result in the exclusion or marginalization of a variety of communities and histories. The Counter-space proposed within this project aims to address these imbalances by broadening the range of collected materials incorporating voices and re-evaluating history from diverse perspectives within rituals of death.

It also aims at solving whether or not **architecture can counter the ramifications of a past legacy by transforming time into space within a post-apartheid context.**

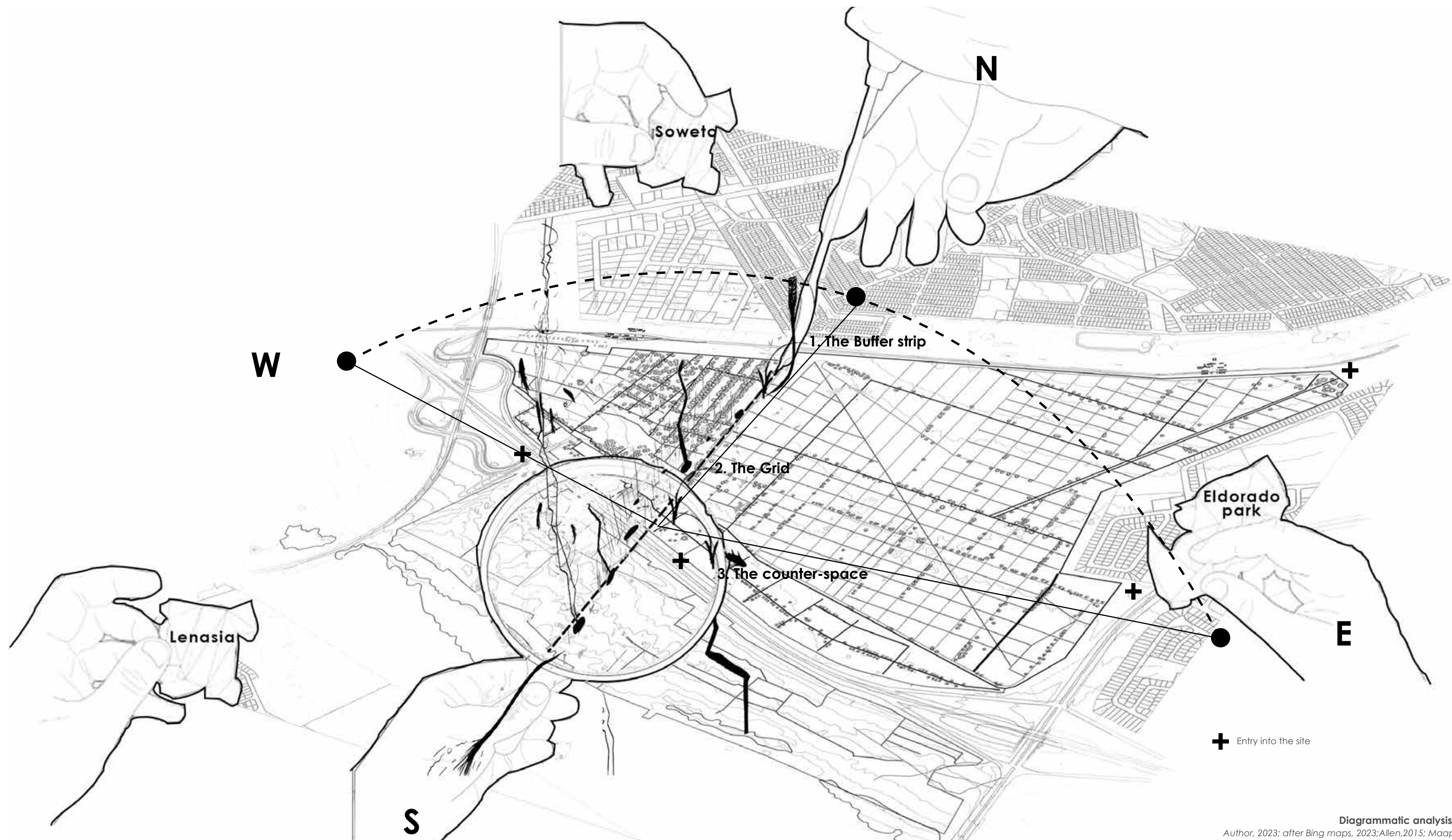
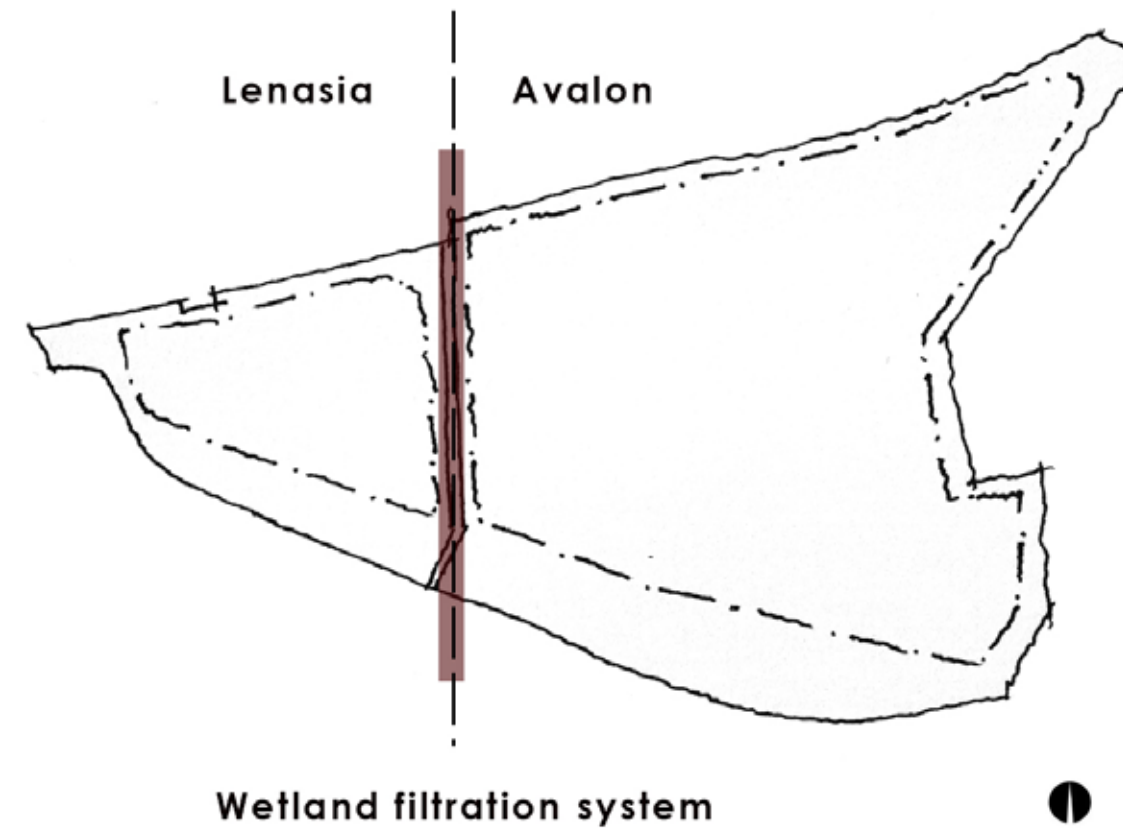


Fig 2.7:
Above
Diagrammatic analysis of site
Author, 2023; after Bing maps, 2023; Allen, 2015; Maape, 2021

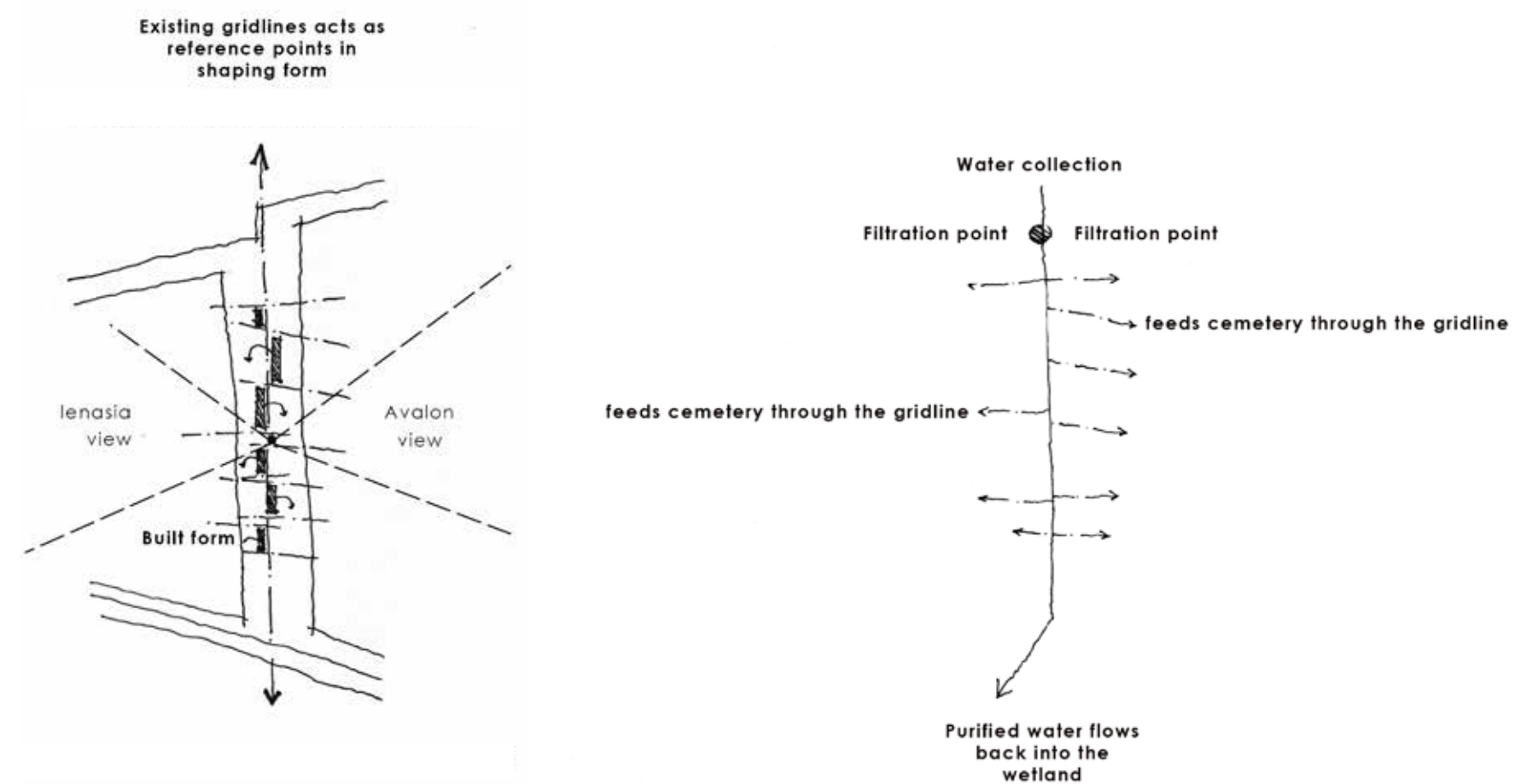


1. The Buffer strip

Currently there exists a divide within the landscape. This division is caused by the double stormwater channel and can be likened to how apartheid employed the railway tracks, open fields and wetlands as tools of segregation. My intention is to bring attention to this divide and emphasize its impact- like shining a spotlight on it. By doing so, we can collectively confront and address the issues from our past directly. This strategy aims to make these problems visible, for everyone allowing us all to witness how they continue to influence today's society.

The buffer strip which cuts through the heart of the cemetery intersecting with rows of graves that stretch out perpendicularly, will now be the filter of the site. The channel currently serves as a timeline capturing hidden legacies within its structure. In strengthening this aspect, I seek to reintroduce the klip rivier wetland within this divide. By converting the stormwater channel into a natural filtering system- I begin to transform time into space. The connection between temporality is closely woven into the journey of life and death. It acts as a representation, metaphor, and a gentle nudge toward the essence of existence and the undeniable flow of time. This interdependence is evident, in the cultural customs, traditions, and philosophical viewpoints embedded in the social fabric of Avalon.

Fig 2.8
above
Site selection
(Author, 2023)



2. Grid

To determine how the intervention fits into the landscape I find it helpful to use the existing gridlines that indicate the main circulation route through the cemetery. These gridlines can guide the general layout of the building. The main routes highlighted in figure 2.9 will serve as reference points within the building.

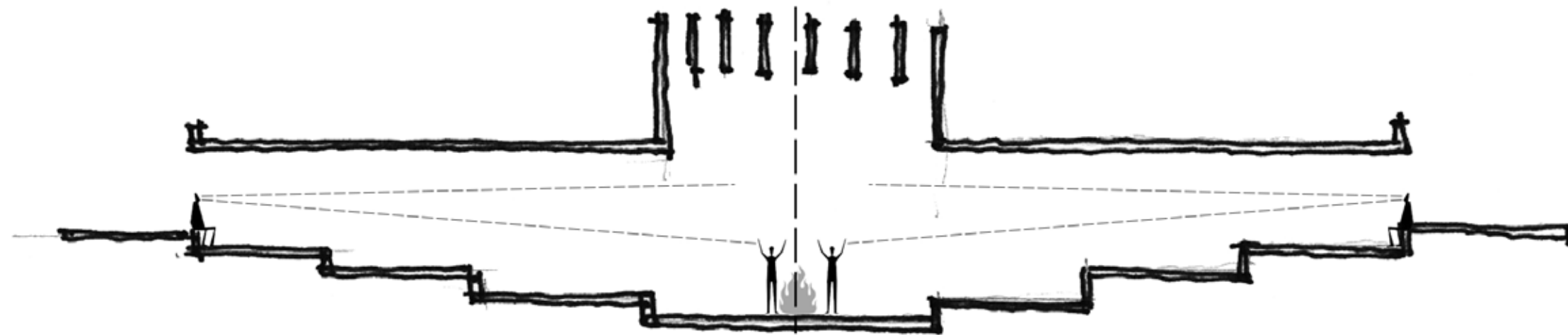
Another idea is to use the building's form to realign and harmonize the mismatched gridlines. In doing this, I aim to form a connection between the two sites that previously did not exist. By creating this connection users, on either side are exposed to the realities of both site conditions simultaneously.

Fig 2.9
above
The form
(Author, 2023)

The self

The counter-space

Ritual - Public



3. Counter-space

As expressed in Chapter 2, this counter-space aims to offer alternative narratives and meanings, as well as confront past injustices by preserving and showcasing history from an alternative standpoint.

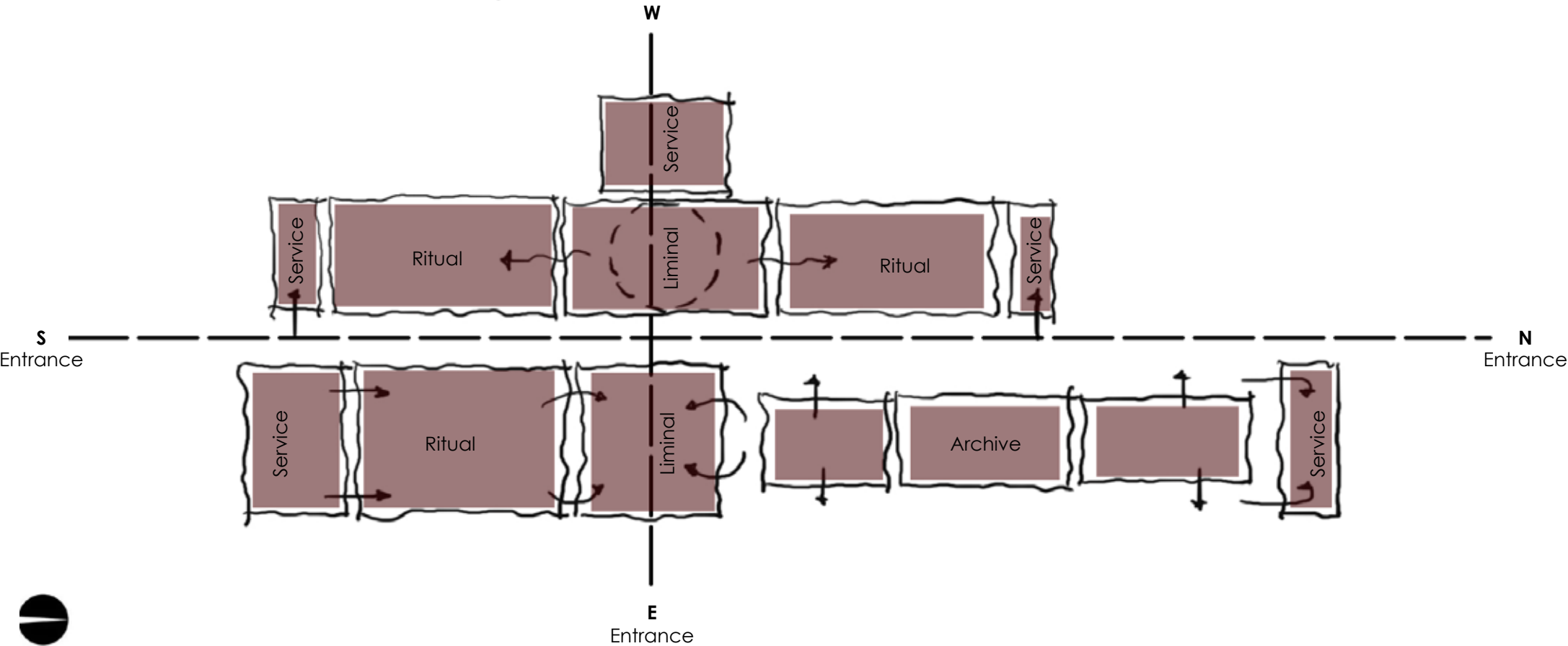
Extracting the lessons learned from the charrette process, the concept of this facility and its connection to the earth serves as the foundation from which our existence springs forth. This seems like a fitting design language to take through into the design phase. Traditionally, archaeology is the means by which we uncover history. When we delve into history we delve into the depths of the underground. In agreeance to a statement made by Dirk Bahmann (2023); the geological layers are not the only things we uncover when cutting into earth, but we also unveil historical layers within a site. In this way examining sections can potentially unveil both the formal and technical aspects of history with a sense of permeance.

The relationship between temporality and permanence can be understood as follows; Time provides a space for history to take shape; it is fluid. In constant flux and lived from moment to moment. I refer to this as the liminal. However, there comes a point when things transition from being temporal to becoming historical – they solidify and become fixed in time. Hence we arrive at the post-liminal. Of flowing through time like before they now encapsulate it. I am particularly interested in exploring this juxtaposition, between history's transient nature and its ability to transform over time while expressing itself through the building's form as I move forward.

Fig 2.10
above
Initial concept of the space
(Author, 2023)

The self

The counter-space Programmatic Accomadation



Counter-space: Cultural center.

The center primarily relies on our senses as a driving force. It emphasizes the importance of gathering, memorialising, repairing, and archiving. The archive and exhibition specifically caters to the stories of struggle and heroism within the site while the multi-purpose space takes the form of an amphitheatre designed for ritual. The central axis welcomes individuals from communities to breathe life into the area with their memorabilia. Lastly, workshops support the local Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries initiative who are passionate in sustaining and repair local cemeteries like Avalon. The massing of the intervention remains minimal in size and form. Due to a lack in burial space within the site, it would be fitting to take up as little coverage as possible, leaving room for alternative burial methods to unfold.

Fig 2.11
above
Diagram of programmatic relations
(Author, 2023)

Fig 2.12
above
programmatic accomadation
(Author, 2023)

Description	Approx. Size(sq.m)	No. req.	Total(sq.m)
The Underground+The Surface+The Edges			
Reception Foyer			
Entrance Foyer	50	1	50
Exhibition Space	100	1	100
Security office	10	2	20
Store room	10	2	20
Auditorium	250	1	250

Offices			
Reception/waiting area	20	1	20
Open plan office	75	1	75
Meeting rooms	12	2	24
Multi-purpose room/Ritual	130	2	132
Boardroom	30	2	60
Archive and Filing / Print Room	12	1	12
Cleaners Store	5	2	10
Kitchenette	15	1	15

Counter Archive Facility			
Reception area/waiting area	20	1	20
Archive area	100	1	100
Reading space	50	1	50
Research commons	50	1	50
Reference and Research Facilities	30	1	30
Offices	12	2	24
Meeting Room - 8 seater	20	1	20
Store Room	10	1	10
Staff Tea Room	20	1	20
Staff Kitchenette	10	1	10
Staff Toilets	20	1	20

Retail			
Restaurant	120	1	150
Restaurant (Outside)	50	1	50
Store room	6	1	6
Cold room	7	1	7
Kitchen and Service Area	45	1	40
Informal retail	10	5	50

Sub Total	70%	1577
-----------	-----	------

Circulation & Service areas		
Circulation	As req.	
Parking(100 bays/)	As req.	
Ablutions	As req.	
Burial alternatives	As req.	

Sub Total	4000
-----------	------

Total Building Area	5577
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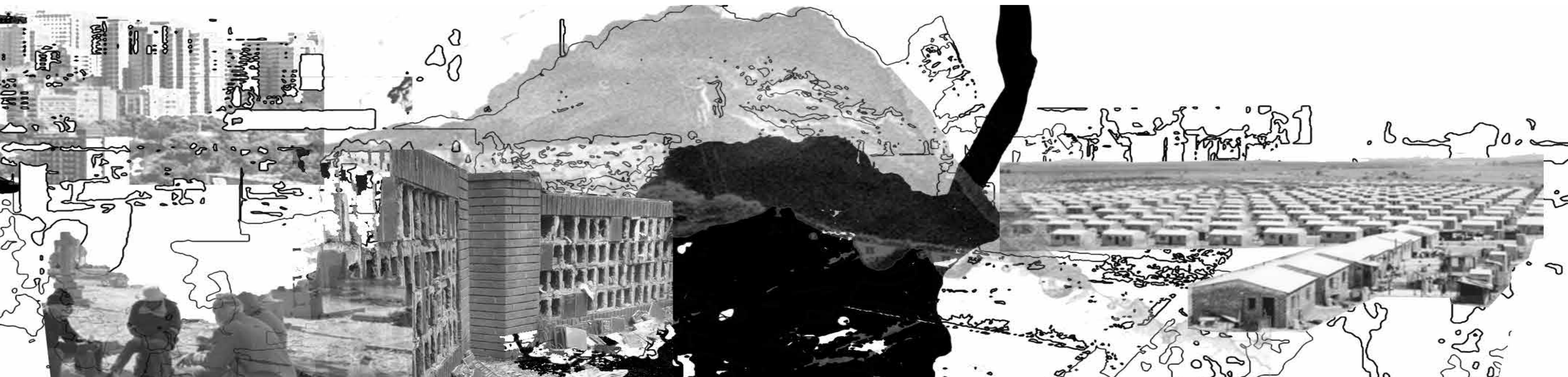
The Surface

Counter-poetics.

chapter 03

Mazibuko claims that, Johannesburg is a city characterized by a longing for the future than dwelling on the past. The city's perception in the present is shaped by an adaptation of its narrative fueled by a yearning, for a fast-paced and progressive future. Moreover, there seems to be a trend of acknowledging, facing, and dealing with the past. (Mazibuko, 2016,p 12)

Fig 3.0
below
Physical orientation of the project
(Author, 2023)





Consequently, "Experience of the city within this tumultus vortex of energy is often intense, disorientating, and overwhelming, as it tends to inundate the senses and engulf the space of silence of the in-between. When these silences are lost meaning and quality become subsumed by the homogeneity and chaos of profane space".(Bahmann, 2001)

This feeling can also be felt within the boundaries of Avalon Cemetery.

This misalignment has led to violence against nature in the form of resource extraction presented by performance Johan Thom as well as an environmental and identity destruction that will be conveyed further. As a result, there is a constant state of turmoil and uncertainty. The various shifts occurring within our environments - be it political, social, or economic - contribute to a lack of shared stability on which we rely on to navigate life's complexities.

Fig 3.1
above
Inessential extravagances linked to death
(Author, 2023)

This epidemic stems from the past whereby the Black African, Indian, and Coloured communities successfully liberated themselves from past colonial and apartheid views on death by re-envisioning burial rituals on their own ground.

Unfortunately, on the surface “funerals, especially amongst the black community have become expensive events. They have turned into a hive of social activity where fashion, style, expensive cars are show-cased, leading to a move towards a demand for one-stop services” (whoownswhom, 2022)

The funeral service industry has adapted itself in response to the changing times by offering several additional services alongside the standard ones like a hearse, grave site, and death registration. Catering, transportation, event decoration and church services have been added to their list of offerings which are favoured by leading brands such as Dove and AVBOB creating an opportunity for them to offer comprehensive insurance policies. (whoownswhom, 2022) The commercialisation of death has consequently given rise to additional expressions of grief such as the ‘after tears’. According to an article written by Karabo Ngoepe, “it’s a phenomenon that elderly citizens find hard to comprehend, with many saying the tradition of burying their loved ones with dignity has been lost”. (Ngoepe, 2016)

The former African burial society has now transformed from “primary agents responsible for financing African burials” (Dennie, 2009) to an industry driven by capitalistic gain at the expense of the bereaved. Allowing past remnants of exploitation and disruption to once again seep through into the present. The reality now is that funeral costs have spiraled out of control for many deprived individuals - a situation made worse by the rising expenses linked to death and dying in general. One significant factor in this trend is the pressure put on marginalized populations by unscrupulous undertakers who encourage them to invest in costly coffins and tombstones they can hardly afford. Predictably, it is common to see these inessential extravagances even in sections close to impoverished areas like the informal settlement near Avalon Cemetery .

Figure 3.1 not only highlights the stark contrast between these deluxe burial items (tombstones) and their surrounding environments - which are typically unkempt or unsafe due to issues like poverty and unemployment, but it also highlights the wider disparities linked to inequality.

Garfinkel (2017) indicates that these disparities are kept hidden until, an anti-social package of vandalism and violence along with a sense of daring, defy the ultimate fear - death itself. (Garfinkel, 2017)

“Vandalizing a loved one's grave injures the family, and far beyond. Attack on a cemetery is an attack on memory and community that resonates with humanity's ugly history of ethnic and religious hatred” (Garfinkel, 2017)

Fig 3.2
below(left)
Vandalised graves at Avalon Cemetery
(De Wee, 2022)



Fig 3.3
below(center and right)
Vandalised fencing at Avalon Cemetery
(Author, 2023)



Looking at Avalon's landscape is one way to track historical indicators but examining the human bodies that navigate the space, provides another avenue for understanding the ongoing re-inscription of political power. (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2008) The vandalism of graves seen in Avalon brings attention to the socio-economic issues at play. Taking away from my interview with Sarah Welham, founder of Friends of Johannesburg cemeteries; there seems to be three types of incidents at play:

Ordinary vandals who target graves randomly (most common), vandals who choose specific cemeteries based on racial motives (less common), and those who engage in grave robbery (rare).

I argue that the prevalent form of cemetery vandalism seen in Avalon, is closely connected to the expression of grievances towards society. These perpetrators specifically target the cemetery because it holds significance for many people, it is associated with emotions and memory tied to burying loved ones. When engaging in acts of vandalism they show no consideration for the grieving families; instead, their aim is to showcase their disdain or hostility towards society. It seems like these individuals want their actions to be seen as statements, against figures of authority. It is a form of resistance towards what Mbembe (2019) coined- Necropolitics. The dynamics of necropolitics can be seen in the form of the deliberate neglect, and deprivation of fundamental rights towards these individuals. The city does not view these people as important and worthy of prioritization; effectively contributing to a cycle of suffering, insecurity and heightened vulnerability, to loss of life. A lack of humanity is quite clear in events like these.

The inherited trauma from the past in which the present individual embodies has a clear link to the treatment of marginalised bodies in the past. Jane Alexander's work is widely acclaimed for its symbolism and its ability to capture the profound impact of apartheid, on its victim's sense of self, particularly the black South African community. Through her art she skilfully represents the struggles and darker aspects of the white minority's psyche which I believe has left a continuous imprint in today's people. I believe that her work also opens up a discussion around dehumanization and identity in present-day.

Butcher Boys

Case study

Jane Alexander



Fig 3.4
above
Butcher Boys
(Alexander, 1985/86; mixed media. Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town; derived from flicker/Goggins world)

While studying for her degree at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg Jane Alexander, a South African artist created an unsettling, yet captivating piece called Butcher Boys.(TRUROCOLLEGEARTANDDESIGN, 2021) This artwork was made using reinforced plaster materials combined with animal bones and horns. The creation process took place in 1985/86. It involved applying vivid oil paints to its surfaces and is currently exhibited on a wooden bench where it remains to this day. (TRUROCOLLEGEARTANDDESIGN, 2021)

In some ways here artwork displays counter-temporalities as it indicates both the physical and psychological trauma experienced through the body from the past in the present.The emotion evoked towards the audience stems from a past life,that gets introduced to new generations.

The violence, pain, and altering identities of those who bore witness to apartheid's unyielding grip on society are translated through the lack of facial features, erosion of individuality, and violence inflicted on the body.(Tully, 2011) Each victim was reduced to anonymity during suffering. A similar sentiment that can be felt by the inhumane acts towards people today. This can also be compared to the experience of intergenerational trauma and how PTSD(post-traumatic stress disorder) strips people of their humanity. It holds true not only for the brutality of apartheid but also, for the widespread and pervasive trauma found in South African society and culture.



Fig 3.5
above
Butcher Boys
(Alexander, 1985/86; mixed media. Iziko South African National Gallery, Cape Town; derived from flicker/Goggins world)

The sacred nature of Avalon cemetery has been overshadowed by the profane. Criminal activities have led to these areas becoming deserted due to safety concerns. Graves are left abandoned; the absence of facilities creates an undignified experience for both funeral attendees and visitors alike. The current condition of these spaces hinders any dignified journey, through grief and an existential rootedness, a sense of socio-cultural belonging and connection.

The disruption that death brings to social orders is a significant point of tension in any society. "Death disrupts the fabric causing a disturbance, in social interactions and balance. Following a loss of life society must find an equilibrium." (Brown, 1948, p 285)

I propose that this equilibrium can be found within the realm of death- Avalon Cemetery. The intervention is centred around an anchor point that mimics Sechaba Maape's work by acting as a "physical and metaphysical locus towards people's existential identity" (Maape, 2012)

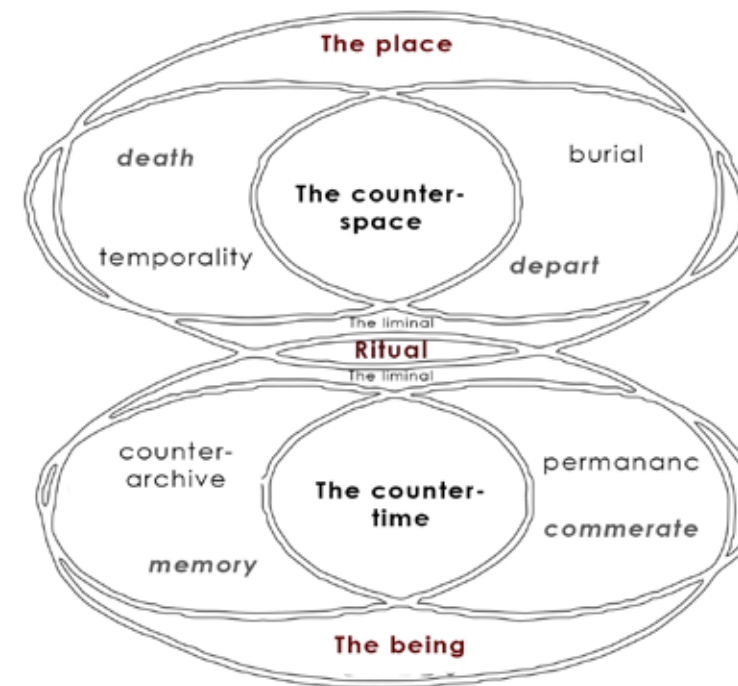
By applying the mirror principle within Michael Foucault's concept of Heterotopia one can effectively challenge the harmful social practices that dehumanize individuals within Avalon. This approach allows us to reflect on existing values while also distorting them, ultimately opening up space for new frameworks regarding human worth and dignity to be explored. Through this alteration, death no longer serves as a common ground; survival becomes a viable possibility in the same space. Within this counter-space lies the possibility of becoming and belonging.

The depiction of the characters vividly captures the conditions currently experienced by the body as one enters the liminal space of grief. According to Fred Smith, rituals are necessary as they serve as structured transitions between orders (Smith, 1987). Rituals have the potential to take on forms and serve as a tool for reinforcing social values and most importantly it provides a link to one's sense of self. The design aims to create an architectural anchorage where visitors can catch a glimpse of the sites history in which they are a part of and establish a meaningful connection between the past and present.

"a threshold that bridges what was and what will be" (Picu, 2023)

Counter-temporalities

Space + Time



Bahmann(2023) pointed out that art has always been acknowledged for its capacity to unveil the world to us serving as a guiding force that allows us to perceive beyond our surroundings and gain a deeper comprehension of our existence. It's akin to lifting the veil from a bubble that encases our reality empowering us to acknowledge and understand the environment we are immersed in.(Bahmann, 2023)

When contemplating Avalon Cemetery, it can be perceived as an entity allowing juxtapositions to exist between realms. On the surface, there is life and death; agency and inequality; and visibility. Below that surface lies an underground domain where the departed, the corrupt, and the afflicted dwell in secrecy like in a catacomb. This vantage point offers insight into what it means to inhabit Johannesburg – a navigation, through these contrasting spaces. It's an experience characterized by fluidity, where mediation constantly comes into play.

To establish a sense of belonging, an intervention should encompass the essence of transcending boundaries. It should embrace a multiplicity of perspectives, cultures, and interpretations. The intervention ought to accommodate layers of rituals aligned with death processes. Counter temporalities will be upheld by counter spaces, alongside the permanence that enables individuals to navigate life's intricacies with layers of meaning.

In the previous chapters, I have delved into how space can be manipulated in ways that strip individuals of their humanity, sense of self, and sense of place. As we progress, my focus will shift toward reinventing these dynamics to create a set of design principles that can shape the development of the intervention.

Fig 3.6
above
Diagrammatic illustration of Programmatic elements
(Author, 2023)

Rituals of making

Conceptual development

Precedent studies

The form of the building posed a challenge. My initial thought was to rely on the existing surroundings to guide the creation of its form. The initial stages began with the surface relations which had not been guided by any constraints. To overcome this hurdle I studied architectural precedents that focused on the interaction with landscapes, lighting, and construction techniques. Through these investigations, I ultimately developed the design, for the building, which is detailed in the upcoming pages.

Fig 3.7
below
Initial conceptual explorations
(Author, 2023)



Bruder Klaus

Germany, 2007

Duality in space: Ritual

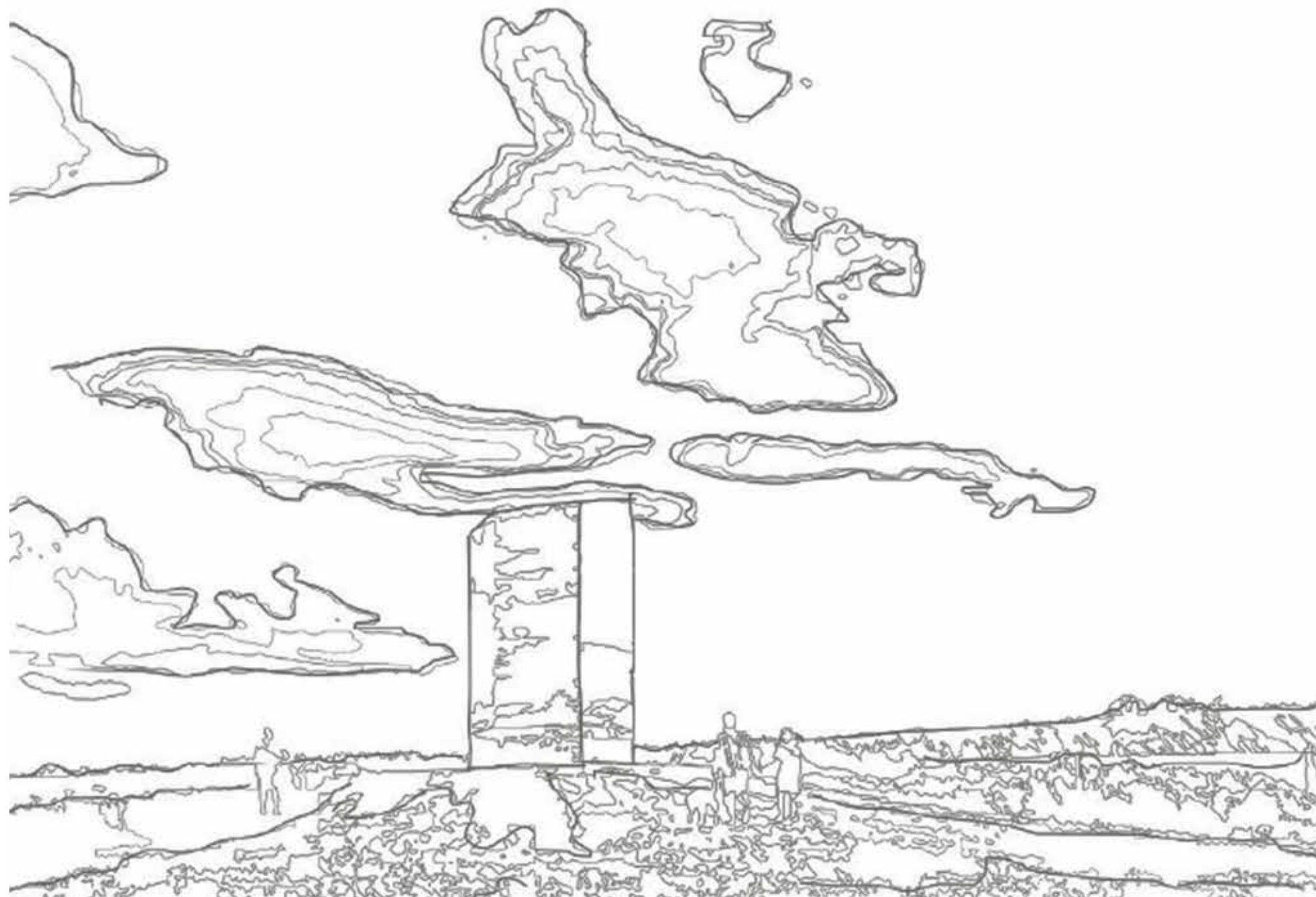


The facilities connected to the ritual of death within Avalon lack the capacity to serve the various cultures in a meaningful way. This brings attention to the truth of insufficient infrastructure provided to marginalized individuals even when it comes to matters related to burial. The absence of cleansing facilities (ablutions), designated spaces for funeral rituals, and adequate awareness in terms of burial options, all contribute to an experience that lacks dignity and humanity.

This precedent demonstrates how architecture can have a positive influence on creating meaningful spaces, for people. I personally found this to be an insightful and practical approach when designing spaces of connection.

The Bruder Klaus Field Chapel, which was created by Peter Zumthor in 2007 is located in the rural landscape of Mechernich, Germany. It was commissioned by a farmer who wanted to pay tribute to Niklaus von Flue, also known as Brother/Bruder Klaus. The farmer reached out to Zumthor with a request to design a chapel on his land dedicated to honouring this significant figure. In the eyes of the farmer and many others in the farming community, Bruder Klaus held a significant place as he was not only an agriculturalist, from Switzerland but also considered a "Christian mystic" during the 15th Century. (Phaidon, 2015)

Fig 3.8
above
The interior of the Chapel-Textural quality
Binet, no date



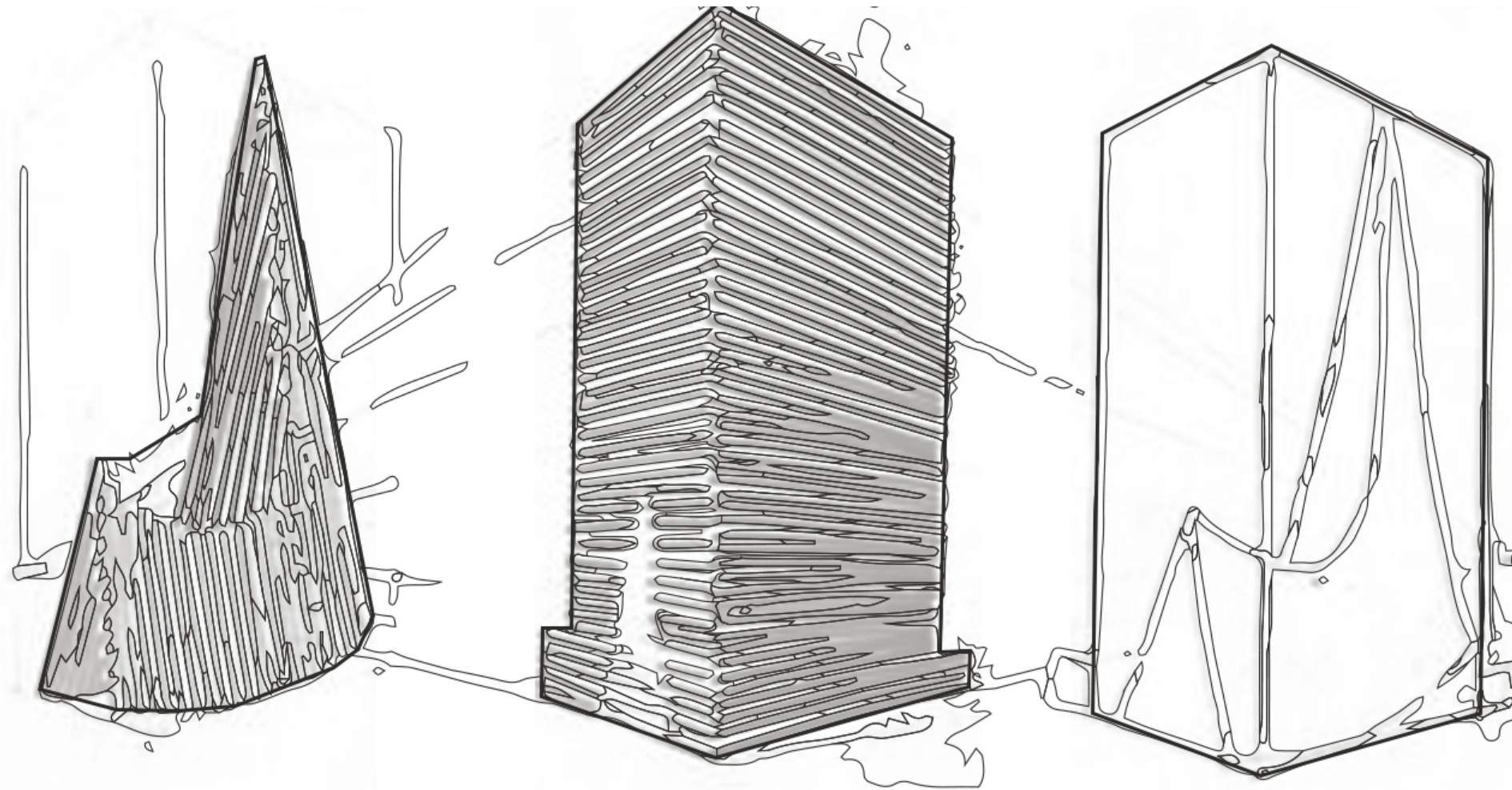
From a distance, the chapel appears like a solid structure resembling a tall tombstone as displayed in figure 3.9. Its unique and ethereal appearance is achieved by using materials sourced from the surrounding fields such as timber, sand, gravel, and local white cement - which blend harmoniously with the environment. As you approach the chapel and enter through its pivoting triangular door you are greeted with a darkened interior illuminated by sunlight filtering through glazed openings. Wang and Dai(2023) liken the entryway as stepping into a gold mine, where the soft play of light resembles the glimmer of gold.(Wang and Dai, 2023) They further explain that the ground is reminiscent of walking in wet soil after rain, whilst the lasting presence of tree trunks adds to the confrontational experience within. Additionally, a faint smoky scent lingers, in the air evoking the imagery of a chimney.(Jenner, 2012)

Fig 3.9
above
The chapel within its surroundings
Author, 2023.



What captivates me the most is how the construction of this chapel creates a platform where the earth and the sky interact, in a manner capturing the essence of burial and preservation through a deeply immersive experience. The presence of earth, air, fire and water within the building and its ability to connect one with the cosmos evokes a sense of psychological and mythological connection for those who enter. A play on time is also evident with the use of lightness and darkness.

Fig 3.10
 above
The presence of fire, water, earth and sky
 Byrne, 2018; after Pulles, 2023



Mia Pulles(2023) highlights Greek philosopher Heraclitus who believed that fire symbolizes the passage of time due to its movement making it an eternal element. While the other three elements are always present, they only become apparent when ignited by fire; fire has the power to reveal everything. Mythology, much like religion is composed of a collection of memories that withstand the test of time. In mythology memory itself is personified as two distinct characters: remembering and forgetting. It is strikingly poetic that a chapel born from fire can stand as a space honouring both the significance of time passing and memory itself.(Pulles, 2023)

The significance of the chapel lies in its connection to the spiritual realm and earthy realm. The outcome (as seen in figure 3.11) is a structure that embodies the idea of transforming time into space.The materials remains untreated even after the removal of the framework. The earth still forms part of the architecture's narrative.

Jenner highlights that the visible marks on the surface known as stigmata serve as evidence of authenticity and a dedication to purity achieved through the ability of the imprint to directly capture material.(Jenner, 2012)

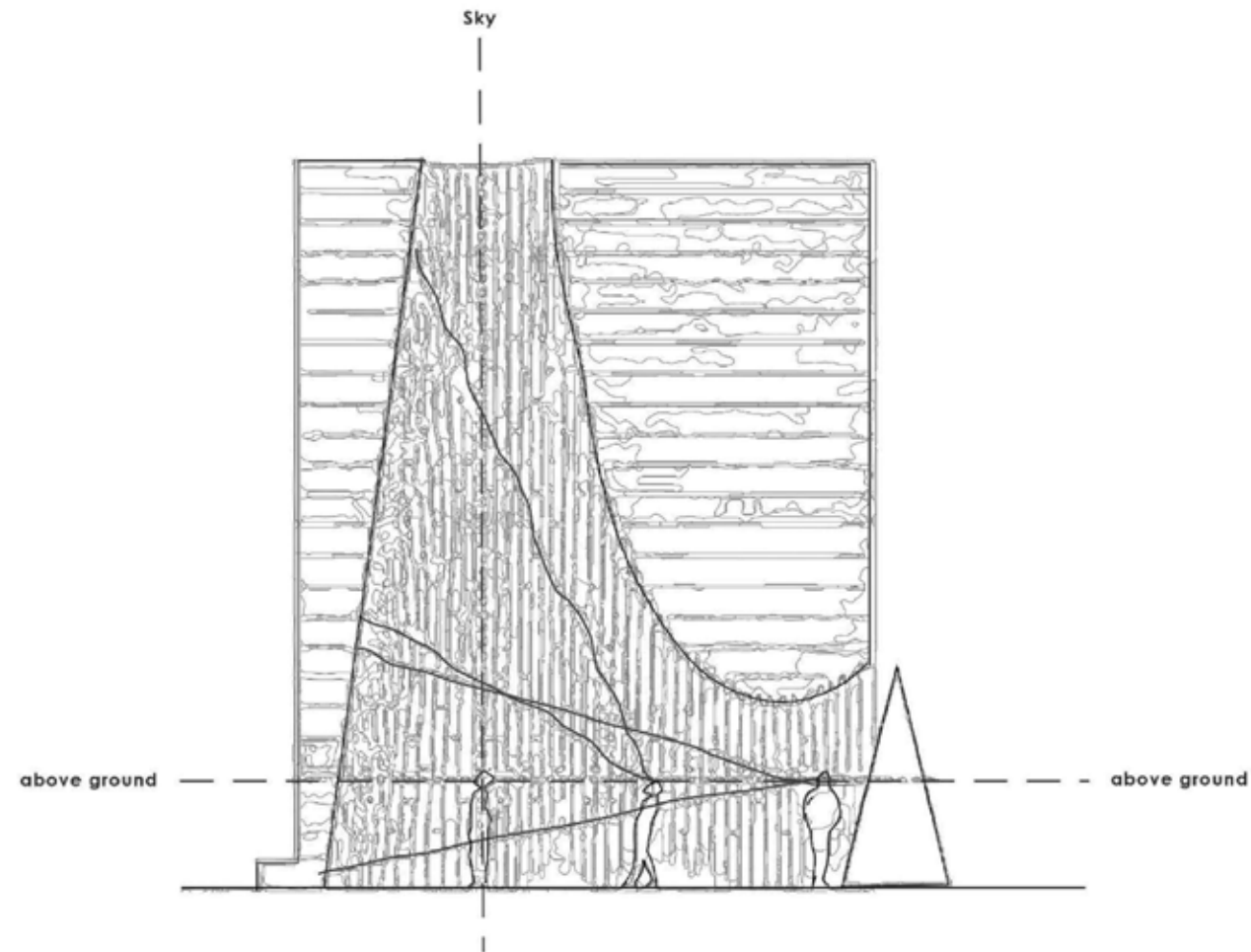
Fig 3.11
above
Framework of the Chapel
Author, 2023;after: Unknown, no date



Outside of the building you can see another trace or mark. It's the concrete that was mixed by hand and then compressed, imprinted, and walked upon. Zumthor followed a technique, similar to rammed earth called *pisé de terre*. The concrete was poured in layers of half a meter each with 24 pours. (Jenner, 2012)

In every aspect of this arrangement, Zumthor explores the connections between the human body and the quality of materials. In agreeance with Jenner(2012), he establishes a framework that emphasizes preservation by acknowledging the enduring presence of the past in the present.(Jenner, 2012) Creating an internal environment which provides a sense of stillness and seclusion from the everyday turbulence of life - acting as a threshold.

Fig 3.12
above
Framework of the Chapel
Author, 2023;after: Binet, no date

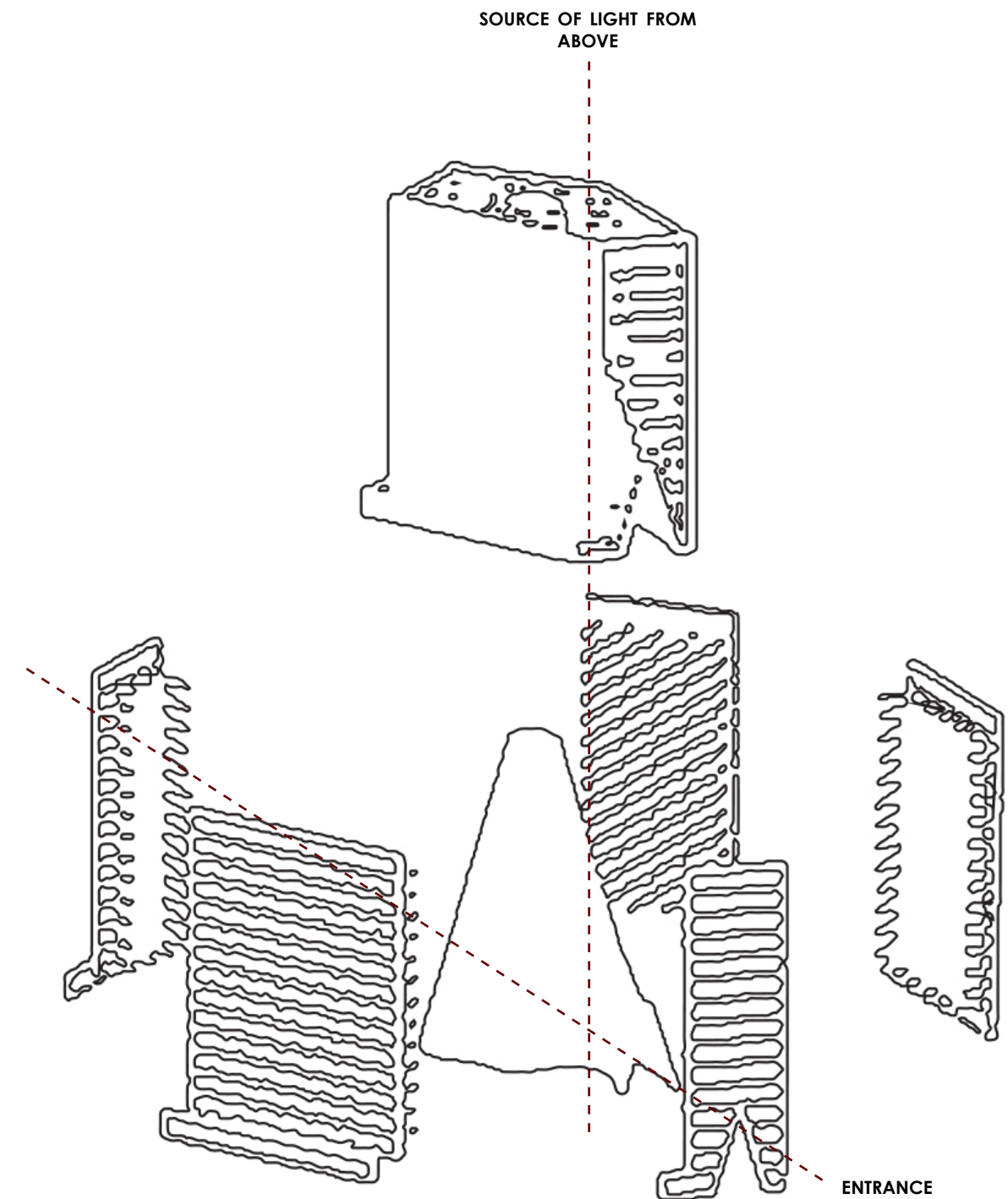


The chapel explores the boundaries and possibilities that arise when our physical actions of the human body interact with materials in our environment. As Jenner stated, the building becomes inseparable from the processes involved in its creation. It challenges the notion that making is merely a technique- a means to achieve a predetermined form or image. (Jenner, 2012)

The architecture merges with its context - materially. Zumthor, skilfully combines the natural field and the process seamlessly blending one setting into another. Eventually creating a dual experience of night and day within the space. I am intrigued on utilizing the same play on time within interior spaces whereby connection to place is of upmost importance.

Fig 3.13
right
Formwork of the Chapel
Author, 2023; after: Binet, no date

Fig 3.14
above
Section through the chapel
Author, 2023; after: Unknown, no date



Paris Catacombs.

Paris, France 1809

Threshold: Memento mori

The underground ossuary known as the Catacombs of Paris or Catacombes de Paris in French is located in France's capital city. They serve as a resting place for over six million individuals. Originally constructed to centralize the stone quarries of Paris these catacombs stretch south from the former city gate called the Barrière d'Enfer also known as the "Gate of Hell." The creation of this ossuary was part of an initiative to address the issue of overflowing cemeteries, within the city. (Unknown, no date)

Im captivated at how, death can be used as a way to remind people of the inevitability of dying and the fragility of human life. The human scale, change in levels, and lighting qualities that expose the human skulls are design elements that can also be used to provoke contemplation.

An additional aspect that intrigues me is how there is a level of equality within the realm of death. There is no level of status, division, or imbalance between the dead. The materiality of the skulls expresses a sense of decay, fragility, and temporality. An experience would like to create as one enters the facility; by the use of tombstones.



Fig 3.15
right
Paris catacombs
(Stimmler, 2023)

Igualada Cemetery.

Igualada, Spain 1994

Counter space: Alternative burial

Enric Miralles and Carme Pins designed the Igualada Cemetery, which they referred to as a “city of the dead.” – a space for integration between the living and the dead. The cemetery aims to help visitors understand and confront the cycle of life and death.(Kroll, 2011)

An alternative method in creating a counter-space is the method of carving and merging form within the landscape which formulates an alternative relation between the body and the earth through death - a key component I would like to achieve. This is accomplished through the combination of light and shadow, surface, and texture.

The project utilizes earthy materials and tones to tie the built form back into the landscape. The core burial zone is in a lower excavated portion of the cemetery. This section obstructs the view of the visitors from the surrounding area, as the sky is the only thing visible from this part of the cemetery(Kroll, 2011)

This location acts as a mediator between the body and the earth, utilizing an unconventional interment technique that still promotes the notion of burial as a process that brings the physical body into being with the landscape. Figure explores this relation between the body and the landscape with the addition of water as a cleansing component.

Fig 3.16
right
Mausoleum landscaping component at Igualada Cemetery.
(Dharmesh, undated)



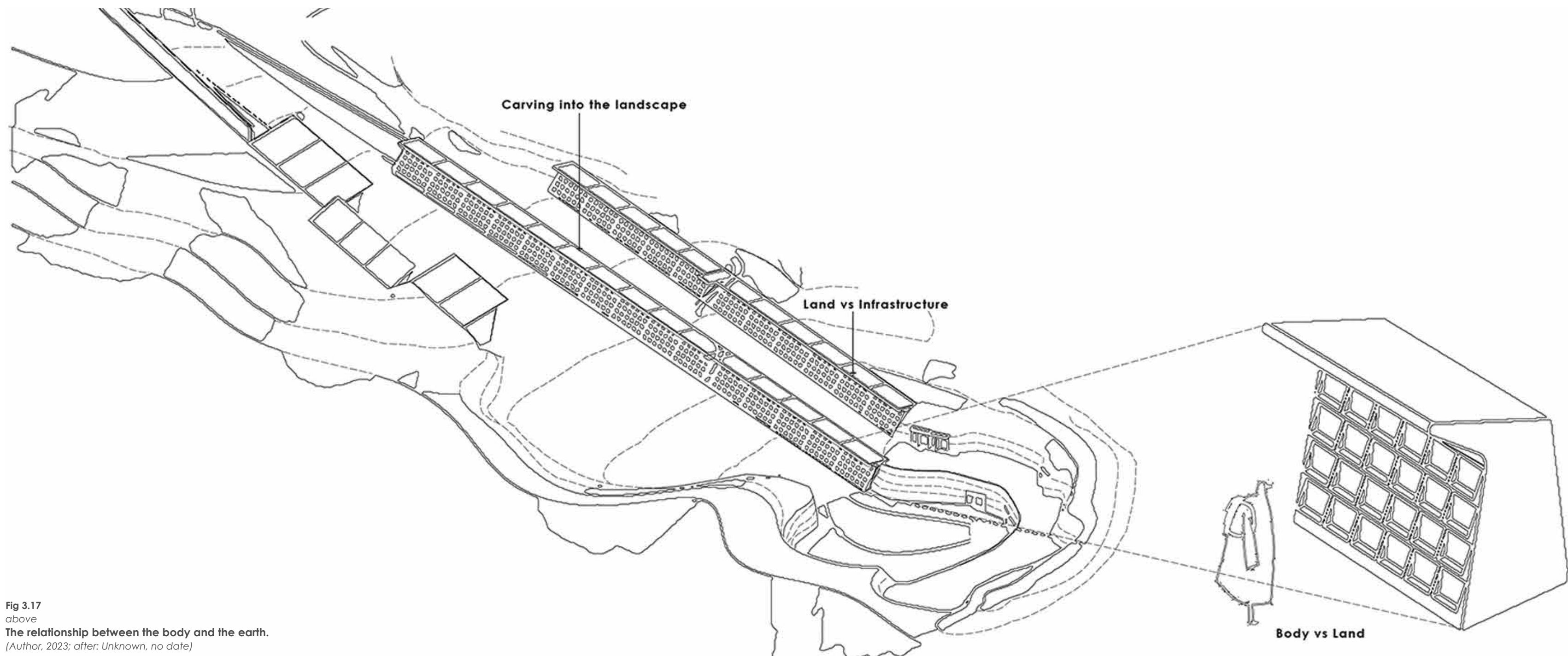


Fig 3.17
above
The relationship between the body and the earth.
(Author, 2023; after: Unknown, no date)

Kuruman Center

for oral history and cultural development

Archive: Archive

“From a phenomenological perspective, rituals seem to be fundamentally linked to our bodies, our body's locations in space, time, and the manner in which we shape and move them”.(Maape, 2016, p 57)

In alignment with Turner's (Turner, 1969 p. 95) argument,when it comes to death,it becomes crucial to regain a connection with place in order to restore the social structure that death disrupts. This elucidates why burial holds such significance for marginalized communities.

Additionally, Maape explains that ritual serves as a means of manifestation and asserting one's existence, within the surrounding environment. (Maape, 2020)This is showcased in his oral history and cultural development center.

Similarly to Avalon cemetery,the land on which the Kurman center was proposed acts as a buffer zone “between a coloured township and the main CBD which was in those days part of South Africa and predominantly white”.(Maape, 2022) The architecture was conceptualised at the time as a 'shelter' in which rituals of storytelling can be housed. The idea of an archive - “a place where historical records are kept”,(Cambridge dictionary, no date) has been reimagined to suite the context it is situated in.The body in some way acts as the archive through the act of storytelling.

Within the design, Maape(2016) highlights that what appears to be essential but often overlooked in anthropological interpretations is the role of the body and its senses. The embodied experience, and its impact, on those taking part in the ritual. (Maape, 2016)

Maape's usage of extraction and submergence draws the user closer to the earth from which they are rooted in.The pushing and pulling creates pockets of space that have the potential to offer a platform for people to, reconnect with their cultural and spiritual roots, and ultimately rediscover their humanity by acknowledging the deep and shared journey through narrative. An experience all humans should have access to in a post-apartheid society.

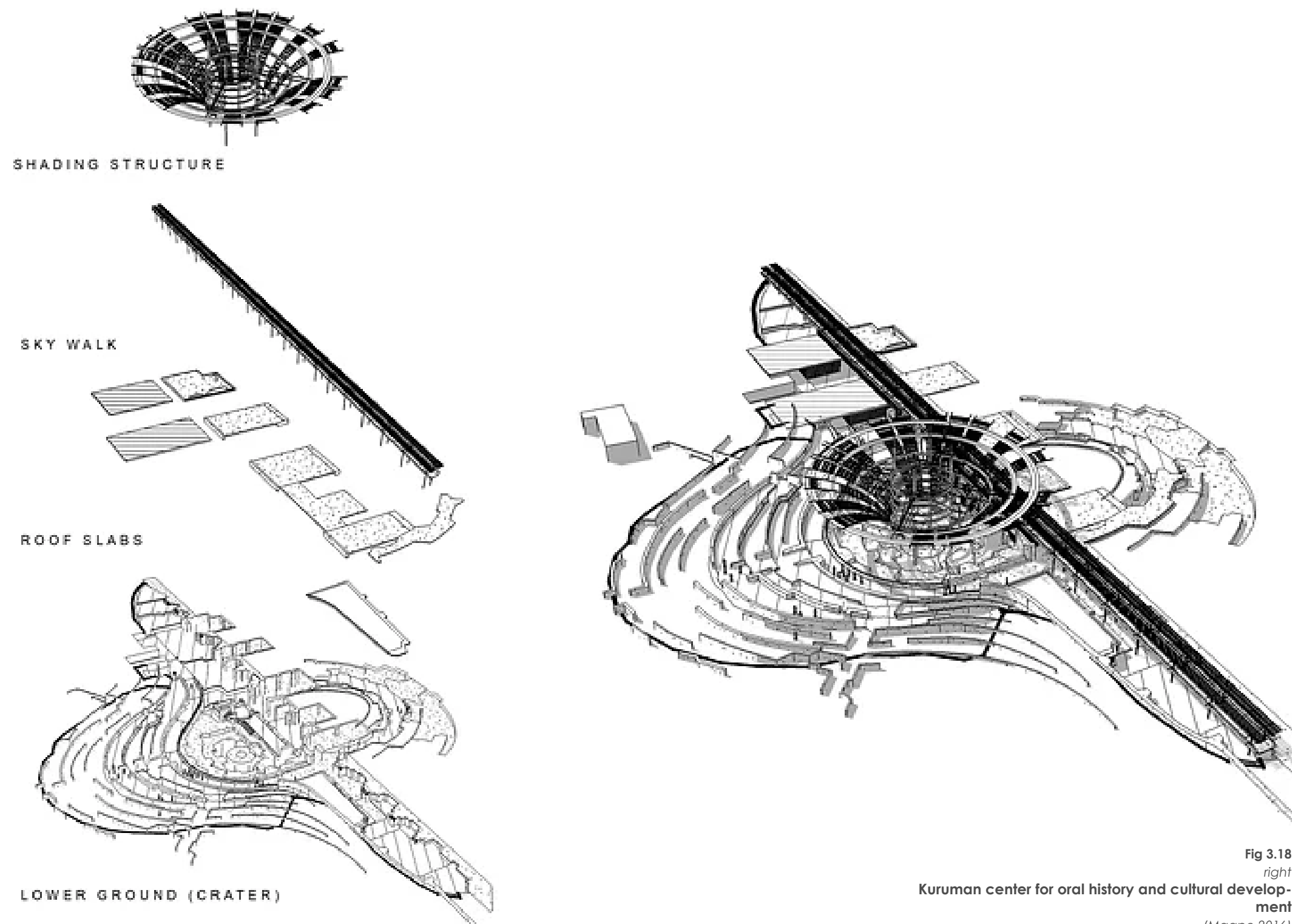


Fig 3.18
right
Kuruman center for oral history and cultural develop-
ment
(Maape 2016)

Charette

earth. fire. sky.



The interaction between the architecture and the surrounding landscape is crucial especially when it comes to the central spine. This pathway must be practical and functional. By incorporating a alternative burial system like a the mausoleum structure as well as the natural filtration system within the spine, it serves as a defining element of the route whilst having ties to the natural environment. It is also an answer to the City's urban development as there is a shortage of burial ground.(JCP, no date) Similarly to figure 3.17, to enhance the experience of an underground burial that is in alignment with many cultures; there will be a elevation change that is maintained by the presence of the mausoleum structure (the retaining wall) as well as a series of vegetation that is in return fed by the filtration system. To maintain a sense of continuity, between both sides of the buffer strip.

The process of making:

The merging of rock, sand, wax and spice and fire, all of which is linked to the ritual of burial symbolizes the connection to the earth and our rootedness within it. The process of mixing, heating and setting the material evokes a sense of fluidity (the making of history). Placing the substance within the mold, calcifies the making process-cementing it in time. In a way symbolising a coming to an end. The finality of death. The merging of ash, wax and cloth, all of which is linked to the ritual of cremation symbolizes the aspect of temporality (fire and sky). The process of burning and heating highlights the temporalities of an event as opposed to the previous iteration. The combination of both iterations is a conflicting one. Perhaps it highlights the importance of individuality in terms of cultural expression or maybe it encompasses the aspect of perceiving the landscape as an interstitial realm. The tension between the terrain and the subterranean is once again visible.

Fig 3.19
above
Exploration of carving into the landscape
(Author, 2023)

The Interstitial realm

Site analysis.

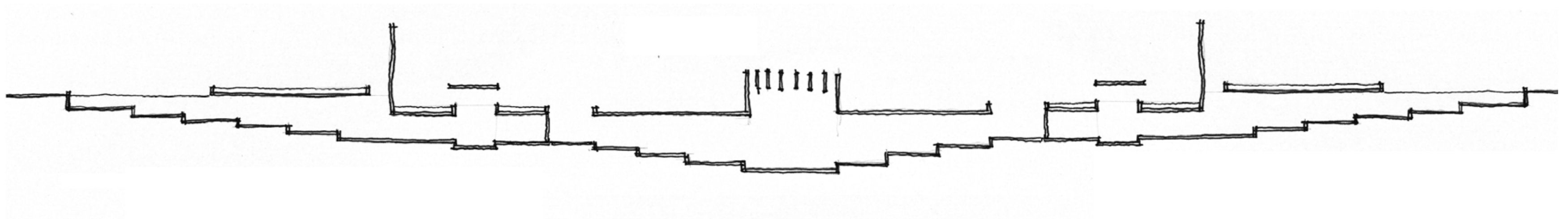
Chapter 04

My initial experience on the site was incredibly disorienting. It was a challenge to navigate through waterlogged roads, potholes, and rocks. The scorching heat, lack of shade, and vastness of landscape made site observations even more tedious. I felt a desire to escape the environment I found myself in. Reflecting on it now, I realize the lack of basic amenities like ablutions, seating, and way-finding elements added to my discomfort during that moment.

In this chapter, I will start converting the theoretical framework that has been set up into counter spatialities. The main emphasis is on analysing the site through the lens of ritual. By exploring the relationship between place and ritual my goal is to expand on the concepts discussed in the previous chapters and create a strong basis for the upcoming design phase.

Considering the argument discussed earlier. The ambiance of spaces plays a role in shaping our experience of them particularly during moments of sorrow. When we are overwhelmed by pain our bodies undergo a transformative process. It yearns for stability. I believe that cemeteries hold a sacredness that can offer that needed sense of stability.

Fig 4.0
below
Initial concept of ritual space
(Author, 2023)



Access

“no equality, not even in death” (Foundation, 2019)



Fig 4.1
above
Stormwater channel
(Author, 2023)

Vegetation

It's interesting to note that the presence of vegetation visible in figure 4.2 can also contribute to a sense of imbalance and separation in spaces. As mentioned earlier Avalon was founded in 1972, while Lenasia followed suit three years later in 1975. However, there is a disparity in the distribution of trees in Avalon when compared to Lenasia Cemetery, which stands out due to its abundant greenery. Leading to an unequal level of atmospheric experience when navigating both sites.

Navigation

The apartheid spatial organization extends itself into navigation. The cemetery, like the township itself is designed in a way that separates it from the surrounding fabric. The stormwater channel adds to this layer of separation by dividing the two sites. Due to the nature of the channel, individuals are left feeling uncomfortable when nearing it.

Access:

As illustrated in figure 4.2, Avalon is mainly accessed from its corner, which is guarded and monitored. Two other secondary entrances on the eastern edges remain closed and are opened during peak hours. As for the Lenasia, its main entrance is situated along the edge with a secondary entrance nearby that serves the crematorium. The openings within the fencing of the cemetery (due to theft), allows people to freely pass through, indicating alternative routes.

Fig 4.2
left
Mapping of Vegetation & Access
(Author, 2023; after Bing maps, 2023)

Ecology

The Surface

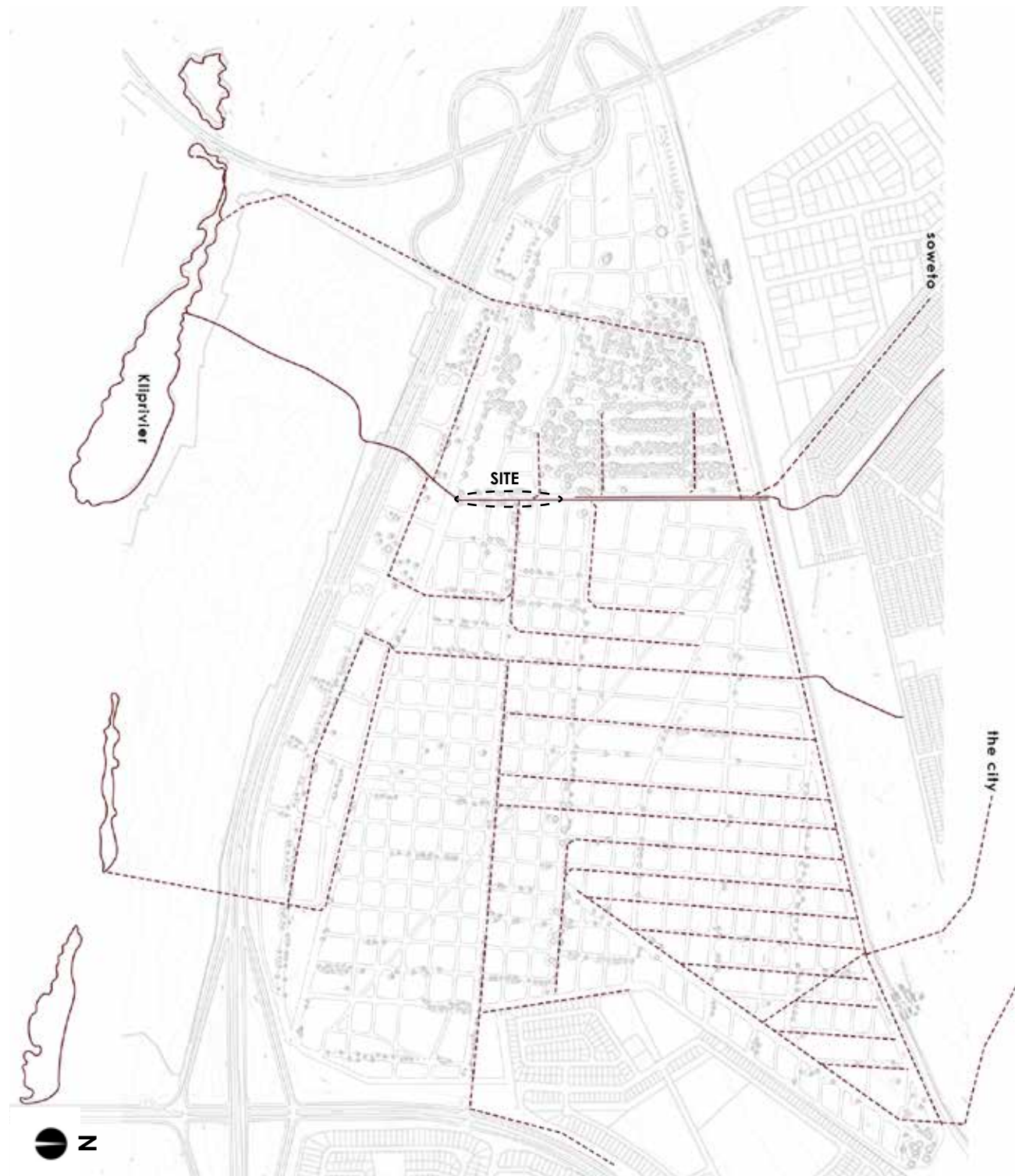


Fig 4.3
above
Changes within the Klip rivier wetland .
(Unknown, no date; derived from: McCarthy et al., 2007)

Fig 4.5
left
Mapping of drainage within the site.
(Author, 2023; derived from Bing maps, 2023; Tarmohamed, 2021)

Depicted in figure 4.4, the current place for intervention is located away from the city centre on a relatively flat section of land. As you head north the surface gradually rises towards a ridge while it slopes downward towards the Kliprivier wetland towards the south. This land has a dolomitic geological profile meaning that if exposed to water, sink holes can develop. (Wagener and Day, 1986)

Figure 4.5, indicates the water drainage within the cemetery itself, which flows from areas of Soweto as well as from the city- flowing towards the Kliprivier wetland located along its southern edge. This could cause an issue for the construction of the building if not adequately waterproofed. "The extensive accumulation of metals within the Klip River wetland reflects the contaminant legacy associated with gold mining on the Witwatersrand and highlights the vital role this natural system has played in trapping vast quantities of toxic pollutants and remediating downstream waters." (Chetty and Pillay, 2021)

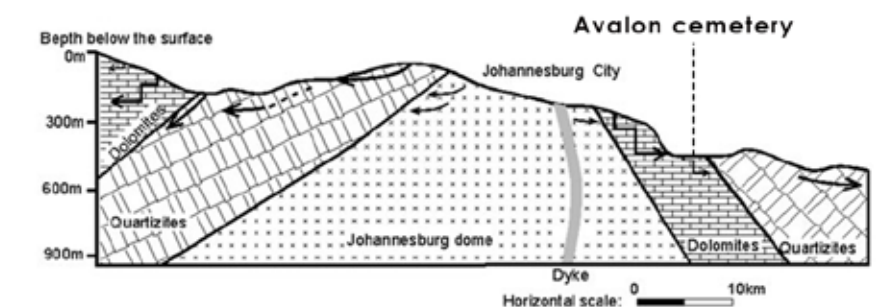


Fig 4.4
above
Conceptual hydrogeological model along south-north section in Johannesburg.
(Tamiru A., Haile and Molla B., 2011)

Strategy

Programmatic orientation.

“an ecological sponge in the cityscape” (Leuta, 2020)

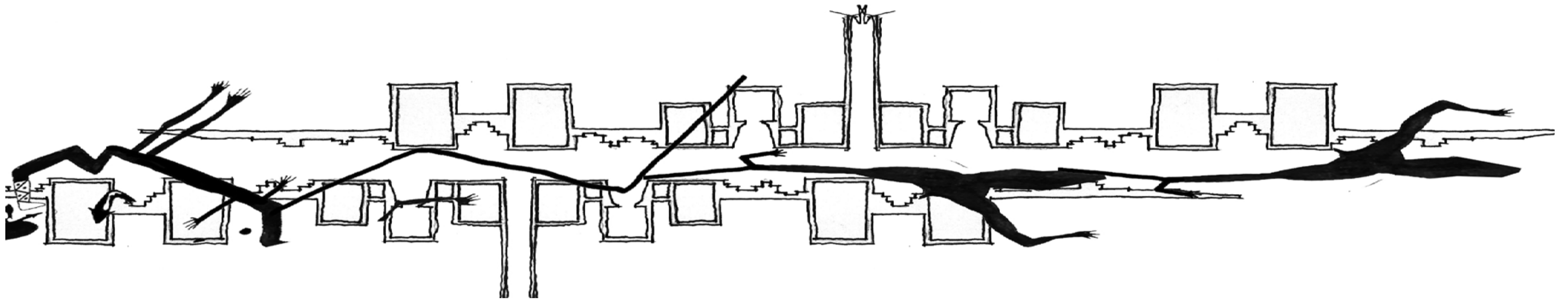
The striking aspect of the mapping process in relation to the focus of this project is the intentional division that shapes the landscape. When addressing these relations, it is important incorporate the conditions, of both sides of a boundary to bridge any disconnect.

Fig 4.6

below

Design language

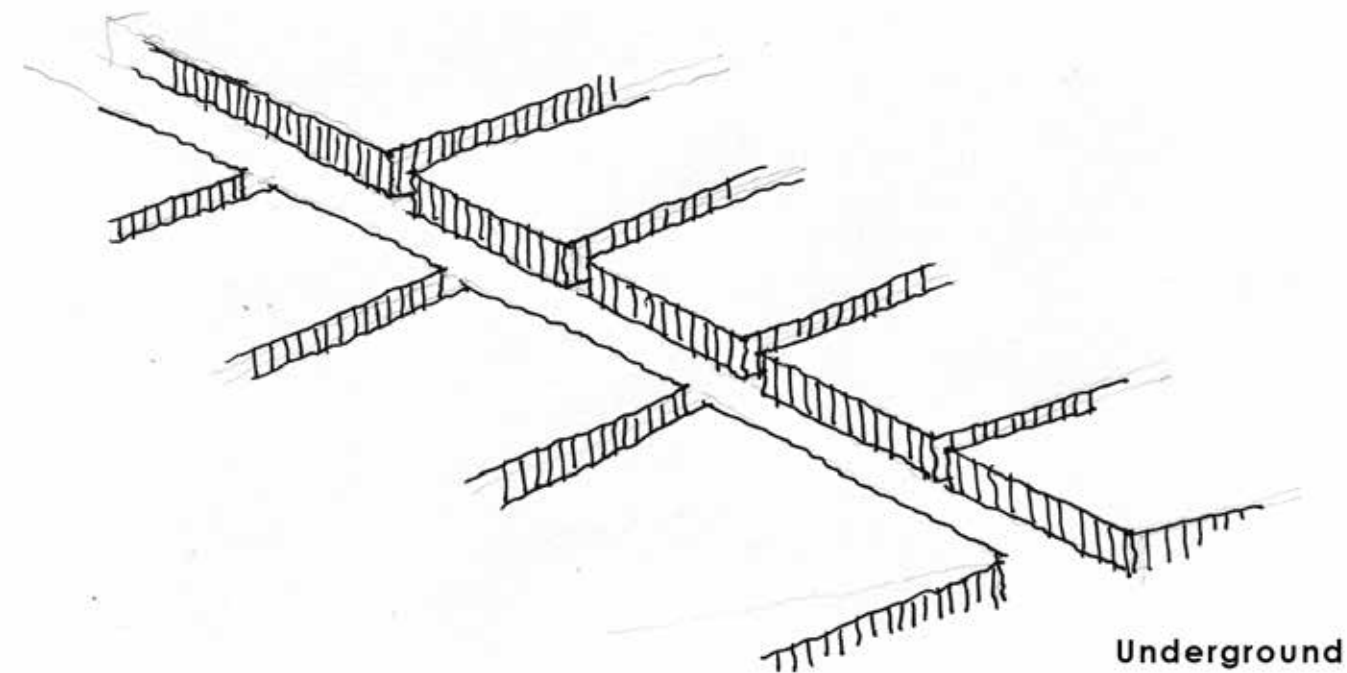
(Author, 2023; derived from Maape, 2021; Maape, 2012)



The Landscape.

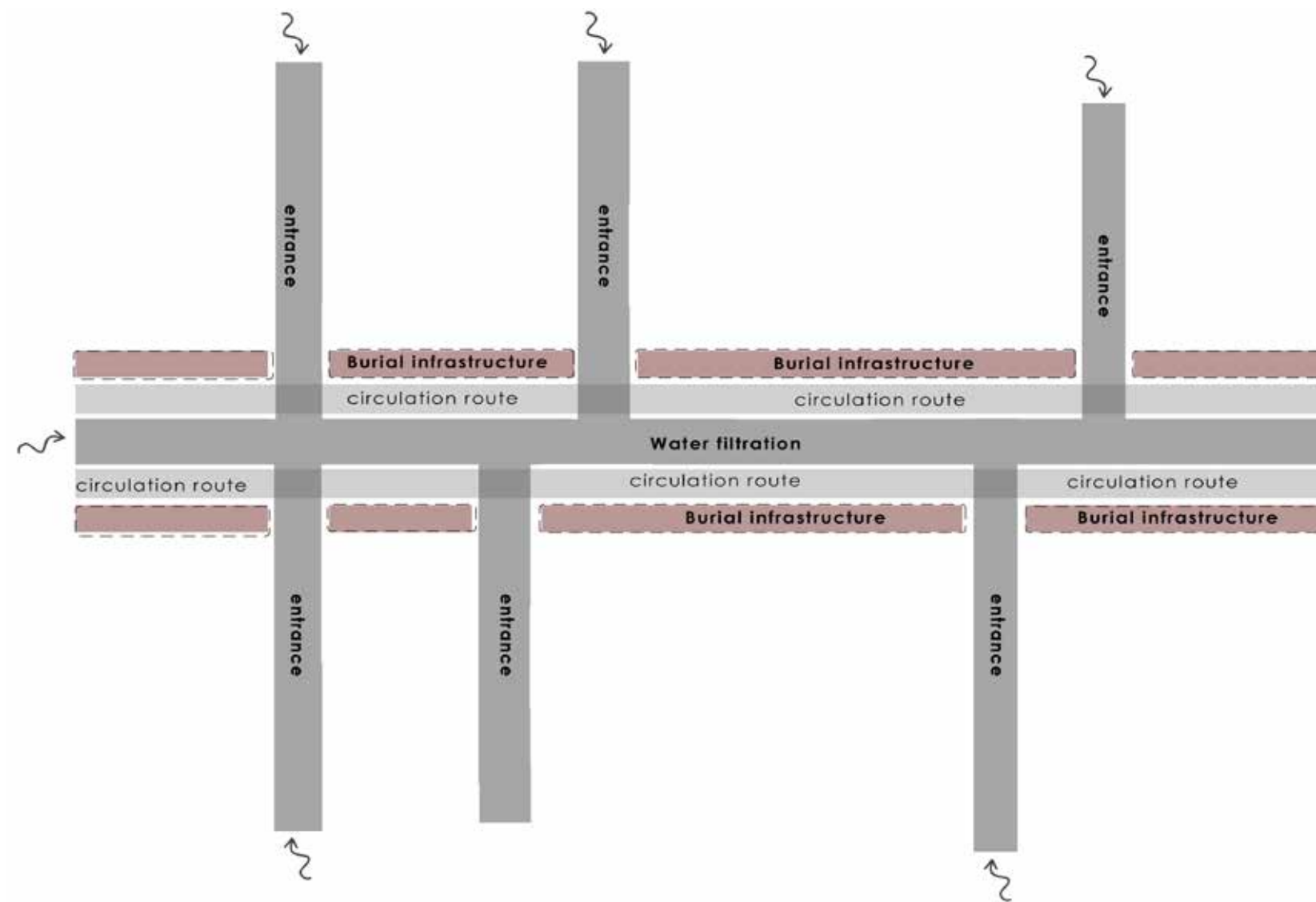
The green lung.

The spine



Even though the landscaping aspect of the project isn't the main focus of this architectural intervention, it did prove to be a bit challenging. Usually, I draw inspiration from the existing surroundings to shape my design. However, in this case, it ended up being a circulation route with no real meaning behind it. (Illustrated in figure 4.8) Then I had a breakthrough idea of transforming the stormwater channel into a natural filtration system, to bring life back into what seemed lifeless. This concept stemmed from my brainstorming sessions with my supervisor. I then was inspired by looking at similar architectural precedents that aligned with my goal. These explorations ultimately led to the design of the building that is documented in this chapter.

Fig 4.7
above
Initial concept of landscaping
(Author, 2023)

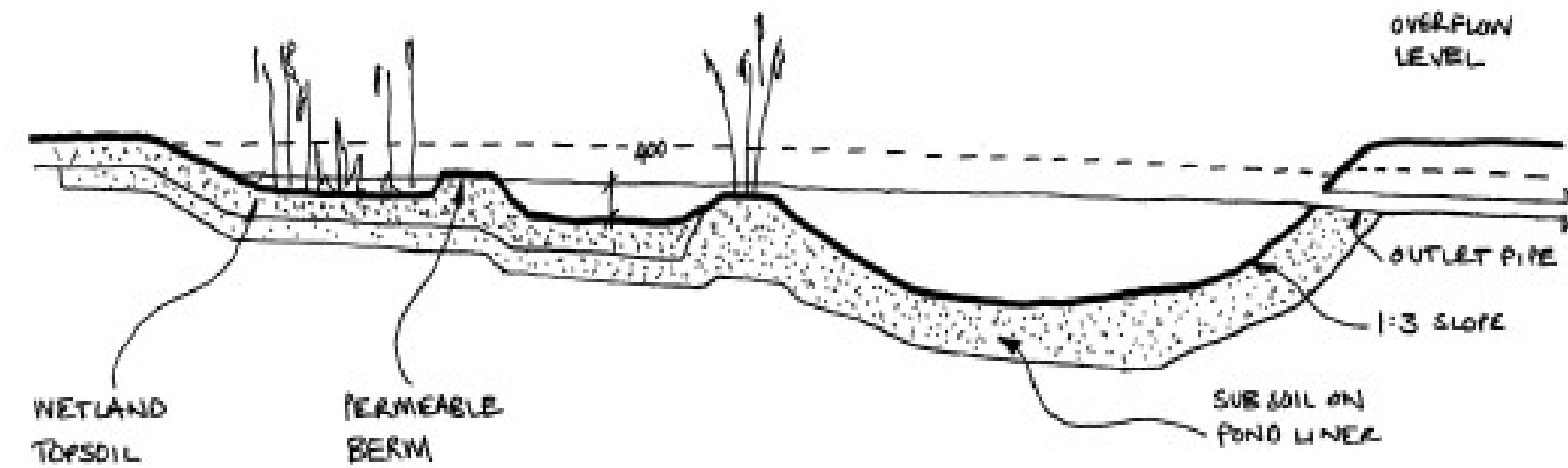


Wetlands are changing ecosystems where water and the cycle of life continuously intertwine in different stages. Just as wetlands naturally filter and renew water, life is born and comes to an end. The cycle persists. Wetlands possess the ability to cleanse water by removing impurities and pollutants.

Diverse flora and fauna call wetlands their home highlighting how all living beings within the ecosystem are interconnected. Symbolically speaking this reflects the interconnectedness of all forms of life emphasizing how one life influences and nourishes others. It can also represent a relationship with nature and the understanding that life and death are fundamental aspects of our natural world. Just as wetlands thrive and find balance, humans discover purpose and meaning by embracing the natural cycles of life and death.

Many cultures and belief systems consider environments, like wetlands, as sacred or spiritually significant. By incorporating a wetland filtration system into a burial site, we can establish a connection between the symbolism of life and death, with the sanctity of nature underscoring the notion that both life and death are essential components of the natural order.

Fig 4.8
above
Diagram of programmatic relations
(Author, 2023)



According to Mark Schaerer(2015),constructed wetlands form part of the City's sustainable urban drainage system as it increases biodiversity,purifies water and can be used as attenuation dams in case of flooding.(Schaerer, 2015).Therefore, within the design of the wetland - a combination of open and concealed channels will be implemented.As well as "permeable berms created at water entry allow for silt collection. It is noted that further silt dams may be required above that deal with silt capture and periodic removal"(Schaerer, 2015)

Maape,(2017) explains that some might argue that architecture currently plays a role in preserving a kind of reality in certain places while neglecting other types of places (referred to as "black places") and marginalizing them.(Maape, 2017) As individuals, we perceive the environment differently. Places hold distinct meanings for different people. Moreover, places hold significance not only for individuals but also, for communities contributing to their collective identity and sense of belonging.

In this section below, my objective is to outline two sustainable burial methods of three major religious groups concerning Avalon and Lenasia Cemetery. (Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism)The goal is to, use Enric Miralles's concept of a mausoleum and combine the alternative burial method with the constructed wetland.

There is a struggle between finding suitable land for housing the living and accommodating the deceased. Often priority is given to developing housing infrastructure resulting in a scarcity of burial space. Consequently, the city is currently exploring alternative, sustainable burial methods (Moloi, 2023).

Hence, the method used explores the type of burial ritual relevant to the site and its users.It is also important to note that it is currently being promoted by the city,as a more sustainable option for burial. "They can be designed to any size and specification, and are a practical and cost-effective alternative to conventional tombstones"(JCP, no date)

The two different types of burial options used within the landscaping component illustrated in figure 4.10. is already accessible. Residents of Johannesburg are being urged to explore more sustainable burial methods as a means to secure adequate space for future generations.

Fig 4.9
above
Constructed wetlands
(Schaerer, 2015, p 47)

Typologies



Mausoleum & Columbarium

This newly introduced type of burial which is typically used when digging is not feasible such as in areas of Avalon's southern section. The bodies undergo embalming and are then placed in crypts within a standalone mausoleum structure in the ground. This allows us to blur the lines between what a traditional underground grave is and what it can be.

The columbarium on the other hand, is the same concept however it includes the cremation process. At Lenasia's crematorium, they utilize three gas furnaces that can fully cremate an adult body within a maximum of three hours. (Oscar, 2023)

After the passing of a loved one, a family is entrusted with the ashes of their departed relative. They then come together to discuss and determine the meaningful ways to honour and cherish their cherished memory going forward.

The columbarium provides the option of having a resting place, for all individuals with various religious backgrounds.

Fig 4.10
above
Burial options
(Author, 2023; after: JCP, no date; Tarmahomed, 2021)

The preliminary design.

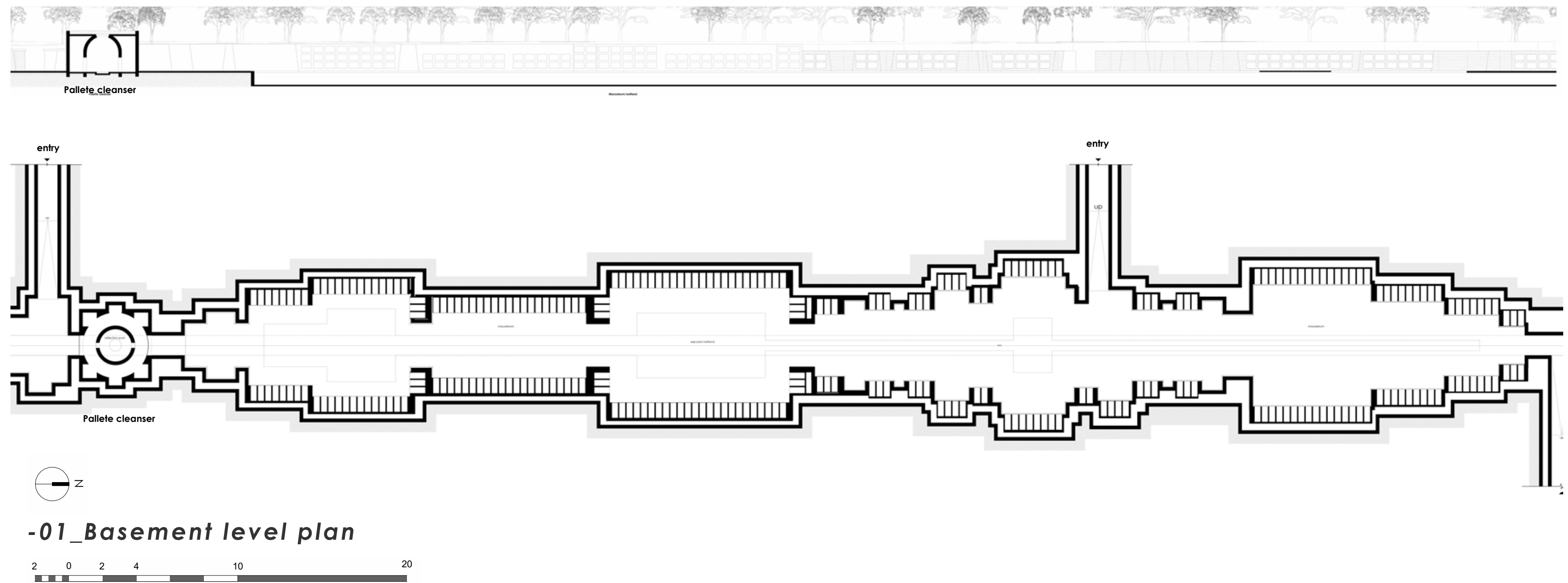


Fig 4.11
above
Preliminary design.
(Author, 2023)



Design language

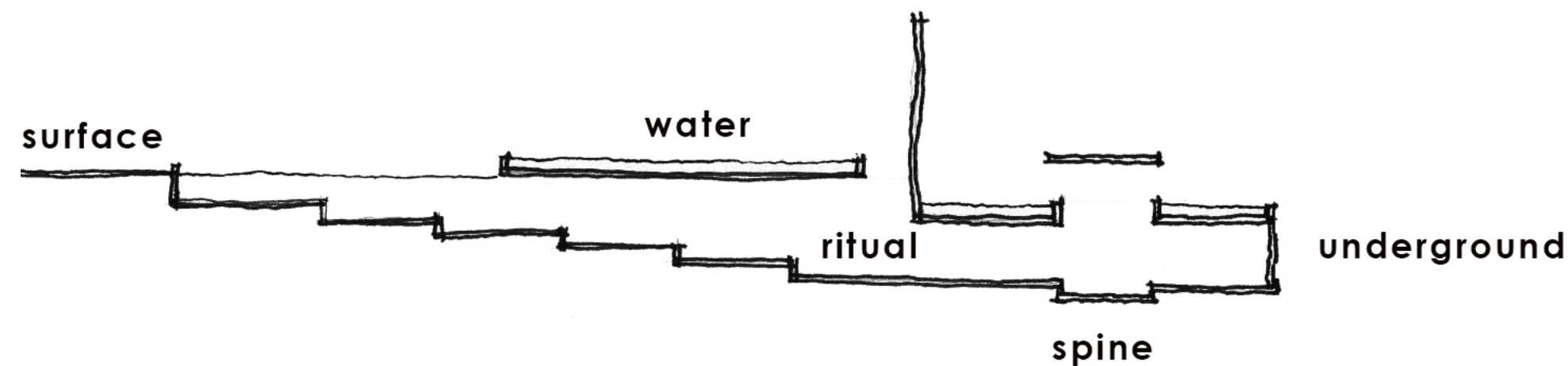
The architectural design approach relies on the integration of carving and merging with the surrounding landscape to create connections between the human body and the natural environment in relation to death. Lessons learned from the precedent studies. This is influenced by Mbembe's work (2002) which draws a comparison between archives and cemeteries using burial imagery to symbolize the process of archiving. Cemeteries hold a spatial significance that reflects power dynamics, archives also derive power, from their architectural spaces. Both spaces serve as sites of ritual where fragments of narratives are laid to rest for the living to explore. Furthermore, I personally believe that an archive should not only serve as a repository of historical materials but also provide a sense of personal connection and ownership over time. This can be achieved through spaces, such as the maker's studio/workshops, where community members have the opportunity to contribute to and shape the archival content within the "council of beings" (exhibition space) which pays tribute to the past heroes of struggle. This approach ensures that the space remains dynamic and connected to its history throughout the diaspora. Additionally, interactive workshops allow people to actively participate in designing coffins, grave markers, and memorabilia fostering a sense of ownership. Lastly, the multipurpose space and auditorium serves as a platform, for myth and storytelling, creating an atmosphere of commemoration.

Fig 4.12
above
Carving and Merging: Charrette model
(Author, 2023)

The Ritual

The Liminal

Process- Private



As expressed earlier, meaningful rituals hold importance for communities who have experienced dehumanisation and marginalisation. Unlike Avalon, where there are no facilities to support these rituals, it is essential to create a well-designed facility that provides a spatially rich environment, for the processes of memorialization and commemoration.

This project does not aim to reintroduce the idea of 'othering' within these spaces by catering to only the dominant groups within the fabric. Therefore, unlike churches, mosques, or temples that might make some people feel excluded, I propose a space that can adapt to different cultures and individuals- a multi-functional space. Drawing inspiration from the Bruder Klaus chapel we can create an environment that promotes existential connects through ambiguity. By incorporating subtle elements like directionality, texture, and scale within the design. This way all groups can feel a sense of belonging within the spaces they occupy.

Because of the nature of the programming, I strategically positioned these spaces discreetly in the heart of the landscape. Unlike the archive intimacy holds significance. The shift in scale focuses on the sacred and private elements of the program. By incorporating a multi-functional venue, I provide individuals with an opportunity to have a humane commemorative experience. Additionally, this space aligns with the City's commitment, to raising awareness about burial options.

Fig 4.13
above
Initial concept of ritual space
(Author, 2023)

Preliminary design

Counter spatialities

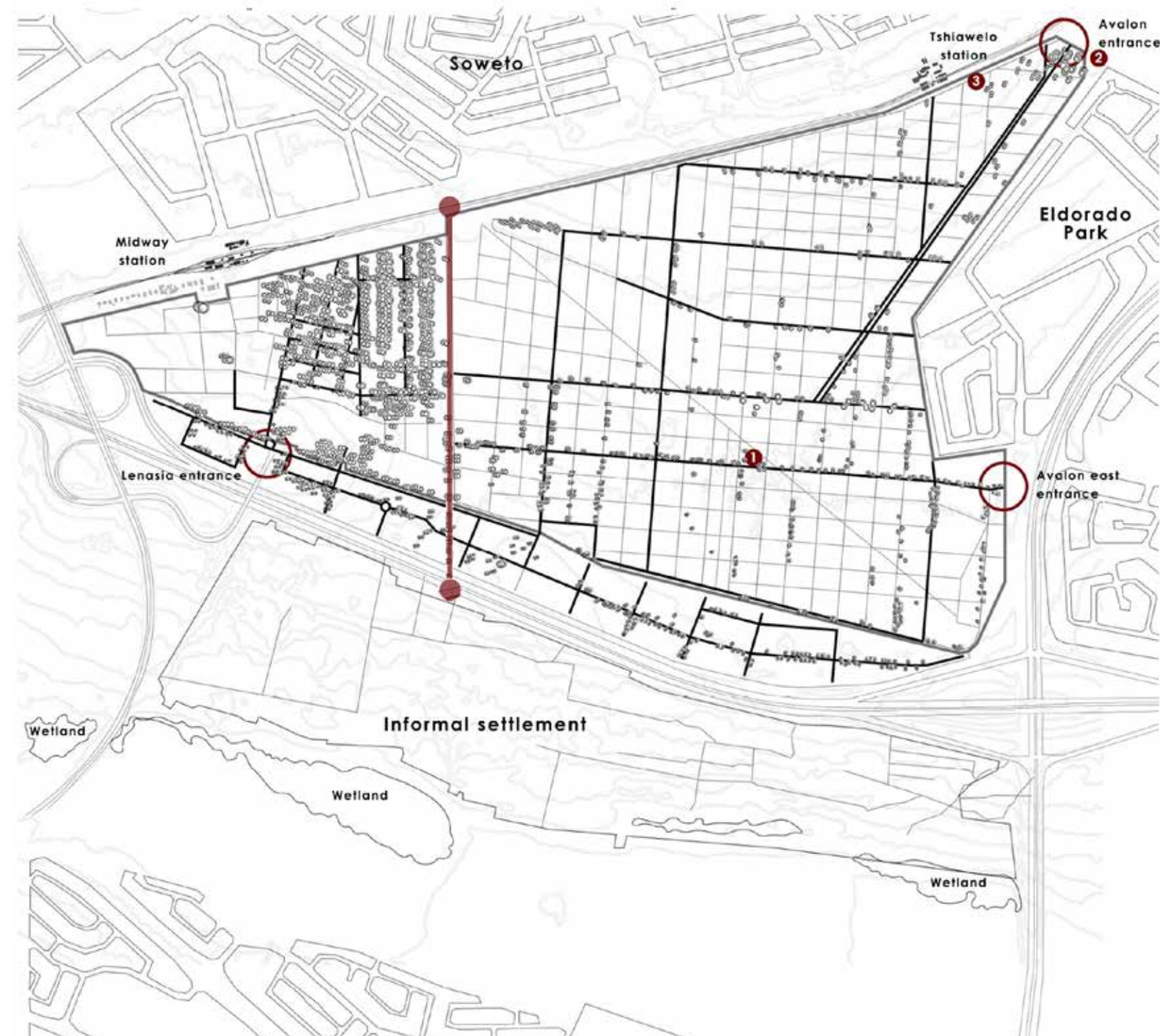
Site

The design principles discussed earlier guided me in creating a building proposal, which I have documented here. Unfortunately, it has not yet reached its potential. The proposal showcases the arrangement of spaces, structure, and architectural expression. However, there were still some inconsistencies that needed to be addressed. The design remained like a diagram rather than being fully developed.

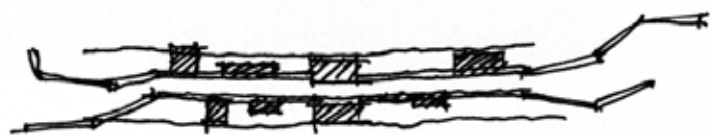
From this point onward until the final submission, my focus will be on refining the building design. I ensure that its geometries will be suited to scale and that all technical aspects will be carefully considered in the detailing process. I intend to apply the ideas discussed in the previous chapters to every drawing produced from now on. The final version of the building proposal will be thoroughly documented in this chapter.

The entryways into the building possesses the element of confrontation. The main access point is towards the south end of the site, whilst the existing entrance towards the east provides a second entrance. The remainder of the site is composed of the landscaping component, leaving enough space for the facility.

Fig 4.14
right
Masterplan
(Author, 2023; after: Bing maps, 2023)



The form as means of connection to earth



Aim

The diagram above showcases how the building extends towards the residential area of Chiawelo as well as the informal settlement as a means of connection. This architectural structure serves as a connection to bridge the gap created by the 1950 Group Areas Act providing convenience for pedestrians who use this site daily to reach the different modes of transportation to the north. Moreover, it serves as an entrance to the site granting access to both the legacy and the natural surroundings. The site's flat slope accentuates the structure in its plan and elevation; serving as a visual guide, for orienting people toward the building.

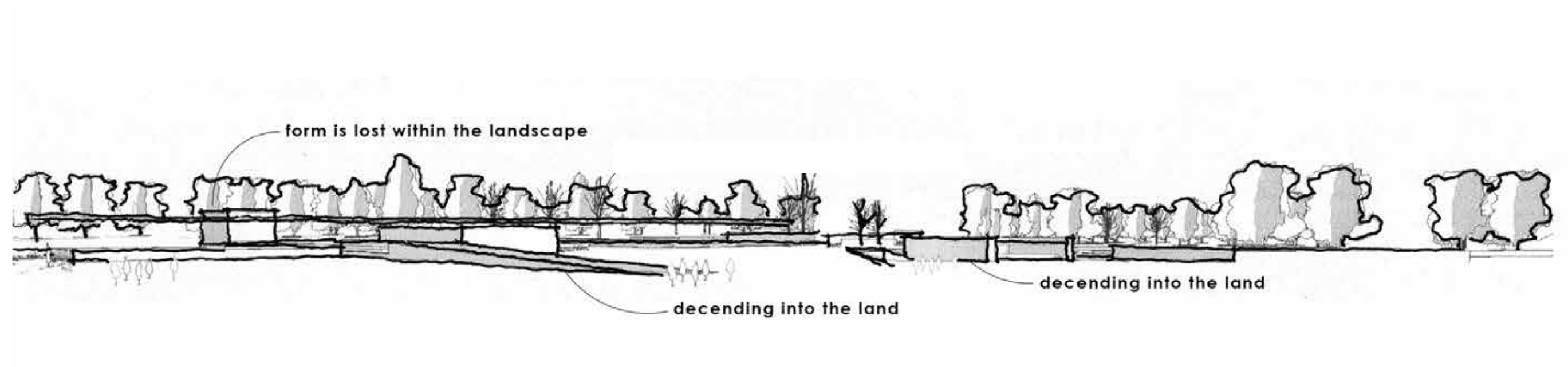
Counter-space

The archive primarily relies on our senses as a driving force. It emphasizes the importance of gathering, processing, making, and storing history, claiming ownership. The oral archive specifically caters to the stories of struggle and heroism within the site while the multi-purpose space takes the form of an amphitheatre designed for formal and informal gatherings and storytelling. Studio spaces welcome individuals from communities to breathe life into exhibition areas with their memorabilia. Lastly, the circulation route aligns with the existing grid to provide access, to these spaces.

The Planning.

The current development of the spatial relations focuses on the vertical axis-connecting the northern and southern edges. Horizontally, it looks at creating an alternative experience when descending into the space. Moving forward, a hierarchy shall be established within the site, between what is public and private. How spaces respond to the spine and wetland and how the filtration system works on a technical level.

Fig 4.15
above
Diagram of the intervention's aims
(Author, 2023)



Tectonic expression

The physical structure emerges through its representation. The choice of materials and how they are put together create a platform where the land and the sky interact, in a manner capturing the processes of burial and preservation through an immersive sensory experience.

I understand that at the moment this structure is not completely resolved and the implementation of the wetland filtration in the design has not been successful. Going forward my plan is to introduce vegetation as a the temporary element. It represents the cycle of life and death as it withers and comes back, to life with each season. The retaining structure will continue to symbolize permanence with the use of sand casting techniques to reintroduce the earth back into the design.

Fig 4.16
above
Elevations and Perspectives of form
(Author, 2023)

The self

The counter-archive

Design Development

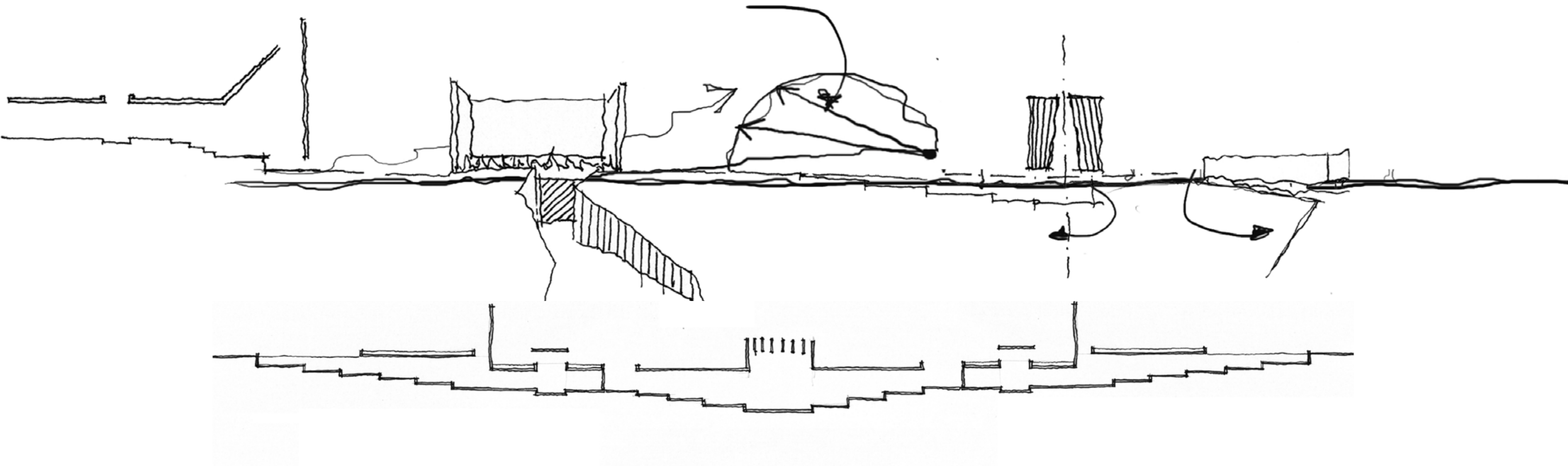
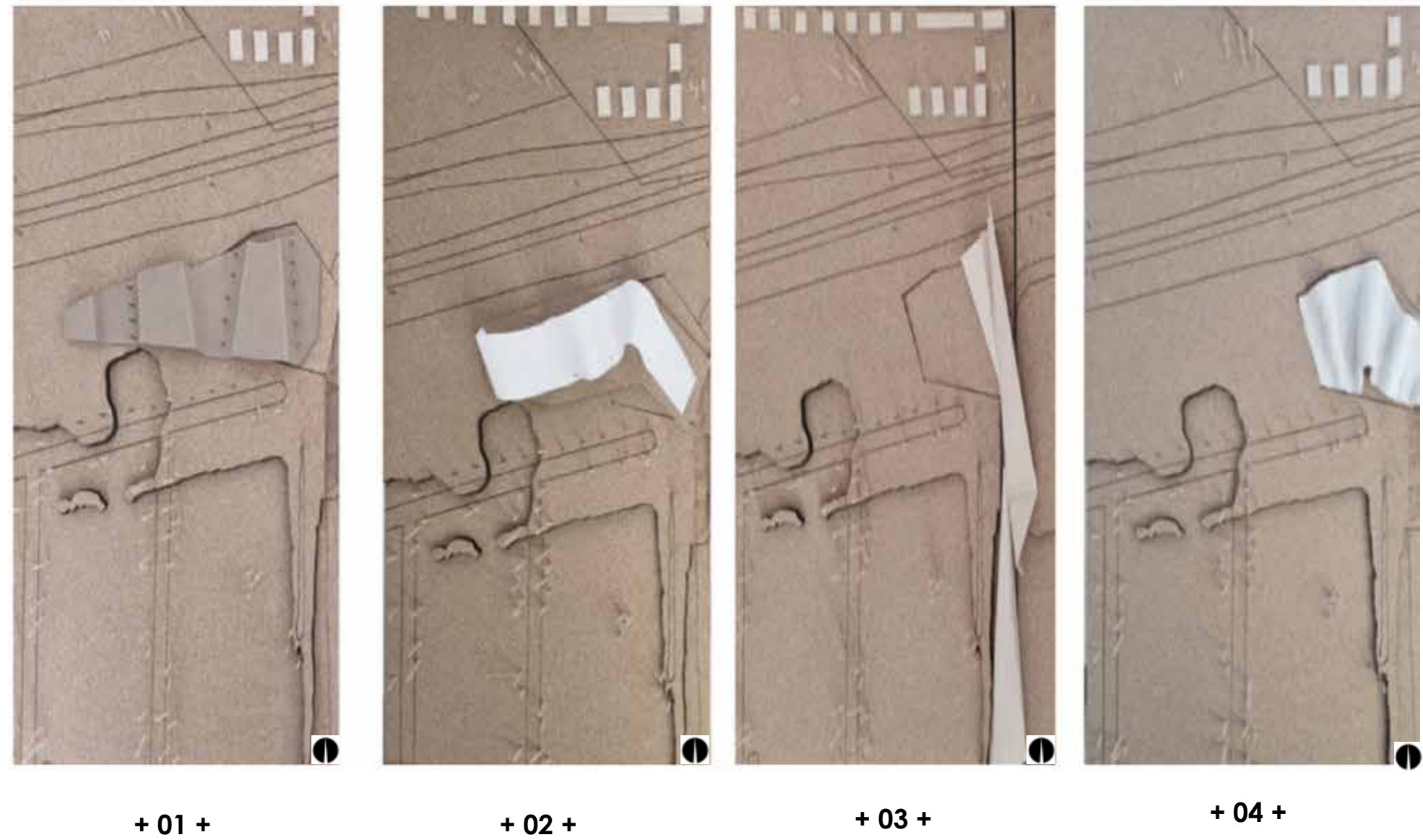


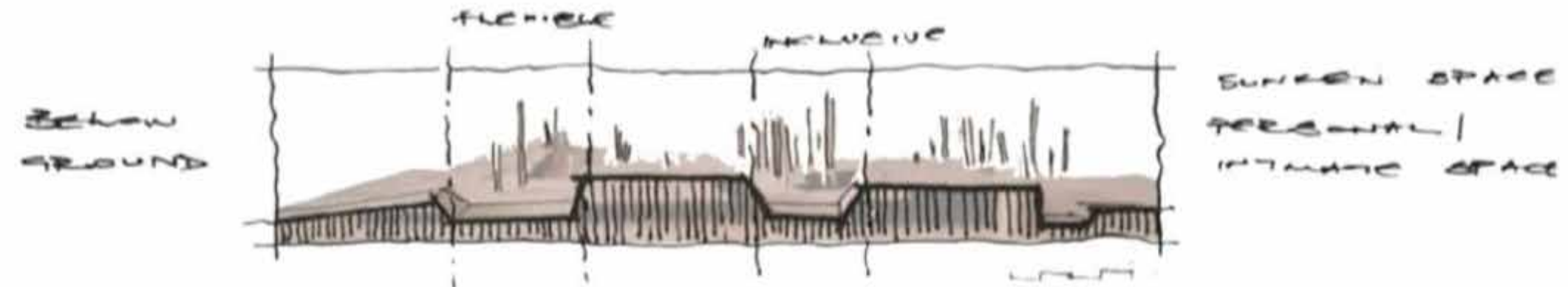
Fig 4.17
above
Initial conceptual sketches
(Author, 2023)



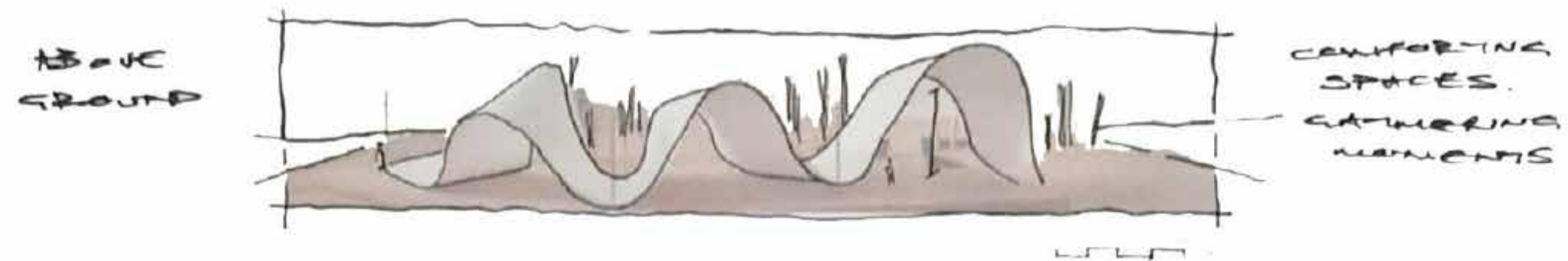
In the initial stages, my focus was primarily on the northern area of the site rather than the central part. However, by the time I reached iteration 3, I started exploring how the constraints of the 30-meter spine and the arrangement of graves could influence the overall shape. The limitations presented by the site allowed for place to play a role, in informing my design decisions.

Fig 4.18
above
Conceptual explorations
(Author, 2023)

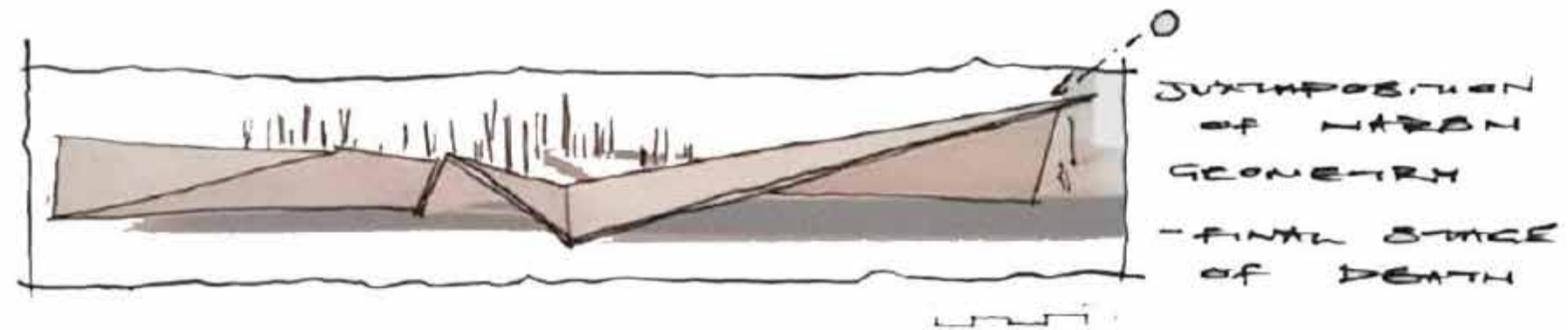
+ 01 +



+ 02 +



+ 03 +



+ 04 +

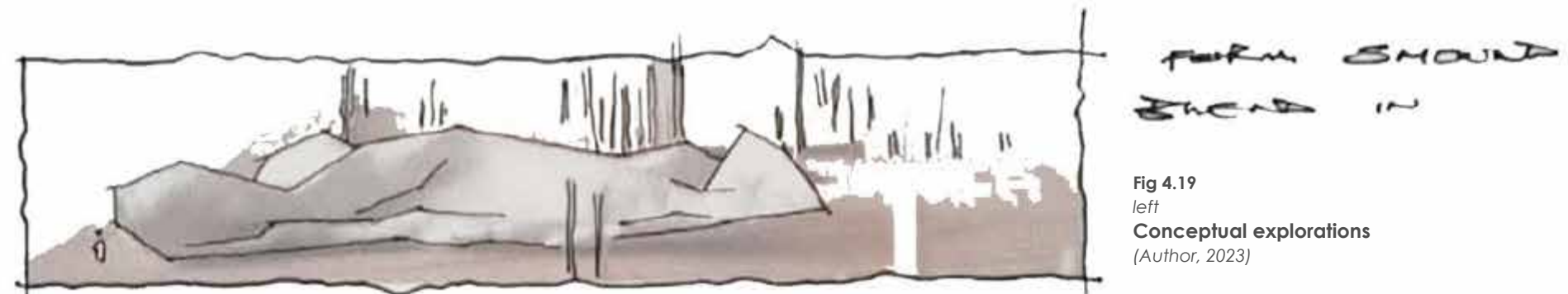


Fig 4.19
left
Conceptual explorations
(Author, 2023)

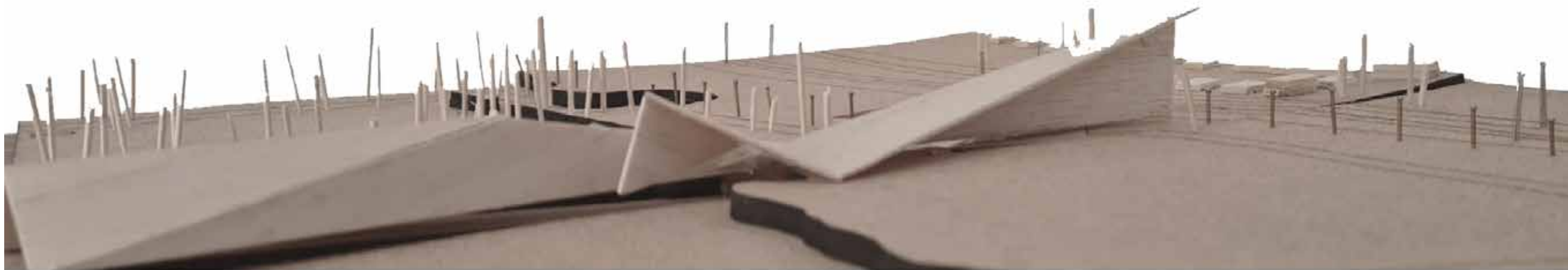
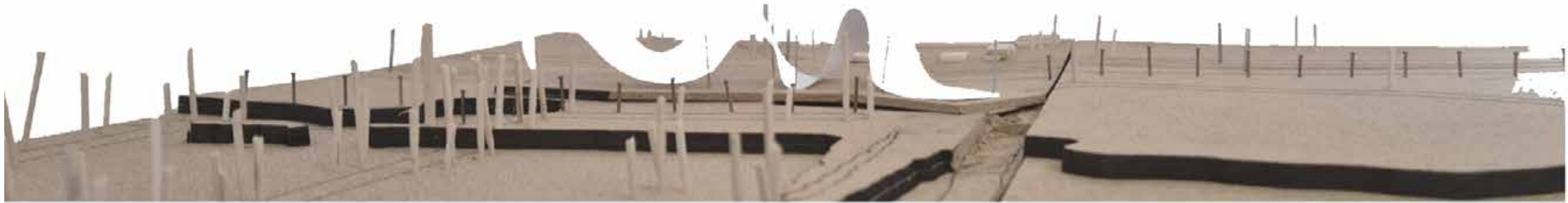


Fig 4.20
left
Conceptual explorations: Form
(Author, 2023)

Tectonic expression.

Temporality vs Permanence

Physical + Metaphysical locus to one's existential self

Tectonic expression

The physical structure of the design are derived from the lessons learnt from the Bruder Klaus Chapel. The choice of materials and how they are put together create a platform where the land and the sky interact, in a manner capturing the processes of burial and preservation through an immersive sensory experience. The use of light and shadows also help twist one's sense of time when in the space.

Expression

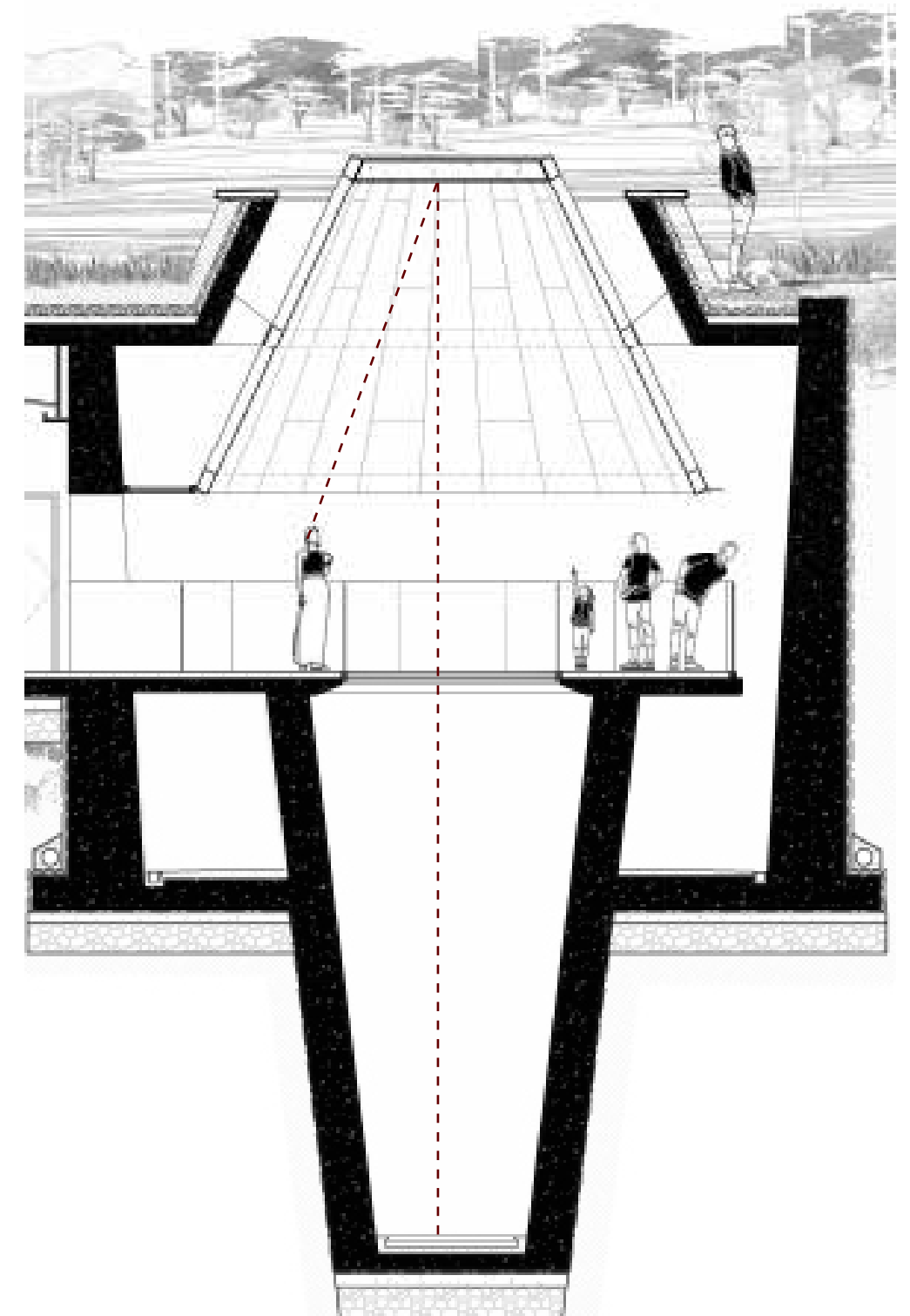
This is the current development of the design. Yet again, still not highly resolved. However, through this process I've developed an idea on the process of excavation. It brings to light various materials. This interaction with light both in terms of space and symbolic meaning shapes our perception of how humans inhabit that space. Furthermore, light plays a role, in defining the structure and volume of the constructed form.

The exhibition space showcased in figure 4.22, was inspired by the The Holocaust History Museum by Safdie Architects as it encompasses the symbolism of the chapel expressed earlier. Individuals enter a dark room with the first instinct to look downwards. By using the same technique within the holocaust "Hall of names", a mirror is placed within a small amount of water allowing imagery of past struggle icons to be recognised as individuals look upwards. The perimeter of the space is exposed to nature's elements (sun, wind and rainfall), allowing a constant link to the outdoor.



Fig 4.21
right
Tectonic expression of the gathering space in section
(Author, 2023)

Fig 4.22
above
Development of sections through ritual spaces
(Author, 2023)



Counter-spatialities

Chapter 05: Final design



Fig 5.0
above
External view of Archive
(Author, 2024)

Program

1. The counter-space

Phase 1. The alternative burial site. A introduction of the mausoleum, columbarium as well as a constructed wetland system to the site.

2. The counter-space

Phase 2. The Counter-archive. A cultural center aimed at providing a new spatial take on archiving and memorial within Avalon and Lenasia cemetery.

Formal auditorium: A space provided for commemorative and anniversary events like the anniversary of the Soweto Uprising of 1976, anniversary of the sinking of SS Mendi and the anniversary of the death of Joe Slovo.

The Informal gathering space provides a platform for performances to take place - for oral history to fill the space.

The Exhibition is a homage to the struggle icons that have passed.

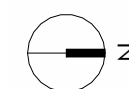
The Multipurpose space is provided to family members who participate in tomb-stone unvielings, after-tears rituals as well as seminars for educational purposes.

The workshops are provided for initiatives like the Friends of Johannesburg Cemeteries as they perform reparative events for the cemetery.

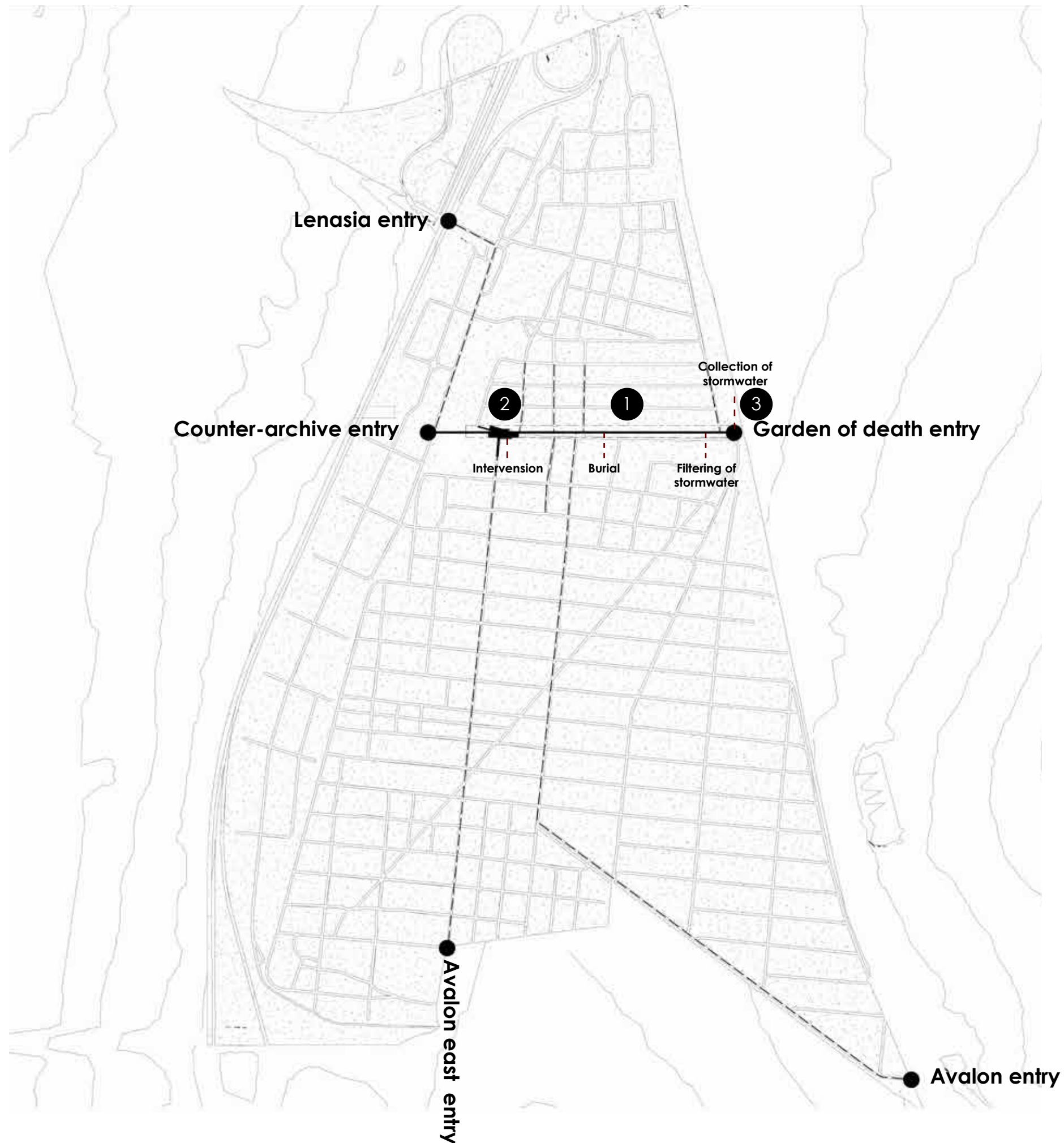
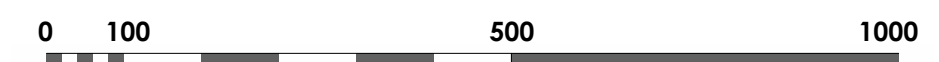
3. The counter-space

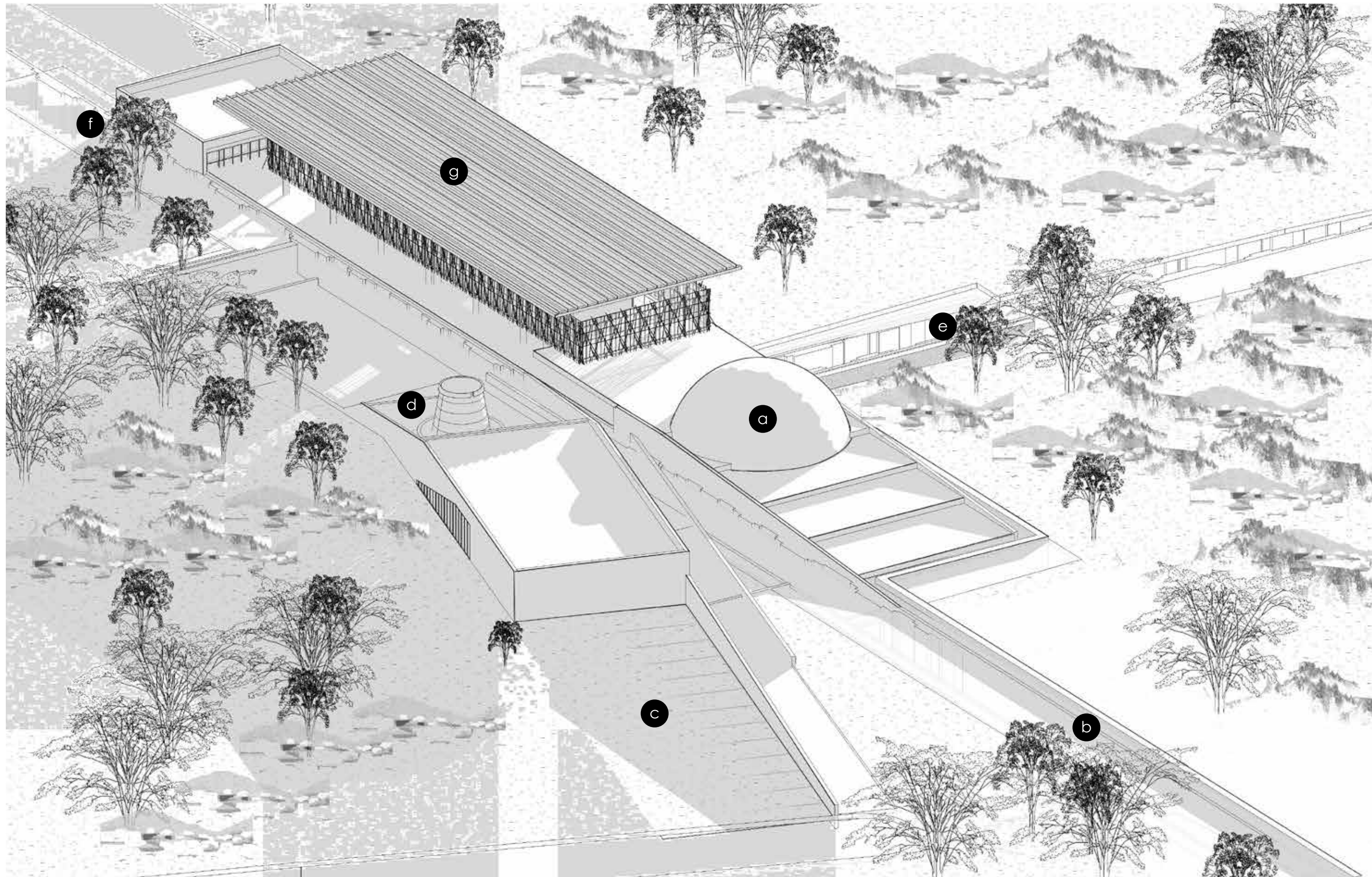
Phase 3. The water filtration system.

Fig 5.1
left
External view of Archive
(Author, 2024)



-01_Site plan





- a. Story-telling chamber
- b. Memorial(Alternative entry)
- c. Parking(accessible)
- d. Reflective pond
- e. Memorial (Alternative entry)
- f. Entry into Garden of death(Mausoleum)
- g.Counter-archive

Fig 5.2
left
Ariel view of site
 (Author, 2024)

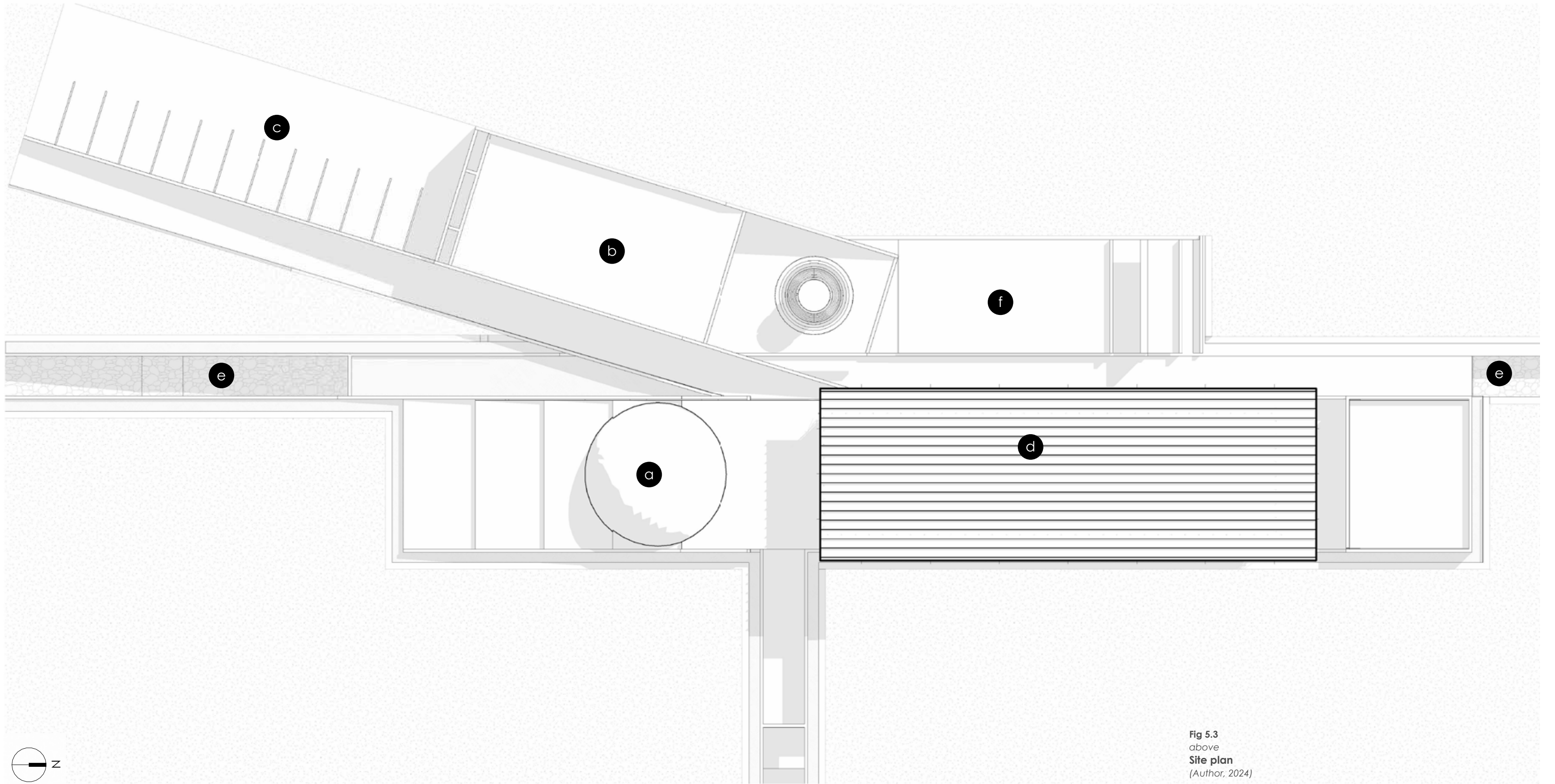


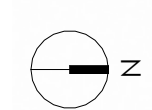
Fig 5.3
above
Site plan
(Author, 2024)

02_Roof plan

2 0 2 4 10 20

a. Visual facility
b. Retail
c. Arrival

d. Archive
e. Memorial
f. Reflective pond



Age Group	Number of People
18-24	2
25-34	0
35-44	2
45-54	4
55-64	10
65+	20

- a. Reference & research facility
- b. Research commons
- c. Staff room

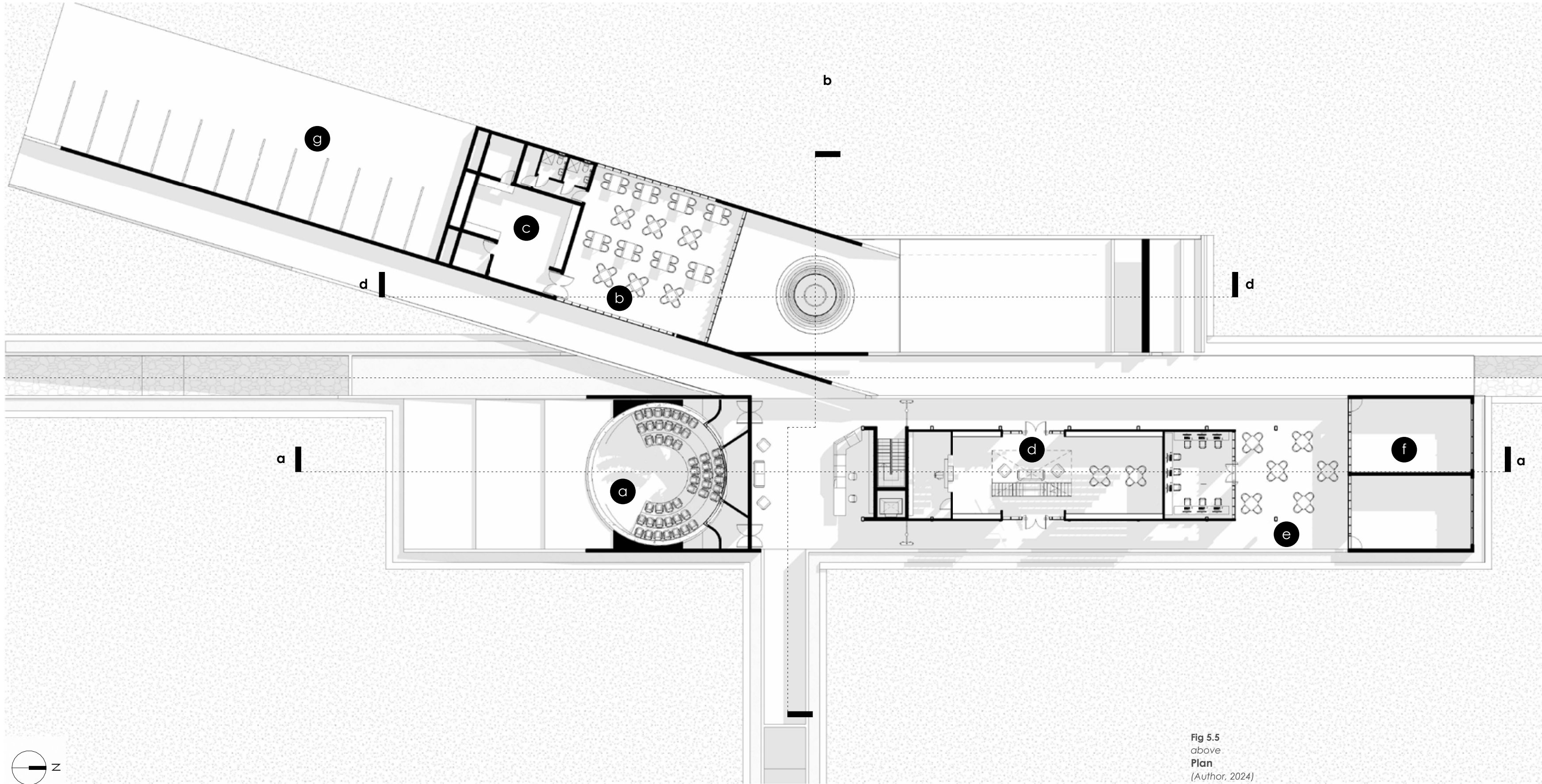
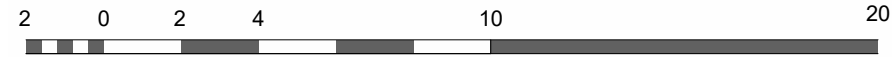


Fig 5.5
above
Plan
(Author, 2024)

00_Ground level plan



- a. Story-telling venue
- b. Resturant
- c. Kitchen
- d. Archive
- e. Reading space
- f. Seminar/workshop

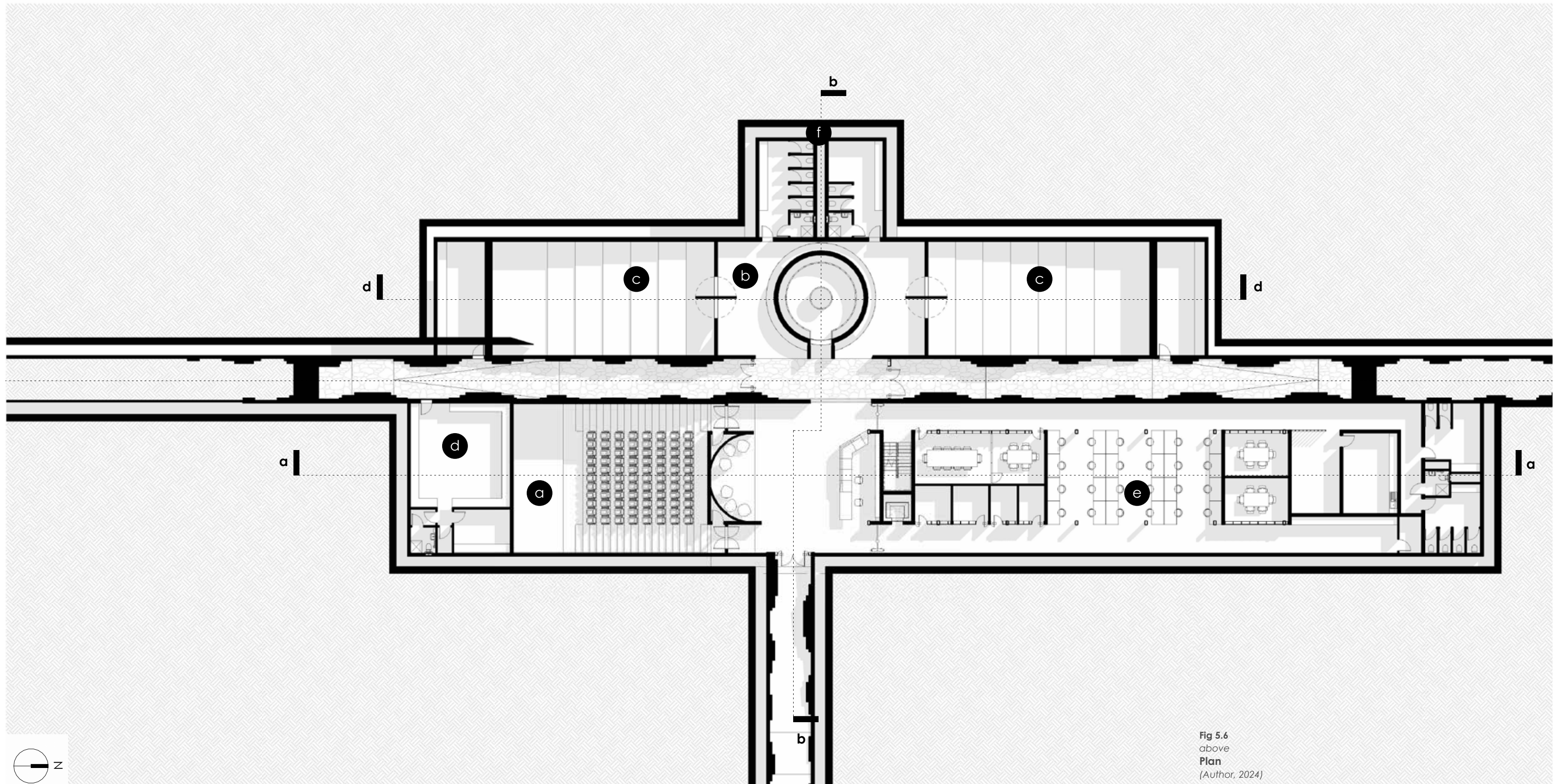


Fig 5.6
above
Plan
(Author, 2024)

-01_Basement level plan

2 0 2 4 10 20

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| a. Auditorium | d. Repair cafe |
| b. Exhibition | e. Office space |
| c. Multipurpose hall | f. Service space |

Section bb

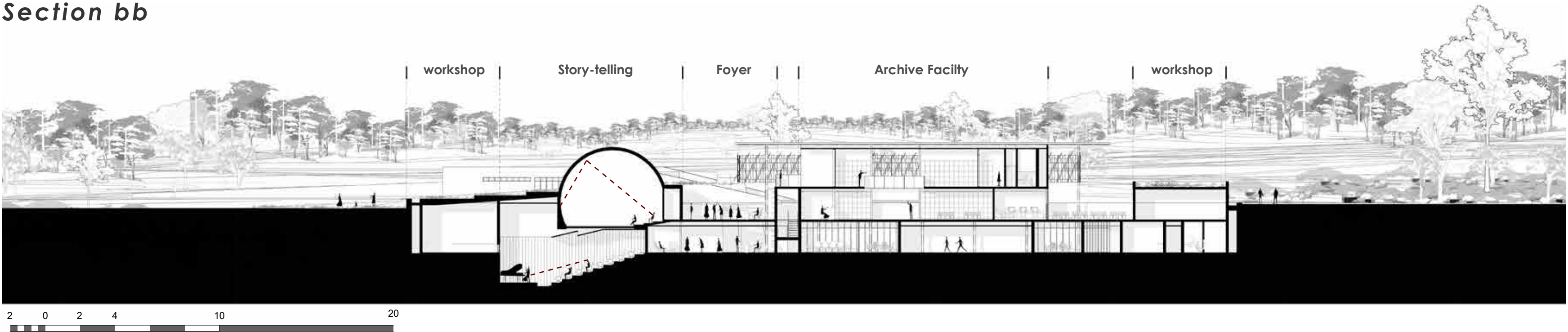
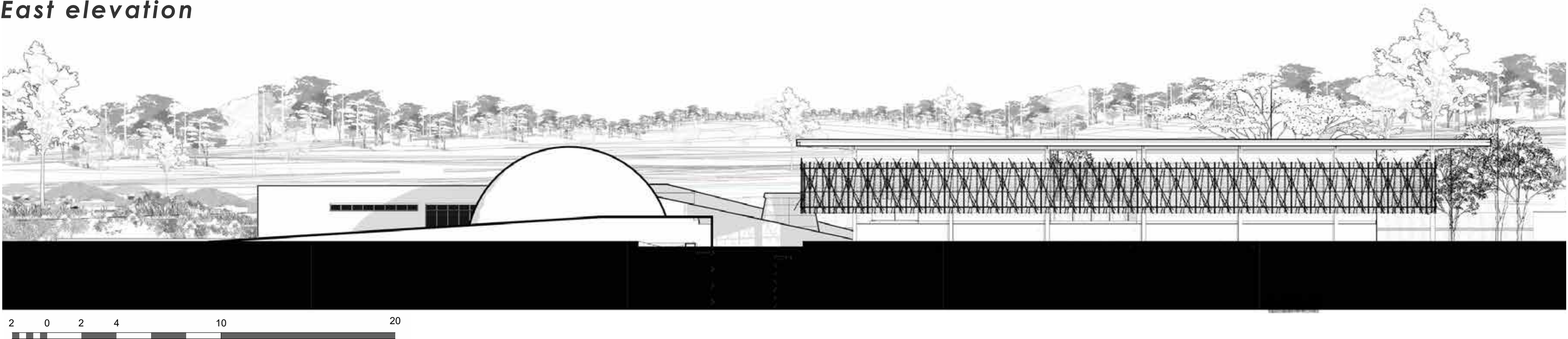


Fig 5.7
above
Section
(Author, 2024)

Fig 5.8
below
Elevation
(Author, 2024)

East elevation



Section cc

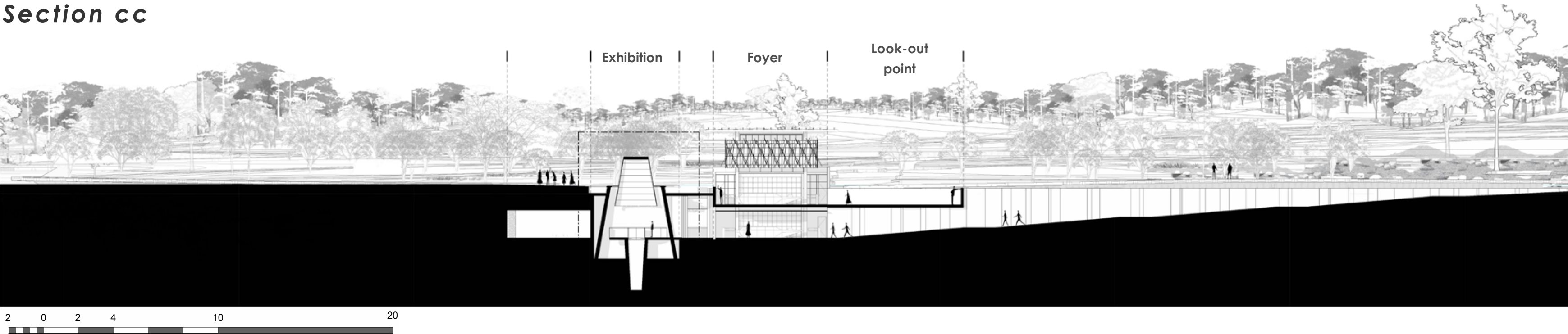
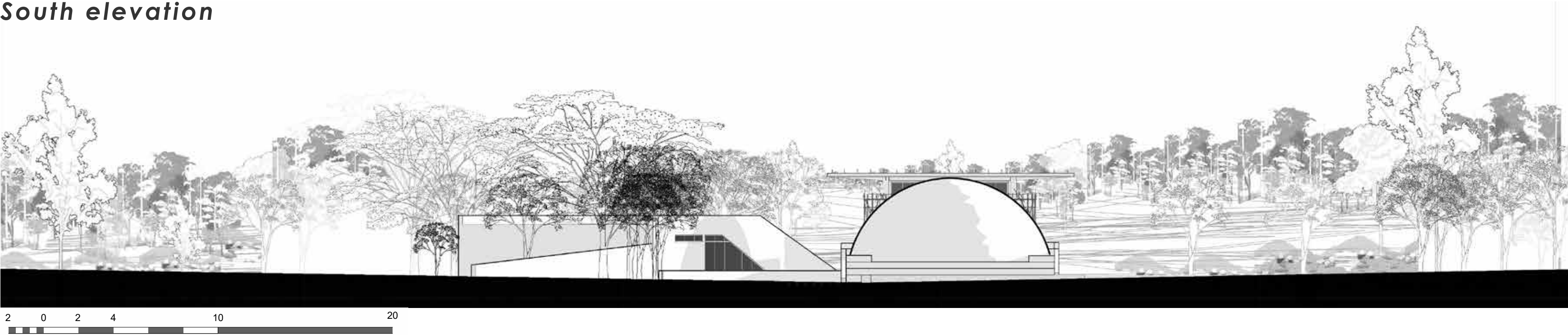


Fig 5.9
above
Section
(Author, 2024)

Fig 5.10
below
Elevation
(Author, 2024)

South elevation



Section aa

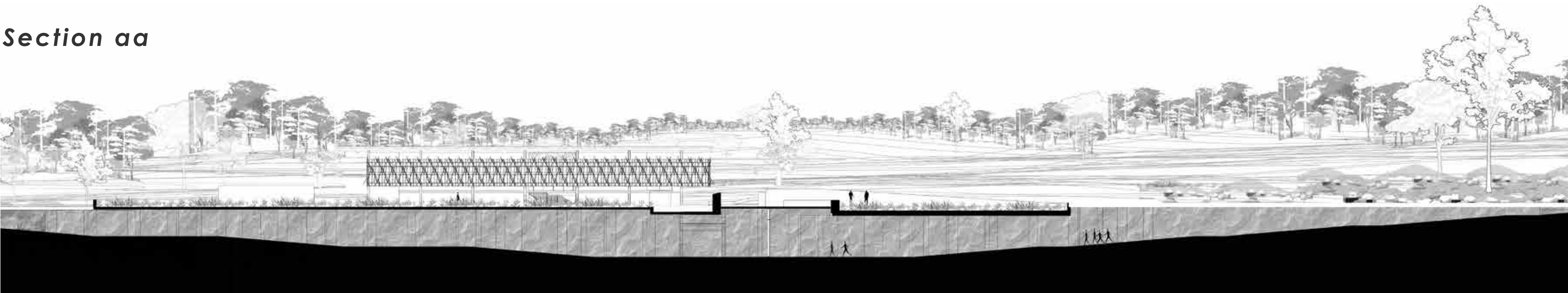
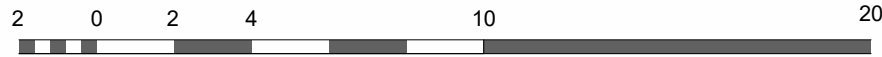
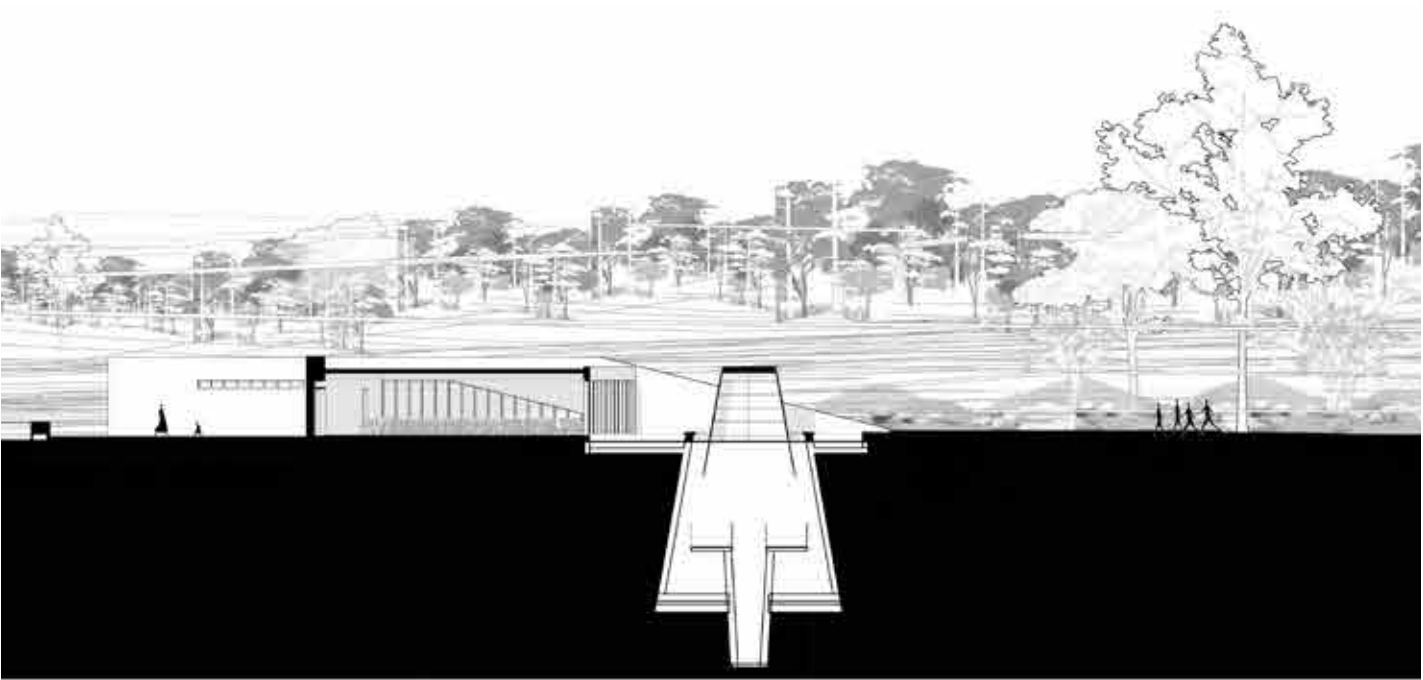


Fig 5.11
above
Section
(Author, 2024)

Fig 5.12
below
Section
(Author, 2024)

Section cc



North elevation

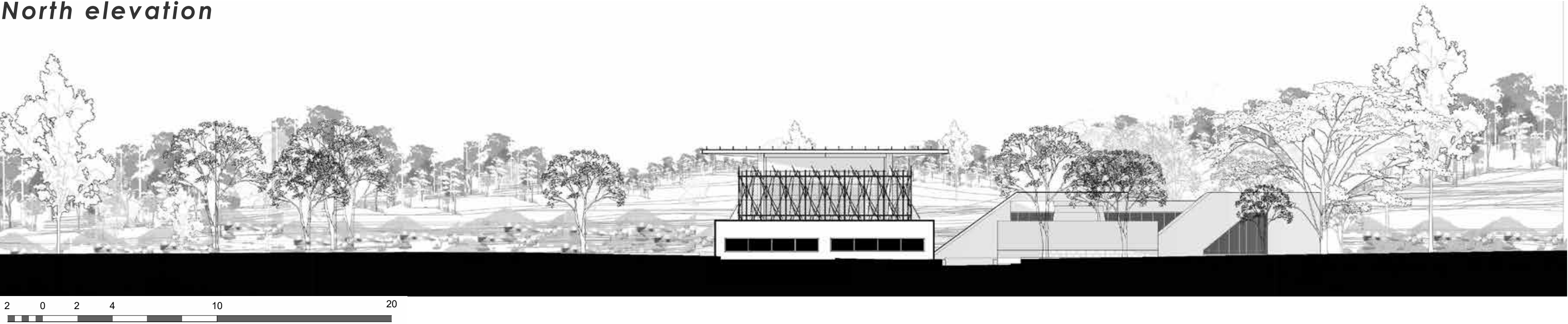
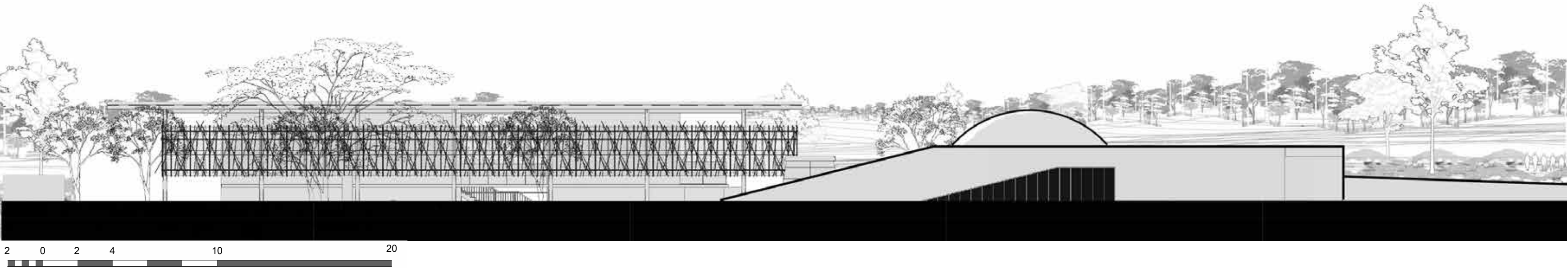


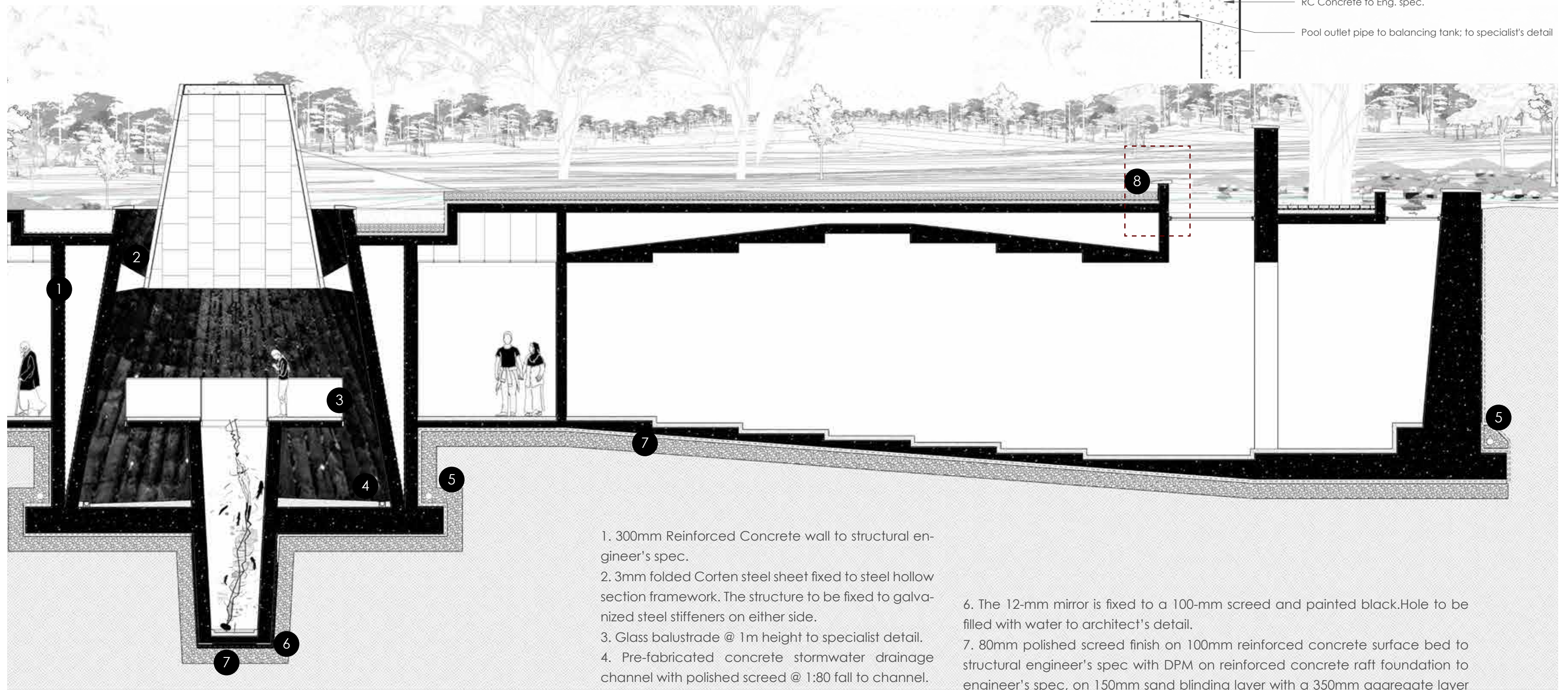
Fig 5.13
above
Elevation
(Author, 2024)

Fig 5.14
below
Elevation
(Author, 2024)

West elevation



Tectonics



1. 300mm Reinforced Concrete wall to structural engineer's spec.
2. 3mm folded Corten steel sheet fixed to steel hollow section framework. The structure to be fixed to galvanized steel stiffeners on either side.
3. Glass balustrade @ 1m height to specialist detail.
4. Pre-fabricated concrete stormwater drainage channel with polished screed @ 1:80 fall to channel.
5. HDPE agricultural drain wrapped in geo fabric layer and covered with free draining gravel to the stormwater channel.

6. The 12-mm mirror is fixed to a 100-mm screed and painted black.Hole to be filled with water to architect's detail.
7. 80mm polished screed finish on 100mm reinforced concrete surface bed to structural engineer's spec with DPM on reinforced concrete raft foundation to engineer's spec, on 150mm sand blinding layer with a 350mm aggregate layer below.
- 8.Reflective pool trough drain with waterproofing to landscape architect's detail

Fig 5.15
above
Tectonics
(Author, 2024; after Binet, no date; Maape, 2021)

List of Figures

Chapter 00

0.1. Author, 2023

Derived from: Maape, 2021, Drawing Creepy Places, hand sketch. THE SITE MAGAZINE. Available at: <https://www.thesitemagazine.com/read/drawing-creepy-places> (Accessed: 28 August 2023); Arnold, V., Ellery, W.N., McCarthy, T.S. and Venter, J., 2007, photograph. Location of the Klip River wetland in relation to industrial and mining development in the Johannesburg area, map. In Arnold, V., Ellery, W.N., McCarthy, T.S. and Venter, J., 2007. pp 2

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after: Bing Maps, 2024. Avalon Cemetery -26,288755, 27,872899. Aerial view. Internet: <https://www.bing.com/maps>, viewed 3 June 2023; derived from: Bonner, 1998; Brodie, 2014; Google Maps, 2023; Mazibuko, M. (2016) 'Not No Place: Johannesburg. Fragments of spaces and times', Agenda, 30(2), p. 159

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Chapter 02

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Personal communication

Moloi, R. (personal communication, 25 April 2023) Cemeteries Manager, Johannesburg City Parks, Johannesburg, interviewed online.

Oscar, O. (personal communication, 28 August 2023) Manager, Lenasia Crematorium, Johannesburg, interviewed in Johannesburg.

Bahmann, D. (personal communication, 2 May 2023) Supervisor, University of Witawaterand, Johannesburg, group discussion online.

24 May 2023

Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment:

Ethics clearance letter:

Dear Melissa Kock

Student number (1670054), this letter confirms that your ethics application has been cleared. Your clearance/protocol number: SOAP030/04/2023

Yours sincerely

Lerato Nkosi