

THE STORY EXCHANGE:

Narrative sharing as a catalyst for creative change in Orange Grove

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Abstract

Ever since we as humans sat around fires in caves, we have been sharing stories in an attempt to understand life and the need to survive. Storytelling is an integral part of human experience. We define our lives in narrative form. It gives us a means to explain the inexplicable and understand our lives in the context of a greater whole. The increasing prevalence of technologies like cell phones, tablets, and laptops has led to a phenomenon of disconnection between people in the physical dimension. Instead of communicating face-to-face, with all of our senses engaged, we rely on technology to interact with friends and share our stories. South Africa's current political climate, and particularly the protests on University campuses across the country in the past year, has emphasised the idea that society is suffering from a lack of real communication. This research proposes that stories can create change in the built environment, through building design, in the same way that stories affect our personal beliefs and understanding. Thus the concept of narrative and memory and how it manifests itself in architectural design and discourse is explored. This report finds that nostalgia and phenomenology play a significant role in producing connections between people and the built environment and these theories must be employed to create strong narratives in architecture.

Orange Grove, once a vibrant suburb along Louis Botha Avenue, has suffered from a lack of investment and development since the 1990s. Ultimately I employ perceptual and conceptual design philosophies to design a sustainable intervention within the already rich context of Orange Grove. *The Story Exchange* building design proposes that only through art, craft and open tactile interaction (that involves all the senses) - can one produce architecture that becomes a catalyst for the creative upliftment of the area and its community.