

Chapter 5 - Precedent Studies

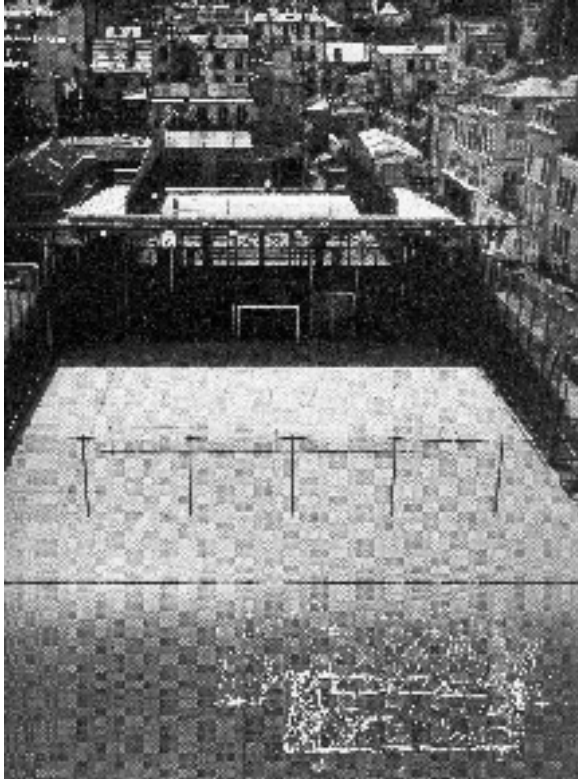


Fig. 5.1 Passive surveillance is an important design consideration

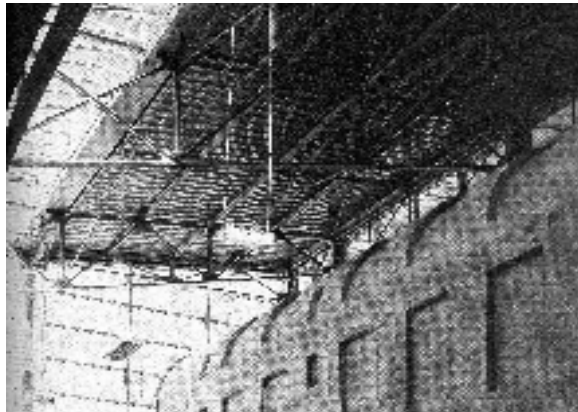


Fig. 5.2 Optimum use of glass facades, in contrast with more rugged materials

5.1 Precedent study 1

Program: Bastille sports centre, Paris.

Architect: Massimiliano Fuksas

The Bastille sports centre is an intervention in a very rigid and pre-defined urban grid, with limited space available in a dangerous neighbourhood. The building solves the problem by digging underground, and combining housing, sport and an urban park in a very intricate and intimate manner, with some of the walls of the building literally functioning as ringside seats to the sporting events (Slessor, 1990:64). There is at all times a strong visual connection between the activities and a pedestrian walkway running adjacent to the building. Materials and tectonics provide the area with a new identity, and the housing block runs along the street edge to reinforce the urban fabric.

The building is a good example of sharing public spaces between different social groups and programming open space to be used as various sports fields. Sports fields protrude into the streets of the site and the underground sports hall is visible through clerestory windows. Fuksas shows how intelligent material use can give new identity to an area needing originality by using intricate metal cladding on all surfaces that are visible from the street edge (Slessor, 1990:68).

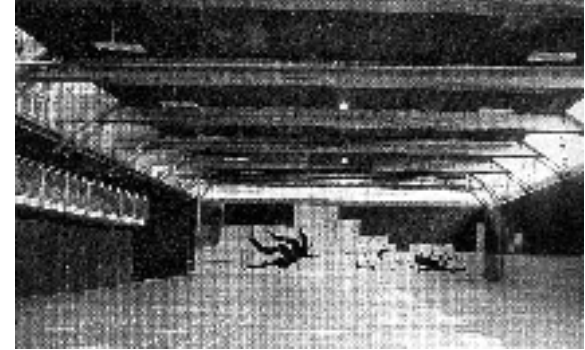


Fig. 5.3 The underground sports hall

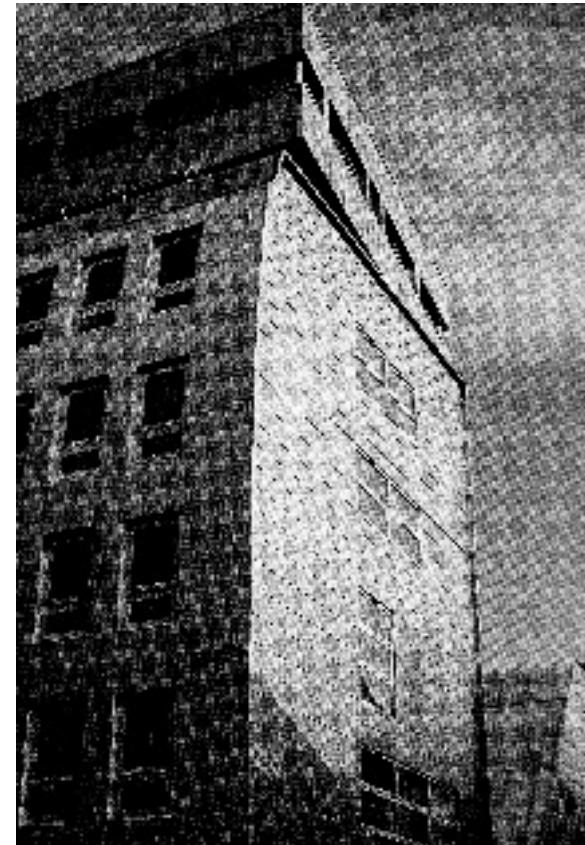


Fig. 5.4 The building provides identity through material use

5.2 Precedent study 2

Program: Drill Hall, Johannesburg

Architect: Micheal Hart Architects & Urban designers

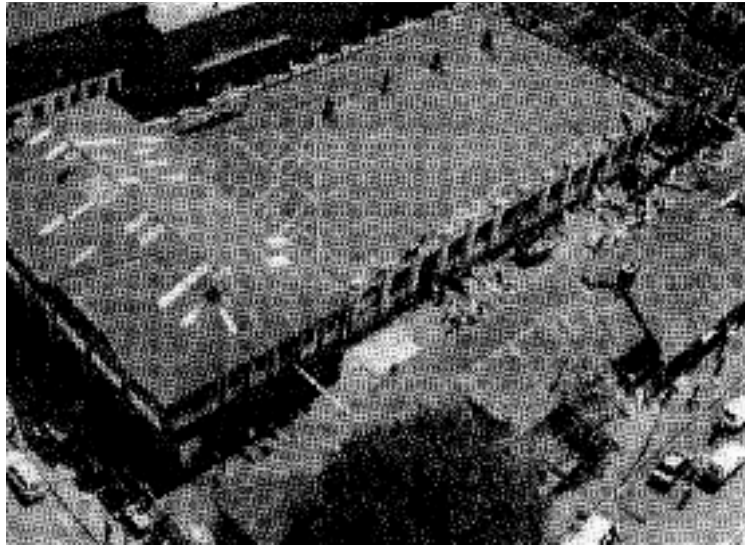


Fig. 5.5 The Drill in an urban context

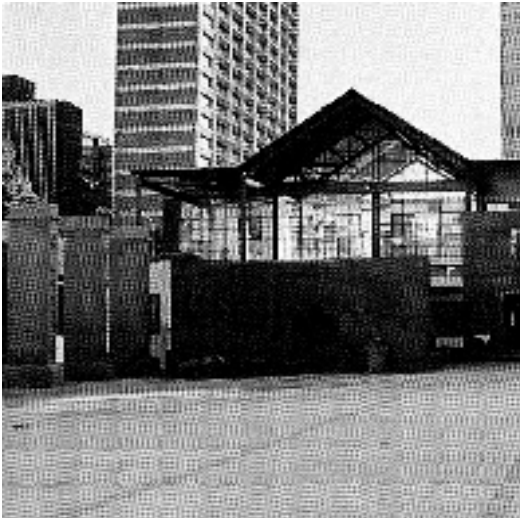


Fig. 5.6 Glass facades create a open and transparent appearance



Fig. 5.7 The Drill Hall



Fig. 5.8 A performance to viewers in flat buildings



Fig. 5.9 An unorthodox performance

The reality is that limited areas for events and expression are available in South Africa. However, one project that has achieved considerable success, is the Drill Hall in Johannesburg. The Drill Hall lies in a densely populated area and is now used as an exhibition and cultural space. The building is recognized as being a good example of adaptive re-use of an existing building as part of a sustainable city environment (Deckler, Graupner & Rasmuss, 2006: 29). To fully understand the success of the Drill Hall, one can simply recount an event hosted during March 2007 by Cascoland. Adam Levin recounts his experience of events organized by Cascoland – a group of interdisciplinary artists from SA and the Netherlands - in the Drill Hall. The Hall was used as a canvas for expression, attempting to create a stronger sense of community by introducing small interventions in the Hall and its surrounding area. One of these interventions was a performance of Swenkas, which entailed participants parading in front of an audience, showing of their striped socks, red suits and cufflinks in several frozen poses. The event was used as a tool to attempt to create connections between culture and was held the week before a contemporary dance piece was performed for this same reason. The experience was not limited to the Drill Hall, as it spilled into the streets of the Joubert Park area. One of the many successes of the events was that children who started playing in the Hall, resulting in their parents following them there and soon becoming regular visitors. The reality however, is that funding for these projects is difficult, and the community needs to take ownership of the project.

Lessons learned from the Drill Hall are the need to have strong management systems in place, combined with initiative from the community. The history inherent in the building, combined with a well-defined space, provided the community with a strong sense of security. The action spilled into the streets, showing the potential of such spaces as urban regenerators. The Drill Hall shows how the simple re-use of abandoned buildings can provide a canvas for community expression.



Fig. 5.10 The reprogrammable public square



Fig. 5.11 Trees are used to define walkways

5.3 Precedent study 3

Program: Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park, Germany.
Architect: Peter Latz

The Landshaftspark in Duisburg-Nord is an attempt by the landscape architect to reclaim what has been lost. From an old industrial area, Peter Latz has created a recreational park that is used for multiple purposes (Brandolini, 2000:75). From walks in nature, to concerts or scuba diving courses, the landscape park has truly been reinvented as the ultimate outdoor recreation park in Germany. The design makes use of multiple paths and viewpoints into the buildings to intrigue the user and create a suspense of what is around the next corner.

Palimpsest is integral to the success of the park. Palimpsest refers to a manuscript or parchment that has been written on more than once, so that earlier writings are still visible. Translated into design, the idea is that given the chance, the history of a place can and will rise from its grave (Lacayo, 2007:46). Thus, older visitors can “reminisce about the time they or their parents worked in these places, while younger generations stare in amazement at the world that never belonged to them” (Brandolini, 2000:79). The use of light during nighttime creates sculptures out of the industrial towers and gives the building the status of icon in the community. It is important to note that, although tourism is a strong motivation, these developments benefit the locals most in that effective public space has been created and ruins have been turned to active recreation areas (Lacayo, 2007:44).

The park shows the effective reuse of old buildings and even machinery on-site. Even though it is now a vibrant park - the dignity of what was before is given the necessary respect.

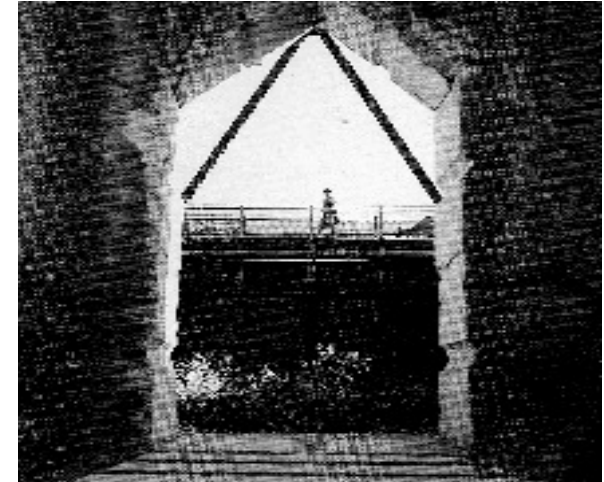


Fig.5.12 Openings are cut in existing walls to reveal what was hidden

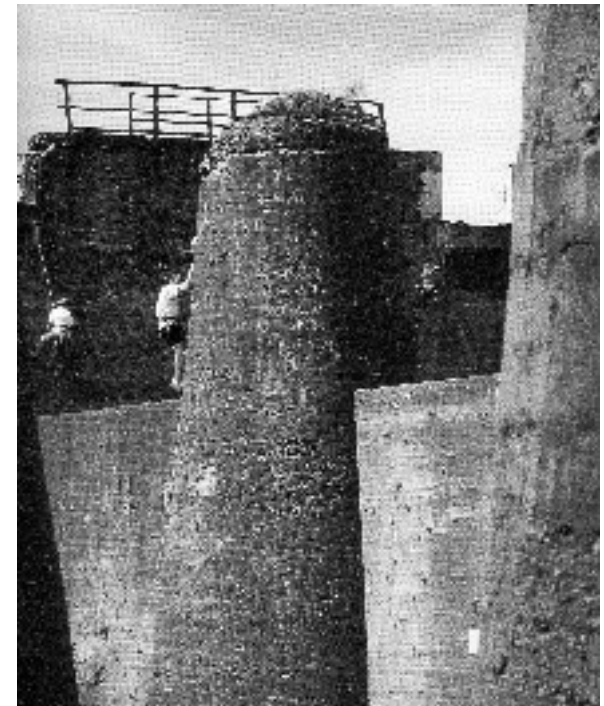


Fig. 5.13 The building provides natural climbing walls



Fig. 5.14 View from the building, showing additional residences and pool facilities

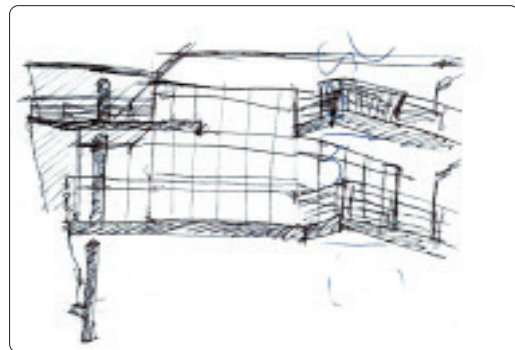


Fig. 5.15 A study of the facade

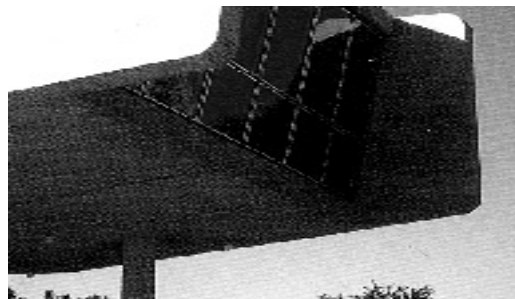


Fig. 5.16 Pretoria vernacular - the freestanding auditorium

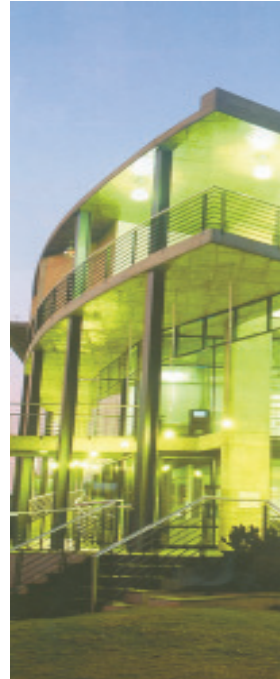


Fig. 5.17 A strong entrance

5.4 Precedent study 4

Program, Structure, Materials: High Performance Centre, Pretoria

Architect: SoundSpaceDesign

The HPC is a building that embraces the architecture of Pretoria in a very distinct way, as there strong reference to the early modernist traditions. The building has elements such as pilotis, the floating concrete roofs, free-standing glass facades and the free-floating auditorium. Yet, this is the Modern in a contemporary way, effectively combined with elements common to Pretoria - namely the plinth, mid section and roof. The tectonics of the building seem institutional, with the excessive glazing in the building reflecting an architecture of openness and transparency.

The building houses many functions, is able to cater for small conventions and house entire sport teams in the main building as the top floor consists of a comfortable lounge and private rooms. Each room has its own balcony, used to hide the air-conditioning units and providing an exceptional method of keeping western sun out of the rooms.

The building embodies a feeling of inclusiveness, while finishes are rough to comply with a rugged concrete and face brick exterior, reflecting Pretoria's heritage. The floating auditorium is used to create visual appeal towards the building, and the rest of the building seems to follow suit. The columns are treated with respect and provide a uniform rhythm to the building. The extensive use of glazing allows visibility from out of the building to all areas of the sporting activities around the building. The building is a good example of multiple functions grouped into a single building, where different groups are able to use the building at a time.

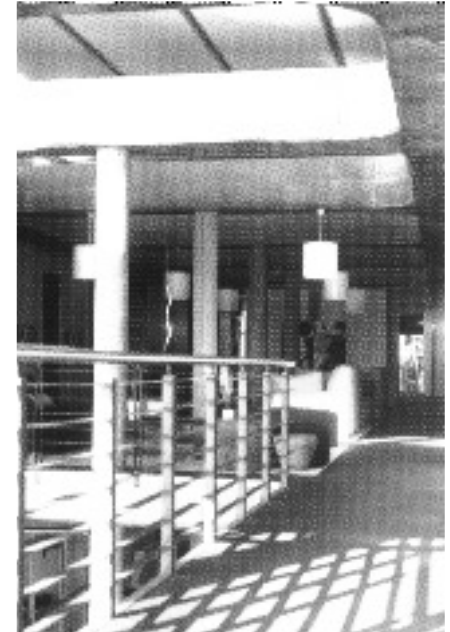


Fig. 5.18 Lounge on the top floor, with rooms on either side, each with their own balcony



Fig. 5.19 The strong sense of rhythm

5.5 Precedent study 5

Structure: The Women's Jail, The Constitution Hill,
Johannesburg

Architect: Kate Otten Architects cc



Fig. 5.20 The building protrudes over the original jail wall.

The Women's Jail is part of the Constitution Hill precinct in Johannesburg. The building addresses a heritage building, being an addition to the original Women's Jail and the design transforms former symbols of oppression to one where human dignity is restored. The new building houses offices for the South African Human Rights Commission. The old building is integrated into the design by becoming the threshold through which one needs to pass to get to the new offices.

The building makes use of punctured Cor-ten plates that aim to mimic the steel bars of a jail. The cladding covers most of the building, creating a lighter feel to the building, while it serves as shading elements to diffuse sunlight on the east and western facades. The windows on the northern façade receive more attention with protruding wooden shutters providing shading from the summer sun. The building makes use of massive round concrete columns, creating an impression of the building stepping out over the boundary walls of the jail, symbolizing freedom from oppression. The swing doors in front of windows can open, and are also made from the punctured plates.

The building displays a dual façade, achieved using punctured metal plates, creating one-way passive surveillance from behind the plates similar to the Arabic Mushrabiya.

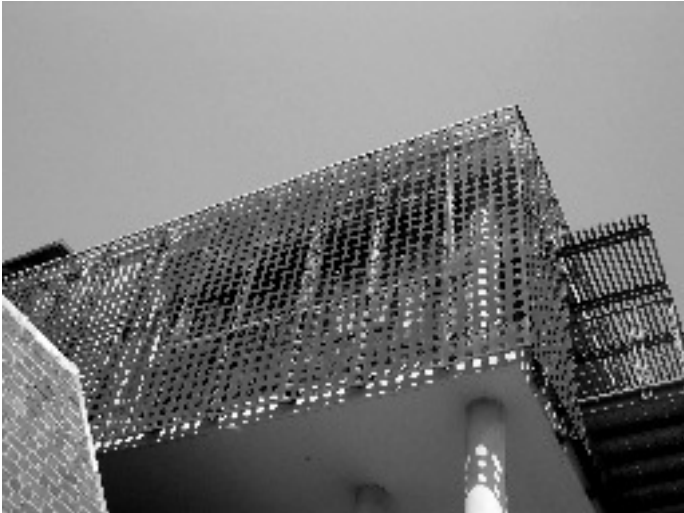


Fig. 5.21 Using perforated plates to play with light

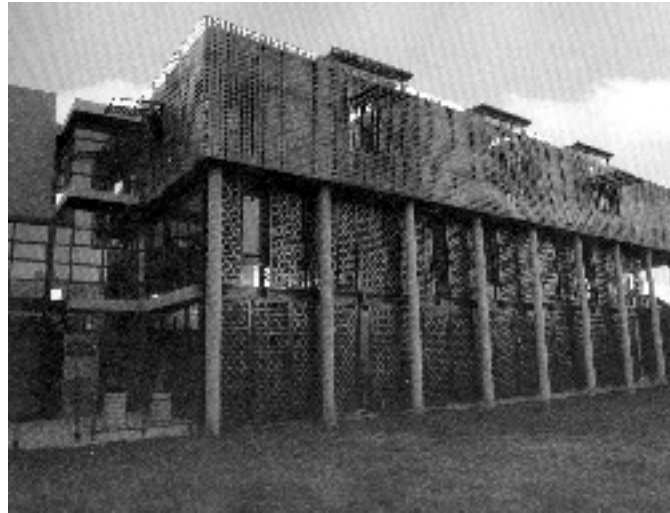


Fig. 5.22 Strong rhythmic columns and appearance



Fig. 5.23 Perforated plate details