

A healing outdoor experience

The potential of outdoor environments to enhance psychological healing at Weskoppies psychiatric hospital

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Landscape Architecture (Professional)
in the faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology.

University of Pretoria
2009

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Function: Psychiatric hospital
Research field: Cultural landscapes and environmental potential

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the potential of a designed physical outdoor environment to improve the social environment and thereby enhance the psychological healing process at Psychiatric institutions. Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital situated in Pretoria West served as a model for testing the hypothesis.

The physical and social environment at Weskoppies was analyzed through observations, interviews and literature research. Findings from analysis and theoretical research regarding the influences that physical and social outdoor environments have on mental health, were synthesized to establish design guidelines. These informed the design decision making process and assisted in the proposal of an outdoor environment with emotional healing potential. An open space framework and catalytic sketch plan was designed to illustrate the application of the design guidelines.

The author found that an outdoor environment that encourage independence, purpose, consciousness, rest, connectedness and physical activities have the potential to enhance the psychological healing process. The open space framework and sketch plan proved that these guidelines can be accommodated on different scales.

*Hierdie werk word met dankbaarheid opgedra aan
my hemelse Vader en ondersteunende ouers
wat hierdie vir my moontlik gemaak het.*

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Figure 9.61: Retention dam inlet with bird hide in background (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.62: Section through Retention dam 1 (Author, 2009)