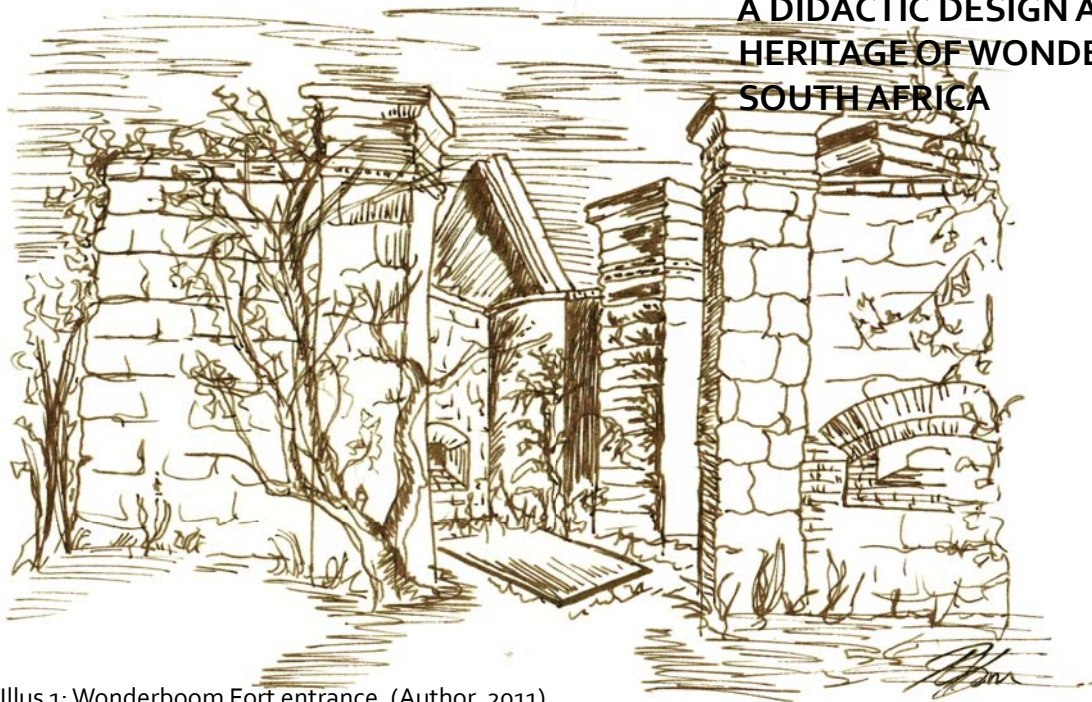


# THE NARRATIVE OF A SANCTUARY

**A DIDACTIC DESIGN APPROACH FOR THE CULTURAL AND BIOPHYSICAL  
HERITAGE OF WONDERBOOM FORT AND NATURE RESERVE, PRETORIA,  
SOUTH AFRICA**

By Natanja Blom



Illus 1: Wonderboom Fort entrance, (Author, 2011)



Illus 2: Wonderboom Nature Reserve, view in the direction of the Wonderboom tree. (Author, 2011)



The Narrative of a Sanctuary: A didactic design approach for the cultural and biophysical heritage of Wonderboom fort and nature reserve, Pretoria, South Africa.

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Studio master: Jacques Laubscher

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Magister of Landscape Architecture (Professional)

Department of Architecture, Faculty of the Built Environment, Engineering and Information Technology, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

November 2011



Illus 3: Wonderboom fort ruins, view of the rooms from outside of the ruin. (Author, 2011)

Full dissertation title: The Narrative of a Sanctuary: A didactic design approach for the cultural and biophysical heritage of Wonderboom fort and nature reserve, Pretoria, South Africa.

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Faculty: Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology  
University: University of Pretoria

In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Landscape Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further state that no part of my thesis has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that this thesis is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

signature  
Natanja Blom



## Project summary

Programme: A didactic narrative of Wonderboom fort, tree and reserve, revealing the heritage layers.

Site description: Wonderboom Nature Reserve, Pretoria north  
Client: City Council of Pretoria  
Users: Local residents, regional visitor's, national and international tourism

Site Location: Wonderboom Nature Reserve (remaining portion 18, 19, portion 7, 55 and 56 of the farm Wonderboom 302 JR)

Address: c/o Voortrekker Road and extension of Lavender Road, Wonderboompoort, Pretoria, South Africa

GPS Coordinates: 25°41'33"S  
28°11'39"E

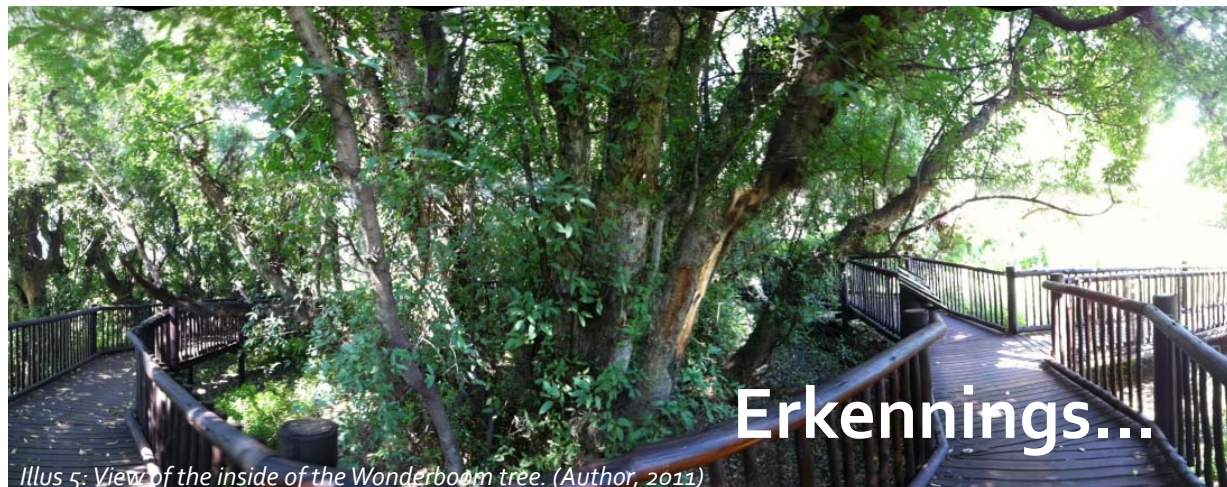
Architectural Theoretical Premise: Semiotics, narratives and didactics as communication tools to 'speak' of the site's cultural and biophysical elements and the history thereof.

Architectural Approach: Better access, heightened awareness and heightened interest through complexity and coherence. A reversible design intervention

Research field: Heritage and cultural landscapes



*Illus 4: Wonderboom fort, night view through one of the aiming holes towards Pretoria city. (Author, 2011)*



*Illus 5: View of the inside of the Wonderboom tree. (Author, 2011)*

Ek dra hierdie verhandeling op aan die Groot Landskapsargitek wat my die vergunning gee om 'n junior vernoot in Sy skepping te kan wees.

Baie dankie ook aan my studieleier, studiomaster en elke dosent wat 'n rol gespeel het in my opleiding.

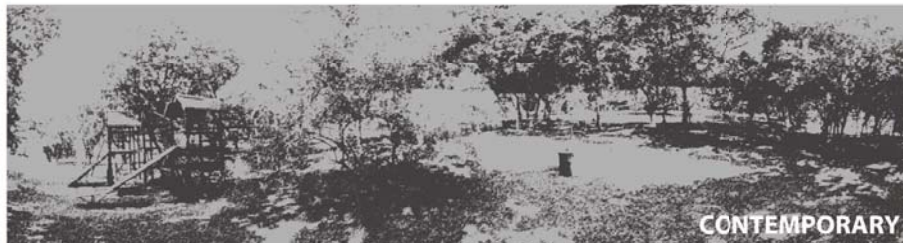
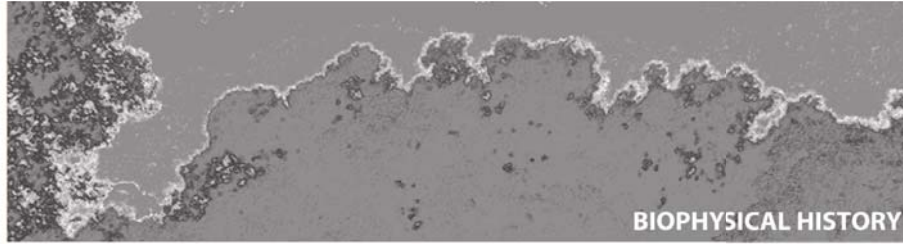
My spesiale waardering aan my familie en vriende vir hulle ondersteuning.



*Illus 6: Wonderboom Tree, close up view with the wooden walkway around the tree. (Author, 2011)*



# Abstract



*Illus 7: The three typologies (Author, 2011)*

Many past events go unmarked and unremembered, and eventually lose their significance. One such area is the Wonderboom fort, tree and the Nature Reserve.

The research investigates how the landscape design can strengthen the existing spirit of place. The place's identity - that of a refuge - is intangible and unconscious, but can be made tangible through a narrative that engaged with the cultural and biophysical history of the site (the tangible world) by means of didactics and semiotics. This will provide a learning experience with added meaning that gives added identity of place. Furthermore, specific design principles are investigated namely: better access, heightened awareness, and heightened interest created through complexity and coherence in design.

Complexity and coherence will generate interest in the user to engage with the physical/conscious experience, engaging and learning about the physical aspects of the site's nature and culture. The unconscious experience will be guided through semiotics - the use of symbols that give meaning and add identity to place and user.

The design intervention will be a landscape which tells the story of the place and unveils the heritage and history of the site in such a way that visitors will have an engaging and informative experience of the past events.

The site can be the northern link and gateway into the city of Pretoria, a destination for local and international tourism, and a green corridor for people to experience the city in a different way.

The design approach ties in with the Burra Charter approach, namely "changing as much as necessary but as little as possible" but also with the Ename charter stating that Heritage sites should be presented to the public and the public should be educated to ensure their protection.

Hampton Adams rightfully says that: Only by looking at the past, can we plan the future.

Keywords:

Didactic  
Semiotics  
Narrative  
Cultural  
Biophysical  
Ruin  
Identity  
Experience

Meaning  
Complexity  
Coherence  
Access  
Awareness  
Genius loci  
Landscape architecture

# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

## FRAMEWORK

1

2

3

4

- 1.1 Background to the problem
- 1.2 Core research question
- 1.3 Hypothesis
- 1.4 Sub-questions
- 1.5 Vision
- 1.6 Introduction to the site
  - 1.6.1 Study area
  - 1.6.2 User
  - 1.6.3 Client
- 1.7 Methodology and methods
- 1.8 Delimitations and assumptions

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Natural history of the Magaliesberg area
- 2.3 The cultural history of the Magaliesberg area
  - 2.3.1 Introduction
  - 2.3.2 The Stone Age
  - 2.3.3 The Iron Age
  - 2.3.4 Early travelers
  - 2.3.5 Voortrekker invasion
  - 2.3.6 South African Republic
  - 2.3.7 Founding of Pretoria
  - 2.3.8 British annexation of the Transvaal
  - 2.3.9 The first Anglo Boer War
  - 2.3.10 The second Anglo Boer War
  - 2.3.11 The nature area
- 2.4 Conclusion

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Literary investigation of core theoretical concepts
  - 3.2.1 Semiotics
  - 3.2.2 What is a narrative in terms of design?
  - 3.2.3 What is didactic design?
  - 3.2.4 How can identity be created?
  - 3.2.5 How can experience strengthen identity?
  - 3.2.6 Meaning in the landscape
  - 3.2.7 How do you create interest and discovery in the landscape?
  - 3.2.8 How can access be created?
  - 3.2.9 How can awareness be created?
- 3.3 Further investigation into key concepts of the site and design.
  - 3.3.1 The tangible and intangible
  - 3.3.2 Ruins
- 3.4 Conclusions

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Existing Open Space Framework
  - 4.2.1 Context and location
  - 4.2.2 The larger urban context analysis
- 4.3 The larger block context for urban development analysis
  - 4.3.1 Larger block context location
  - 4.3.2 Historical features
  - 4.3.3 Topography and setting patterns
  - 4.3.4 Gateways and main roads into Pretoria City
  - 4.3.5 Fortifications and monuments in Pretoria
  - 4.3.6 Open space, parks, landscape structure and waterways
  - 4.3.7 Educational institutes
  - 4.3.8 Link between Pretoria north and south
  - 4.3.8 Composite plan of the block context analysis
- 4.4 Framework concept
  - 4.4.1 Connection of the north and the south (concept 1)
  - 4.4.2 Activating Pretoria (concept 2)
  - 4.4.3 Framework narrative (concept 3)
  - 4.4.4 Conclusion
- 4.5 Location of the fortifications of Pretoria and their immediate environment
- 4.6 Large conceptual contextual framework proposal
- 4.7 Framework narrative

SETTING: THE SITE

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT SKETCHPLAN CLARIFICATION

TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION

5

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 The larger context
  - 5.2.1 Site location
  - 5.2.2 Landuses
  - 5.2.3 Geology (Magaliesberg ridge)
  - 5.2.4 Vegetation (Magaliesberg ridge)
- 5.3 Wonderboom Nature Reserve
  - 5.3.1 Exisitng site
- 5.4 Historical background of the Wonder boom Nature Reserve and important aspects thereof
  - 5.4.1 Wonderboom tree
  - 5.4.2 The two caves
  - 5.4.3 Wonderboomppoort
  - 5.4.4 The Wonderboom fort
  - 5.4.5 Wonderboom Nature Reserve
  - 5.4.6 The man-made waterfall
- 5.5 Archaeological data analysis
  - 5.5.1 Historical sites on the nature reserve with cultural and archaeological significance
- 5.6 Cultural and biophysical aspects of the Wonderboom Nature Reserve
- 5.7 The site's contrasting factors/aspects
- 5.8 SWOT analysis
- 5.9 Concept
- 5.10 Conclusion

6

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Concept
- 6.3 Design guidelines
- 6.4 The specific focus areas on different scales
- 6.5 Wonderboom Nature Reserve frame work plan development
- 6.6 Wonderboom Nature Reserve master plan development
- 6.7 Conclusion

7

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Analysis summary
- 7.3 Final sketchplan: roof plan
- 7.4 Final sketchplan: building plan
- 7.5 Coherence
- 7.6 Complexity
- 7.7 The three narratives
- 7.8 Sections
- 7.9 Zoning of sketchplan
- 7.10 The discussion of the different spaces (zones)
  - 7.10.1 Entrance approach
  - 7.10.2 Entrance
  - 7.10.3 Narrative (history)
  - 7.10.4 Courtyard
  - 7.10.5 Lookout points 1-4
  - 7.10.6 Medicinal roof garden
  - 7.10.7 Geology, materiality and spirit of place
  - 7.10.8 Amphitheatre
  - 7.10.9 Restaurant and spill-out area
- 7.11 Exploration of existing structure and new intervention
- 7.12 Conclusion

8

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Location map
- 8.3 The site in context
- 8.4 Final sketchplan: roof plan
- 8.5 Final sketchplan: building plan
- 8.6 Soft materials
  - 8.6.1 Tree plan and list
  - 8.6.2 Medicinal roof garden plan
  - 8.6.3 Planting pallet
  - 8.6.4 Plant list
  - 8.6.5 Veld grass list
  - 8.6.6 Plant sources diagram and table
- 8.7 Hard materials
  - 8.7.1 Paving plan
  - 8.7.2 Material pallet, material sources diagram and table
- 8.8 Sustainability
- 8.9 Technical plans
  - 8.9.1 Reference plan
  - 8.9.2 Lighting plan
  - 8.9.3 Storm water management plan
  - 8.9.4 Storm water calculations
- 8.10 Technical sections and details

9. CONCLUSION

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

11. APPENDICES

12. ADDENDUMS