

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

*“The task of the responsible architect is to provide resistance to current cultural erosion and to **replant** buildings and cities in an authentic existential and experiential soil. At the beginning of the new millennium, architectural culture would do well to nurture productive tensions between cultural realism and artistic idealism, determination and discretion, ambition and humility.”*

(Pallasmaa, 2000: 82)

This dissertation explores the role of architecture in the conservation of intangible heritage with specific reference to the ‘Marabi’ culture, a vibrant township culture unique to Marabastad in the North West of Pretoria which played a formative role in the development of South African popular culture from as early as the 1930’s.

The current predominant approach to South African commemorative architecture is critically investigated in order to ascertain the level of engagement with intangible heritage and the success thereof. Professor Karel Anthonie Bakker’s (Head of Department of Architecture, University of Pretoria) studies on Heritage Transmission and Liana Muller’s (University of Cape Town) investigation on Intangible Landscapes will serve as the principle supportive background for this investigation. The architectural proposal then responds to the findings of the study within the context of Marabastad and its intangible heritage.

The complex history of Marabastad is unpacked with the following intentions:

1. To illustrate the cultural, political and historical significance of the study area.
2. To identify living historical cultural systems unique to the area, their origins, their physical loci, their social implications and possible threats to their health/survival.
3. To establish Marabastad’s far-reaching cultural influence.
4. To understand the built fabric of the area in terms of its development and its role in supporting the culture of the area.

The knowledge gained from the historical analysis of the area will determine programme, location, scale and architectural response.

Renowned anthropologist and professor at the Performance Studies Department of the Tisch School of the Arts in New York, Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett, is one of the world’s foremost authorities on the commemoration of intangible heritage. Gimblett, in alignment with Austrian Philosopher Friedrich August Hayek’s (1899-1992) theory of Cultural Evolution, propagates the notion that “culture is not static; it is continuously produced and re-created by people” (Kirshenblatt Gimblett, 2004: 65).

The endeavour of “preserving” cultural heritage is therefore inherently dualistic: for a cultural system to sustain its societal currency it must be able to endure within its current social context. This means that culture has to adapt in order to maintain practical feasibility. Should it fail to adapt, the cultural system may become sacrosanct, lose its functional value to society and ‘die’. Consequently, it could be argued that the act of “preservation” in a socio-cultural context entails not the safeguarding of “originality”, but rather the facilitation of a process of evolution. See Fig.1.1

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (*ibid*) posits that the process of continuous re-interpretation, decoding, adaptation and the adding of additional layers of meaning allows “the outmoded” a life in the present as “an exhibition of itself,” a process she calls Metacultural Production. Metacultural Production and Bakker’s studies on socially constructed heritage meaning form the theoretical backbone upon which the dissertation will explore an architecture that may better engage with the complex, processual nature of intangible heritage.



Fig 1.1
The evolution of identity
Author

1.2

BACKGROUND

1.2.1

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSERVATION OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Since its establishment in 1942, UNESCO has guided the development of multiple heritage initiatives across the world. Initially, cultural heritage was only deemed to include tangible elements, which were defined as “monuments, groups of buildings or sites of historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value” (UNESCO, 1972 : 1).

In 1972 the definition was expanded to include natural heritage, which was defined as “outstanding physical, biological and geological features; habitats of threatened plants or animal species and areas of value on scientific or aesthetic grounds or from the point of view of conservation” (UNESCO, 1972 : 1).

The understanding of Natural Heritage in terms of “ecology, environment, and a systemic approach to a living entity” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004: 53) contributed greatly to the perception of heritage not only as elements that could be indexed upon an inventory, but as living systems that are constantly evolving.

Consequently, it is through the systemic approach to Natural Heritage that Intangible Heritage found its current definition.

The efforts to devise a model for the protection of intangible heritage dates back to 1952. In an attempt to ‘safeguard’ intangible heritage (then called ‘Folklore’) legal concepts were enforced (such as intellectual property, trademark, patent). This failed however, for “folklore is not the unique creation of an individual; it exists in versions and variants rather than in a single, original and authoritative form; it is generally created in performance and transmitted orally, by custom or example, rather than in tangible form (writing, notating, drawing, photographs, recordings)” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004: 53).

During the 1980’s, UNESCO defined preservation as different from legal matters and in 1989 they adopted the “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and

Folklore.” Although legal matters were now left aside, the focus was still on the “materials gathered” (UNESCO, 1989: 4).

2001 saw the introduction of the “Report on the Preliminary Study on the Advisability of Regulating Internationally, through a New Standard-setting Instrument, the Protection of Traditional Culture and Folklore” (UNESCO, 2001).

The 2001 report defines Intangible Heritage as: “all forms of traditional and popular folk culture, i.e. collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition. These creations are transmitted orally or by gesture, and are modified over a period of time through a process of collective recreation. They include oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities, traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia, the culinary arts and all kinds of special skills connected with the material aspects of culture, such as tools and the habitat” (UNESCO, 2001: 6).



Fig 1.2
The Folklorist
Author

Then, at the March 2001 meeting in Turin, the definition was further specified as : “Peoples’ learned processes along with knowledge, skills and creativity that inform and are developed by them, the products they create and the resources, spaces and other aspects of social and natural context necessary to their sustainability; these processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity” (UNESCO, 2001: [s.p]).

The Turin document shifted the focus from the documentation and preservation of endangered traditions and their artefacts (tales, songs, customs etc.) to sustaining the traditions themselves by supporting the practitioners. Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett (2004: 53) states that the 2001 document illustrated a “shift in the concept of intangible heritage to include not only the ‘masterpieces’ but also the masters.” The latest model acknowledges the fact that the mere ‘safeguarding’ of a dying tradition (through the preservation of it’s ‘originality’) will not help in preventing it’s demise. It establishes that in order to “sustain a living, if endangered, tradition” one needs to support “the conditions necessary for cultural reproduction” (ibid, 2004: 56).

This approach adopted its thinking from natural heritage as living systems and from the Japanese concept of “living national treasure” (ibid, 2004: 54). Therefore UNESCO (2001: [s.p]) implores that measures be taken (by state actors) to create spaces that may “support local cultural reproduction, rather than creating cultural artefacts such as lists”.

From the abovementioned introduction to UNESCO’s framework for the protection of intangible heritage it is apparent that architecture has a role to play in the creation of places where metacultural production may occur and therefore contribute to the sustainability of living cultural systems.

This dissertation aims to illustrate how architecture may contribute to the conservation of the intangible heritage of Marabastad by providing it with a habitat for cultural reproduction, thereby “giving the endangered or outmoded [the Marabi culture] a second life as an exhibition of itself” (ibid, 2004: 56).

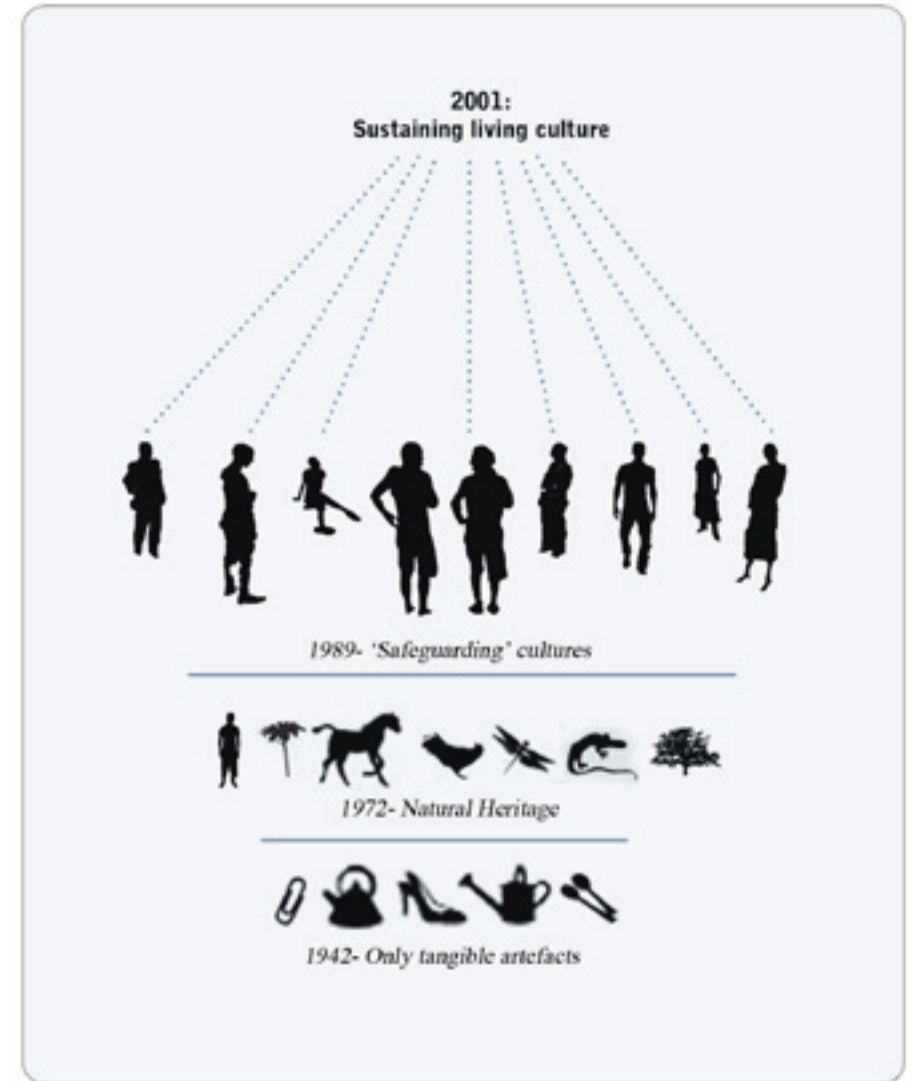


Fig 1.3
 The development of UNESCO's model
 for the conservation of intangible heritage.
 Author

1.2.2

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following section aims to briefly introduce the issues surrounding the conservation of intangible heritage in the context of Post-Apartheid South Africa. Chapter 4 further explores precedents in support of issues discussed in this introduction.

In “Making Money with Memories: The Fusion of Heritage, tourism and Identity Formation in South Africa” (2005: 103) Marschall identifies a “post- apartheid fascination, bordering on obsession, with the identification, celebration, evaluation, reassessment and, not least, commodification of heritage”. Fig 1.4 to Fig 1.9 illustrates six examples completed during the last decade.

This “obsession” has been actively taking shape in the form of a multitude of commemorative places (museums, statues, squares, memorials) across the country, all sharing the commonalities of either “correct[ing] previously misrepresented history, or to present[ing] previously non-represented or suppressed history” (Bakker & Muller, 2010 : [2]).

Although these post-1994 sites contribute (at varying levels of success) to the rectification and clarification of South African history, memory and heritage, they deal almost exclusively with the sites and heroes of the ‘struggle.’ Bakker and Muller (2010: 3) contend that they do so in the form of a “hegemonic, dominant voice that crowded out, ignored or silenced many dissonant and smaller voices of that epoch [intangible heritage], and made it more difficult to commemorate other cultural themes from the country’s multivalent past”.

Bakker (2008) alleges that this may be as a result of “a lack of clear guidance in the South African heritage legislation on the nature of intangible heritage” which leads to an “emphasis on the use of static monuments, blunt and simplistic use of symbolism, avoidance of complex narratives, ignorance of the cultural dimensions of landscape, a lack of interpretation of place, event and locally-based oral history, and subsequent deficiencies in presentation and meaning”.

Bakker and Muller (2010: [5]) support the argument for an increased “emphasis on intangible heritage as an agent in the production of places of commemoration” as well as an integral part of “community identity formation” and that heritage practitioners should “transform their practice” (Bakker & Muller, 2010 : [5]) in order to better engage with the complex, evolutionary nature of intangible heritage.



Fig 1.4
Red Location Museum, Port Elizabeth
Noero Wolff Architects, 2006
(sammlung, 2011)



Fig 1.6
Walter Sisulu Square, Soweto
StudioMAS, 2005
Author

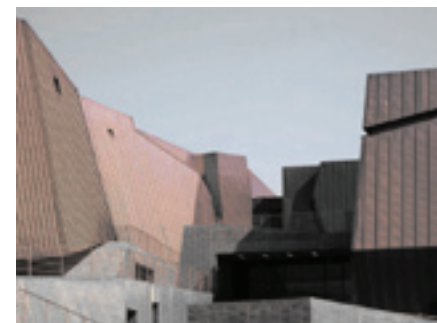


Fig 1.8
Freedom Park, Pretoria
Mashabane Rose, GAPP and MMA, 2010
Author



Fig 1.5
Cradock Four Memorial, Cradock
GP Greeff and Associates, 2010
Author



Fig 1.7
Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg
Mashabane Rose, GAPP, Britz Roodt and Linda Mvusi, 2003
Author



Fig 1.9
Hector Pieterse Museum, Soweto
Mashabane Rose Architects, 2002
(flickr, 2011)

1.3 PROBLEM

1.3.1

BACKGROUND TO PROBLEM STATEMENT

Chapter 2 discusses the historical background of Marabastad in detail, but to clarify the objectives of the study the following key points are of particular significance:

(Summarised from: Illife, 1987 ; Friedman, 1994 ; Van der Waal, 1998 ; Ballantine 1993 ; Le Roux, 1991 ; Dikobe, 1984 ; Naidoo, 2008)

1. The 'Marabi' culture refers to a rowdy, festive township culture synonymous with the drinking of illegally brewed beer and wild dancing to 'Marabi' music – a unique and greatly influential musical style argued to have originated in Marabastad. (Illiffe, 1987)
2. The 'Marabi' culture created important independent economical opportunities within the townships. (Friedman, 1994)
3. The culture once thrived in beerhalls and dancehalls where weekend-long parties (timiti) would be held. In Marabastad, three theatres : The Orient, Empire and Royal theatres were the primary locations where 'timiti' would take place (along with various other social activities). (Dikobe, 1984)
4. These locations were subject to numerous police raids and restrictive laws. In 1963 the Royal Theatre was demolished under the pretext of a highway scheme to be constructed through its site – it was, however, the only building in the area to be demolished. Electricity to the other two theatres were also permanently cut, thereby dislocating the culture from its primary physical loci. (Naidoo, 2008)
5. Marabastad saw the forced relocation of different racial segments of its population at different times during its history until finally in 1967 it was completely rid of its residential component, dislocating the area from its cultural practitioners (the people). (Van der Waal, 1998)
6. Currently, Marabastad hosts Pretoria's largest inter-modal public transport interchange, accommodating vast daily 'tides' of commuters that pass through the area. (Aziz Tayob Framework, 2002)
7. In 1991, Professor Schalk le Roux (University of Pretoria) identified an opportunity to establish a heritage conservation area within the last remaining historical fabric of Marabastad, with specific reference to the possibility of reviving aspects of its

complex cultural history (intangible heritage).

8. The 'Marabi' culture is still very much alive, 'Marabi' music forms the platform upon which a great deal of contemporary South African musical styles has been developed. Kwela, Mbaqanqa and even Kwaito are known to have their origins in Marabi music. These styles now enjoy worldwide acclaim. (Ballantine, 1993)
9. The street and the 'Shebeen' (informal bar) may be ascribed as the contemporary loci where the culture is still most active.

1.3 .2

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Due to the relocation of its citizens, the demolition of the Royal Theatre (together with the decommissioning of the Empire and Orient theatres) and the increasing effects of global cultural homogenization, Marabastad has become dislocated from its cultural heritage.

The principle aim of the dissertation is to re-establish aspects of Marabastad's cultural heritage within its current context. It will do so by reviving historical cultural practices and allowing it a life in the present through the process of metacultural production. The implementation of the proposal entails returning the cultural practices to the physical loci that once hosted them, which in the context of Marabastad, are the three theatres: The Royal, The Empire and The Orient.

1.3.2 .1

Sub-Problem

The shortcomings of commemorative architecture in South Africa in terms of its engagement with intangible heritage (discussed in Chapter 4).

The proposal aims to offer an architectural response to issues raised regarding commemorative architecture in South Africa with specific reference to Bakker's 2011 critique on the 2007 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (discussed in Chapter 3)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Quantitative and qualitative field research

Analysis of current conditions in Marabastad in relation to the Integrated Spatial Design Framework for Marabastad as compiled by Aziz Tayob Architects Inc. & Meyer Pienaar Tayob Architects & Urban Designers in 1998.

Author of “Plekke and Geboue van Pretoria”(1992) Professor Schalk le Roux’s 1991 report “Marabastad of die Asiatiese Bazaar: Geboue en Plekke van Belang” will guide the analysis of the existing historical fabric of the area.

2. Literature study

Literature studies will be done on the following subjects in substantiation of the argument:

- Metacultural production
- Social Construction
- Intangible Landscapes

The following Heritage Charters and Heritage Legislation will be considered:

- The 2007 ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage sites.
- The 1999 South African National Heritage Resources Act.

3. Historical overview/context

A thorough analysis of Marabastad’s physical, political and cultural history will be undertaken.

Intentions:

1. To identify opportunities for architectural response.

2. To create an in depth understanding of the local culture.
3. To substantiate the arguments expressed in this dissertation.
4. To illustrate the significance of the study.
5. To establish a baseline knowledge of the study area with the reader.

4. Precedent/case studies

Examples of South African commemorative architecture will be critically analysed in order to establish current typological characteristics (both positive and negative).

International examples will be discussed, illustrating global trends, theories and design approaches.

Programmatic precedents will be investigated to gain knowledge on the subject of contemporary theatre design.



Fig 1. 10
The Merry Blackbirds - 1930's Jazz troupe.
(Ballantine, 1993: 53)

PROGRAMME

The proposal is to be implemented as an integral part of a heritage conservation scheme within the Marabastad heritage conservation area identified by Professor Schalk Le Roux (1991). He identifies three theatres as important social, cultural and physical landmarks which should be restored or reprogrammed in an effort to re-establish their influence on the area. Le Roux stresses the importance of developing individual landmarks within relation to one another because of their role of providing continuity to the historical fabric of Marabastad.

1. The programme will function together with the simultaneous restoration and/or adaptation of the Orient and Empire theatres (See Fig 1.12-Fig 1.13).

In accordance with the wishes of the owner, Mr Sandha Chetty, The Orient will be restored as a cinema, specialising in local and historical films. The Empire Theatre will be re-programmed as a micro-brewery that brews local historical beers (Skokiaan) with names like 'Ma-trek-my broek uit', 'Klim-in -die-boom' and 'Lillian's Brew' ¹, to be served at a bar there as well as at the other two theatres (the historical and cultural relevance of beer brewing is discussed in Section 2.2.2.4).

2. The main site of investigation, the site of the Royal Theatre will be programmed as a multi-use, multi-form theatre.

The programme will respond to historical, current and future conditions:

Historical:

A reinterpretation of its historical function as multi-functional space: cinema, theatre, dancehall, town-hall and community centre.

Current

Appropriatable space for informal restaurants

Public ablution area

Public open space

¹ **Skokiaan** [mass noun]

South African illicit home-brewed alcoholic drinks made from malt, yeast, sugar, and water. (Oxford Dictionary)

Future:

In response to the programming of the Conservation area and the implementation of the Aziz Tayob framework.

In addition it will now also host:

Music recording facilities and music teaching facilities.

Artists accommodation- flexible, to accommodate different group sizes .

The old Columbia dancehall – which later became Steeve the Jazz King's Records – also has a role to play in the re-programming of the historical area. It will be programmed as a public sound archive where music and sounds recorded at the new Royal Theatre will be stored and made available to the public. The songs and sound samples are available to visiting artists to use in contemporary projects (See Fig 1.11).

3. How does this programme facilitate metacultural production?

- Provides an arena for the Marabi culture to exhibit itself within the current social context and in relation to contemporary cultures.
- Allows critical public engagement with the Marabi culture as a living historical cultural system.
- Allows cultural evolution within a historical framework.
- Returns the physical locus which traditionally hosted the Marabi culture.



Fig 1.11
Steeve the Jazz King's Records: Historical Remnant of the Marabi era. To be re-programmed as a public sound archive where sounds from the New Royal Theatre are made available to the public.
Author

CLIENT PROFILE

The Gallo Music Group- Record company and music publishing.

The Gallo Music Group has been associated with Marabi music since 1930 when they first introduced the world to Marabi music by sending several Marabi musicians to London to record albums for Singer Records. Since then, the label has become synonymous with the culture, having recorded acclaimed musicians such as Miriam Makeba, Solomon Linda and Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Ballantine, 1993: 8).

Fig 1.14 (overleaf) Shows the album cover of Marabi group Tsaba Tsabane's first recording, recorded in London in 1930 (Ballantine, 1993: 54).

1.6.1

ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION

The client (and the artists involved) would stand to benefit from the following:

Primary income sources:

- **Royalties*: Sounds from the sound archive are copyrighted. Artists or private agencies that use the material pay royalties.
- **Recording*: The studios offer recording facilities where musicians can produce albums.
- **Record Sales*: Music recorded by the artists signed under the Gallo brand.
- **Large events*: Events where entry is controlled can generate income through ticket sales.

Secondary income sources:

- **Music classes*: Musicians can share knowledge.
- **Rentable space*: Restaurant and living units generate income through rent.
- **Overnight facility*: The overnight facility charges a nightly fee.
- **Busking*: Performers accumulate donations during daytime performances
- **Exposure*: As artists gain popularity other opportunities are created for them.



Fig 1.12
Field Sketch: The Empire Theatre today, currently shops but to be reprogrammed as a micro-brewery that brews local historical beers.
Author



Fig 1.13
Field Sketch: The Orient Theatre today, currently a shebeen and shops, to be restored to a cinema.
Author



Fig 1.14
Early Gallo Records Album Cover
Tsaba Tsabane No 1.
(Ballantine, 1998: 54)