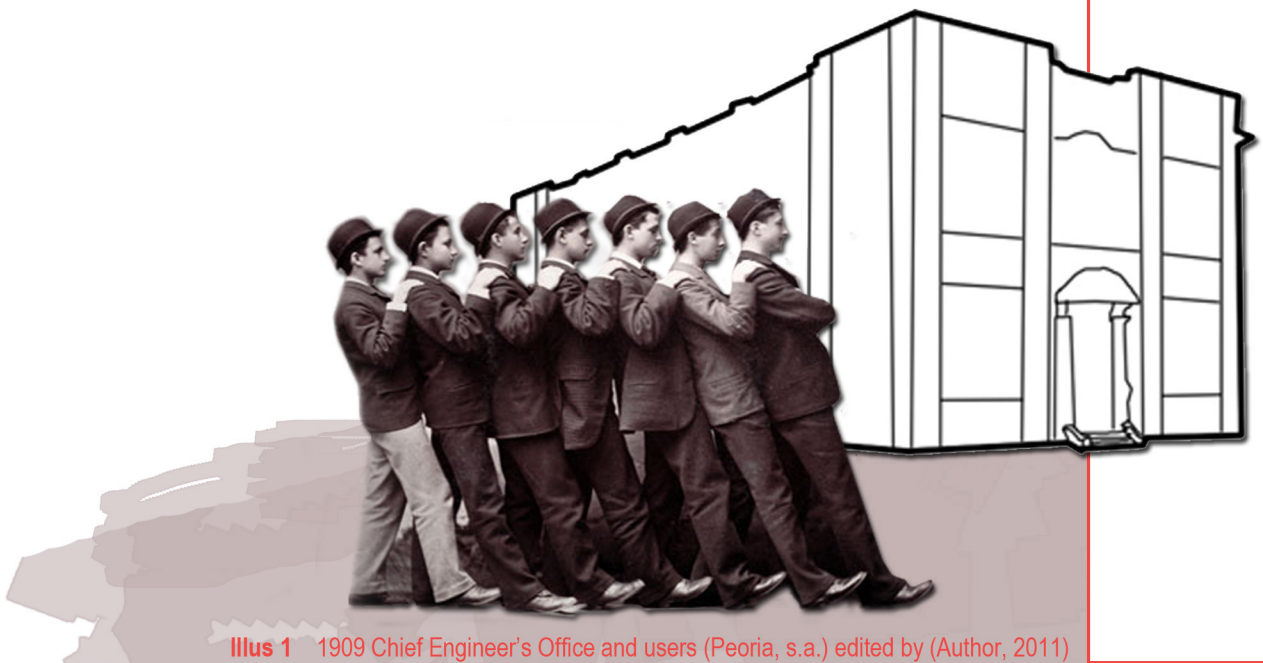




“...Processes of change to facilitate re-colonization will tend to usurp a building's initial integrity and create mongrel buildings” (Scott, 2008:11).

1

Introduction



Illus 1 1909 Chief Engineer's Office and users (Peoria, s.a.) edited by (Author, 2011)



I.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will serve to introduce the study discourse for the programme, M Int (Prof) in the year 2011. The background of the study will be outlined and its significance identified. The research problem and its subsequent research questions will be discussed, with reference to their theoretical context and aims.

Thereafter, the design problem will be introduced. An overview of the building site, typology and client will be provided. Finally, intended methods of research and design will be stated and limitations and assumptions will provide a framework through which the study will occur. The chapter will then be concluded.

I.2 BACKGROUND

“It is the alteration in the rituals of occupation that will cause a building to be considered obsolete”.
(Scott, 2008: 5)

Attitudes to the treatment of existing historical architecture differ and approaches to intervention vary. Historical architecture traditionally experiences intervention through the processes of restoration, preservation, reconstruction, adaptation and new work (Australia, 1999: 2-7). Scott argues that while restoration does seek to re-establish the integrity of a building that once was, the negligence to address change is a denial of the needs of the present and prevents inhabitation (Scott, 2008: 48). Similarly, he argues against the process of preservation, which seeks to retain a building's condition as it stands and prevent future decay, a process which Scott rejects by highlighting the futility of preventing a ruin, which has increased value due to decay, from ruining further (Scott, 2008: 58). Alteration, however, acknowledges a building's failure to provide for a current need and proposes a solution: intervention to the built structure (Scott, 2008: 95). Since interior design is concerned with intervention and inhabitation (König, 2010: 12), it is the third method that most suitably addresses change in occupancy.

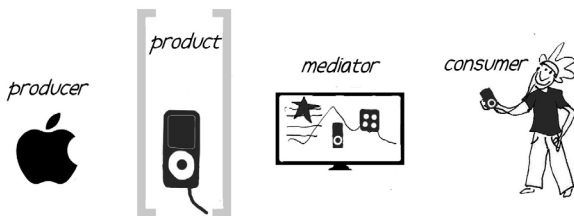
Interior design, as a discipline of intervention, has the purpose of reacting to existing built form (König, 2010: 50), and is therefore capable of addressing change in occupancy in existing architecture. Because it is concerned with the interpretation of user needs, habits and desires (König, 2010: 12), the explicit representation of user culture and identity is apparent in the design of interior space. It is in this way that interior design is a cultural product, which influences user identity through filters of perception and meaning (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 4).

The study finds relevance to the context of interior design in South Africa, particularly Pretoria, in its exposure as a discipline which can fulfill the role of intervention on historical buildings in the built environment. This will contribute to the value of the discipline, as one which is capable of successfully transforming the existing and inherited in order to suit current user culture.

I.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research study will strive to build on the concept of interior design as a form of cultural production (Königk, 2010: 51) and motivate its capability as a discipline thereby principled to successfully alter existing historical architecture for new occupation. The dominant research problem is that intervention on historical architecture generally represents a loss of value to both inherited form and new typology (Feilden, 1994: 8).

Interior design is a cultural product (Königk, 2010: 51). Cultural production is the “creation, diffusion and consumption of cultural products” (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 1). In their paper, Venkatesh and Meamber (2006: 4) explain the three actors involved in cultural production and their role in contribution to this process. Using the popular product, iPod, the diagram below (Illus 1.1) demonstrates their explanation.



Illus 1.1 Actors in Cultural Production (Author, 2011)

The producer is responsible for the creation of the product, mediators are responsible for communicating the product and consumers absorb and utilize products (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 4). In the context of design, a designer becomes the producer (design is the product), media is the mediator and users are the consumers.

As is evident in the case of an iPod, the consumer extracts meaning from the product and uses it as a part of identity construction (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 4). The iPod transcends its function as a music player and symbolizes trend and youth, which are absorbed by the consumer and expressed in identity. Similarly, design, as a cultural product, has the ability to influence the experience and identity of its users. According to Venkatesh and Meamber, it is the use of symbolism, narratives, and experiences in product creation that opens a product to consumer interpretation (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 9) therefore, the use of symbolism in design is a tool to invoke feeling and meaning in the experience of its users.

Douglas asserts the importance of cultural production by defending the seemingly superficial activity of shopping as that of a reflection of identity and cultural expression (Douglas, 1996: 81). Shopping, as a consumerist act, is linked to the process of cultural production. Although temporal, the act of shopping cannot be dismissed as superficial since it is a meaningful contributor to identity construction and cultural production. All forms of cultural products are temporal and are of relevance for a particular time, they are influenced by cultural priorities of the consumer of a time (Venkatesh & Meamber, 2006: 12). Similarly, interior design, although temporal, imposes a deep impression on the cultural identity of its users and therefore its significance may not be dismissed. Interior design is current, explicit and temporal.

From the perspective of cultural production, the idea of historical architecture for current inhabitation does not fulfil the relevant cultural desire of the consumer (or user). As with all architecture, historical architecture exists of a time, and is relevant for such time. As a cultural product, architecture addresses an objective which is temporal and the anticipation of its influence does not project beyond the point of current occupation: it is utopian (Scott, 2008: 15) and therefore unwilling to change.



“Change of use causes a massive change in the rituals of occupation. Buildings change as the city changes”.
(Scott, 2008: 17)

Architecture exhibits a sense of permanence. Buildings survive beyond their destined purposes and change in occupation is inevitable. To address this, buildings may be retained and altered or they may be demolished and replaced. Feilden argues for the conservation of historical architecture as “cultural property” (1994: 8) but rejects new occupation. Interior design, as a reaction to existing built form (König, 2010: 50), would opt to retain and alter the existing. These conflicting ideas have given rise to the following research question:

1. How can the value of existing historical architecture be improved through intervention?

And sub questions:

1.1 What is the role of historical architecture in cultural production?

1.2 Can the interior design intervention adequately address change in occupancy while maintaining the historical identity of the existing building?

I.4 DESIGN

The problem of focus will relate to the 1909 Chief Engineer's Office (CEO) / 2011 People's Upliftment Programme (POPUP) building in Salvokop and a re-approach to intervention since change of typology as a means to reinstate integrity to the original building and explicitly address its new purpose as a skills training centre for the disadvantaged. This study is significant to the context of Pretoria, a city which contains the real-world problem of large collections of historical architecture rendered obsolete due to change in occupancy.

The site and context were chosen according to a set of criteria as a means to overcome the unfamiliarity with the city of Pretoria and in order to respond to existing design and research strengths and interests. These criteria include:

- The chosen site and building should be of heritage significance and therefore of appropriate complexity (SACAP, 2010: 1).
- The chosen site and building should be accessible and documentation of the area (history, frameworks, maps, drawings, etc.) should be available.
- The chosen site and building should find itself in a defined urban context (a defined urban context is regarded in the study as a setting which includes a diversity of activity nodes and built functions within the given precinct).
- The chosen site and building must have distinctive qualities, worthy of preservation and useful as a positive contribution in the process of design.
- The chosen site and building should display a sense of missed opportunity to be addressed in the design.

The neighbourhood of Salvokop (Illus 1.2) appeared to meet these criteria and had the most appeal as an historical settlement associated with the railway development of Pretoria. Freedom Park is of note in this instance, since it is a world heritage site (Freedom Park, s.a.) and is located within the immediate context. Its design concepts of a documentation of the past, present, and future of the South African people's progress (Freedom Park, s.a.) should provide relevance and significance to both design and theory.



Illus 1.2 Aerial Photograph of Salvokop (Google Earth, 2010)



Illus 1.3 Chief Engineer's Office, 1909 (Bakker, 2002)

The chosen building lies within a complex of historical buildings designed to service the operation of the railway line in the early 1900's (Astrup, 2005: 21-22). The chosen building, completed in 1909, was designed to accommodate the offices of the chief mechanical engineer for the Central South African Railway (Astrup, 2005: 24) (See Illus 1.3). Presently, the building is occupied by POPUP, a skills training centre for the disadvantaged (Illus 1.4).

In order to motivate the necessity of a design intervention, a statement of significance has been prepared:

- As a building historically designed for the use of office workers in the early 1900's, the original design has little relevance to the functionality of a skills training centre for the disadvantaged of today.
- Similarly, the alterations and additions applied to the building to suit these new functions were conducted in a way which disregarded the aesthetic and spatial integrity of the original building, without adding design value to the operation of its current typology.
- However, the existing typology of a skills training centre is socially significant and worthy of retention since its role as a means to enable progress in people is of constant relevance, a positive contribution to society and meaningful to its immediate context of the impoverished Salvokop community, as well as Freedom Park, a monument concerned with the progress of South African people throughout time.



Illus 1.4 POPUP (Astrup, 2005:21)

POPUP, the identified client, is a charitable organisation, which is involved in imparting a variety of skills to the disadvantaged at the cost of a marginal enrolment fee with the goal of enabling them to generate an income (POPUP, s.a.). Existing skills classes last for differing time periods and are supplemented by a further 10 days of training in life orientation prior to the skills course (POPUP, s.a.). Skills training fields include: home management, catering, garment and décor manufacturing, early child development, home based care, computer and secretarial skills, arts and crafts, forklift driving, business skills and life skills (POPUP, s.a.). POPUP also provides social services, medical services, a crèche and foster care at the Edenvale site (POPUP, s.a.). Conditions for entry to skills programmes include: learners should be "between 18 and 45 years of age", they should be unemployed and "available daily for full-time studies", "no post-school qualifications or grade 12 is necessary" and learners must be capable of reading, writing and understanding English, with a compulsory written test to determine this (POPUP, s.a.).

The skills training centre will require designated spaces for the following existing skills training: home management (some practical training occurs outside POPUP centre), catering, garment and décor manufacturing, early child development, home based care (practical training occurs in Centurion), computer and secretarial skills, arts and crafts, forklift driving, business skills and life skills (POPUP, s.a.). Of these skills, forklift driving is the only one which is confined to the exterior and will therefore be regarded as secondary focus to programming of other skills training.



Illus 1.5 POPUP's Sewing Laboratory (Author, 2010)

All skill types require rooms for lecturing and some for practical experience (training laboratories). Lecture rooms will be non specialised and multipurpose, in order to suit the use of different skill types. Training laboratories will be specialised according to the relevant skills.

The following is required:

1. Lecture room/s (cooking skills, garment and décor manufacturing, secretarial skills, arts and crafts, business skills and life skills)
2. Food laboratory (cooking skills)
3. Sewing studio (See Illus 1.5) (garment and décor manufacturing)
4. Arts and Crafts studio (arts and crafts)
5. Counselling rooms (for POPUP learners, staff, street people, food applicants and local shelter inhabitants)
6. Ablutions
7. Dining Hall (for meal provision to POPUP learners)
8. Staff Offices
9. POPMed, POPEye and POPDent constitute an on-site clinic for the disadvantaged and will be disregarded from the scope of study.
10. POPKids is a crèche for disadvantaged and community children and will also be disregarded from the scope of study.

The entire building will be considered as the site for intervention. Although the clinic and crèche will not be considered as the focus of the study, these may be appropriately rezoned should this be required.

I.5 METHODS

As part of the research study to be conducted, the combination of qualitative and interpretive historical research methods are intended to be implemented. Qualitative research involves the act of subjective, interactive research with which the researcher is strongly engaged (Groat & Wang, 2002: 28). It is an inductive process of inquiry which entails the exploration of factors before reaching a conclusion (Groat & Wang, 2008: 28). Qualitative research is concerned with the interpretation of information, rather than the acceptance of facts.

The grounded theory method, as a sub category of qualitative research, will be utilised specifically and involves an “open ended”, “iterative” and “intensive” procedure of “data collection”, “coding” (analysing information) and “memoing” (“theory building”) (Groat & Wang, 2008: 181). This requires the researcher to enter the study without preconceptions, and rather, allow the process of data collection and analysis to generate theory (Groat & Wang, 2008: 180). It is a cyclic process which demands continuous re-evaluation, connection and recollection between the phases of data collection, coding and “memoing” as expressed in the diagram alongside (Table 1.1) (Groat & Wang, 2008: 182).

The interpretive historical method of research will also be employed as a secondary research method. This method was chosen because of the heritage significance of the chosen site. This process of research will involve the collection of historical data, (photographs and aerial photographs) and organizing and interpreting these (Groat & Wang, 2002: 137). This will be used as a form of contextual analysis and discovery as outcomes for the design process, and in determining the significance of the building. These will manifest in time lines, photographic analysis and mapping exercises. Historical interpretive research is linked to the act qualitative research (Groat & Wang, 2008: 167), making it a viable choice in combination with the grounded theory method.

A design method to be initiated is the stripping back method as outlined by Fred Scott. The stripping back method involves the removal of “rotted fabric” (alterations and additions to the building) , replacing and repairing the original fabric, and “enabling works”, the removal of portions which hinder new purpose and the introduction of portions which enable this (Scott, 2008: 108) (Illus 1.6).

The process requires that the designer gains explicit knowledge of the “host” building (Scott, 2008: 108), to be achieved through the process of determining its ideal or model form (Scott, 2008: 109) in analysis.

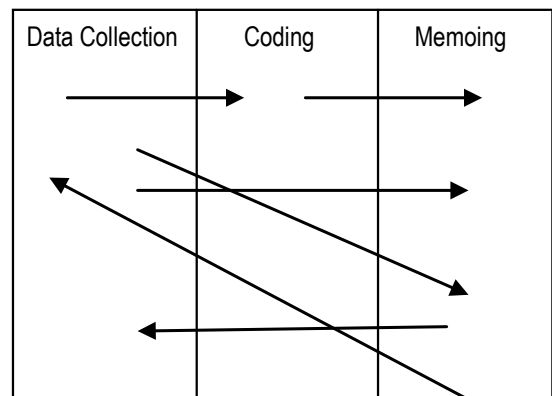
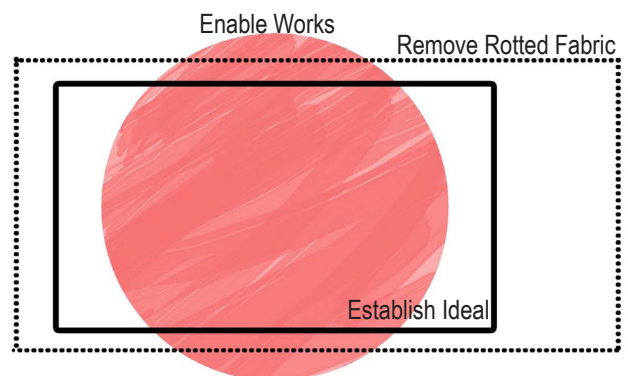
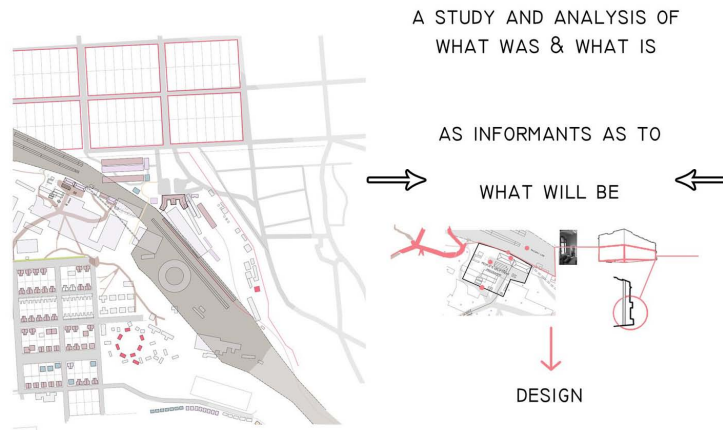


Table 1.1 Grounded theory research phases (Groat & Wang, 2008: 181)



Illus 1.6 Stripping Back Method Parti Diagram (Author, 2011)

Reading the Existing



Other methods to be implemented are symbolism, permanent and temporary, and reading the existing as guidelines for the design intervention. These are illustrated and described below in Fig 1.1.

Other design tools to be implemented include contextual studies, precedent studies, mood boards, collages (as a “compositional tool for intervention” (Scott, 2008: 156)), collection of current and past evidence (newspapers, magazines, maps) and the use of models (as a means to determine stripping back, replacement and removal of fabric).

The following limitations are identified: The building may only be accessed during its operational hours. The design and research study will be conducted in the space of a single year and therefore, only a portion of the built intervention maybe detailed. The existing building will be considered as the site for intervention and the functions of a clinic and crèche maybe rezoned according to spatial requirements, but will not be considered as the study focus.

The design proposal will occur within the context of the following assumptions: All of the proposed Freedom Park buildings are complete and operational. The design will act under the assumption that the Gautrain system and station is operational. Framework proposals for Salvokop will be reviewed and selectively incorporated within the group urban framework within which the design will find context. The building’s structural condition is currently stable.

I.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has served to introduce the study topic. The study background and theoretical context have been outlined and the research questions identified. The chosen site, typology and client have been introduced. The research and design methods have been outlined and the limitations and assumptions denoted. The chapters to follow will strive to supplement and represent the design and research goals outlined.

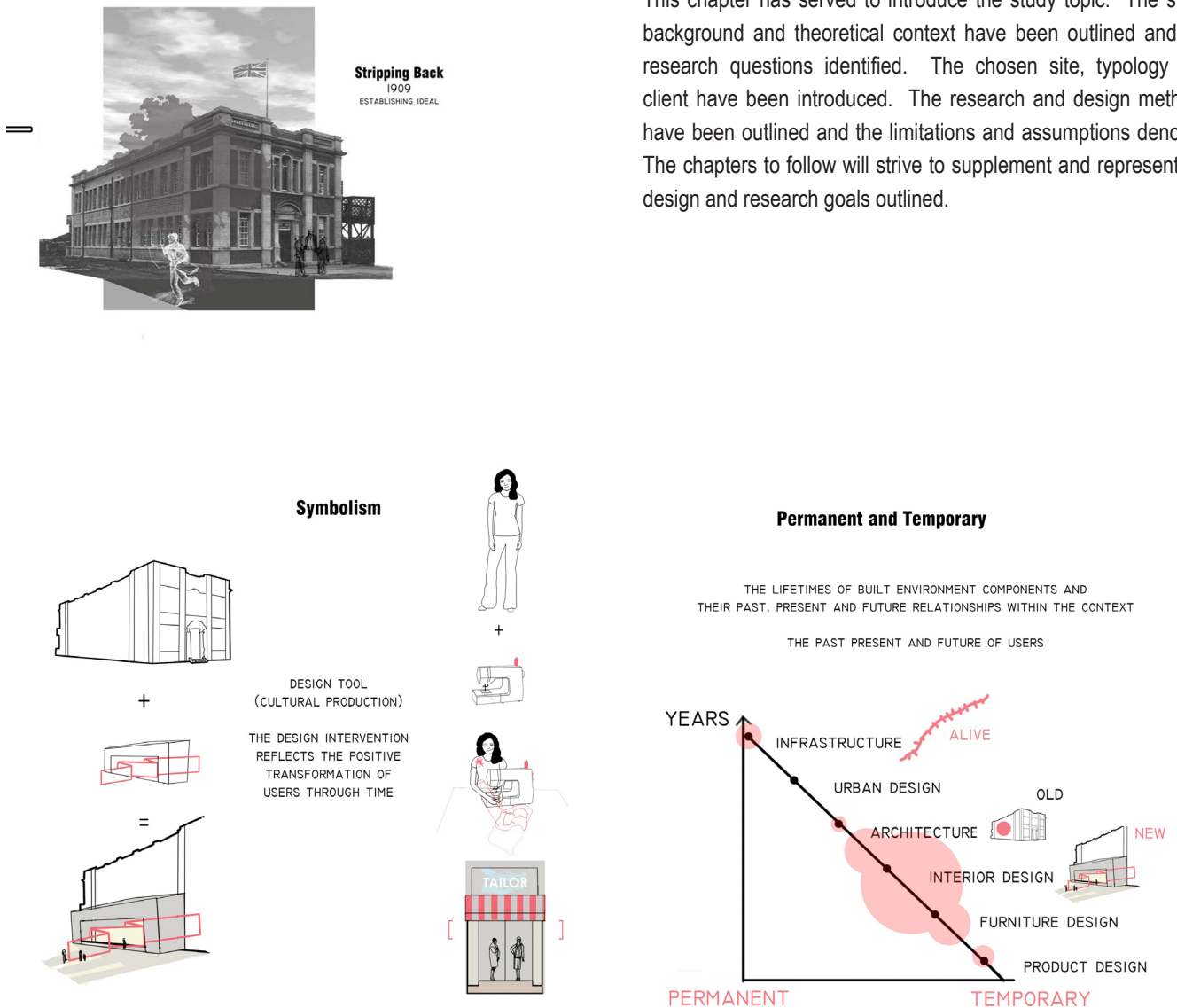


Fig 1.1 Design Methods (Author, 2011)