

### 1. Problem Statement

Inner city regeneration is a prime concern all over the world. What used to be the hub of activity and source of entertainment for the general public, is now being slowly forgotten and replaced with more localised suburban development. This is not to say that the inner city, particularly that of Pretoria, does not still have much to contribute. Thus municipal initiatives for revitalisation of such urban environments are not in short supply. It is in this effort that the city of Pretoria was objectively analysed through a range of spatial development frameworks and found to be increasingly disjointed. Many areas in and around the city have much to offer, and proper redevelopment of these areas could further catalyse a renewed interest in city activities and promote a legible and gratifying urban environment. The precinct of Salvokop is one such area.

Public transport concerned with and between cities is long overdue for improvement. With the introduction of new government initiatives to improve the transport infrastructure of the major metropolitan cities in this country, for example like the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link between Pretoria and Johannesburg, the cities are potentially now more accessible than ever. But with greater accessibility comes a need or an interest to take the trip. Salvokop itself is ideally situated to these major public transport nodes, making it available to not only the citizens of Pretoria but the greater region.

Salvokop has been designated the area for the construction of the nationally significant Freedom Park Heritage Site. But this tourist attraction cannot survive on its own, and requires the establishment of precinct that creates public interest to support it. Thus the once neglected Salvokop Precinct is the subject of heavy investment in order to cultivate its link with the Central Business District and establish development that encourages greater public involvement and economic sustainability.

This dissertation is concerned with documenting design considerations and substantiating the design decisions in the process of the building development. This is furthermore aided by analysing current contextual influence and sensitising the development to its eventual contextual impact on the Precinct.

The main intention of this project is to create a building of regional significance, which contributes towards inner city regeneration and helps establish the precinct as a location of economic, social and cultural vitality. On a more individual level, its facilities will serve to encourage youth development and cultural discovery. The Centre for Performing Arts thus makes itself available to the broad spectrum of society though a medium that all can relate to: music, dance and art.



Figure 1.02



Figure 1.01



Figure 1.04



Figure 1.03



Figure 1.06



Figure 1.05



Figure 1.07 Aerial Photograph showing relationship between Freedom Park, Salvokop Precinct and the Inner City

## 1.1 Design Brief

Salvokop is an area earmarked for major urban regeneration through the government sponsored project "Freedom Park". Coupled with convenient proximity and access to inter-city and inner-city transport infrastructure - such as the Pretoria train station, future Gautrain development and R21 highway - as well as proposed improved vehicular access to and from the Central Business District of the city of Tshwane makes this a prime location for development and public interest.

South Africa is a country of diverse cultural backgrounds, thus for a project to be successful in this melting pot of traditions it needs to serve a general common interest. It is not presumptuous to observe that all these cultures past and present share a love performance and music as a means of expression record of personal culture. Thus it is this love that provides abroad appeal and incentive for public involvement and participation. It is therefore in the interests of the municipal authority to develop a centre that captures the imagination of the people, and serves its purpose as a catalyst for urban regeneration for the area.

Facilities for the performing arts, as is proposed by this dissertation, are not in existence within the immediate area, yet the likes of which compliment the Freedom Park Development Framework. This project does not seek to replace or contest already available facilities in the greater area, such as the State Theatre, nor planned facilities yet to be constructed, as with the broad spectrum of functions that the Freedom Park seeks to accommodate. This project instead seeks to develop a meeting place between past, present and future. Freedom Park is representative of the joy of the present situation, a glorification of the struggle for political freedom after a period of hardship. The Centre for the Performing Arts strives to cultivate a freedom in spirit of its users, to instil optimism for the future through experience and achievement while providing a medium for cultural exploration and expression.

The Centre for the Performing Arts is intended to cater to all disciplines of performance in use in this country. The Centre is thus designed to accommodate performances of a traditional nature, indigenous to South Africa, from dance, choir, music concerts, even story telling to an audience of intimate scale. Yet, while the vernacular is provided a home, we must remember that South Africa is still part of a Global village, and therefore these facilities should accommodate the more contemporary and classical examples of performance arts enjoyed the world over. It is also important to this project that a distinct and favourable relationship with the outdoors be achieved with a multitude of performance spaces arranged throughout the complex, sharing public foyer and congregation spaces to invite discussion and the sharing of ideas. In this way, an appreciation of all forms of expression and culture may be both directly and indirectly achieved.

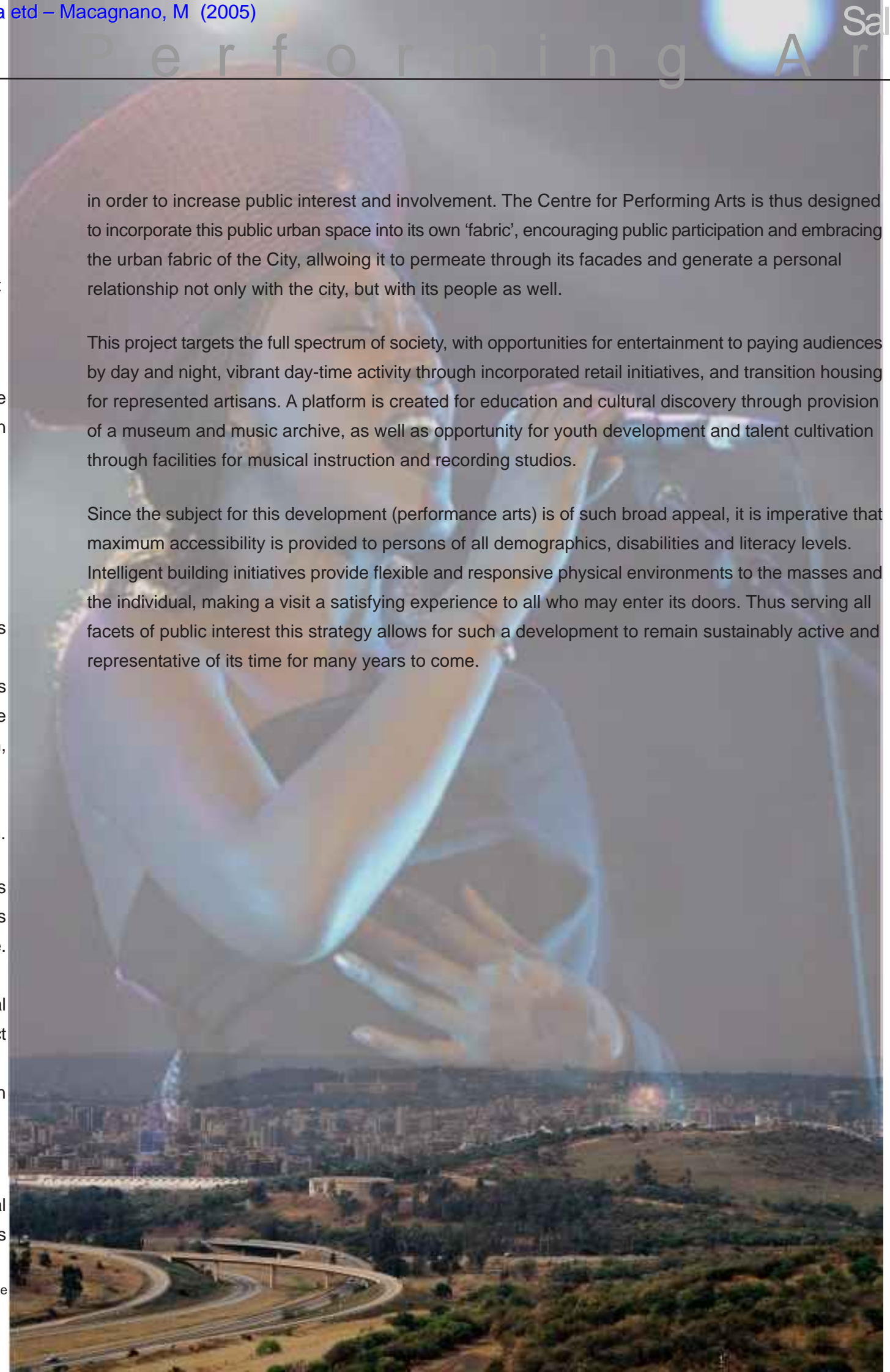
The site chosen for this project is situated along the soon-to-be-constructed Ceremonial way (Cultural Spine), that bisects the Inner City. The plan for this 'spine' is to introduce a multitude of public spaces

in order to increase public interest and involvement. The Centre for Performing Arts is thus designed to incorporate this public urban space into its own 'fabric', encouraging public participation and embracing the urban fabric of the City, allowing it to permeate through its facades and generate a personal relationship not only with the city, but with its people as well.

This project targets the full spectrum of society, with opportunities for entertainment to paying audiences by day and night, vibrant day-time activity through incorporated retail initiatives, and transition housing for represented artisans. A platform is created for education and cultural discovery through provision of a museum and music archive, as well as opportunity for youth development and talent cultivation through facilities for musical instruction and recording studios.

Since the subject for this development (performance arts) is of such broad appeal, it is imperative that maximum accessibility is provided to persons of all demographics, disabilities and literacy levels. Intelligent building initiatives provide flexible and responsive physical environments to the masses and the individual, making a visit a satisfying experience to all who may enter its doors. Thus serving all facets of public interest this strategy allows for such a development to remain sustainably active and representative of its time for many years to come.

Figure 1.08 Western View of Salvokop Hill, Local Artist embedded in the landscape



## 1.2. Investigating the Client

As part of the Salvokop Development Framework, development is called for that inspires local economic opportunity, as well as stimulates public interest in the area. This government mandate is thus responded to by the decision to implement a publicly oriented building that celebrates this country's cultural heritage and provides a platform for youth development and education.

The Department of Arts and Culture is the main beneficiary for construction, in the hopes of bettering public image and constructing a high-profile development that is contributes to public well-being. Funding is deemed to be directed from the national treasury or directed from international governments though established partnerships. The land, which has been subdivided into many sites, is currently owned by Transnet who are willing to enter into agreements of sale.

The Department of Arts and Culture Strategic Plan aims to develop and preserve South African culture in order to ensure social cohesion and nation building. The Department's mission involves improving the economic opportunities for South African Arts and Culture nationally and globally through mutually beneficial partnerships, as well as ensuring development of archival and information resources of the nation to empower citizens through full and open access to these facilities. Relationships with International partners such as the South Africa Swedish partnership and Flemish partnership provides financial (at least R70 million over the last three years) and HRD resources to supplement the financial support for the Arts.

In order for this project to be successful in the long-term, it is imperative that backing is obtained from the government. This backing thus has some guarantee of delivery, especially when required for purposes of construction, maintenance, salaries and expansion costs.

Once constructed, it is the intention of the client that an advisory board/ steering committee with executive power be established for administrative purposes regarding the development – positions to be negotiated from project inception. These positions may be considered positions of prestige, nominated persons to convene at least once a month. This advisory board will have the power to attract and direct funding in the interests of the development, and the position of chairman to be rotated on a periodic basis. A sustained management force of employees paid and hired by the DAC will concern themselves with the day-to-day administration and management within the guidelines as decided by the advisory board.

NGO involvement is encouraged, and required by means of government policy towards such organisations – hence the establishment of such organisations as the Transnet Foundation, The Ford Foundation and so forth. Such funding may thus be put to use in the organisation of exhibitions, events and equipment for the facilities. All profits obtained from the success of such events may then be allocated towards a trust account and used in the improvement of the facility.



Figure 1.09



Figure 1.10



Figure 1.11

### 1.3. Normative Position

This portion of the dissertation seeks to familiarize the reader with the intentions of the author in terms of the ideological design approach and general design philosophy, with reference to the project under scrutiny.

Contemporary understanding of platonic theory constitutes a reduction of design approach into a simplistic dualistic theory, with emphasis placed on the signified and signifier, and so forth. It is up for debate as to which is more relevant, and certainly the answer is entirely open to personal interpretation. It is incontestable that certainly one could not exist without the other – does a tree make a sound when it falls if there is no-one there to hear it. But it is the opinion of this author that, while these extremities are relevant when investigating the design process, it is not in the aid of encompassing the pertinent issues. If anything, it is a more pragmatic approach that warrants the best results. Without fully understanding and assimilating all information, associated problems and the desire for artistic freedom a project can never be complete.

The signified is intended to represent contemporary cultural and social services as a response to identified needs through a process of intense investigation and thorough substantiation. In this way, the signified is representative of those users the development – signifier – seeks to serve.

The role of the architect is changing. As one of the more time-honoured professions within the history of modern mankind, it is so often presumed to be inflexibly traditional in both the training and practice. It has been said that the world is catching up and that in this age of optimisation many are able to compete and contest the skills with less training and a smart computer program. It is difficult to argue with this point, but this is only true if the architect agrees to stand in the same place. Society is a constantly evolving entity. Trends change everyday, what's in today is out tomorrow. Human beings are, by nature, driven by a necessity to excel, to improve and to optimise. Ok, maybe not all of them but we wouldn't be where we are today if this did not ring true. The aim is thus to become indispensable and flexible to current trends and needs.

User participation is critical to ensuring that the development and management system implemented is optimal to provide an environment that serves all requirements this day and in the unforeseeable future. The evaluation of the design process needs to involve the input of three groups of people: Participant groups (users), Facilitators (professional team), and Managers (administrators during operation) (Kernohan, 1992: 30).

In this era of information technology, one is intrinsically connected to information at the press of a button. Chat rooms, the telephone, video-conferencing, sms-chatting and internet surfing have negated the relevance of physical spaces for meeting and socialising. Space is now an abstract concept, life is becoming more and more lived in virtual environments. These electronic environments (Horan, 2000: 5) are thus customisable and personally representative sense of place, offering the user a freedom

not available in the 'real world'. This is not a negative concept, it is definitely here to stay and its relevance in contemporary society is growing. But as in platonic theory, one extreme cannot exist without the other. Abstract, virtual environments will always require tangible spaces in order to exist optimally. In fact, the public is intent on making the effort to remain in specific locations where they can be unsociable. Offices aren't required anymore, just a computer, but most employees choose to have an office and e-mail their neighbour.

The task of integrating technology into our day-to-day places should not be left strictly in the hands of network designers, but rather necessitates the informed, active intervention of numerous parties including users, designers, and technologists. The traditional built environment thus has a new 'context', of which we can't see or feel. But this context analysis and sensitivity is of utmost importance in order to ensure sustainability in response to the cultivation of this emerging culture. We need to create places that comprehensively integrate human and technological elements in a manner that both respects and stretches our traditional notions of place, in a way that links both electronic and physical networks, and through a process that engages a spectrum of participants (Horan, 2000: 22).

Design is thus the assimilation of a variety of fields and expertise. Personal relationships are forged between designer and client on a grassroots or 'bottoms-up' level, ensuring participation in the critical design formulation process. Furthermore design needs to be the product of an evolutionary approach, as some term an "emergent architecture" (Weinstock, 2000: 11). In this respect architecture cannot be deduced from its components, but only as something more than the sum of its parts. When design is concerned with the needs of many, the resources required to maintain the environmental quality of public and private spaces increase exponentially. Social interaction is thus more complex and more intense, and needs to be catered for by spatial and infrastructural design that maximises qualitative and quantitative factors (Weinstock, 2000: 12).