

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Museum

Noun

“...the preservation and interpretation of some material aspect of society’s cultural consciousness” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011).

“...a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest are stored and exhibited” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010).

## Typography

Noun

“The study of the design and use of type, the objective of which is to make text as legible and visually attractive as possible, by choosing appropriate typefaces, font sizes and attributes, but also by means of page layout” (Heidelbergerdruckmaschinen.com, n.d.).

## Language

Noun

“the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010).

The written word is a very significant part of everyday life – it is hard to imagine a society without it. The written word provides navigation of both the tangible and intangible realms of life and urbanity. It allows us to obtain knowledge through printed and visual matter, and to navigate city streets, urban space and architecture by means of lettering and signage (Ambrose & Harris, 2006: 170). Writings can even aid in the navigation and understanding of ourselves in relation to space and to our physical and psychological landscapes.

It can be said that the written word and typography forms the spatial context in which language resides. It constitutes the building blocks of our verbal communication systems and gives form to speech. Ellen Lupton (Lupton, 2004: 1) proclaimed that “Typography is what language looks like”. Language is typography, and typography is language.

Analogously, architecture and the urban environment perform a similar two-step, with architecture constituting the “typographic” building blocks through which the urban “language” is understood. Umberto Eco (in Abel, 2000: 23) proposes that architecture as communicative tool can be compared to a linguistic model of language, thus architecture in itself can also be equated to this interrelationship, with space and spatial experience underpinning the “language” of the architectural tectonic. A hierarchy of communicative spaces are thus brought into existence (See Figure 1 - 6).

What if these communicative spaces could manifest in an architectural product that combines space, city and typography?

## typography



Fig. 1: Typography forming the basic building blocks of words (Author, 2011).

## building blocks

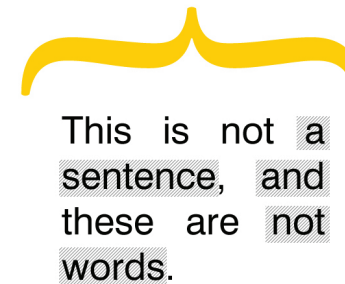


Fig. 2: Typography and words constituting the visual element of language (Author, 2011).

## spatial context

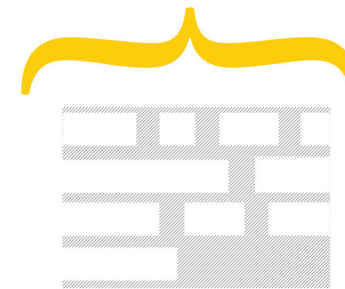


Fig. 3: The spatial matrix of language (Author, 2011).

## typography

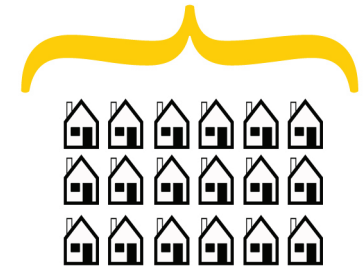


Fig. 4: Individual buildings constituting the typography of the city (Author, 2011).

## building blocks

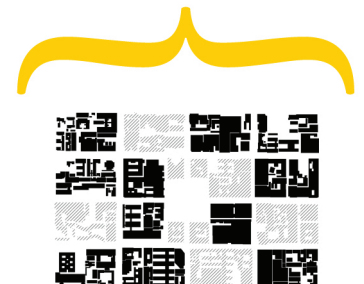


Fig. 5: Typographic building blocks through which the urban language is understood (Author, 2011).

## spatial context

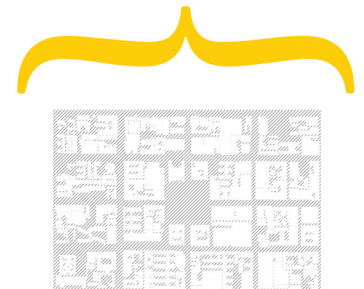


Fig. 6: The spatial matrix of the urban cityscape (Author, 2011).

## 1.1 BACKGROUND + CONTEXT

In a publication entitled ‘Museums of the World’ (De Gruyter, 2011), published in 2010, museums from all over the globe were profiled and studied. In this publication it was estimated that the total number of recorded museums in 202 countries around the world is around 55 000. Of those 55 000 museums, a total of approximately 300 can be found within South Africa (South Africa, n.d.) with 39 of these contained in the greater Tshwane (Museums Online SA, 2009) area ranging from art galleries and national museums to sites of cultural heritage.

According to Suzanne Macleod (2005: 2), “museums have come to be consciously recognised as drivers of social and economic regeneration” within cities and urban centres. She highlights the fact that museum space in itself is seen as active in the construction and formation of meaning and that museum space within our contemporary society is now, more than ever, open to change.

Within the Pretoria study area however, there is a need for the museum to be rethought as it is not as highly regarded as a catalyst for social regeneration<sup>1</sup>. Physically taking up space in our city, but psychologically not occupying space in our minds, these museums seemingly exist as ‘non-places’<sup>2</sup>. We neglect these buildings, physically and psychologically (See Figure 7-8).

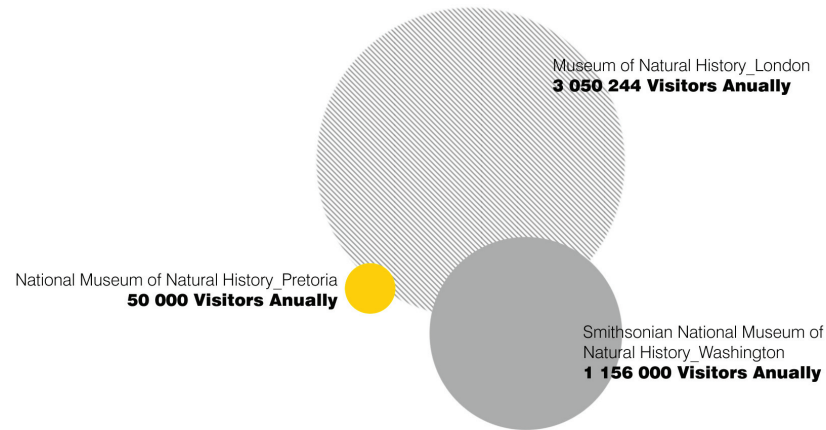


Fig. 7: The extremes: the lack of a museum culture in Pretoria with National Museum of Natural History as focus (Author, 2011; Data: Smithsonian Newsdesk, 2011; The National Archives, 2009).

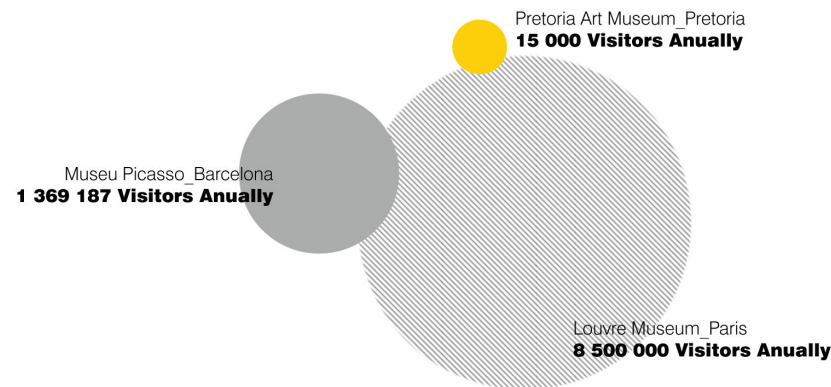


Fig. 8: The extremes: the lack of museum culture in Pretoria with the Pretoria Art Museum as focus (Author, 2011; Data: Pes & Sharpe, 2011: 26).

1. Museums are delegated to the outskirts of the urban centres, not forming part of inner city rejuvenation strategies (Rankin and Schmidt, 2009)

2. “Non-places” according to Marc Augé (1995: 103) are those spaces that are stripped of their identity and instead induce solitude and uniformity. Places that disappear into the urban fabric without being noticed by individuals, these are the true non-places of contemporary society.

A possible reason for this could be that most new-built museum buildings, within a South African context, are approached as homogenous and single-minded monuments to the past, void of civic integrity<sup>3</sup> and that the older museums are 'abandoned' and left to fend for themselves amidst the (perceived) inner city decline. There are however vast numbers of inner city users that pass some of these buildings on a daily basis, but still do not interact with or make use of their facilities on offer<sup>4</sup>. Within a city of 39 museums, there seems to be no established museum culture (Rankin and Schmidt, 2009).

A supporting component in maintaining museum space is that of usable and meaningful urban public space. Public spaces within the Pretoria CBD are however limited and not all of them are being utilised to their full potential.

Within the Pretoria South CBD precinct, south of Skinner Street, there are only three accessible public spaces to be found<sup>5</sup> (See Fig. 9).

The public space that this study will focus on is that of Pretorius Square in front of the City Hall and across from The National Museum of Natural History. This space offers vast opportunities for amalgamation into the public space matrix within the CBD, but is as of yet underutilised and unprogrammed.

3. The Apartheid Museum for example is built on the outskirts of Johannesburg, and so does not truly contribute to the enrichment of the urban fabric and public life of the city proper (Rankin and Schmidt, 2009).

4. This conclusion was reached after an extensive urban mapping exercise of the study area was conducted.

5. There are three accessible public spaces in the study area – Burgers Park, Pretorius Square and the public space in front of the Pretoria station. This conclusion was made after an extensive mapping exercise of the study area was done.

This dissertation aims to (re)introduce the celebration of everyday-life into museum space, and will also endeavour to establish the importance of communicative<sup>6</sup> space. There is a need for a cross-pollinated and interlaced programmatic approach. Museums need to become true public spaces and in turn catalyse the production of meaningful and memorable urban public spaces external to themselves.

## 1.2 AIMS + OBJECTIVES

- This dissertation will question the validity of the museum typology within the context of Pretoria and endeavor to redefine this much needed societal and cultural establishment.

- David Fleming (2006: 59) believes that museums are not of the 'everywhere' but rather have to be highly contextual and embedded in the 'somewhere'. The proposed design will be approached from a strongly rooted contextual stance as the chosen study area is rich in significant tangible and intangible cultural heritage and any introduction of a new built product into the existing fabric will have to be done tactfully and sensitively – the opportunity to be bold yet perceptive in this process is however not entirely negated.

- The author will also investigate the extent of "museum space" and how the museum building itself can extend beyond its built confines in the form of public space, thus permeating the sphere of the social and the everyday.

- Identify the opportunities that arise from incorporating typography into the spatial experience and communicative aspects of architecture and urban space.

- The aim of the overall design product will be to celebrate, uncover and showcase different dimensions of typography, public space and architecture. The project will aspire to amalgamate museum space with that of public space, with the final design product being a museum with an integrated public landscape devoted to an everyday urban existence and the art of typography.

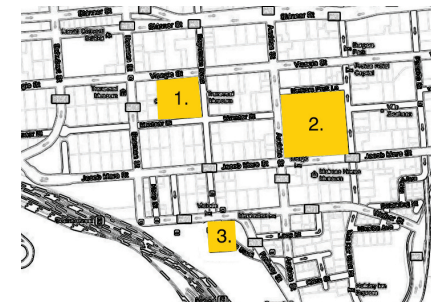


Fig. 9: Accessible public space. 1. Pretorius Square, 2. Burgers Park, 3. Pretoria Station (Author, 2011).

6. Communicative: "Relating to the conveyance or exchange of information" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011). The spaces and the architectural experience need to communicate to the visitor on all levels; from detailing and signage, to spatial experience and visitor interaction and most importantly, to the information on display.

### 1.3 DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Within the study area of Pretoria, museums are not recognised as vital components to the continual re-making of society, of space and of place. These buildings are regarded as autonomous relics paying homage to, or being reminiscent of, a bygone era (Rankin and Schmidt, 2009).

Public space on the other hand is regarded as one of the key components to ensuring a balanced urban existence. Pretorius Square is however not fully appropriated by the public so as to afford it meaning and place within the everyday lives of individuals.

### 1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Contemporary museum buildings, within a South African context, are approached as homogenous and single-minded monuments to the past, void of civic integrity (Rankin and Schmidt, 2009). Established museums take the approach of “passive experience” where the user is guided through display upon display of outdated and non-engaging exhibition material.

This dissertation will endeavour to illustrate that in order for this typology to regain its societal and civic importance it needs to start celebrating the ‘everyday’ and the ‘ordinary’ and shift the user experience to that of “active engagement” where the user becomes an intrinsic part of the museum experience. There seems to be a need for a cross-pollinated and interlaced programmatic approach – an amalgamation of museum space, public space and everyday life.

Public spaces are the connective tissue that ensures a cohesive urban existence. They allow people space to breathe, a place to escape to and a place where they can interact. They are a vital component to a healthy functioning urban society.

### 1.5 HYPOTHESIS

This dissertation envisions a redefined museum space and a museum typology that celebrates the everyday and is accessible to the everyman. This document will showcase the importance for museum buildings to function as true urban and social contributors.

Museums also need to become true public spaces and in turn catalyse and facilitate the production of meaningful and memorable urban public spaces external to themselves – they need to at once, be and create usable place. There is a need for a museum and public space rethink, for a redefinition of what these places and spaces are and what they mean to us.

The architectural intervention will also allow for typography to become an intrinsic part of the spatial experience of architecture.

### 1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How does museum space and public space contribute to the formation of one another?
- How do architects ensure that ‘museum space’ becomes part of the everyday and resonates as a truly public place?
- What role do thresholds and the in-between play in architecture and how can it be utilised in order to enrich spatial experience?
- To what extent does typography and language affect the spatial experience of architecture?

### 1.7 DELIMITATIONS

- The study’s aim is to establish a new-built museum within Pretoria, and therefore the project will not aim to reinvigorate existing museum buildings directly but rather establish guidelines through the new design that could aid in future reinterpretation[s] of existing and new museum space.

- The investigation of public space will be limited to that of Pretorius Square. The findings and proposed strategies may thus not be applicable to all public spaces within the city.

- Through the research process it has been discovered that relevant South African literature on museum space is limited. Applicable international literature will thus form the main departure point in order to establish a South African response.

## 1.8 PROPOSAL

### 1.8.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### CONTEXT ANALYSIS

A context analysis will be done of the immediate environs surrounding the proposed site of intervention. Various mapping exercises will be done which will inform various factors including (but not limited to) historical and cultural context, pedestrian influence, built character and building use, typology integration and access.

#### URBAN FRAMEWORK STUDY

An integrated urban framework study will be done in order to establish the wider contextual milieu within which the project will have to position itself.

This framework will include a thorough urban analysis and will propose future and current developmental and design guidelines.

#### STUDY OF PRECEDENTS

The author will draw on various forms of architectural precedent studies spanning over a variety of approaches and subject matter.

Contemporary international and local examples will be explored. The aspects that will be critically looked at are:

- Architecture + Typography
- Threshold
- Surface
- Old + New
- Public Space

### STUDY OF TYPOGRAPHIC HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

A study will be done in order to get a more thorough understanding of typography, its origins and its classifications.

#### TECTONIC AND STEREOTOMIC EXPLORATION

Throughout the design process the relationship between the tectonic and the stereotomic will be questioned and explored, both between the existing context and the proposed new intervention, as well as within the spatiality of the proposed new architectural end-product.

### 1.8.2 THEORETICAL APPROACH

Theoretically the study will position itself within various approaches and scales – both architectural and urban.

Firstly, contemporary writings on ‘museum space’ will play a very significant role throughout the theoretical and design exploration of the project.

Secondly the theories of Henri Lefebvre regarding the “Everyday and the Ordinary” in spatial and architectural terms, will be investigated.

Theories about the “In-Between” and “Liquid Thresholds” form the third point of departure. Especially those propagated by Aldo van Eyck will be explored.

Supporting theories regarding the ‘writing of space’ will also be investigated.

Associations between typography, surface, architecture and public space will continually be investigated throughout the processes of conceptualization and design.

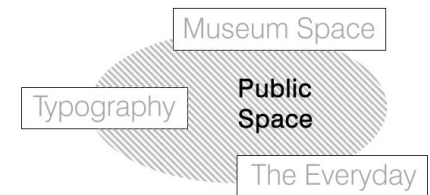


Fig. 10: Relationship between concepts - Public Space (Author, 2011).

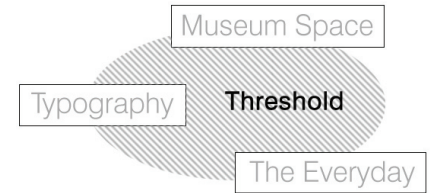


Fig. 11: Relationship between concepts - Threshold (Author, 2011).

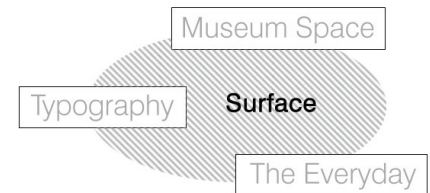


Fig. 12: Relationship between concepts - Surface (Author, 2011).

### 1.8.3 LOCATION

The study laboratory will be the City of Tshwane, more specifically the Museum Park precinct south of the CBD (see Fig. 13), with specific focus on the interstitial space between the City Hall and the National Museum of Natural History along Paul Kruger Street.



Fig. 13: Museum park precinct (Redrawn by Author, 2011).

### 1.8.4 TARGET POPULATION

Due to the proposed location of the intervention, the target population is exceptionally varied.

The site is at the moment mainly frequented by pedestrians that are in transit. These persons do not necessarily physically access the space but paradoxically they currently make up the largest user group of the site. These individuals commute along Paul Kruger Street in both directions as they make their way either to Church Square in the north or Pretoria Station in the south. Paul Kruger Street thus forms a very important activity spine within both the study area and the Pretoria CBD.

The intervention will consequently aim to provide an impetus for these persons to actively utilise and engage with the available public space as well as the proposed new built intervention.

The other user groups that will be provided for are the local residents in the area seeing as there is a strong residential component to the precinct. The precinct in itself is also highly mixed-use with various government departments and offices directly adjacent to the site. These users will have a different set of needs that will also be catered for.

Because of the communicative and information orientated character of the museum precinct, a very important number of the target population will also be school children, not only from the surroundings, but from the greater Tshwane area.

The enhancement of tourism in the precinct is a highly significant factor that will be considered as well, the aim here being to activate the site as a destination.

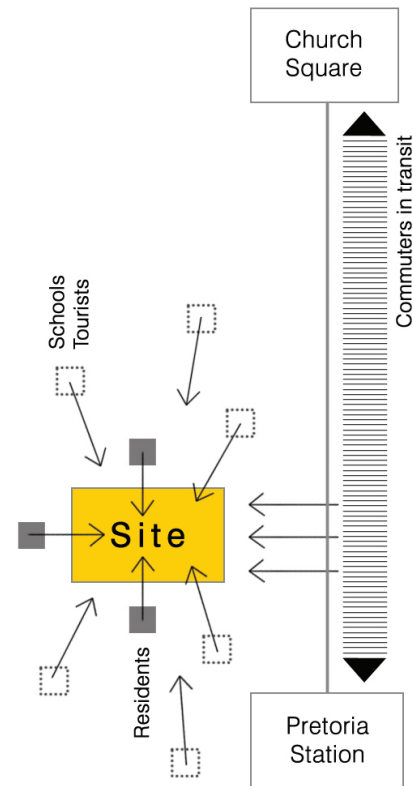


Fig. 14: Target population that will potentially benefit from the proposed intervention (Author, 2011).

### 1.8.5 CLIENT

The identified client structure for the envisaged project is a threefold consortium and is comprised of an international non-profit organization as well as two governmental departments.

#### THE SOCIETY OF TYPOGRAPHIC AFICIONADOS

The Society of Typographic Aficionados (SOTA) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the study, promotion and support of type, its development and history, its use in the world of print and digital imagery as well

as its designers (SOTA, 2010). SOTA is committed to sponsoring and funding relevant programmes and projects that help to promote and develop these goals. SOTA will thus be the main client and funding body behind the project.

An annual international conference (TypeCon) that deals with all things type is also organized by SOTA. There exists a possibility to accommodate this conference within the newly proposed facility and urban framework (SOTA, 2010).

#### THE DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE

The Department of Arts and Culture, more specifically the branch of Arts, Cultural and Promotional Development, was identified as one of the possible clients due to the overtly cultural nature of the intended project. The department will provide additional funding and necessary project guidance as well as marketing opportunities for the project.

The department aims to develop and promote arts and culture within South Africa and emphasize its role in social, cultural and economic development. Developing and promoting the official languages of South Africa and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the country is also a main concern of this branch (DAC, 2006).

#### THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

The highly public orientated nature of the proposed project ensured the inclusion of the Department of Public Works as the third potential client, specifically focussing on the branch dealing with inner city rejuvenation projects.



Fig. 15: Booksetting (Alessandra, 2010). Books are the containers for letterforms and type, here however, the books themselves become the letterforms; the exploitation of an inherent duality is thus showcased. The same duality exists between landscape and architecture and the possibility for their entanglement is always present.