

## 2.1. DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

### 2.1.1 The interior architect

Interior architects look at the relationship between space, the user and the object. Thus, they examine how the human utilizes the space he or she occupies and the connection with the surrounding objects, where the space is never empty – always embodies a meaning. In this context space can be described as the absence of something signifying the relational distance between a boundary and an object, and object/ boundary and another object/ boundary or an object and the



user. As a designer we are bystanders and observe and study the ways in which humans utilize these spaces, how they interact and move through these spatial environments, to generate a certain mood or feeling in an environment. (Fig 8)

To watch a movie is a virtual journey to all the places the movie allows you to experience, and as interior architect we have to design a space within which this journey can take place. In this instance we have to create a feeling of safety and comfortability to allow the user to experience the fantasy, the journey without distraction. Another aspect the designer has to keep in mind is the transition space between the world of fantasy and the world of reality. Does the user just 'jump' from one world to the other or is it a gradual change? The world of fantasy includes documentary films, films based on literary works as well as films on specific parts of the world, travel films. It is the fact that the audience can experience a certain place, simulation or reality without being there at that specific time that makes it part of the fantasy.

### 2.1.2 The cinema theatre

According to L Manovich, (1998: 5 [www.manovich.net](http://www.manovich.net)) "...in the case of cinema, its physical interface is a particular architectural arrangement of movie theatre, its metaphor is a window opening up into a virtual 3-D space."

In the context of the cinema theatre, the idea of space – user – object can be approached from two contrasting directions. The one is the traditional cinema auditorium isolated from its surroundings referred to as a black box in numerous texts; the other, the open-air cinema that forms part of its urban context. In the first approach the auditorium signifies the space, the spectator signifies the user, and the

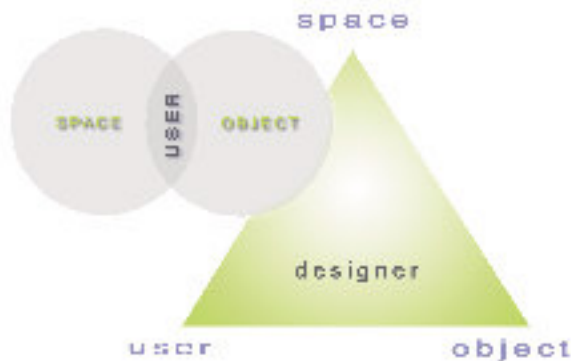


Fig 8. The interconnection between space and object and the relationship between user- space-object

screen the object. As soon as the lights fade, the physical space of the auditorium becomes less significant but the spectator remains subconsciously aware of it. The spectator enters a world of every changing context, a world where one moves from the reality and the tangible space to the fantasy and simulation of reality – this is a conscious hallucination. "The film subverts the viewers' actual existence, offers them, for a limited time, an alternative way of seeing, an alternative life." (Rattenbury 1994: 35) According to Miller and Stam (1999:251), in watching a film the viewer focuses his or her full attention on the representation on the screen and disregards the physical space outside it. This concentration is possible because the image fills the entire screen. The screen "functions to filter, to screen out, to take over, rendering non-existent whatever is outside its frame." (Miller & Stam 1999: 251) One can also add 3D cinema in this category where the audience participates in the experience. By wearing the 3D glasses, the illusion is created that everything in the movie happens there in the movie theatre.

The human's ability to leave reality for a world of fantasy and illusion can be described in the following example. During one of the early films from 1896 a train moved towards the camera, which shocked the audience into fleeing the auditorium for fear of their lives. (Heathcote 2001:54)

In the second approach of the open-air cinema there is not a distinct difference between the space and the object. The space becomes the object and the object becomes the space. The screen becomes part of the space and forms an integral part of the architecture. "During the show, the cinema acquires an architectural dimension not only because it intervenes into the city's night landscape as another urban element but also as it duplicates on the screen fragments of architectural and urban space. The spectator holds two positions; identifying with the show and with the surrounding built environment." (Georgiadis 1994: 81)

### 2.1.3 The approach

Cinema is all about contrast, the contrast between fantasy – the simulation of reality - and reality, light and dark, heavy and light and scale. Movement also plays an important role in cinema, the movement of images on a screen as well as the movement of the viewer from the fantasy world to the world of reality.

The conceptual argument is based on the metaphor of contrast and movement. Walls can be seen as these heavy entities that form an exact boundary. By using this concept of contrast and movements walls can become light structure. Walls become screens and screens become walls. This can be achieved by using projections, plasma screen technology as well as vapour screens. By using vapour screens one can create the feeling of a boundary that does not really exist. Moving

components, screens that can change their direction, walls that become doors and the movement of the viewer through the building, emphasize the concept of movement.

A different approach to movement is the moving image, the actual film itself. In the design the user is going to form part of this moving image by penetrating the image on different stages of his or her journey through the building.

The idea of a large scale outdoor screen for the moving image, rooted in the drive-in cinema, will also be explored.

These aspects will form the basis of the design process and will be conveyed in the design of the cinema auditoria, the foyer, the digital gallery and all other related facilities.

## 2.2 SITE CRITERIA

The following selection criteria assisted in the identification of the appropriate site.

- The site should be in an urban context, preferably in Johannesburg or Pretoria.
- The site should be located so that it assists the development of the evening economy and local regeneration.
- A site should have pre-existing structures, that are big enough to house a few cinemas and suitable for development, with addition to and expansion of the existing structures, or a site that is big enough for this project and in close proximity to other facilities, like restaurants and retail.
- The related facilities should cater for students, young skilled professionals and tourists – my main user groups.
- The site should be accessible, thus close and visible from vehicular and pedestrian routes to create public awareness.
- Ideally the site should be bordered by a public space or a public square to accommodate the outdoor cinema and the crowd (leaving the cinema centre at the same time after a screening).

## 2.3 GOALS OF THE PROJECT

The goals of this dissertation are as follows:

1. Due to the fact that there is no existing building structure in Melrose Arch that can currently house this cinema multiplex development, only a development program, the project will include the design of an outer shell.

The interior will shape and form the exterior.

2. Planning of the spatial layout of the traditional black box cinema theatres with all its related facilities like projection booths and concession stands.
3. Design of the entrance/foyer of the building and the digital gallery, with emphasis on materials and lighting effects.
4. Detailed design of the experimental cinema auditorium and cinema booths, with emphasis on acoustics, ergonomics, visual and sound qualities, and ventilation. Here the idea of the individual and group experiences will be explored.
5. Product design, which will include the individual booths, seating and lighting in the experimental auditorium and entrance and foyer projection.
6. The development of the project will also include the connection between the public square and the cinema complex.

design approach