3.1. Introduction

What is architecture? With this question in mind, this chapter focuses on the argument used in the design of the dissertation project. The main theory, deconstruction, is examined first, after which its application and further theories about the definition of architecture are investigated.

3.2. Deconstruction

There are two principle streams of thought in architectural deconstructive theory. The proponents of the first stream, use the philosophical and linguistic theories of Jacques Derrida to influence their work. (Broadbent 1991). The second group focus on architectural theory, claiming that it came into being through their involvement in the

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Theory

discipline, as is evident in Johnson's and Wigley's (1988) publication.

The first group see deconstruction as a new form of logic (Broadbent 1991:35). It is about analysing ways of thinking, as Derrida (1996:146) put it:

> "Something has been constructed … and along comes a de-constructor and destroys it stone by stone, analyses the structure and dissolves it … one looks at a system … and examines how it was built, which keystone, which angle of vision supports the building; one shifts them and thereby frees oneself from the authority of the system … however … this is not the essence of deconstruction … It is not simply the technique … but a probing which touches upon the technique itself."

Derrida goes further by attacking the beliefs of ethnocentrism, wherein one culture asserts its superiority over another; logocentrism consisting of abstract truths; phonocentrism comprising of the spoken versus written word; and, to a lesser extent, metaphysics, ontotheology and science (Broadbent 1991:36). This line of thought was applied by other philosophers, as described in Patin's (1993:94) explanation of deconstruction. He concurs (*ibid.*) with Goosen (2009) when he states that it is the means by which binary oppositions are identified, with one being of a higher value. It is then deconstructed, so that the other term becomes greater, showing the flaws in the argument. By applying this theory to architecture one can deconstruct:
- architectural texts, e.g. the phrase "less is more" (Broadbent 1991:63-67),
- brief or programme, e.g. Tschumi's Parc de

la Vilette (*ibid.*:67-80),
- architectural form (*ibid.*:80-85),
- and structure (*ibid.*:85-91).

Broadbent (*ibid.*:91) admits that deconstruction in architecture can be called a 'style' as hinted at by Porter (2004:47-48) in his definition of the theory, stating that Coop Himmelb(l)au's rooftop remodelling (see chapter 4) is based on aesthetics. However, it becomes clear in Broadbent's (1991) writing that this is not the case. Johnson (1988:7) agrees, stating "deconstructivist architecture is not a new style."

The second group's theory is slightly different. As Wigley (1988:10-11) states:

"It is the ability to disturb our thinking about form that makes these projects deconstructive. It is not that they derive from the mode of contemporary philosophy known as 'deconstruction'. They are not an application of deconstructive theory. Rather, they emerge from within the architectural tradition and happen to exhibit some deconstructive qualities."

Architects have always wanted to achieve pure form (*ibid.*:10), in order to attain Vitruvius' (1960:17) "beauty" or "delight", but deconstructivism acknowledges that impurities are important elements in building forms (Wigley 1988:10-11). "Traditional thinking about the nature of the architectural object was placed in doubt" by the constructivists (*ibid.*:11). This was taken as the inspiration of deconstructivism, but adapted to result in the "de-" (*ibid.*:16). While constructivism creates instability by using pure forms in dynamic and innovative

relationships, deconstructivist architecture distorts the forms themselves from within the structure (*ibid.*:15-17). "By exploiting the hidden potential of modernism" (*ibid.*:19), deconstructivist architecture opposes post-modernism, but in a different way – instead of letting form follow function, like the modernists (*ibid.*), form becomes more important, in such a way that "function follows deformation" (*ibid.*).

There are, however, strong similarities between both deconstructive theories. Both deconstruct using the elements in question themselves, working from within (Goosen 2009 and Wigley 1988:16-17). Broadbent (1991:22) even goes as far as quoting Wigley's 'non-Derridean' description of Coop Himmelb(l)au's rooftop remodelling to prove his point that deconstructivist architecture has Derridean influences.

Both types of deconstructive architecture can seem to disregard function in order to emphasise form. Some of Eisenman's work focuses on being autonomous (Patin 1993:89), yet "if Eisenman's early design and theory are taken seriously, architecture can no longer be simply functional, but neither could it be autonomous" (*ibid.*:98). Thus:

> "Despite calling into question traditional ideas about structure, these projects are rigorously structural. Despite calling into question the functionalist rhetoric of modernism, each project is rigorously functional." (Wigley 1988:19).

The combination of these concepts, forms the basis of the definition for "deconstruction" that has been determined as the theory by which norms and
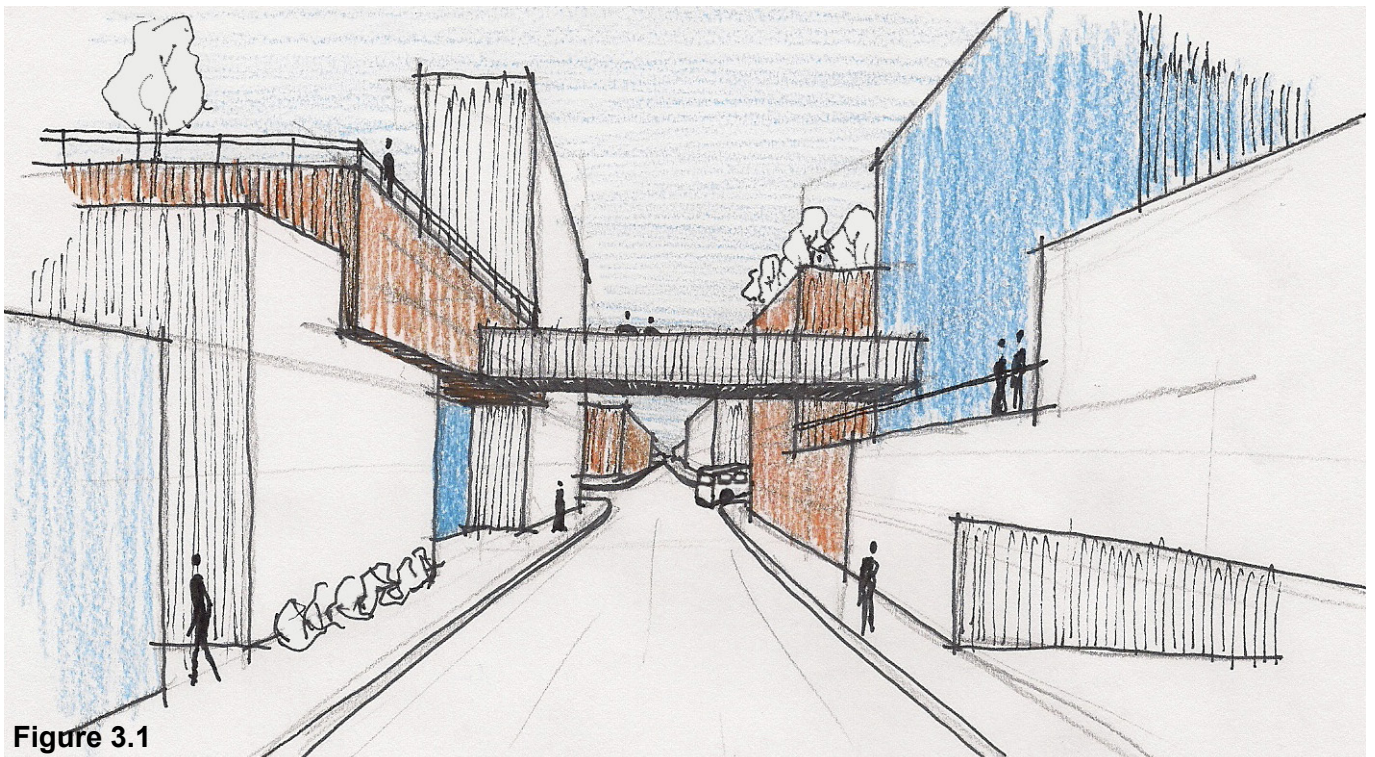

Figure 3.1

ideas are questioned and restructured from within to form new ways of thinking and new products. In architecture this theory results in the deconstruction of form and its elements to create buildings.

3.3. Q:xyz

This dissertation thus questions the cartesian x-y-z axes, re-examining the position of site and the arcade. The x-y-z of architecture is questioned as part of the deconstructive process of design. As with so many abandoned buildings in the Pretoria CBD, the owners need a new model for selling, or renting land. Traditionally, the term 'site' deals with the soil on which something will be built. However, following from the global economic crisis and the increasing lack of developable land in urban areas, the re-use of existing structures, becomes important. Thus, this dissertation proposes that each floor in a building be seen as 'sites'. When spaces in buildings become vacant, the owners should be able to re-sell spaces as new 'sites' with certain regulations and provisions. In this way, cities can truly become three-dimensional, using the x-, y- and z-planes to create buildings that intersect with each other in all three directions (fig.3.1).

3.4. The new site

New sites are established within the existing spaces. Much like Coop Himmelb(l)au's existing rooftop remodelling (Wigley 1988:17), these sites have always existed, but are only now released. To achieve this, the empty floors of the City Centre and Die Meent buildings are divided into sectional title stands, which in turn are sold. This division is done

according to set principles, providing service points to every new site.

With the proposed model for creating 'sites', new buildings will be constructed on different levels. The dissertation aims to emphasise this fact, with one building intersecting two others (fig.3.2). For this reason, the City Centre and Die Meent buildings are treated as two separate buildings, even though they are on the same municipal stand.

It is proposed that the arcade system is adopted to cater for movement in the new three-dimensional city. A link is established between the proposed new 'sites' and the proposed film archive, but on a higher floor than ground level. This link is strengthened by semi-private and semi-public green spaces on the same level, geared toward users of the proposed spaces (fig.3.3).

3.5. Architecture

The question of "what is architecture" is still raised in architectural theory, though, after studying various essays, it was found that it is only referred to indirectly. Architecture, according to the following sources, can be defined as:
- about space (Lao-Tzu, c.6th century BC, in Broadbent 1991:63),
- "durability, convenience, beauty" (Vitruvius, c.46 BC, 1960:17),
- mass and surface which is generated by the plan (le Corbusier 1931:17, 26),
- "the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light" (*ibid.*:37),
- space (Wright, in Broadbent 1991:63),
- "complex and contradictory", incorporating Vitruvius' aspects (Venturi 1966:16),
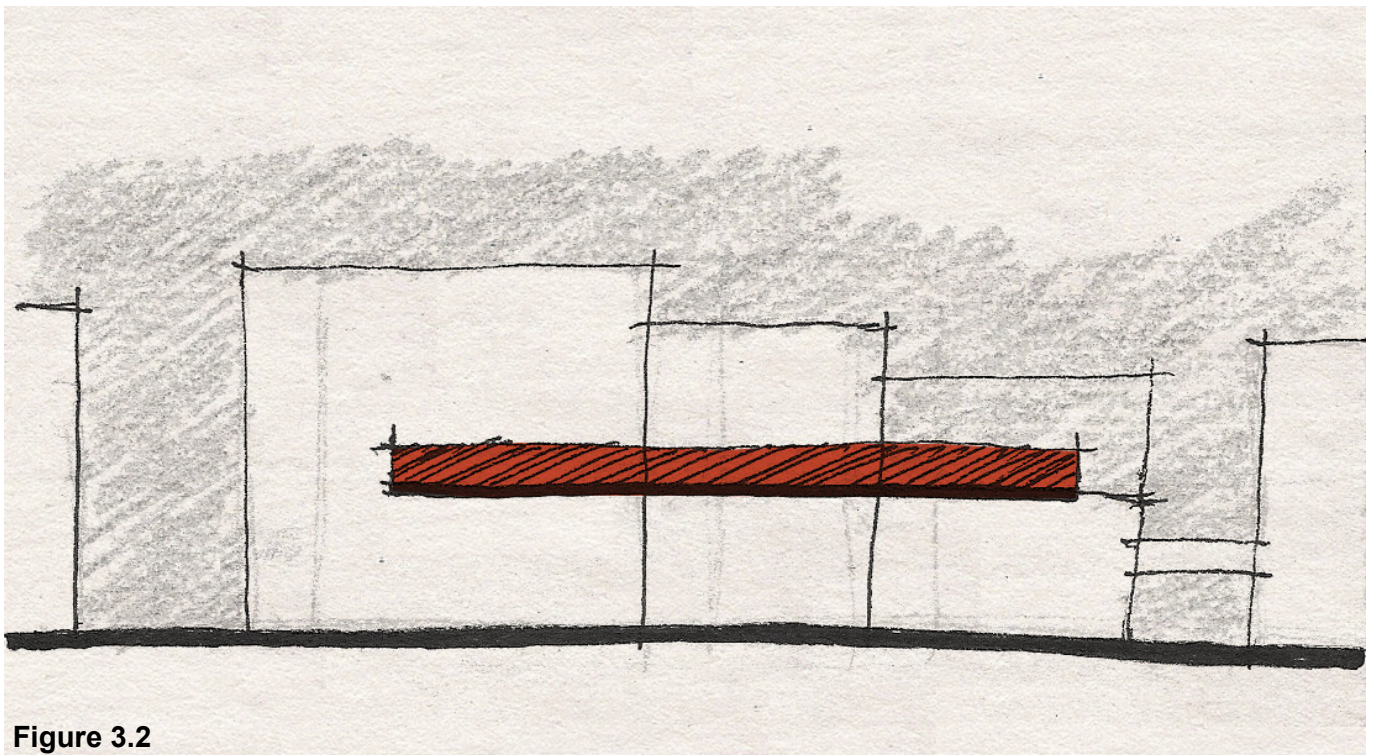

Figure 3.2

Fig.3.2 - Sketch showing the proposed building highlighted, intersecting two existing buildings and extending onto another's roof.

Fig.3.3 - Aerial photograph with the proposed green spaces on higher levels highlighted.

- according to deconstructivists form is primary, yet function and structure is still included (Wigley 1988:19),
- "solids whose surfaces do the enclosing of spaces" (Broadbent 1991:64),
- "sustainable, malleable, and beautiful" (Sorkin 2003:23),
- human life is above form and "we need to investigate processes … in construction … design and use" (Pasquarelli 2003:24),
- craftsmanship is the pleasure of moving between utility and beauty (Paz, according to Mayne 2003:41),
- form is beyond function, yet form and function are never distinct (McLeod 2003:50),
- "contextual and contingent" and "form never comes first" (Decq 2003:54),
- "organizing materials in such a way that

the form and program of a building become consistent' (Zaera-Polo 2003:56),
- vectors (from programme), envelopes (from context) and, to a lesser extent, materials and concept (Tschumi 2003:64),
- to give form to the world, with components of 'life and 'community' and a focus on beauty (Goosen 2009).

From this it is concluded that architecture is primarily about the design of space, incorporating form/beauty, function/programme and tectonics/structure, which is the x-y-z of architecture.

Instead of working with these aspects from the start, a new method is followed. Each of them is designed separately, after which they are overlaid forcibly. This causes them to influence each other, without one being superior to any other. The in-between 'spaces' created by this overlaying become

Figure 3.3

Semi-public

Semi-private

important, just as the 'space' between binary oppositions are important to the deconstructivists (Goosen 2009).

3.6. Conclusion

- Question the definition of the site and consequently provide a solution by releasing new sectional title stands.
- Provide for movement by utilising 'arcades' to link the proposed gallery and film archive.
- Design each component of architecture separately at first, then layer all together and adjust accordingly.
- Provide dynamic yet simple spaces.
- Design for change, based on the fact that Deconstruction abandons absolute truths.