3

THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

3.1 The Notion of Change

It may be argued that when the interior designer has to respond to built fabric, change is established. This notion of change of [institutional] buildings is defined by Edward Hollis (2009:10) in the book *The Secret Lives of Buildings* as a "dirty secret". This statement implies that change in architecture lacks acceptance from the public and professional domain. New structures are perceived by the user as a symbol of progress but, in contrast, change alludes to the perception that progress may be compromised. There is a suggestion that this notion is not only applicable to the physical structure of the building, but possibly also to the symbolic connotation it has. In the instance of The Tshwane District Hospital, it can be implied that such a connotation may be that of the authoritarian political approach of the

apartheid government.

Scott (2005:1) identifies three possible fates for buildings when he notes that buildings can be left unchanged, be demolished or altered. Architecture would not have to be changed or demolished in a perfect world, but the dynamic requirements and needs that architecture has to accommodate justifies the existence of alteration as facilitator for change *(ibid.)*.

Hollis *(ibid.)*, however, insists that change is a spontaneous occurrence in the built environment, and he argues that it should be. His motivation is that change enables architecture to endear the test of time, and therefore allows a building to keep on existing and fulfil a function. Such a function has the ability to extend beyond the programme and structure of architecture. Changing architecture may possibly also change the connotation it has. Hollis (*ibid*.: *14)* signifies this opportunity by stating:

> *"Buildings are gifts, and because they are, we must pass them on."*

There is a complex process involved in changing architecture. In this study, the change of architecture implies that a designed means should be provided in order to allow the user to reinterpret both the architectural envelope and its content. But before new work can be commenced, Scott (1998:150) suggests that the existing built fabric be prepared before new work is commenced. He *(ibid*.) defines this process as 'enabling works. It may therefore be argued that enabling works suggests the manipulation of the connection point between old and new in order to establish a link. As established in *Chapter 1,* buildings are comprised of a series of sub-systems. It is the role of the interior designer to seek a designed means of connecting the systems present in the existing envelope to the systems of the proposed new work. Groàk (1992:21) compares buildings to energy systems that are open, closed or isolated. The open system allows for the free flow of matter across its boundaries, closed systems allow for the partial flow of matter, where the isolated system does not allow for the flow of matter at all. Enabling works suggests creating an open system in the existing, allowing a connection point to the existing. In this study, the manipulation of the existing built fabric will be informed by the requirements of the proposed new work. *Chapter 4* should identify the components that are relevant to the alteration of the place. The aim is to contextualise these components, identify building systems and derive an informed approach from the above.

The process of change arguably has relevance to the field of human anatomy. In order to facilitate a typical dissection, the anatomist must accept the implied properties of the human tissue he has to dissect, and envision the possible dissected result. It can be argued that the unexposed human tissue represents the "real" - whereas the completed dissection represents "the ideal". The success of a typical dissection therefore is influenced by an informed transgression between the real and the ideal.

In architecture, the progress from the real to the ideal is often compromised by imposing an ideal on a structure. In contrast, by only focusing on the limitations of the real, the ideal is marginalised. Cook (1992:219) argues in the same vein when he defines the ideal man in the visual media:

> *"By current convention, saying that a man has rippling muscles and steel blue eyes, is regarded as 'unrealistic'; saying that he has bad breath and a fat beer belly may be regarded as 'realistic'. Yet, both kinds of men exist in the world (if the latter kind occurs more frequently in a user's experience, it does not make the former unreal."*

Eisenman (Jencks 1997:14) highlights the dynamic pulsating relationship between the growth and decay of the urban environment as an opportunity for linkage with new work. It is this fractal nature of urban environments that is proposed as the "point of intervention". In order to establish a connection point between the existing architectural envelope and the proposed new work, Jencks (*ibid.*) urges the designer to get as close as possible to the grain of the urban environment. There is a suggestion that only by engaging with the intricacy of the built environment, is it possible to create a sustainable link with new work.

If a link can be established between the existing The Tshwane District Hospital and the intended new work, it will become a platform from which to effectively communicate to the visitor. Jencks (1997:35) also values this notion and suggests that the interior realm subsequently becomes the physical manifestation of who society is and where they aspire to be. He *(ibid.)* argues that the existing becomes a means of taking the temperature of culture.

3.2 Reinterpreting the Existing

The need to develop new architecture is questioned by Carroon (2010:291)

23

when he states that:

> *"We cannot build our way to climate neutrality."*

Subsequent environmental research supports his argument, seeing that there are 300 000 square feet of buildings in the United States, most of which will still be standing in 2030. As a result, existing buildings outnumber new construction 99 to 1 *(ibid.)*. The replacement or complete renovation of such structures will both prove too resource-intensive. Carroon *(ibid.)* therefore proposes a strategic alteration of selected building elements, which will allow it to fulfil its function.

In this study, this strategic alteration will be referred to as the reinterpretation of the existing building fabric. All new work to the built envelope
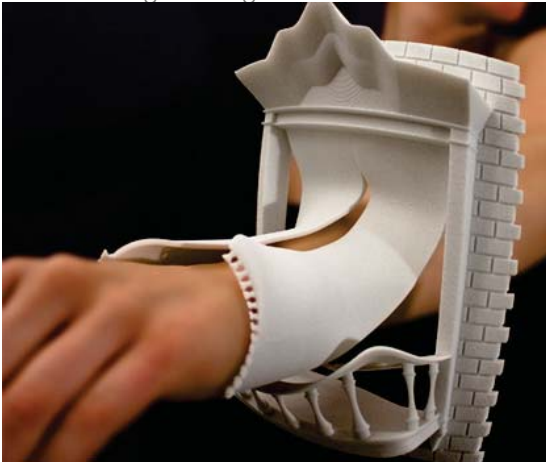
Illustration 3.1 The reinterpretation of architecture as jewellery (Ponoko, 2009)

should therefore either contribute to, or be informed by the principle of reinterpretation, as indicated in *Illustration 3.1*.

This study should indicate that the reinterpretation of the existing can be facilitated by the manipulation of *Diagram 3.1:*

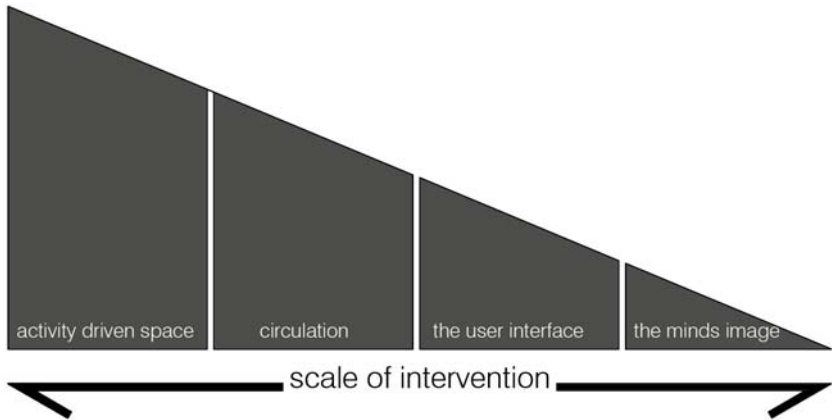1. Circulation.
2. Introducing Activity-driven space.

24

Diagram 3.1 The scale and type of proposed intervention involved in the reinterpretation of space.

3. Manipulating the user interface.
4. Controlling the "mind's image"..

3.2.1. Circulation

Dovey (1999:51) argues that the manipulation of spatial circulation can become a means of suggesting power through built form in the book, *Framing Places*. His research indicates that the principle of authority is spatially experienced by the user. As indicated in *Diagram 3.2,* architecture can arguably become an instrument by which choice is either given or taken away from the user.

In altering the built fabric only slightly, an alternative circulation route may be provided. If conducted successfully by the interior designer, circulation may become a tool by which the user can be guided to engage with parts of a display, where in other instances, it may provide the user with the choice not to do so. In the case of sensitive subject material, for instance a Human Anatomy Centre, the choice to engage will protect the user from being
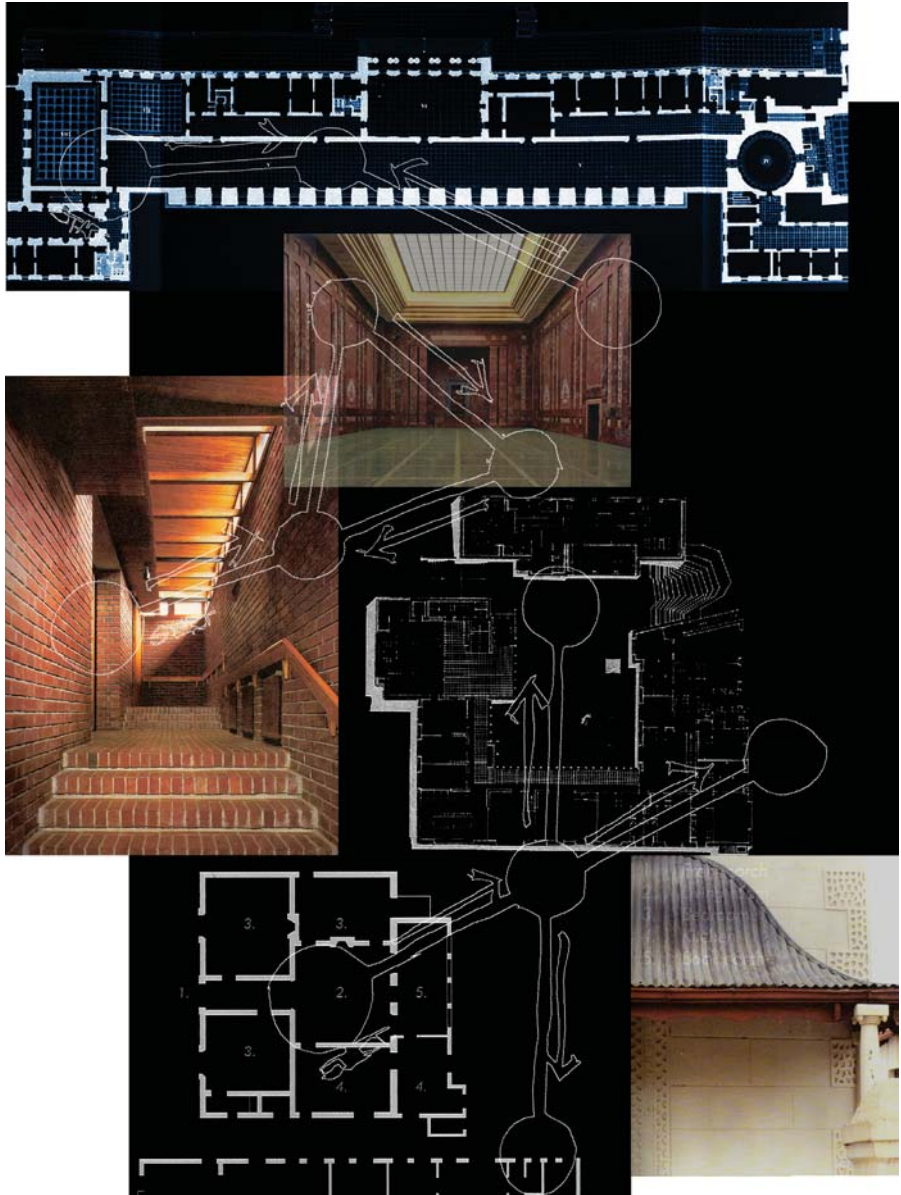
25

Diagram 3.2. How circulation pattern can guide the user in the interior realm.

confronted with sensitive subject material without his choosing to be. In order to provide a hierarchy of levels of engagement with the interior space to the user, this study will aim to intervene on different levels of the architectural envelope. The building shell should be approached as the monument; maintaining the symbolic role the place fulfils within the Tshwane context. The interior should be approached as the anti-monument, allowing it to be altered and added to in an attempt to reinterpret the Administration Building.

As the narrative is not only the link <u>between</u> objects and spaces, but also <u>through</u> a specific space, the form of these spaces becomes a volumetric manifestation of circulation (Ching, 1996:268). Altering an existing structure implies the possibility of volumetric constraint. An alteration strategy may therefore include altering a predominantly horizontal structure, in order to allow both visual and physical vertical circulation.

3.2.3 Activity Driven Space

Part of the architectural dilemma is that of altering the spatial perspective of the user. Whether it be the tactile or the non-tactile attributes involved in transforming space into a place, the user relies on his or her spatial ability (Da Costa, van Rensburg 2008:30). Cross-cultural psychologist, J.Berry (ibid.), aims to quantify a measure for spatial ability and concludes that field dependence and field independence can be seen as a means of measure of spatial understanding. Field dependence focuses on the boundary and planar arrangement to define a space. Space therefore becomes an entity that starts and ends at a boundary. In contrast, field independence focuses on space as "a dynamic process, rather than a static condition" (Berry 1992:124). The user therefore tends to understand spatial qualities beyond its physical boundaries. Berry remarks that field independence is a phenomenon that can be closely associated with nomadic cultures, for instance, in which case the addition of a highly structured environment will suppress spatial complexity.

From the above it can be argued that there is a need to acknowledge the unique needs of the non-urban dweller and question the outright western approach that is usually associated with western cities, that are based on a
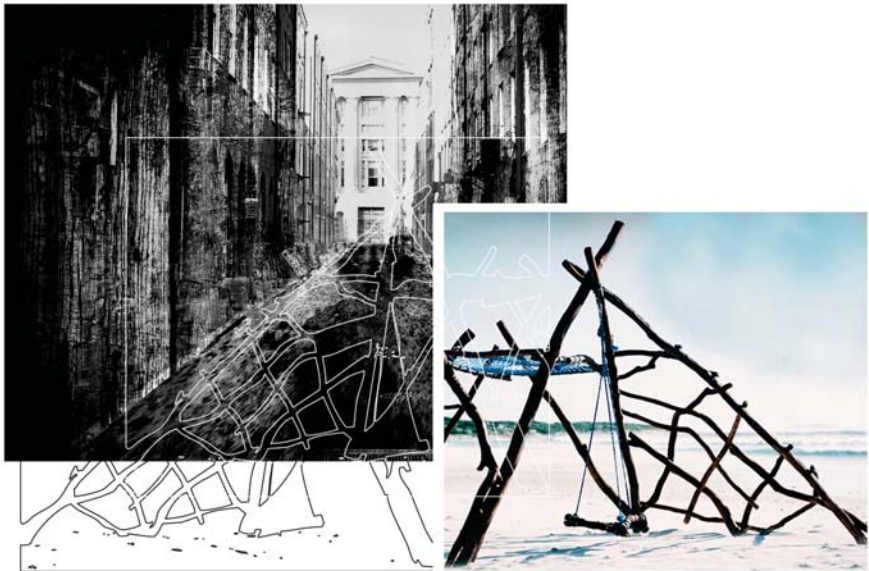
Illustration 3.2 A spatial interpretation signifying the impact of activity driven space. http://dream-weavers.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/pic-2.jpg http://fc07.deviantart.net/fs70/f/2009/360/2/0/Urban_Decay_by_c450.png

Roman grid system.

Failure to do so usually results in architecture that becomes irrelevant (Da Costa, van Rensburg 2008:32). The aftermath of an architecture that has no relevance to its users or surroundings other than its form, becomes reduced to "organised walking" space (Borden 2001:184).

The Tshwane District Hospital and its setting (The Burra Charter 1999:2) has, to some extent, become "organised walking space", not granting the opportunity for the user to take ownership of the immediate surroundings

Da Costa and van Rensburg suggest (2008:35) that in South Africa the intent of government to create unity and social coherence is often inappropriately expressed by the building of monuments. In contrast, they argue that the activation of space can be established by introducing an activity with which all

Illustration 3.3 The degeneration of the Tshwane District Hospital

users can engage.

A human anatomy gallery should be driven by the activities it houses. Room should be made for the user to interact with displays and possibly engage with other visitors in doing so.

3.2.4 The Spatial Perspective

It can be argued that the user interface is the first physical link that a user

29

would have with the architectural envelope, but the user interface allows for communication on both a tangible and intangible level. Buur and Hornecker (Buur&Hornecker 2006:3) emphasise two typical views in which space is perceived by the user.

These are:

- An expressive movement-centred view - this view focuses primarily on the experience of interaction between the visitor and the object. Its aim is, however, not primarily to introduce the user to the space, as the focus of this view is embedded in the richness of the sensory experience provided by the interaction *(ibid.)*.

- A space-centred view - this view is spatial and not aimed at the object in the space. It aims to provide a means of introducing the user into a space by the introduction of elements like sound and light. By architects, this approach is often defined as interactive *(ibid.)*.

By only addressing the space-centred view, Polish artist, Krzysztof Wodiczko, manages to reinterpret public spaces. He does so by projecting visual imagery and video onto the built structure. By manipulating the content of these images, Wodiczko often manages to provoke and question the motives of the institutions responsible for the architecture he projects against (Jekot, 2008:35). By confronting the user with these images, Jekot *(ibid.)* remarks:

His intention is to handle cultural miscommunication

and use art for healing ideological divisions

Hence the suggestion can be made that the user interface can play a role in the reinterpretation of architecture. In the instance of a Human Anatomy Centre, the user interface has the potential to facilitate the effective communication of sensitive subject matter. In aiding the interaction between the visitor and the architectural fabric, the user interface can arguably also serve as a device by which the possible negative perceptions to The Tshwane District Hospital (1927) can be overcome.

3.3 The Mind's Image

Swanepoel (2005:210) notes that a photograph is taken from its context

and placed within a different environment. This notion has two results: first, there is the removal of the element from its context and, second, there is the reinterpretation of this newly acquired image in a new context. For both the principles of de-contextualising and reinterpretation, there is a strong suggestion of constant tension between objectivity and subjectivity. Swanepoel (ibid.:209) argues that the semiology of photography must be learned, and does not come naturally. This notion is confirmed by Umberto Eco when he argues that the reading of the photographic image is no longer an analogue to reality *(ibid.).*

Illustration 3.4 Reinterpretation of the existing through projection http://hightechfolkart.files. wordpress.com/2010/12/wodiczko-video-008.jpg2011

The interaction between user and architecture is temporary. The aftermath of such an interactive experience often results in a formulation of a connotation to place. One might argue that a mental image of the place is created and kept to serve as record of the experience.

Groàk (1992:38) argues that all things created have two narratives. First, there is the narrative of the object in itself and, second, he highlights the external

31

explanation of the object, or its so-called "broader meaning". It may therefore be argued that whilst the physical interaction with the object investigates the object in itself, its broader meaning may influence the public perception and attitudes toward it.

The interior designer, although not the curator of an anatomy museum, has the ability to manipulate built fabric on different scale levels. The design task should include the manipulation of built fabric, the considered addition of selected new elements, as well as guiding the resulting intangible factors like curatorship, future alteration and the introduction of new work. This manipulation affects the user's experience of interacting with his environment. In this study the perception toward both the subject of human anatomy, as well as the building envelope it occupies (The Tshwane District Hospital) will be affected.

Hollis (2009:13) views the alteration of architecture as the retelling of a story. This statement implies that the reinterpretation of The Tshwane District Hospital creates the opportunity for challenging the perception of the user, not only with regards to the built envelope, but also to that of the field of human anatomy.