01

introduction

interior architecture realm

Interior architects are not just concerned with the design of surface and appearance - the ephemeral, frail and convertible - but through their work they control shape, space, services and identity to reflect the needs and innumerable faces of twenty-first century society (Hudson 2007:7).

While architectural projects unfold over an extended period of time and are more concerned with the experience of the building within a wider city context, interior architecture affects our lives on a more intimate level. The spaces we inhabit are physically close to us; they shape our lives and are capable of determining behaviour patterns. The realm of interior architecture lends itself more to adapting to the spirit of the time and experimentation with materials and ideas, because of the shorter life span of its projects (Hudson 2007:6).

The building's edge, which divides interior space from the exterior public space, is often treated as a separate entity. The architect punctures walls with large windows that define the storefront. The interior architect designs the layout and shop fitting of the interior space, while the exterior public space is the responsibility of the urban designer. As a result, little consideration is often given to the potential dialogue between the building's edge and the adjacent public space, which could establish a connection between exterior and interior.

overview and context

The front by Steven Holl with artist Vito Acconci is noticeably different from the traditional shop fronts and art galleries in nearby Soho: its experimental design forges a powerful link between public space, the sidewalk and street, and the private space represented by the narrow inner triangle of the art gallery.
Conceived in this way, the façade is both an element of urban cohesion, an extension of the road into the interior, and an expansion of the interior into the street.
-Abitare 334, November 1994
(www.stevenholl.com/project-detail.php?id=24&worldmap=true)

FIGURE 1.1 Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York

This thesis is concerned with the arcades that proliferate within Pretoria's old Central Business District (CBD) and the dialogue between the building's edge and the adjacent public space. The influence of the design of the storefront, which forms the building's edge, on one's experience of the arcade is investigated. These arcades are currently largely under-utilised, having lost much of their former sense of place; as a result they are mostly used as thoroughfares, and are no longer destinations in which to escape and linger. However, judicious re-design of these edges could re-establish what has been lost.

Conversely, a public space that satisfies engenders a sense of place can make them more aware of the building edges around them. Herein lies the potential for increased commercial activity. Van der Westhuizen (2005:18) states, "Public spaces are increasingly being seen simply as opportunities for consumerism." While consumerism alone is not enough to satisfy our basic needs, if commercial activity within a space is lacking and no other significant activity occurs in the adjacent public space, the sense of place is lost. The objective of this thesis is to investigate which design features are required to reactivate the building's edge and its adjacent public space in an arcade, thereby increasing the commercial activity and re-establishing a sense of place.

Arcades are characterised by the integration of commercial activity into pedestrian-orientated public space. Arcades inject the city with an element of surprise and discovery, providing places of escape from the hustle and bustle of city streets. Here the city dweller is able to enjoy a moment's re-orientation and repose.

"Arcades run along the building, where it meets the public world; they are open to the public"
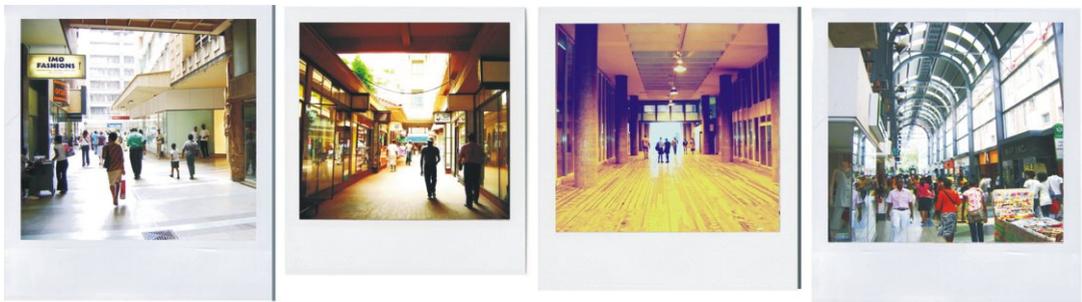(Alexander et al. 1977:582).

FIGURE 1.2 Arcades within Pretoria's Inner City

A definition of arcade is given by Geist (1983:3):
> The root is passus, the Latin word for step, conveying the element of movement, of passage through a space. It has numerous meanings in common linguistic usage: street, roadway, thoroughfare, alley, transit, crossing, part of a book or musical composition, measured gait of a horse, or, in French, the sense of passage de la vie. All these meanings, either spatial or temporal in emphasis, have one element in common: they express transition, threshold, passing, measured distance, or disappearance. Something occurs, comes to pass; movement becomes an event.

The arcade is a form of promenade. Alexander et al. (1977:169) define the promenade as a place where people go to stroll up and down, to meet friends, and to stare at others and let others stare at them.

Thoroughfares and arcades are the public spaces in between the city fabric where people linger about and socially interact with each other.   Bruhn (1991:325) states that anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists all concur that man is a social being who requires interaction with people throughout his life. Some sociologists even doubt whether the individual, considered apart from a social group, possesses significance.

Social interaction acts as a point of reference that helps us to make sense of our experiences. Therefore public space must be designed, to stimulate interaction, in such a way that people want to use the space and to use it for long periods.

However, in Pretoria's urban fabric so many public spaces have become quiet and under-utilised, because they do not provide opportunities to linger. Their edges are strips of blank walls.

Sociologist Derk de Jonge (in Gehl 1987:151) describes the incident of what he terms the edge effect in a study he undertook of preferred areas for 'staying' in an urban environment. It was found that, owing to a need to survey one's surroundings without feeling too exposed, the city dweller establishes 'staying zones' along the borders or edges of spaces.
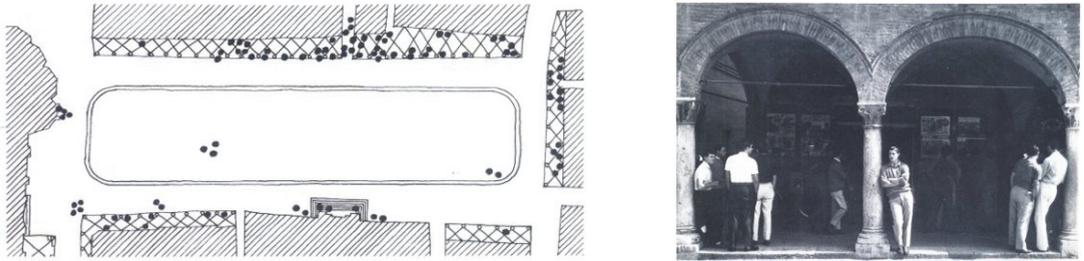

FIGURE 1.3   Survey of the city square, Ascoli Piceno, Italy: Indicating that people tend to congregate along the edges

Many of the arcades in Pretoria are at some point open to the sky (fig 1.2). Through observation it becomes evident that people tend to move faster through spaces that are enclosed, while they linger around edges and spaces that are open to the sky. This lends a specific character to the arcade, "an enclosed space, which is lit from above and therefore offers a strange experience of being inside and outside at the same time" (Norberg-Schulz 1980:59).

Norberg-Schulz speaks about openings in a wall as one of the "main determinants of architectural character". Small openings in the edge create a definite feeling of enclosure and interiority, but when the wall is a framework filled with large surfaces of glass it 'de-materializes' the edge and an interaction between exterior and interior is established (Norberg-Schulz 1980:67).

In playing around with window openings and half-open walls, the interior architect is trying on different masks, seducing the passer-by to linger and explore beyond the edge.

By mapping and studying the arcade and thoroughfare spaces in Pretoria, the study will aim to produce material that indicates what people expect from these public spaces - in terms of lingering qualities and possible staying zones - and how the surrounding edges should interact with these spaces.

Geist (1983:5) states that the arcade "a [...] glass fronts". While this is true of Pretoria's arcades, in front of the glass storefronts one also finds informal telephone stands and hawkers selling fruit and sweets (fig 1.4). Within a typical European arcade (fig 1.5), stores open up and interior shop activity can spill out into the public arcade space, but one doesn't see hawkers sitting around selling their products. Thus, the European notion of arcade needs to be re-defined within a South African urban context.

Walking through the arcades and thoroughfares in Pretoria, one is constantly confronted with signs that state NO PUBLIC TOILETS. It is not enough to only address the social needs of the urban city dweller, physical needs also need to be attended to in order to heighten the potential for lingering in a space.

FIGURE 1.4 Street vendors, informal telephone stands and NO PUBLIC TOILETS signs within arcades

FIGURE 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8
    1.5   Galeries Saint-Hubert, Brussels, Belgium
    1.6   Kalverstraat, Amsterdam, Holland
    1.7   Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan, Italy
    1.8   Passage du grand carf, Paris, France

The following arcades and thoroughfares within Pretoria will be mapped and studied (Chapter 3):

1__CENTRAL STREET linking with Pretorius Street

2__NOORDVAAL ARCADE linking Vermeulen Street with Church Square

3__THOROUGHFARE linking Church Square with Andries Street

4__BURLINGTON ARCADE

5__PRESIDENT ARCADE linking Schoeman Street with Pretorius Street

6__THOROUGHFARE between State Theatre and Sammy Marks

7__POLLEYS ARCADE linking Schoeman Street with Pretorius Street

BELLE OMBRE STATION

PRETORI

PROES STREET

VERMEULEN STREET

CHURCH SQUARE

CHURCH STREET

LILLIAN NGOYA

PRINSLOO STREET

PRETORIUS STREET

ANDRIES STREET

SCHOEMAN STREET

VAN DER WALT STREET

PAUL KRUGER STREET

SKINNER STREET

PRETORIUS SQUARE

BURGERS PARK

BOSMAN TRAIN STATION

1__CENTRAL STREET linking with Pretorius Street

2__NOORDVAAL ARCADE linking Vermeulen Street with Church Square

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4__BURLINGTON ARCADE

5__PRESIDENT ARCADE linking Schoeman Street with Pretorius Street

6__THOROUGHFARE between State Theatre and Sammy Marks

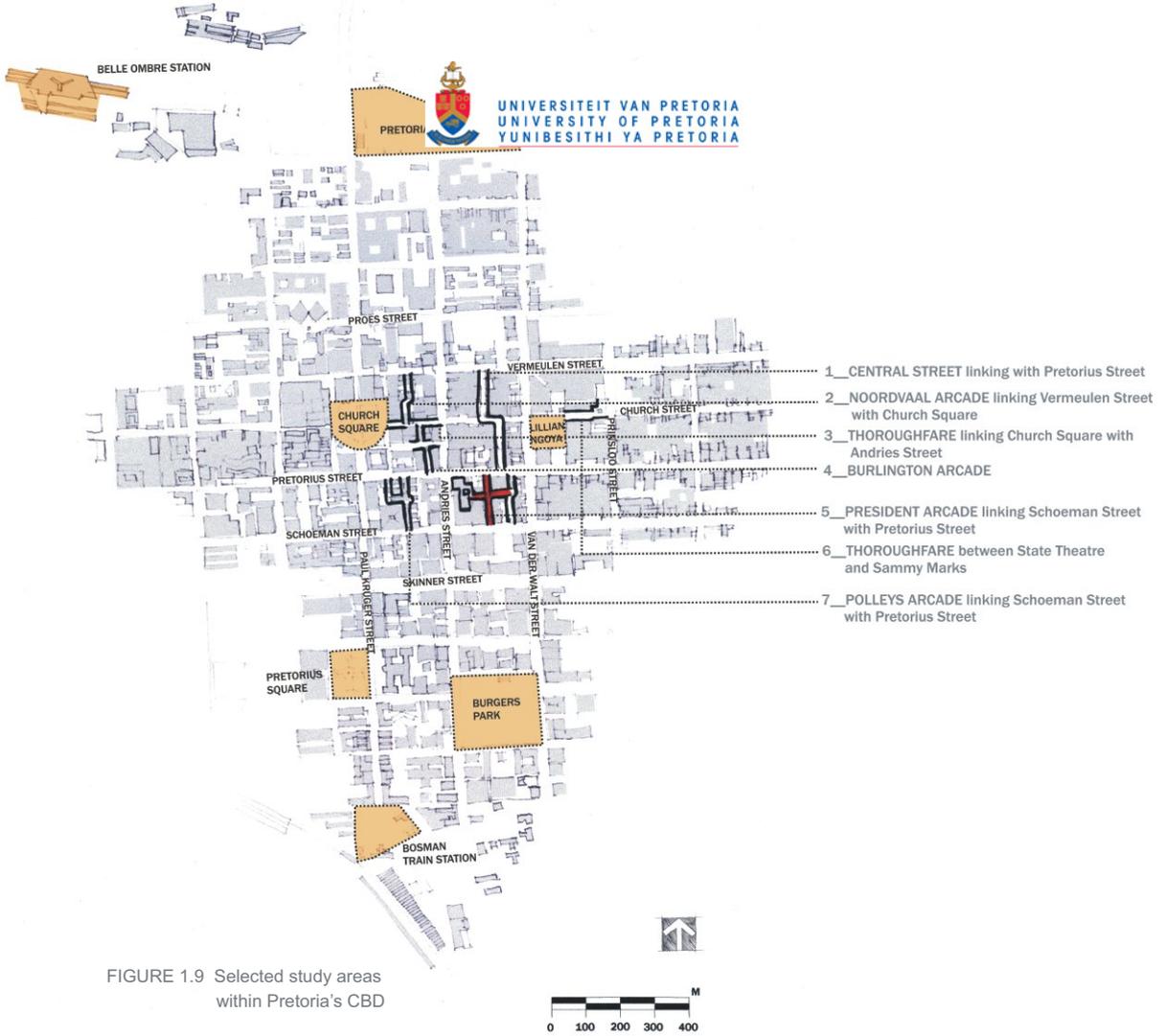7__POLLEYS ARCADE linking Schoeman Street with Pretorius Street

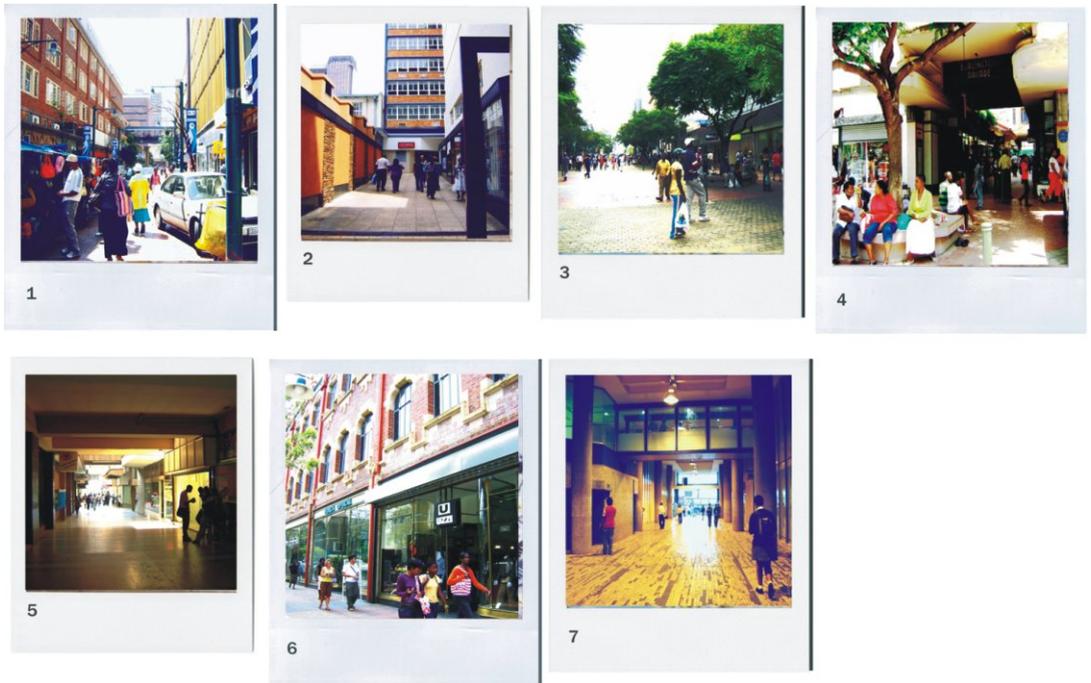FIGURE 1.9 Selected study areas
            within Pretoria's CBD

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0   100 200 300 400

FIGURE 1.10 Views of selected study areas

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Background for research is established through a literature review. Criteria derived from the literature are used to critically assess the selected sites. Assessment is conducted through observations, mapping pedestrian movement and informal interviews with people who frequent these spaces. Thereafter, an experiment with a musician is conducted. Recommendations are then made in the form of a handbook that provides design guidelines which can be applied to revitalise the arcade by encouraging 'edge dialogue'. Finally, through design exploration possible solutions to the design intention, as outlined by the design guidelines, will be investigated (see Chapter 6).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA, for analysis:

- Has the need for social public space been addressed?
- Do the edge and public space create staying zones?
- Do the edge and public space provide opportunity for people to linger, watch and be watched?
- Is there an overload of information and are people able to orientate themselves in the space?
- Does the space have a visual connection to the sky and how do people respond to it?
- Do the building's edges contain elements of seduction? Do they entice people to look beyond the edge?
- What type of events take place in the store interiors and in the arcade?
- Have basic physical needs been addressed?
- How does the shopping mall experience differ from the more open shopping arcade and can parallels be drawn? (Chapter 6)

EXPERIMENT, as culmination of analysis:

Kwaito music booming from oversized speakers in front of shops is a common feature in the arcades and thoroughfares. People move past quickly, ignoring the music, which thereby hinders opportunities for staying zones. The experiment requires a musician to perform in President Arcade, in front of an inactive clothing storefront. The clarinet player will perform classical and jazz compositions on a weekday, during the busiest period from 11:30am and 1:30pm. He will move slowly up and down the arcade space and, for a period of time, will rest against the inactive storefront while performing. The aim is to observe if the city dweller responds to the element of surprise created by live classical and jazz music in this context and whether this seduces the passer-by to stop and linger or even to pause. A secondary purpose of the experiment is to observe, map and compare the lingering points of people while the musician is performing with that when there is no musician present.

The retail industry is one of constant change, while the needs of people within public space remain relatively the same. The Edge Handbook (see Chapter 4) will illustrate long-term and short-term guidelines to be implemented by interior architects who deal with these flexible spaces.

design intention

President Arcade is chosen as the site for deeper investigation. This particular arcade connects Pretorius and Schoeman street, both of which experience heavy pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Geist (1983:4) states that an arcade can only thrive if it connects two streets that are heavily frequented. While President Arcade exhibits the continual movement of people through it, it lacks a sense of place and people do not linger. Dialogue between the building edges and public space has diminished, and the result is an under-utilised space and a lost commercial opportunity.

FIGURE 1.11, 1.12
   1.11   View of inactive Identity storefront edge in President arcade
   1.12   Interior view of the edges in President arcade

FIGURE 1.13 Figure ground study of President Arcade

A detailed design (chapters 6, 7) will be proposed for President Arcade, following the guidelines set out in the Edge Handbook (Chapter 4).

When these guidelines are followed and the elements implemented, the space will become more than just a thoroughfare - it will become a destination in itself.