



BONANG

A centre for the African Girl Child in The Old Pretoria Fire Station: an investigation into the role of Interior design as an agent in the empowerment of the African Girl Child.

by Esther Shaidi

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Study leader: Catherine Karusseit

Internal examiner: Dr. Raymund König

External examiner: Anneke Allers, University of Johannesburg

Editor: Cynthia Ayeza Mutabaazi

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KAKARETŠO

Mo sengwaleng, šedi le hlokomelo di beilwe godimo ga ngwana wa mosetsana wa mo-Afrika. Yena o tloga a tletše ka pshišegelo le bokgoni bja go kgotsofatša. Eupša, go a nyamiša le go hlaba pelo go lemoga gore o hloka hlahlo, tsebo le maele a a tseneletšego ka ga setšo le bokgwa bja gagwe bjalo ka lekgarebe la mo-Afrika. Nyakišišo ye e kgonthišiša le go tshedimoša ka ga lekgarebe leo, ka go laetša le go šišinya mekgwana ya setšoyeo e tlogo go le matlafatša gore le kgone go ba le seabe, khuetšo le hlohleletšo mo setšong sa ma-Afrika. Teori yeo e dirišitšwego bjalo ka thekniki ya sengwalwa se, e agilwe godimo ga ditherišano tša sebjalebjaletše o di tlišago kgahlego le lesedi ka ga lekgotla la “BOSADI” mo setšong sa ma-Afrika le ka moo ditherišano tše o di lego maleba le go fetoga le mehla le mabaka ge matšatši a hlabaka go šiedišana. Gapegape, sengwalwa se, se amanya dinyakišišo go lebeletšwe lefelo le tikologo ya boikgetho, elego “Old Pretoria Fire station”. Tikologo ye e tšwelela bjalo ka boganetši bja lekgotla leo le šišintšwego go ema sekgobeng sa basadi bohle. Le ge go le bjalo, lekgotla le na le maatlakgogedi ebile ke mothopo wa go matlafatša lekgarebe le la mo-Afrika. Seo se tšweletšwa ke ditiro tša go swana le go ithuta ka tša maphelo, mekgwana ya hlahlo le kopano tše o di laetšago bokgabo le bothakga bja setšo mola ka lehlakoreng le lengwe di le thuša ka dikarolo tše dingwe bjalo ka mafelo a go direla meriri, diaparo le bokgabo, ge išita le dijo tša ma-Afrika.

Tšitšinkelo ya “BOSADI” bja ma-Afrika go ya ka mekgwana le melao ya dinaga tše šele e hlola bofokodi le leuba ge go lebeletšwe bokgwa bja rena le ka tsela yeo bo fetogago ka gona. Ditlamorago tša kamano ya mapheko a a mabedi di fihlelela go matlafatša mosetsanayowa mo-Afrika.

ABSTRACT

At the root of this dissertation is the African girl child, abundant in innate potential but lacking in affirmative girl friendly spaces that are suited to her African heritage. The study considers the design of an interface that will empower the African girl child in a traditionally patriarchal African culture. A theoretical review is conducted on the current state of African feminism and how it is realised within its African context being both dynamic and relevant.

The discourse links the theoretical findings with the chosen context, the Old Pretoria Fire Station, which stands in contrast to the proposed progressive feminine intervention. The intervention is defined as being a Centre for the African girl child, incorporating activities such as teaching life skills, facilitating workshops, which centre on arts and culture while at the same time re-establishing the building's relevance to its immediate context by including functions such as an African hair salon, fashion designer and tailor and a restaurant.

The inquiry into the physical expression of African feminism into a building that represented a colonial patriarchal society presents design challenges with regards to respecting the existing heritage fabric while introducing a new function. The architectural and spatial resolution of how these two issues integrate with one each other ultimately contribute to the empowerment of the African girl child.

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CHAPTER 1

I N T R O D U C T I O N

"We are the ones we have been waiting for"
(Walker 2006)

1.1 BACKGROUND

Alice Walker's book title propels one to action in seeking self-empowerment and self-realisation that it is and/or has the power and choice to effect change. The We represents a collective that has a shared identity and motivated by a common interest. Within this collective is the personal identity which "is the glue that maintains the structure and cohesion of social groups" (Webb 2003:2).

The African girl child has been identified by Agbemabiese (2011: 1) as being in need of empowerment with regards to how she is "repressed by male dominance, controlled by traditional perceptions of a woman, and abused by the time-honoured customs of her community". The African girl child is at an age where she is forming an identity on her way to womanhood within a society that is lenient towards patriarchy (Hooks 1981:2). The African girl child referred to in this study refers to girls between the ages of 12-17. She is considered to be going against the dominant ideologies of a patriarchal system and conventional traditional norms when she seeks self-empowerment and self-actualisation (Agbemabiese 2011: 3). The unconventional path she chooses is considered to be un-African and inspired by the West (Agbemabiese 2011: 3). Burdensome traditional laws deny the African girl child power, and consign her to an inferior status resulting in her becoming an African woman who passes on her lack of skills to her children, and especially her daughters.



1.2 REAL WORLD PROBLEM

A result of the discrimination toward the African girl child (AGC) is lack of access to girl-friendly, safe, and supportive spaces that aid in her self-empowerment and self-actualisation. The provision of affirmative spaces allows for her to develop into “a leader in her community and be more prepared to make better, well-informed decisions” (Agbemabiese 2011:8,11).

Pretoria's Central Business District (CBD) is a vibrant, multicultural community of people, made up of people who are residents, business people, civil servants, schoolgoers, and formal and informal traders among so many others. The AGC currently identifies as a scholar and in some cases a resident in central Pretoria. Given the theory on the African girl child, assumption may be made that school and home environments do not necessarily provide for positive affirmation, and therefore, a third space is needed whereby she can be acknowledged and empowered. This space can offer her a sense of belonging and identity within a tangible context and the intangible patriarchal context within which she finds herself.

This dissertation investigates the African girl child, establishes her current identity, her traditional roles and how these can be redefined. Moreover, it seeks to show how interior design can act as agent of empowerment for the African girl child.

The site identified for intervention is the Old Pretoria Fire Station, corner of Bosman and Minaar Streets, central Pretoria. The building is located within a museum complex which contains the cultural, natural and scientific history of South Africa. The cultural production and representation that occurs in the host building will stand in contrast to these museums which contain history which is at an arm's length to the African girl child. The African girl child centre seeks to offer her an opportunity to learn from history within the museum complex and reapply these lessons in a manner that is appropriate and representative of her, be it through the arts, science, mathematics or/and technology.

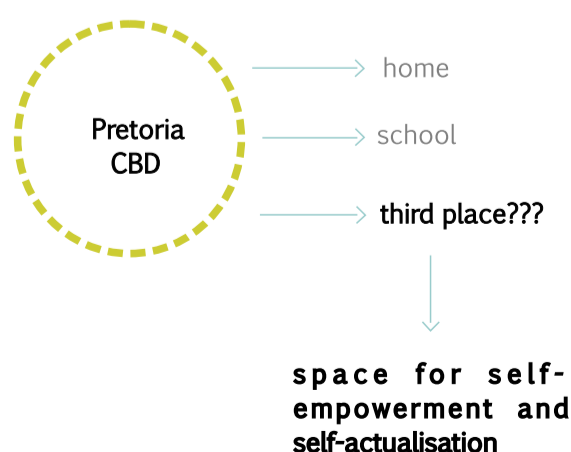


Figure 1.1: Possible affirmative spaces in the Pretoria CBD (Author 2015)

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is a system of inequality that is favourable to the male sex in South African society, as with the African man and boy, in African culture, (even though they were discriminated against in a previously white supremacist society). The African woman and African girl child experience a dichotomy of oppression: firstly, within a previously white supremacist society, and secondly, within their own family with regards to traditional gender roles and patriarchal-based systems. Despite various organisations created to aid the African girl child and laws amended to aid in empowering her, she is still found disadvantaged within the South African society. The traditional gender roles which are passed on to her by her mother have left the African girl child deprived of opportunities for achieving her full potential and independence.

The African girl child needs a platform to facilitate her empowerment. The lack of girl child spaces, and specifically African girl child place and spaces in the CBD results in her not being an active participant in the urban environment and social context in which she finds herself.

Agbemabiese (2011:11) identifies four strategies that would aid in empowering the African girl child:

1. Creation of safe and supportive girl-friendly spaces;
2. Building girls' social assets;
3. Provision of education, information and skill-building for girls; and,
4. Creating channels for girls' participation in decision-making processes in their communities.

In summary, three main issues have been identified:

- The lack of opportunities for the African girl child in Pretoria's CBD due to a patriarchal society and its limitations;
- The absence of physical spaces that cater to the African girl child in Pretoria's CBD; and,
- The repercussions of a previously white supremacist society that lacks an aesthetic with which the African girl child can identify.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This argument has given rise to the following research questions:

- 1 What theory exists that supports the African girl child and her three areas oppression namely; race, gender and power? **AFRICAN FEMINISM**
- 2 Is there any identifiable historical significance in the host building and its context that may be used to empower the African girl child? **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**
- 3 What precedents can be investigated to aid the intervention in the host building? **PRECEDENTS**
- 4 Can a design aesthetic be generated that speaks of the African girl child and serves to empower her? **DESIGN AESTHETIC**

1.5 AIM

The aim of this design dissertation is to investigate how empowerment can be relayed through interior design to the African girl child by means of representation of an African aesthetic, thereby altering her perception of what being a proud African woman is in a dominantly patriarchal society.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

The study is limited to:

- Investigating existing traditional norms and cultural activities within the African community that could inform the initial intervention, which will be rolled out in a selected building on site and allow for a phased approach that will include the entire site.

The study will not:

- Investigate formalised educational spaces with regards to empowerment of the African girl child.

1.7 DESIGN RESEARCH METHODS

The following research methods have been identified as the means by which a substantial conceptual approach will be formulated.

1.7.1 Interpretive Historical Research

Due to the historical significance of the Old Pretoria Fire Station an additional research method will be utilised, namely Interpretive-Historical Research. This research methodology entails investigating “...social-physical phenomena...” in its past condition and so “...explaining those phenomena in narrative form” (Groat & Wang 2002:136).

A strategy to achieve this entails on-site familiarity, use of extant documents, visual inspection, material evidence, comparison with conditions elsewhere, use of local informants and identification of remaining questions (Groat & Wang 2002:136).

The interpretive-historical method can be used in conjunction with Scott's (2008:108) process of stripping back, namely, removal of rotted fabric, making good and enabling works. The application of these methodologies will guide in strengthening the argument in terms of the proposed intervention and how it will impact the historical significance of the Old Pretoria Fire Station. Scott's method of stripping back is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Listed below are the research techniques that have been identified as a means of carrying out the investigation of the topics at hand:

1. Literature Reviews

Hanington & Martin (2012:112) state that the literature review is intended to distil information from published sources, capturing the essence of previous research or projects as they might inform the current project. The literature review to be investigated relates to African feminism and how it manifests itself and heritage guidelines both locally and internationally that will inform the intervention.

2. Case Studies

Hanington & Martin (2012:28) state that case studies are useful in exploratory research for understanding existing phenomena for comparison, information, or inspiration, but can also be used to study the effects of change, new programmes, or innovations. Case studies will be investigated in terms of informing the interior design of a restorative environment whilst also investigating an efficient programme that could be implemented in the African Girl Child Centre. The case studies to be used in the investigation will look at existing international examples and one within the local, South African context.

1.8 DESIGN INTENT

The proposed design is to add value both creatively and culturally whilst simultaneously empowering the African girl child. The proposed design is that of a Centre for the African Girl Child in central Pretoria that will act as an interface for the African girl child to become empowered through different avenues, skills training and educational spaces. The interior design of the Centre for the African Girl Child is to have restorative qualities that foster an atmosphere of empowerment, engagement and conversation on traditional norms that may have alienated the African girl child. The aesthetics of the interior are to resonate with and should instil pride in the African girl child about her African heritage. The programme connects with the urban context and serves to support existing social and economic activity.

1.9 OUTLINE OF STUDY

Chapter 1 introduced the research topic at hand and the constituent issues that will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 will consist of a theoretical investigation of the heritage of the building and African feminism.

Chapter 3 interrogates the macro context, the host building and its historical background. An urban framework is identified to support the intervention. The chosen site is documented and assessed and the interior spatial quality of the host building analysed. The Chapter concludes with a statement of significance and heritage strategy.

Chapter 4 documents case studies, and reviews precedents relevant to the study.

Chapter 5 introduces the space user, client, programme, conceptual approach and design development of the proposed intervention.

Chapter 6 is to be a summation of the preceding chapters in that it will discuss the design's technical development.

Chapter 7 concludes the study.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The study proposal looks at the African girl child and her stand within society, where she is lacking and how she can be empowered. *The designed intervention is to be an interface that grants the African girl child access to opportunities that can be catalysts to her enablement.*

The Old Pretoria Fire Station is identified as the site from which to address the real world problem. It identifies an absence of spaces within the CBD in which the African girl child is welcome.

Delimitations have been set out. The research methodologies are Qualitative Research; and Interpretive Historical Research; as well as literature reviews and case studies are described as tools for investigation.



The Feminist Stokvel Presents

Texture Discrimination:
THE PROBLEM WITH
~~'*FEMINISM'~~

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework is the point of departure for the context and site analysis, as well as a conceptual generator. While not listed the Old Pretoria Fire Station OPFS is older than 60 years; a review of local and international heritage legislation and charters form the basis for the statement of significance and heritage strategy. African feminist writings are surveyed and support the argument for empowerment of the African Girl Child by means of the Centre for the African Girl Child and its interior design.



2.2 LOCAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION AND INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE GUIDELINES.

2.2.1 Local Heritage Legislation: National Heritage Resources Act

The National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) is the legislation utilised by the South African government as a means of managing national heritage resources. The NHRA facilitates healing and material and symbolic restitution, and it promotes new and previously neglected research into our rich oral traditions and customs (South Africa 1999: 2). The inherent historical cultural value of the Old Pretoria Fire Station is thoroughly documented and a Statement of Significance and Heritage Strategy is generated, which will guide the design process (Chapter 3 Context and Site). The NHRA (South Africa, 1999: 18) provides a general Heritage assessment criteria and grading which is as follows:

Grade I: Heritage resources with qualities so exceptional that they are of special national significance;

Grade II: Heritage resources which, although forming part of the national estate, can be considered to have special qualities making them significant within the context of a province or a region; and,

Grade III: Other heritage resources worthy of conservation.

The building in question, Old Pretoria Fire Station, which has been identified for intervention, has to date not been graded, it has no qualities so exceptional nor special that have been identified by the NHRA (South Africa, 1999: 20). The building was constructed in 1912, therefore, it is subject to Section 34 of the NHRA (25 of 1999) because the building is older than 60 years but no further information on the heritage status of the building is available. However, the documentation (Chapter 3 Context and Site) of the building indicates that while not graded the building does indeed embody a historical cultural narrative worthy of recognition and responsible treatment

2.2.2 International Heritage Guideline: ICOMOS

This process of alteration is not a linear projection of activities but may require one to be involved in various steps at the same time. The process of alteration includes various activities one of which being conservation. Australia ICOMOS (2013:6) states that conservation may, depending on circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a use; retention of associations and meanings; maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these.

The process of conservation is one where the Burra Charter states that the approach should do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained (Australia ICOMOS 2013:1) This approach ties in to the NHRA viewpoint that heritage should not only benefit the present but also future generations. The change to be incorporated should be appropriate in relation to the cultural significance of the building.

Adaptation of the building to suit this new use and new works will be of importance whilst considering the preservation of identified elements that may be of historical significance.

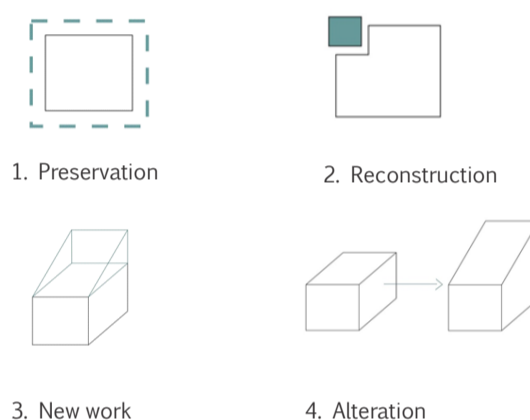


Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic depiction of the Burra charter conservation processes (Author 2015)

Foster (2010:93) states that there are three philosophical viewpoints: The first being the Purist view, ...“the idea that there can be alternative philosophical approaches. The second is the Pragmatist's view, a sound philosophy is one which points in the right general direction – that of truthfulness. Its precise application must depend on the building and its circumstances, ...“If I am in command of all the facts, then the building itself will tell me what to do”. The third view is the Cynic's view, ...“conservation is a completely artificial procedure, interfering with natural processes of decay of absolute. Conservation philosophies are therefore necessarily artificial”.

The view that best guides the approach to conservation of the Old Pretoria Fire Station is that of the pragmatist, a well-balanced and researched approach. This approach is applied in the context and site analysis.

The steps taken to identify inherent value of the site will be adapted from the Burra Charter Process for heritage management (Australia ICOMOS 2013:10):

1. Identify the historic heritage place.
2. Gather information and investigate the place.

3. Assess and determine the place's level of significance.
4. Develop a statement of significance.
5. Identify obligations arising from the significance of the place.
6. Develop policy and manage place with policy.
7. Monitor and review.

2.3 AFRICAN GENDER STUDIES.

2.3.1 Why the African Girl Child?

The African girl child is perceived to be at a disadvantage in a society that is pro patriarchy, a society that deems her to be of lesser value than her male counterpart (Iversen & Nyamakanga 2012: 10). Her standing in society is one of uncertainty and insecurity. Various non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and initiatives have been formed to aid and empower the African girl child. The empowering of the African girl child can occur on many levels which aid her in finding resources that could help in her academic progress, acquiring life skills, social skills and, physical and emotional well-being. Initiatives such as the Girl Education Movement (GEM) train girls in peer education and life skills (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa 2005: 3). GEM provides the girls with access to skills and information and guides them in mobilising the movement within their community. An initiative that forms part of GEM is Technogirls mentorship programme. The programme aids high achieving, disadvantaged girls aged between 15-18 years of age in making informed career choices with focus on science, technology and engineering. The mentorship programme creates a link between what the girls learn at school and what is required within the professional world.

Initiatives such as GEM cater to the African girl child and incorporate her male counterpart. These initiatives are located in various places within South African and Africa but no physical centre can be found within Pretoria that specifically caters to the girl child that allows for her to network with organisations, mentors and with fellow girl children.

2.3.2 African feminism

Being born female in Africa could be considered a disadvantage because women are "...treated like merchandise, passing from a father's to a husband's stewardship..." (Fall 2007:1), where women can pursue their career but as long as it does not "...interfere with their duties as mothers and wives" (Fall 2007:1). It is this kind of mentality that led to an African feminist movement that was largely a silent struggle, characterised by women becoming "financially autonomous" (Fall 2007:2). The silent struggle transitioned to an African feminism in the 1950's which is "...political, pragmatic, reflexive, and group oriented" (Mikell 1995: 405). African feminists are not seeking equality as a means of proving themselves stronger than their male counterparts but rather to showcase their strengths as individuals and as a collective.

The complexities of African culture and the mind-sets of its people results in a feminism that is different to western feminism. African feminism fights for the basics, a woman's right to be (Kanyogo 2015:1).

Lebohang Masango and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are two examples of contemporary African feminists. Lebohang Masango is a feminist writer and poet. She bares her tattoos proudly, dresses how she feels comfortable and is not afraid to speak her mind (Black Bold Voice 2014).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an award winning novelist whose family called her a man for speaking her mind (Wagner 2015). Her books are an outlet for her creative genius and feminist standings, with strong female voices taking the lead in her books such as "Kambili in Purple Hibiscus, Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun, Ifemelu in Americanah" (Wagner 2015). Chimnanda is depicted in photographs as calm, collected and elegant. Her portrayal of feminism may not be as bold as that of Lebohang Masango but that does not mean that one is more legitimate than the other. Both Lebohang Masango and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie believe feminism should be about empowering women, "...equality of the sexes as it pertains to human rights, equal pay and sexuality" (Wagner 2015).

2.3.2.1 The Feminist Stokvel

The Feminist Stokvel is a collective of women who have come together to table and discuss openly about social issues facing the black, South African woman. The collective comprises of Pontsho Philane, Millisuthando Bongela, Danielle Bowler, Lebo Mashile,

Panashe Chigumadzi, Lebohang 'Nova' Masango, Wisaal Anderson and Kavuli-Nyali Binyase (not pictured), as depicted in figure 2.3.

Monthly events are hosted where black women come together to deliberate on how black women are represented, intersectional feminism to hair and beauty matters that concern the black women. The gatherings currently occur in the form of talk shops, film screenings, panel discussions, readings and online content. The event takes place in various venues in Johannesburg with the aim to have the monthly events in more provinces within South Africa. A place like the Centre for the African Girl Child would be able to host such events.

The posters used to market the events, as depicted on the chapter introduction page are bold and unapologetic given the African aesthetic that the Feminist Stokvel stands for.

The gatherings create a safe space for black women to share their experiences that form part of their lives, good and bad. Such sharing within a collective is vital to the African girl child in forming an identity that she can carry daily. Weisman (1992: 2) states that "space, like language, is socially constructed; the spatial arrangements of our buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender, race and class relations in society". The proposal in this study is to design this safe space where the African girl child can share her experiences, be empowered and empower other African girl children. The aforementioned safe space is pivotal in a society that bolsters white male power and dominance and the inferiority and subservience of women and minorities



Figure 2.2: Lebohang Masango and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Masango 2015 & Wagner 2015)



Figure 2.3: The Feminist Stokvel collective (Chigumadzi 2015)

2.4 AFRICAN REPRESENTATION

The representation of the African girl child within the space she occupies is of importance. Weisman (1992:9) states that both the world out there and the world inside ourselves depend upon and conform to our socially learned perceptions and values. By representing the African girl child and the African aesthetic a sense of African pride is instilled in her. She need not cower from opportunities and empowerment that was customarily available to her male counterparts, and even white male counterparts.

The representation of the African girl child will to be discussed under three themes, namely; race, gender roles and the concept of power, within the African family and where in this power struggle she currently fits.

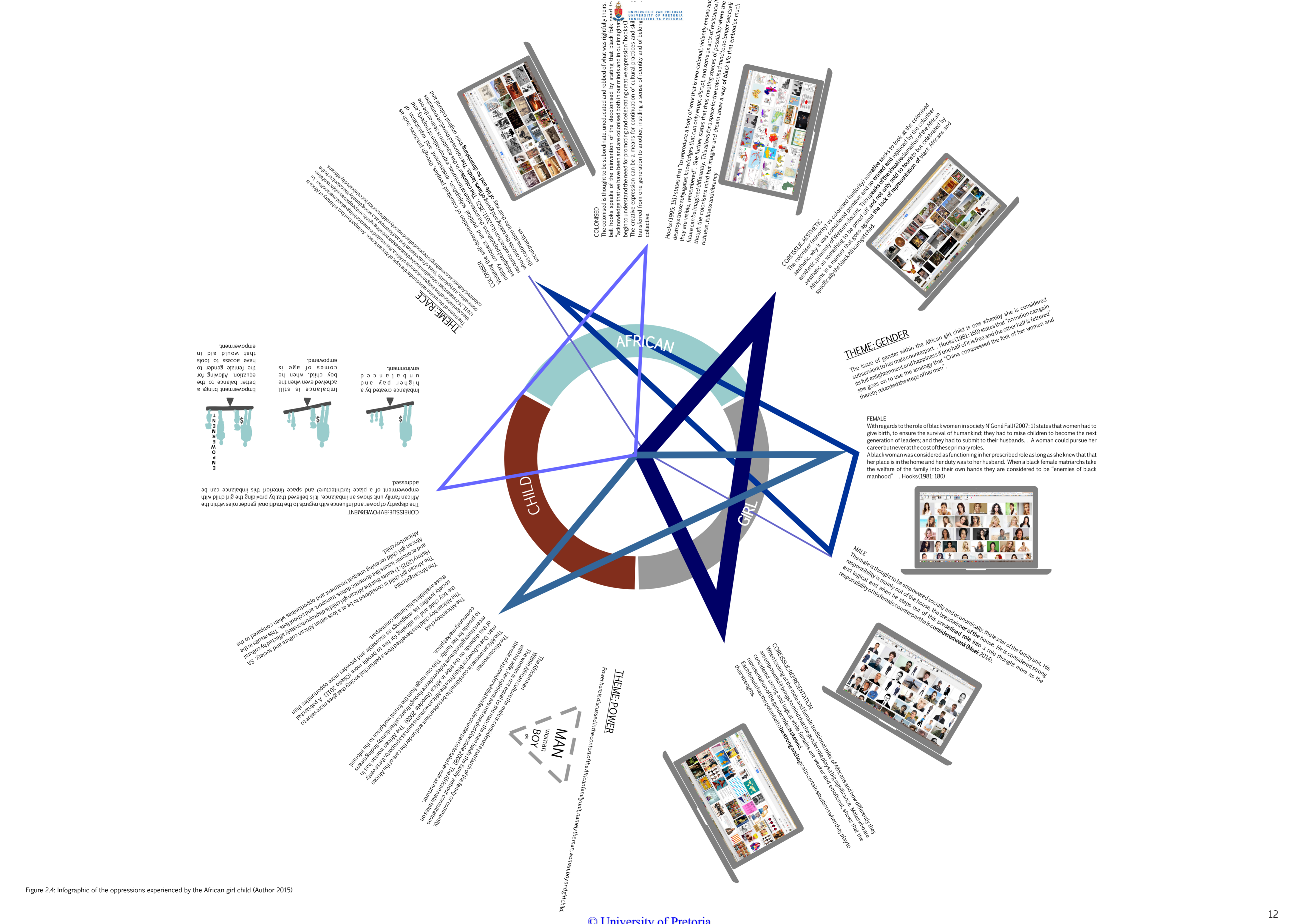


Figure 2.4: Infographic of the oppressions experienced by the African girl child (Author 2015)

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated existing local and international heritage guidelines that are available as tools in the approach of intervening within a heritage building. The interpretation of these guidelines will be highlighted in the design development chapter (Chapter 5).

The theoretical investigation defends the need for feminism that is relevant within the African context, which is that we cannot settle for the “at least’s” - such as: at least we have a few female ministers and legislators, at least women can now have white-collar jobs (Kanyogo 2015: 2) African feminism manifests itself differently within African, black cultures. African feminism plays an important role in the creation of a collective identity in which the African girl child can feel safe.

In conclusion, the representation of the African girl child and her African creative expression are identified as the main generators of an aesthetic for the Centre for the African Girl Child. The intervention and aesthetic are to instil a sense of dignity and delight in her African heritage within a patriarchal, previously white supremacist society.

Date: Saturday 27 June 2015

Venue: Constitution Hill

Time: 12.00 - 2.00

**Cost: R150 - includes lunch, drinks and a free tour of
Constitution Hill!**

Tickets available on Quicket

RSVP to feministstokvel@gmail.com



CHAPTER 3