

PRECEDENT STUDIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates relevant precedents and how they will influence the outcome of the design proposal. The precedents were chosen based on the following criteria: spatial layout and heritage intervention; programme and African aesthetic. The criteria refer to heritage intervention, community centre design, and the existing African aesthetic within South Africa. Each study heading is concluded with what the precedent contributes to the development of the design.



4.2 SPATIAL LAYOUT AND HERITAGE INTERVENTION

The precedents discussed focus on how an intervention in a heritage building can be used to announce new use in the existing building, spatially and on the floor plan.

4.2.1 Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome (MACRO)

Architects: Studio Odile Decq

Location: Piazza Orazio Giustiniani, 4, 00153 Rome, Italy

Area: 12000.0sqm

Year: 2007

The Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome (MACRO) designed by Studio Odile Decq sought to change the introverted site into a more open site. The integration of Contemporary Art Gallery in an ancient mixed industrial building proved to be challenging but resulted in an intervention that is striking.



Figure 4.1: Façade of Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome (Filetici 2014)

FACADE:

A prominent corner of the façade, shown in figure 4.1, has been removed and replaced with contemporary materials that stand in contrast to the host building, permitting light into the building and connecting space users within the host building with the context.

The entrance canopy, depicted in the image below, allows for a gathering space within the entrance. This would not have been possible with the original façade.

CIRCULATION:

The new circulation route is fluid in its transition from space to space, between the different levels, and from public to private. The circulation path, depicted in figure 4.2, is not as linear as the host building would have dictated but instead is dynamic, offering various viewpoints along the route.

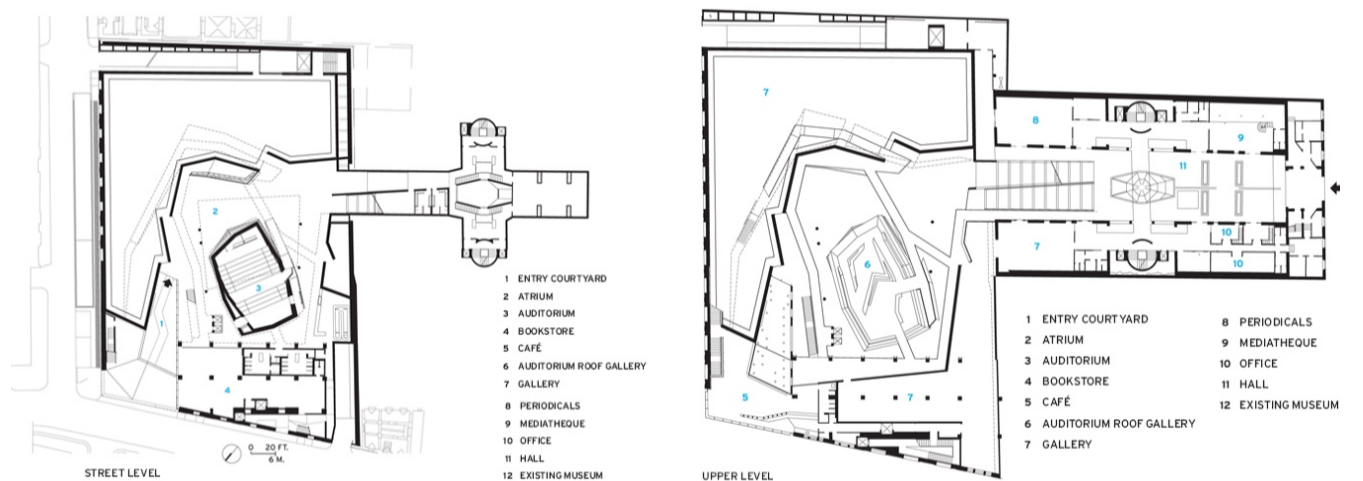


Figure 4.2: Circulation within the museum (Filetici 2014)

SPATIAL ORGANISATION:

The spatial organisation is not limited to the static orthogonal planes dictated by the original layout of the building but rather pulls away from a formal, static plan and section to form angled horizontal and vertical planes.



Figure 4.3: Spatial organisation within the museum (Filetici 2014)

The orthogonal nature of the building was rejected and a diagonal line was used to form new spaces as depicted in the image above. Thus a parti analysis (figure 4.4) reveals that the stable horizontal line is changed to an unstable line, resulting in the static nature of the space becoming dynamic.

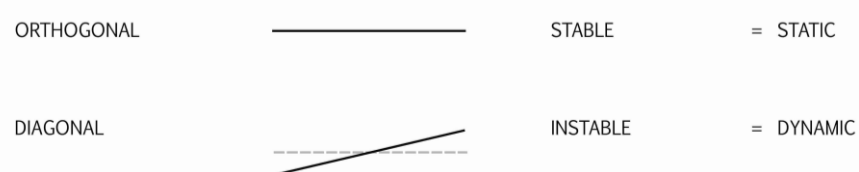


Figure 4.4: Analysis of floorplan arrangement and spatial organisation within the museum (Author 2015)

4.2.2 Fortress of Fortezza

Architects: Markus Scherer with Walter Dieltl

Location: Franzensfeste, Italy

Area: Unknown

Year: 2009

This was a military fortress built in 1838, used as gunpowder depot in the 19th century, and in 1918, Franzensfeste came under Italian rule and was used by the army until 2003. This former fortress has become a place for meetings and cultural exchange (Chemollo 2011).

FACADE

Elements such as the retained existing brickwork (figure 4.5) keep the memory of the past in a manner that is literal whilst the new addition attempts to complete the form of the building with missing parts.



Figure 4.5: Façade interventions at the military fortress (Chemollo 2011)

CIRCULATION:

Of particular interest is the existing tunnel (figure 4.6) which was extended to 22 meters, to connect the lower- to the middle fortress. A lift and black concrete stairway was added with a golden handrail. The extension of the tunnel is of importance because it extends the memory of the history of the building. The architects used the opportunity to maximise the fortress' spatial potential.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION:

The use of the horizontal organisation of space could have produced a predictable design but the architects sought to move away from this and rather use the vertical axis that existed to some degree. This shift from existing axis provides an intriguing spatial product.



Figure 4.6: Section through the extended tunnel (Chemollo 2011)

4.2.3 Moritzburg Museum Extension

Architect: Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos, S.L.P.

Location: Halle, Saale, Germany

Year: 2008

Area: Unknown

The castle of Moritzburg in the city of Halle is an example of Gothic military architecture, from the end of the 15th Century in Germany (Halbe 2011). The building has undergone a number of alterations but some main architectural features remain, namely: the surrounding wall, three of the four round towers at the corners, and the central courtyard. The north and west wings were partially destroyed in the Thirty Years War.

FACADE

The facade intervention loudly announces a new entrance (figure 4.7). The superimposed new intervention peaks out of the ruin, with an angular pitched roof that stands as a memory of the host building. The new materials stand in contrast to the ruin, highlighting that which is old and the new.

CIRCULATION:

The existing buildings were kept as intact as possible whilst the intervention was inserted within the host, retaining its ruined state as far as was possible.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION:

Due to the removal of the existing roof, the floor was completely rid of its walls, to allow for a more open plan as shown in figure 4.8.

In summary, the interventions discussed in this section highlight the need to activate heritage buildings in a manner that need not continue the original intention but rather introduce the new intervention in a manner that is contrary yet complimentary to the site, thereby reactivating the building not only in programme but form and space. The extension and reinterpretation of existing or past elements serve to enrich the design intervention.



Figure 4.7: Façade the castle of Moritzburg (Halbe 2011)

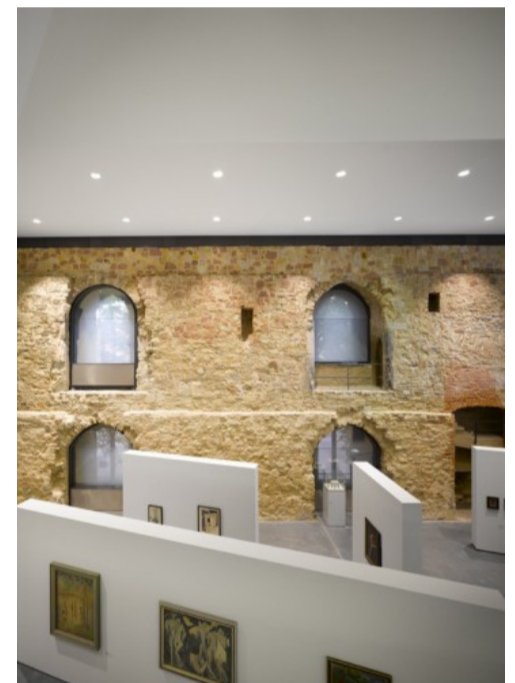
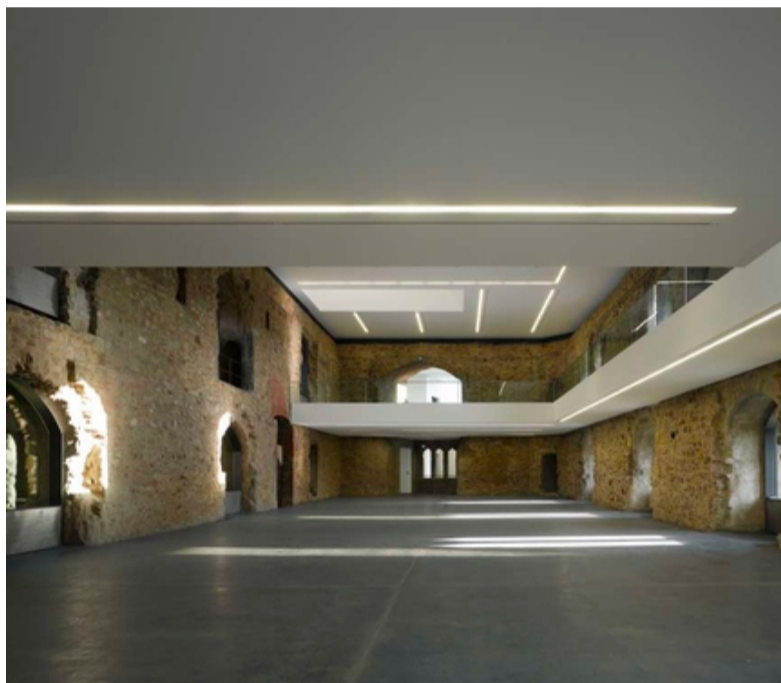


Figure 4.8: Interior, open plan view in the castle of Moritzburg (Halbe 2011)

4.3 PROGRAMME

The following precedent has been investigated due to its successful nature as a community centre within the South African context.

4.3.1 Ubuntu Centre

Architect: Field Architecture

Location: 5 Qe Qe Street, Zwide, 6200, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Area: 1951 m²

Year: 2011

Programme: Mixed use: community centre and commercial spaces

The Group Areas Act of 1950 resulted in racial groups within South Africa being re-settled which resulted in suburban areas flourishing and growing while the informal settlements grew but did not flourish. Many of the informal settlement communities were left to their own devices, with very little to no formal infrastructure or planning. Field (2011:2) states that this resulted in communities lacking basic housing, community centres and even schools.

The Ubuntu Centre is located in Zwide in Port Elizabeth and is an example of how architecture and education can be used to empower a community. Field Architecture and John Blair Architects in association with NOH Architects completed and handed over the building to the Ubuntu Education Fund in September 2010. Field Architecture (2011:1) states that "...it [The Ubuntu Centre] provides access to a state-of-the-art facility in a beleaguered post-apartheid community. The design is a model for sustainable development that begins with the environment and extends to the preservation of life. The centre contains facilities for paediatric HIV testing and treatment, education, counselling, and community empowerment".

The multiple functions that the building contains (figure 4.9) address the needs found in the community. The building becomes an answer to the community instead of being imposed upon them. This was done by looking within the community to provide an answer or alternatives to social ills, educational dilemmas and the need for creative expression and enjoyment.

Field Architecture (2011:2) notes that rather than entrances being punctured in the facades, the voids are a continuation of the township pathways. This creates a critical sense of community ownership which allows this building to survive in the township context. The buildings have also been designed to seem as if they are leaning on each other, as shown in figure 4.10, thus creating a reference to the notion of Ubuntu where people can lean on one another. The programme for the building accommodates spaces such as a resource



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|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Resource/ Computer Learning Centre | 6 Pharmacy |
| 2 Multi-Purpose Hall | 7 Reception/ Entrance Hall |
| 3 Community Kitchen | 8 Flexible/ Expandable Meeting Rooms |
| 4 Staff Lounge | 9 Parking |
| 5 Pediatric HIV/TB Clinic | 10 Garden Court/ to Rooftop Vegetable Garden |

Figure 4.9: Floor plan of the Ubuntu Centre (Field 2011:1)

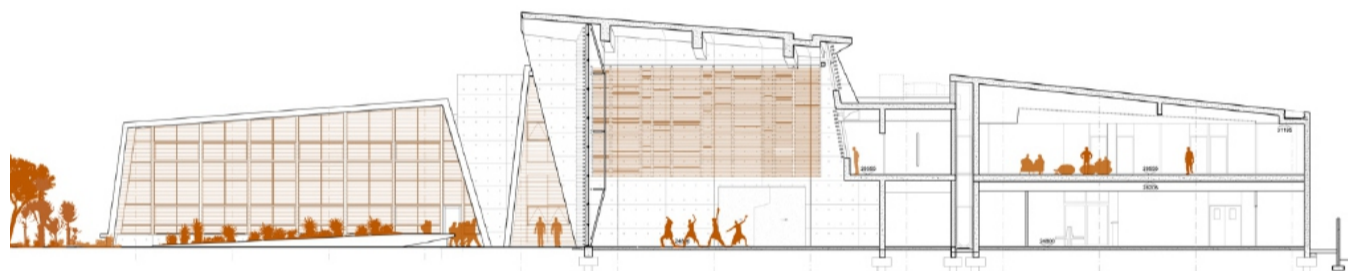


Figure 4.10: Section through the building showing use of double volume (Field 2011:3)



Figure 4.11: Multi-purpose hall (Riordan 2011)

centre, multi-purpose hall, community kitchen, paediatric HIV/ TB clinic, pharmacy, flexible meeting rooms, reception/entrance hall, staff lounge, offices, playschool, and a rooftop garden.

The variation in programme allows for the centre to cater for young and old within the community at different times of the day. As a result the centre is not flooded all at once with foot traffic but instead it is broken into a moderate flow throughout the day. This ingenious use of programme to prompt different users at different times can aid in accommodating more functions with less but more flexible space. It also ensures a continual use of the centre. The multi-purpose hall, depicted in figure 4.11, is an example of this continuous use.

The hall can accommodate a lecture in the morning, a community engagement meeting in the afternoon, and a concert in the evening.

In conclusion, the community centre is successful due to its integration within the community. This integration is brought about by providing a programme that addresses the needs, and at times wants, of the community. The variation in programme speaks to the varied interests within the community; the building is therefore designed to be a dynamic place, to suit varying spatial needs.

4.4 AESTHETIC and CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The following precedents were chosen in an endeavour to identify an aesthetic that the design intervention would need in order to successfully represent the African girl child through interior design. Two precedents were identified, namely; the Constitutional Court of South Africa, and examples of shack interiors, from the photographic documentary “Shack Chic” (2002) by Craig Fraser.

The two precedents represent the formal and informal interiors that can be found within the South African context. The formal interior is primarily constructed by skilled labour applying sophisticated mass produced materials, while the informal interior is created by unskilled individuals applying found and/or recycled materials.

4.4.1 Constitutional Court of South Africa

The Constitutional Court (2015: 1) brief was “...to create a building rooted in the South African landscape, physically and culturally, without overemphasising the symbols of any section of the South African population, or making a pastiche of them all”. This brief resulted in a space that is visually stimulating and representative of its Southern African context.

The theme of the design focused on “justice under a tree”. The foyer (figure 4.12) of the court depicts this by incorporating slanted columns which represent the trees under which villagers and leaders would traditionally gather to deal with arguments and qualms. This speaks of the court being accessible to all citizens and is further reinforced in the décor of the foyer space. The principal materials used: timber; concrete; glass; steel and, black slate “...infuse the court with an African feel” Constitutional Court (2015:2). The materials are relevant within the South African context as space users can identify with their everyday use.

THE FORMALISED AESTHETIC: THE MACHINED ARCHITECTURALELEMENTS

The Constitutional Court can be considered to be a space that has been machined, meaning that the majority of the building was built commercially and using various machinery.

The art, crafts and sculptures within the building represent the hand-crafted elements, formed and crafted to suit and decorate the building, and communicate the concept, whilst elements such as concrete columns and slabs represent the machined architectural elements.

COLOUR

Colour usage with the various spaces is limited to a specific palette of colours: orange, green, yellow and brown, which maintain the theme of justice under a tree. Colour is also incorporated by allowing the inherent colour of architectural elements and furniture material. The use of colour is not overwhelming; rather, it compliments the spaces, and results in a unified look of the Foyer space (figure 4.13).

TEXTURE

Textures used in the spaces, range from the very smooth and polished to rough and coarse as seen in figure 4.14.. Texture on surfaces and in the incorporated art and crafts all work harmoniously together. The formalised African aesthetic is seamless in that all the elements are carefully thought through before they are placed within a space. It makes use of more commercial means to deliver the aesthetic. Colours and textures are chosen to be complimentary in how they appear within the space. This stands in contrast to the organisation of spatial quality in informal spaces with an African aesthetic.

4.3.2 Shackchic

Shack chic is a photographic documentary of the dignity to be found in the dusty streets of South Africa’s shack-lands, and is described as “...an exhibition of cultural creativity in real life contexts” (Fraser 2002: 15).

THE INFORMAL AESTHETIC: HAND-CRAFTED FOUND OR RECYCLED MATERIALS

Shack chic serves to celebrate making the best of what is affordable and available. The interiors and built structures showcased in Shack Chic depict handmade elements more as a necessity rather than a luxury. The built structures are built according to what the creators could afford or find resulting in materials being recycled. For example, a method of wall papering the interior of a shack to keep the cold out, as depicted in figure 4.16 is labeling paper from household and food items receiving a new use, the results of which are an intriguing pattern and colours within a given space; a collage of materials.

COLOUR

Colour is used in varying tone, usually bold and contrasting as seen in figure 4.15. The colour usage is unconventional as it may not be premeditated, such as in formally design spaces, but a result of a collage of found materials and readily available elements. This adds character and intrigue to the spaces and surfaces.

TEXTURE

The texture that can be seen is from a multimedia collage of materials such as Lucky Star make-shift wallpaper, vinyl floor carpets to painted timber pallet walls (figure 4.17).

In summary, the formalised African aesthetic is primarily deliberate in that there is a concept, a specific colour palette, and predetermined materials. The spaces are realised through the use of machinery and commercialised elements. In contrast, informal spaces with an African aesthetic are unplanned in that what is available and affordable is used. There is no concept in the makeup of a space, rather there are layers of materials and textures which are organically layered and completed, which result in each space being unique in its aesthetic.



Figure 4.12: Crafted element within the Constitutional court (Mushahary 2012)



Figure 4.13: Use of colour in the Constitutional court (Mushahary 2012)



Figure 4.14: Use of texture in the Constitutional court (Mushahary 2012)



Figure 4.15: Re-use of packaging wrappers as wallpaper (Fraser 2002)



Figure 4.16: The use of colour in the interior (Fraser 2002)



Figure 4.17: The use of texture in the interior (Fraser 2002)

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides national and international precedents, which are relevant to the design of the African girl child centre. The precedents were chosen as reference points for spatial layout and heritage intervention, programme and aesthetic and conceptual framework. The heritage interventions provide an opportunity to examine how existing and new interventions can be integrated to produce a new interface that is relevant and accessible to the space user. The programme precedent contributes by displaying how a multi-functional building can allow for organic programme growth, that as the centre grows so does the programme, along with its community's needs. The aesthetic and conceptual framework precedents bring to the fore an African aesthetic that is vibrant in colour, rich in texture and has hand-crafted quality in both a large scale and small scale setting. The gathered information will guide the design development of the Centre for the African girl child and further extend the possibilities of the design.

