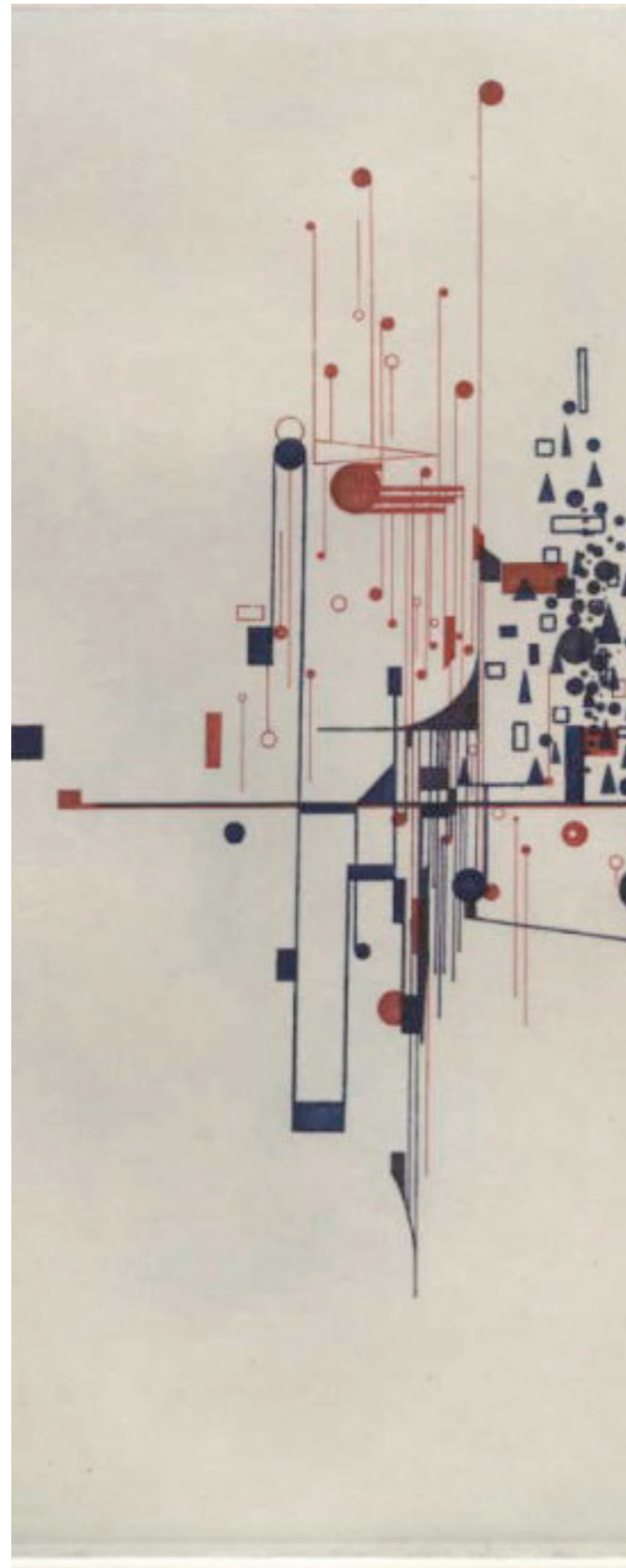# 4. EXPERIENCE

Programme intentions

Theoretical, conceptual and contextual drivers informing programme selection are introduced to the reader in this chapter.

Programmatic consideration stems from a desire to create space that allows the user to 'get lost' and be immersed in the experience of just *being* in that space, freely. Specific activities or programmes enhance this experience or prepares one for it.
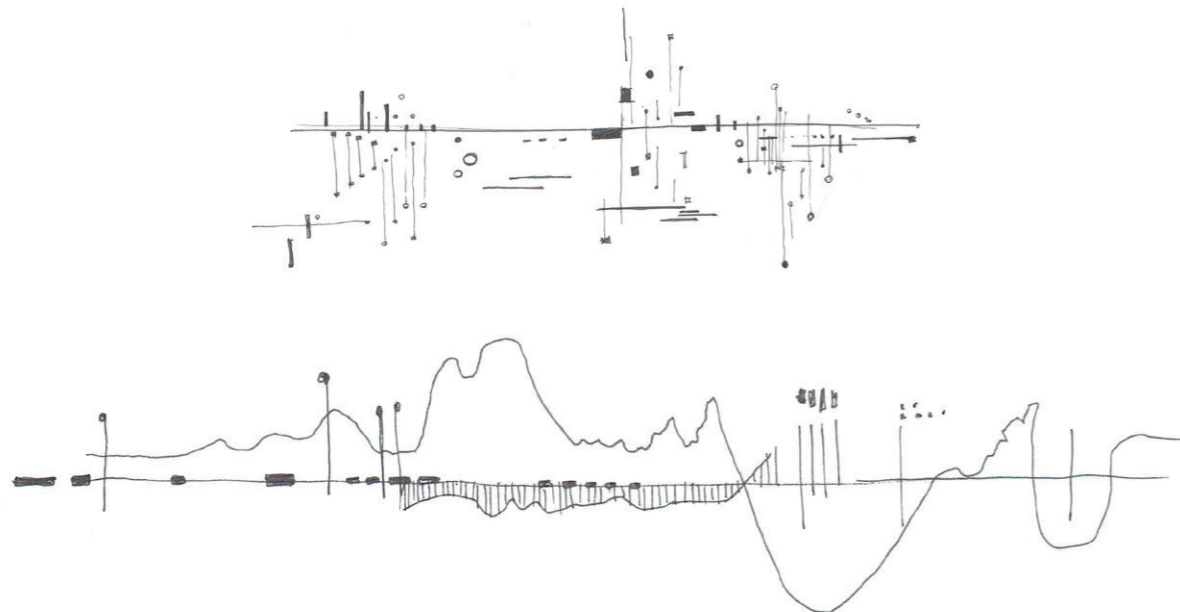
Set programmes to be introduced are to be seen as *anchors* which ground and support the adjacent spaces. The focus is on the in-between. This being said, the programmes are secondary to the experience and the investigation is not the interrogation of conventional typologies, but rather of their impact on the spaces they support.

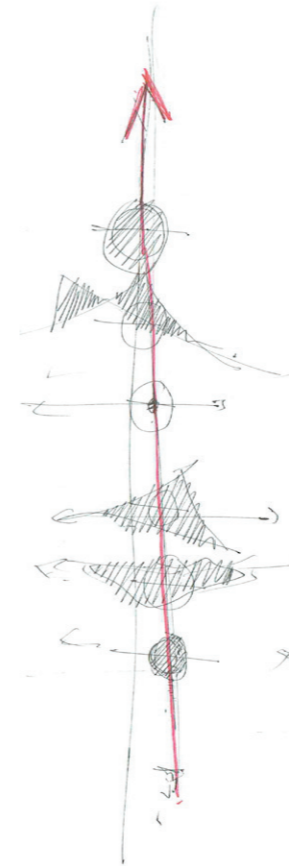*Fig. 112.* Roman Hauenstock-Ramati. Score for Konstellationen (1971).

VISUALISING EXPERIENCE

Getting lost

Fig. 113. Bleeding of the intangible. Finding order and chaos in Ram Square.

Fig. 114. Scores for experience - getting lost 01

**Fig. 115.** Scores for experience - getting lost 02

ANCHORS

and the in-between

The art of visualising music, illustrated by Roman Hauenstock-Ramati's Score for Konstellationen (Figure 112) inspired me to develop a graphical representation of experience - moving through space, getting lost, slipping in and out of an experience, an activity, a space or the subconscious.

This depiction revealed the value of a place in which to do nothing (varying scales of nothing). It is just as valuable as the places to do something.

Fig. 116. A map for getting lost.
Fig. 117. Anchors, routes and the in-between.
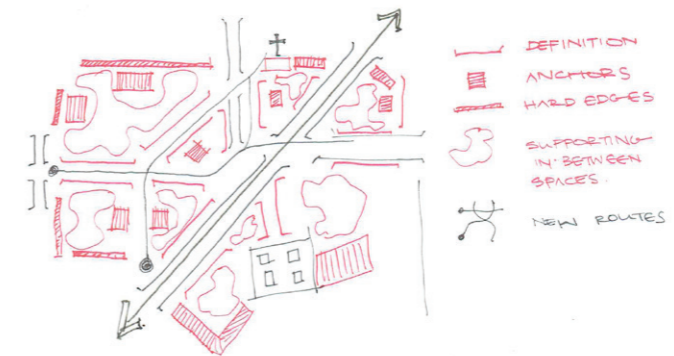
WATCHING THE WORLD
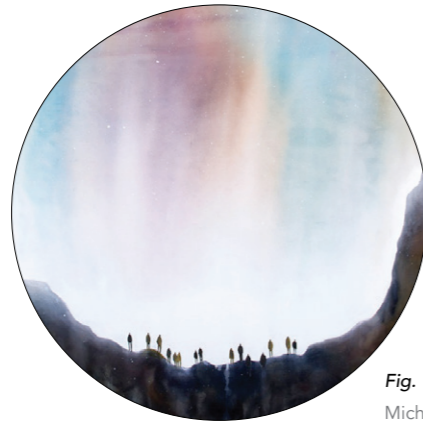# GO BY

Christopher Alexander

Fig. 118. Entrance (cropped).
Michelle Blade (2014)

"...events which repeat themselves are always anchored in the space. I cannot imagine any pattern of events without imagining a place where It is happening.

[...]

Consider for example, the pattern of events which we might call "watching the world go by."

We sit, perhaps slightly raised, on the front porch, or on some steps in a park, or on a cafe terrace, with a more or less protected, sheltered, partly private place behind us, looking out into a more public place, slightly raised above it, watching the world go by.

I cannot separate it from the porch where it occurs.

The action and the space are indivisible. The action is supported by this kind of space. The space supports this kind of action. The two form a unit, a pattern of events in space."

Christopher Alexander
(1979: 69-70)

THE PORCH

A pattern of events

cannot be separated from the
space where it occurs.

Clockwise (from left)
Fig. 119. Mapping the negative.
Fig. 120. Overlap
Fig. 121. Overlap on site
Fig. 122. Breaking boundaries

The images above reveal the relationship between anchors, supporting spaces and the routes that define them. This investigation was a means to develop a complexity on site based on these simple principles in response to Alexander's dissection of the porch and a pattern of events in space.

THE STORYTELLER

THE FORGOTTEN ART

Pleased to meet you

Haven't seen you in a while

Fig. 124. The Storyteller. Illustrations by Turk, 2015.

"The storytelling that thrives … is itself an artisan form of communication, as it were. It does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again.

Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel."

- Benjamin (1969:91)

But as the kingdom grew and life got easier, the people forgot their fear of the desert. Soon they forgot the fountains and the storytellers, too. One by one, the voices of the storytellers were drowned out by noise and silenced by age, and one by one the fountains dried up.

Fig. 125. The Storyteller. Illustrations by Turk, 2015.

*"Familiar though his name may be to us, the storyteller in his living immediacy is **by no means a present force**. He has already become something remote from us and something that is getting even more distant…*

[...]

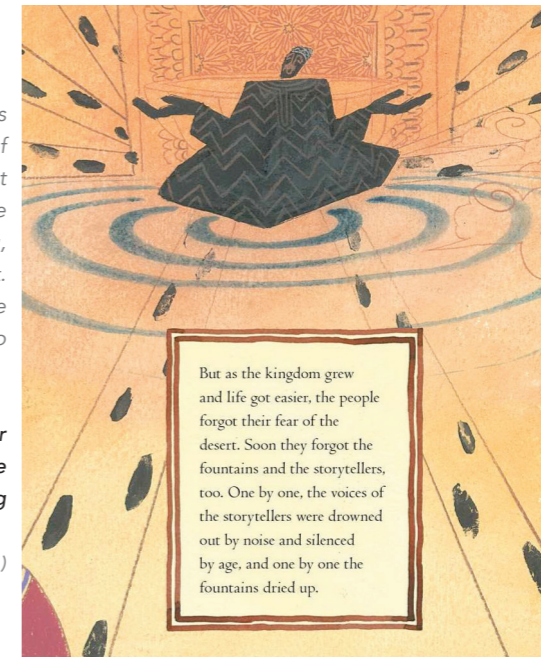*It teaches us that the art of storytelling is coming to an end.*

[...]

*[T]he securest among our possessions, were taken from us: **the ability to exchange experiences.***

One reason for this phenomenon is obvious: experience has fallen in value. And it looks as if it is continuing to fall into bottomlessness."

-Walter Benjamin (1969:83)

The 'artisan form of communication' described by Benjamin (1969:91) is dwindling. The storyteller struggles to exist in a world where productivity and instant gratification are sought after. We lack the slowness required to lead us to stillness. To listen.

There is a beauty in getting lost in another's voice; to be transported to another place and time. We lack this mystical depth in our everyday lives.

A CAPACITY FOR BOREDOM
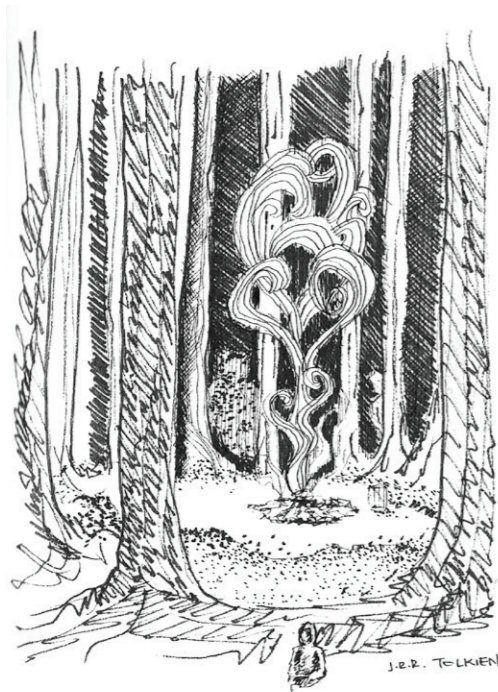
The lost art of stillness

Fig. 126. Sketch of Tolkien's illustration The Trolls.

"The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory.

- Walter Benjamin (1969:91)

SLOWNESS

In praise of idleness

If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation.
Walter Benjamin (1969:91)

Our capacity for boredom is a valuable one, but our understanding and respect thereof has waned. Boredom is inherent to creativity and discovery, and securing our connection to the slowness of nature. By denying ourselves of this slowness, we deny ourselves the opportunity to be truly present. Benjamin (1969:91) describes boredom as "the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience." Understanding the value of boredom in this light, is vital.

To restore our capacity for boredom, perhaps we need spaces that encourage slowness and 'nothingness', spaces that may reconnect us to the rhythms of the natural world and promote being *present* as we move through thin layers of experience.

Fig. 127. Labyrinth. The art of getting lost.

Going nowhere ... isn't about turning your back on the world; it's about stepping away now and then so that you can see the world more clearly and love it more deeply."

- Leonard Cohen
(Iyer 2014:13)

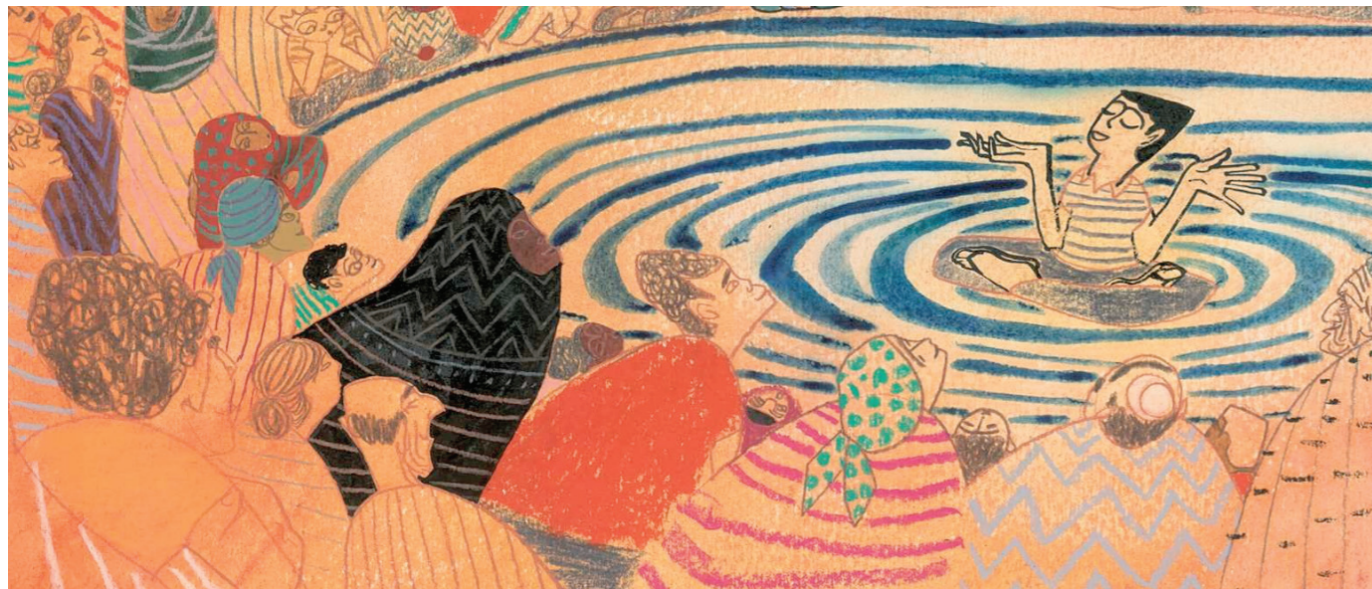# THE POET

Producing poets

Fig. 128. The storyteller. Illustrations by Turk (2015).

"It seems to me that the artist's struggle for his integrity must be considered as a kind of metaphor for the struggle, which is universal and daily, of all human beings on the face of this globe to get to become human beings… The poets (by which I mean all artists) are finally the only people who know the truth about us. Soldiers don't. Statesmen don't. Priests don't. Union leaders don't. Only poets.

[...]

[This is] a time … when something awful is happening to a civilization, when it ceases to produce poets, and, what is even more crucial, when it ceases in any way whatever to believe in the report that only the poets can make…"

- James Baldwin (1962)

PHELI

Language and poets

Pheli - The Narrative History by Magashe Titus Mafolo was written in 2015 to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Atteridgeville. One of the most notable aspects of this account was the eminent figures mentioned - members of Pheli who played vital roles in the community, ranging from a teacher to a political figure. The culture of recognising these pillars of a community continues.*

Mafolo's text is mentioned to illustrate the value of storytelling. In an interview with the SABC, Mafolo emphases the importance of engaging with literature, especially local literature and also the value of encouraging youth to participate in creative writing (SABC 2015a).

James Baldwin (1962) argues that society is no longer producing *poets*, and this should be a cause for concern. Mafolo expresses a similar concern:

Unfortunately, these young people are denied the important knowledge of their own history, the wisdom found in the idioms and proverbs that make many African communities produce such vibrant and far-sighted individual leaders like Alfred Mangena, WF Nkomo, Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Es'kia Mphahlele, Steve Biko and others.

This predicament has repeatedly been a contentious issue in the South African context. Disputes regarding the language of instruction have again become relevant in 2016. Without delving too deeply into this topic, it is important to bring to the forefront the relationship between language and identity and reiterate Mafolo's sentiment on the value of literature.

*Annually, teachers are honoured with an event at the Saulsville Arena filled with festivities including awards and performances.

*Attridge Tribute is an organisation established to honour Mrs Atteridge, with a focus on sharing and promoting local history and protecting the spirit of Atteridgeville.

LITERATURE

Stories and place

Fig. 129. The storyteller. Illustrations by Turk (2015).

Sven Ouzman (2002:3-29) explains that architecture creates a place for storytelling, connecting the intangible past to the built fabric of today. It becomes of that place, by the people who know it so intimately. A constant framing and presencing of place and the stories attached to that place is necessary. To achieve this, Ouzman recognises the value of embracing place and not focussing too narrowly on the subject matter. The importance of these "outdoor classrooms" is that they also become good places at which to think, spaces "for contemplation [where] one is physically removed from home, office ... and the other insidious attention-grabbers." These spaces encourage introspection, about the past but also "one's own development and trajectory," but more importantly, stories appeal to every member of a community, especially children.

By story, I do not mean a weak narrative but a robust entity borne out of the soil and history of a particular people that are of a particular landscape... Wilhelm Bleek called this and other similar stories literature.

Ouzman (2002:10).

Unfortunately these places for storytelling are hard to come by. As has been discussed, public spaces are often neglected. For example, the library in Atteridgeville was removed to give way to a petrol station. The only cinema and theatre that used to provide entertainment in Atteridgeville were both converted to churches.

NARRATION

Stories and people

Fig. 130. Listening.

Gibson Kente, or 'Bra Gib' is identified as an example of an important storyteller. Recognised as the founding father of Black township theatre, he produced more than 20 plays and three television dramas between 1963 and 1992. This social issues apparent during these turbulent years in South Africa were featured in his work. Kente was one of the first South African's to openly address poverty, crime and the politics of townships. He revolutionised African theatre. Kente also played a key role in launching the careers of prominent figures such as Brenda Fasie and Mbongeni Ngema, and wrote music for Miriam Makebe Letta Mbulu (McGregor 2004).

Kente trained and inspired many black actors and singers during a time when "black creativity was viewed as a threat and suppressed by the apartheid state." Despite the limited resources available in townships, Kente succeeded in creating musicals and plays revealing "the fears, hopes, joys and tribulations of black urban communities" (McGregor 2004).

Another example of such a person is the talented jazz musician from Atteridgeville - Linda Kekana. In a recent interview (SABC 2015b), Kekana explains the value of honouring musicians and artists, as these figures have a voice, and the potential to contribute to their communities.

Despite the awful conditions endured in townships during apartheid, countless creatives were nurtured in these environments and contributed immensely to their communities. Kekana and Kente are both examples of these important role models who demonstrate the value of performance and expression.

EXPERIENCE

The body in space

Each space should offer the user a way to lose themselves, whether through seclusion, immersion, or observation of the spectacle.

Every action is a means to pay homage to the poets of Atteridgeville, in the everyday.

Fig. 131. 366 Days of the Apocalypse (cropped). Michelle Blade (2012)

THE PROGRAMME

Intentions

The investigation concentrates on the death of the public realm in a suburban context. These spaces form an integral part of successful cities, and it is necessary to recognise townships and their capacity to develop as self-sufficient entities, rather than ones dependant on an external force.

The intention is to develop a scheme where the everyday is celebrated - one which grounds citizens in their collective space. This will be used to pay homage to the history of public gathering and expression in Atteridgeville while challenging existing public-space typologies and conventional interventions in townships.

Pragmatically, the programmes respond to the need for recreation spaces in Atteridgeville. The loss of public and recreational spaces has altered the dynamic of a vibrant community despite ongoing attempts to keep the spirit alive. Although there are many schools in the area, there is little exposure to the arts and artistic expression, and there is no space to host such activities.

The programmes include a theatre, cinema, library and writer's refuge in conjunction with existing programmes on site, which will support a defined public space. The combination of these programmes will be located in the empty heart of Atteridgeville, Rams Square.

This is an attempt to create a place to 'get lost' and lose oneself within the mundane. It is a place to find the extraordinary and through those activities of the everyday and pay homage to the celebrated poet of Atteridgeville.
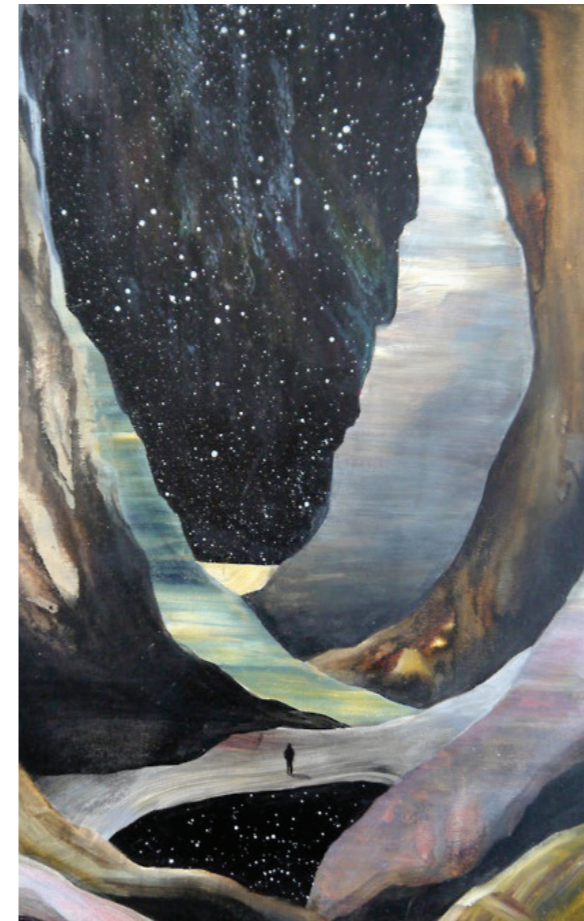
Fig. 132. Day 112 (cropped). Michelle Blade (2012)

IMMERSION

The Library

Books offer their readers an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in a world beyond their own. Reading requires us to use our imaginations and succumb to the sensation of being fully consumed by the written word. The library becomes a place to slip into, away from the mundane. A place that inspires awe and wonder.

The configuration of the library is important to capture this experience. The transition from the very public edge should draw one through nature, into the literary world. Windows may offer glimpses into the space, enticing passers-by, but once inside, the library offers an all-consuming experience. Vertical views are offered to the sky, enhanced by the elegant forms of trees, while horizontal views remind you that you are sharing this experience with others.
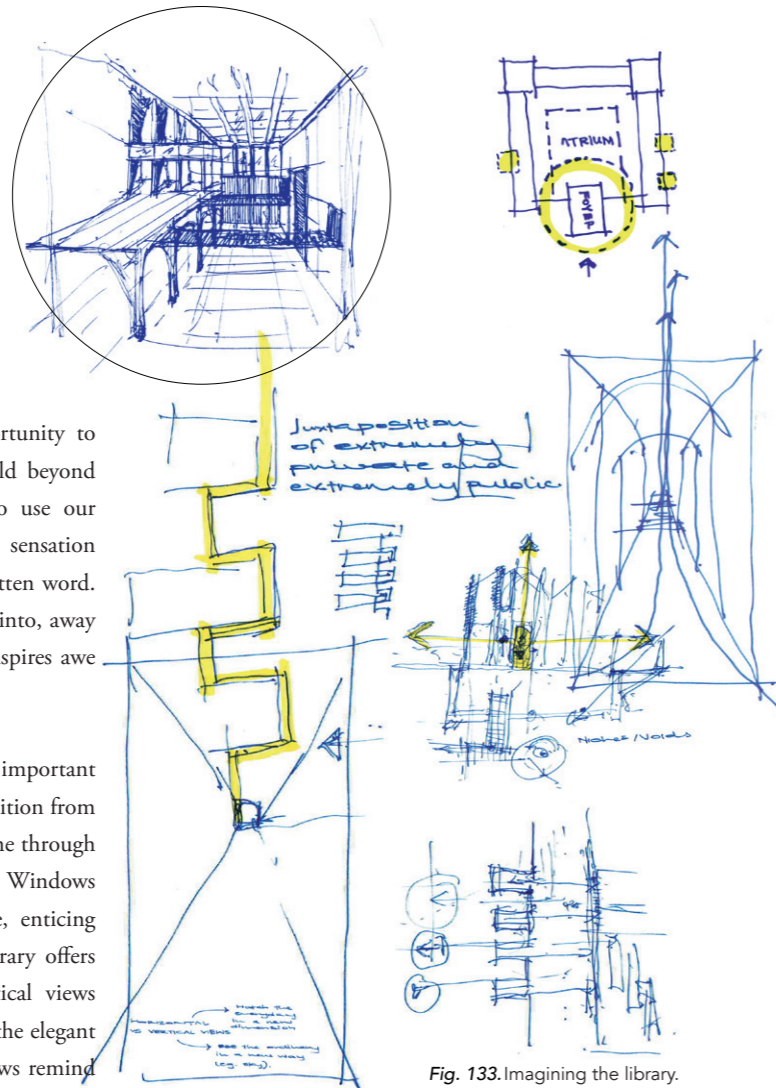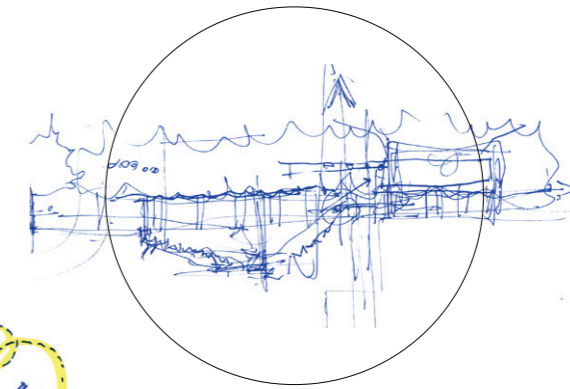
Fig. 133. Imagining the library.
Fig. 134. Library configuration.
Fig. 135. Views and connections.

SPECTACLE

The Theatre

There is a magic in live theatre. The immediacy of the event, the curious relationship between spectator and performer, and the physical environment, contributes to the energy and spectacle.

The stage provides a platform for the mythical and magical to become reality for a moment. Oscillating between reality and illusion, this experience becomes a part of a living memory. Witnessing a performance requires the spectator to participate and surrender to fantasy. As you abandon your defences, each sensation is heightened in the darkness of the house.

The configuration of the theatre should encourage a relationship between the mundane and the spectacle. Theatres are conventionally selfish in nature due to programmatic requirements. By manipulating the configuration slightly, allowing for an oscillation between observer and observed, the relationship to the everyday can be altered. The spectator is then enveloped by the experience as she is drawn into a new world.
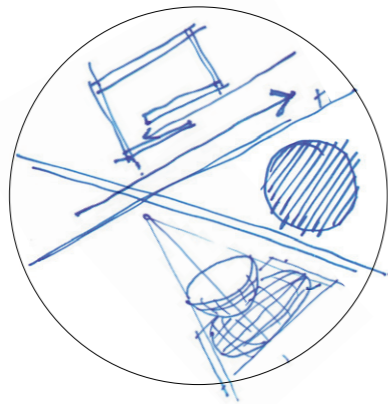
Fig. 136. Exploring immersion
Fig. 137. Theatre configuration
Fig. 138. Traditional theatre
Fig. 139. Public theatre

PROJECTION

The Cinema

Fig. 140. Imagining cinema
Fig. 141. Cinema configuration

Cinema offers the viewer an entirely different, and enigmatic experience. Rather than having a 'lived' experience, the magic arises from the projection, as if produced in a dream and projected from the dreamers' eyes. Light streams from a single aperture, producing images which consume the room and offers an incredible shared experience.

Cinematography allows an artist to transform his dreams, memories and thoughts into moving images and symbols. There is a distortion of time through the use of montage, as imagery is manipulated beyond reality to capture an experience. Captivated by the flickering images, we are invited into the mind of an artist.

In *A Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Zizek (2006) dissects and analyses films to reveal that film is about more than just the narrative. It is "beyond the 'story' that we witness. What provides the density of cinematic enjoyment is material form beyond interpretation."

The configuration of the cinema will allow the viewer to slip into this world seemingly unnoticed. Circulation is intertwined with everyday movement so that one can stumble into the world of the dreamer.
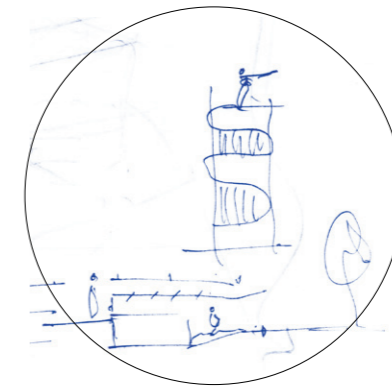
SECLUSION

The Writers' Refuge

Fig. 142. An Ivory tower
Fig. 143. Refuge configuration

Like the ivory tower, the poet finds refuge in the midst of the everyday.

A place to contemplate.
A place to observe.
A place to do nothing.

The poet is secluded, but he plays an important role. His contribution is literature.

Recognising the value of language within culture and identity, the poet spends his time writing and re-writing, translating, and telling his own stories.
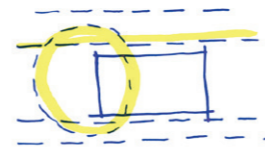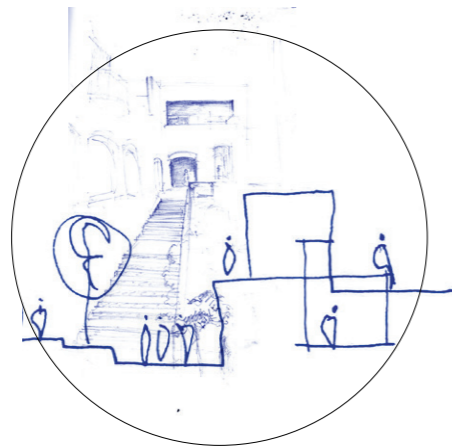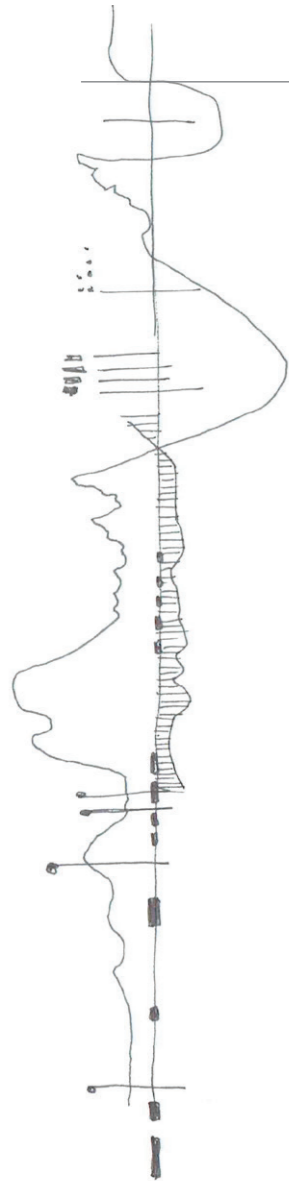
TRANSCEND

Recital Hall

"How shall I say it? Music makes me forget my real situation. It transports me into a state which is not my own. Under the influence of music I really seem to feel what I do not feel, to understand what I do not understand, to have powers which I cannot have … And music transports me immediately into the condition of soul in which he who wrote the music found himself at that time. I become confounded with his soul, and with him I pass from one condition to another."

- Leo Tolstoy 1889

Music allows us to transcend our environment and connect to another's spirit. There is beauty in the translation of emotion into sound, so that someone else may be touched by it. This experience resonates with us long after the music ceases.

The recital hall is included to provide another opportunity to lose oneself in an experience. The configuration allows for passers-by to catch a glimpse (visually and aurally) of the performance, and occasionally allow the music to spill out, engulfing the adjacent public spaces.

Fig. 144. Music as experience
Fig. 145. Imagining the recital hall
Fig. 146. Configuration of recital hall.

A PLACE TO DO NOTHING

Public Park
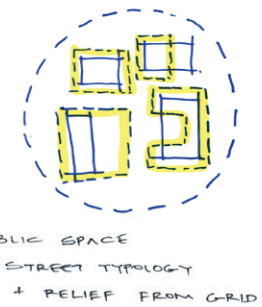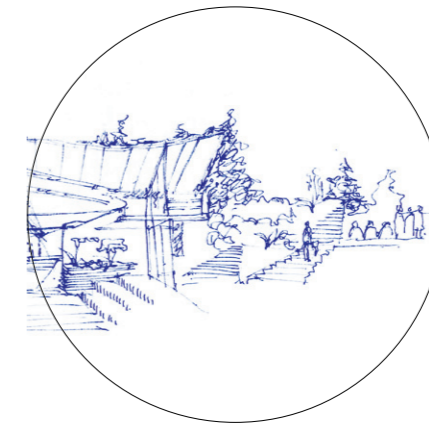
The purpose of the public space is to introduce a new pattern into the desolate heart of Atteridgeville.

Responding to contextual informants, Oldenburg's theory of the *third place* is interrogated and tested alongside the formal programmes. The public space becomes the summation of all the preceding topics discussed. It supports the mundane but becomes the threshold one crosses into the extraordinary.

For this to be successful, familiarity has to exist in this realm. Surrealism plays on images and symbols familiar to the viewer, distorting them and creating surprising juxtapositions. This technique will be utilised to heighten the experience of the supporting programmes. The public space is screened from the busy Mareka street, providing a refuge for the everyday city-dweller.

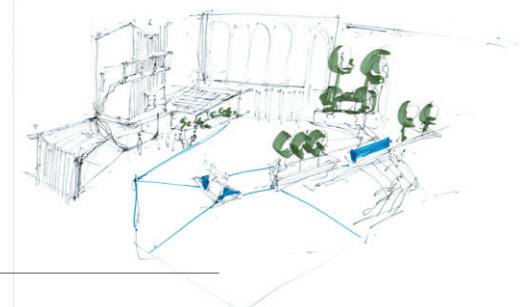The everyday is revealed in a new light.

Fig. 147. Imagining public space
Fig. 148. Configuration of public space
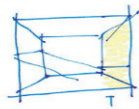*Fig. 149.* Early drawings of the square

SUMMARY

Primary

LIBRARY

The library will accommodate a children's library, informal study area, private study nooks, an information centre and a large collection of periodicals, newspapers and books. The library will serve the greater community with a focus on the schools.

THEATRE

The theatre will seat up to 600 people. The seating arrangement is flexible to allow for different performance requirements and open up into the public realm. The facility will serve the schools in Atteridgeville providing a space for performance art as part of the curriculum, and be sophisticated enough to accommodate professional performances.
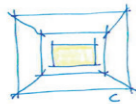
CINEMA

Two cinemas will be provided accommodating 120 people each. The programme will allow screenings of a wide variety of film genres.

PUBLIC SPACE

The central plaza serves as a spill-out space for all the anchor programmes. The space allows users to dwell freely without being required to pay to access it.

RECITAL HALL

In the spirit of the Atteridgeville Jazz culture, a recital hall will host an array of formal and informal musical performances, with an opportunity to leak out into the public realm. 120 seats are provided as well as a small standing gallery for 25 people, to be sold at a lower price.

WRITERS' LOUNGE

Approximately 10 people will be accommodated in this space. A kitchenette, ablution facilities, and a writing space will be provided.

SUMMARY

Ancillary

The remaining programmes proposed for the cultural precinct have been selected to contribute to the overarching thread of recreation. These programmes are introduced to create a diversity of activities for the everyday user.
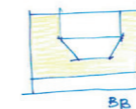
BLACK BOX THEATRE

This experimental theatre consists of a simple, unadorned performance space, with black walls and a flat floor. The emphasis is on the actors - a blank space for the freedom of expression.

BOOK STORE | CAFE

To create a comfortable atmosphere to casually immerse oneself in books and conversation, this space offers a range of comfortable spaces for the everyday user to enjoy or purchase a good book.

SHISA NYAMA

The shisa nyama-style restaurant allows for the social nature of eating to contribute to the vibrancy of the new precinct. The public square becomes an extension of this space for larger events.

ADMINISTRATION

Hosting the box office as the frontage, the purchasing of tickets becomes an event itself, spilling into the public square. The administrative facility ties into the adjacent civic precinct related to the church on the east.

Fig. 150. Stratification. Detail at Scarpa's Brion Tomb (2013).

CONCLUSION

Alive and free

South Africa offers very few public spaces that allow a user to freely dwell in space. Often, the spaces that are designed with recreation in mind require an entry fee, or the consumption of goods. A well-designed public space a user can frequent freely is hard to come by. In response to this observation, it is proposed that a true civic space is returned to the citizens of Atteridgeville, as a strategy for place-making in suburbia.

The research in Volume I revealed the lack of available and suitable facilities for the creative arts. The programme selection is in response to this need, especially considering the value of cultivating creativity in children (Robinson 2006). The intention is that these facilities are shared between local schools to promote the art of self-expression.

Secondly, in response to the initial objective of Volume I, these programmes are introduced to restore dignity amongst the residents of Atteridgeville and strengthen civic pride. The introduction of well-designed recreational facilities will draw energy into Atteridgeville, with the potential of hosting many great events, rather than perpetuating the energy efflux which is so evident.

The third objective is in response to *The timeless way of building* Christopher Alexander speaks of so eloquently. '*The quality without a name*' is continually sought after in this exploration. The programme selection contributes to this search, and responds to the quote below, to generate a pattern of events that is 'alive' and may 'let our inner forces loose and set us free."

> In order to define this quality in buildings and in towns, we must begin by understanding that every place is given its character by certain patterns of events that keep on happening there.
>
> [...}
>
> The specific patterns out of which a building or a town is made may be alive or dead. To the extent they are alive, they let our inner forces loose, and set us free; but when they are dead, they keep us locked in inner conflict.
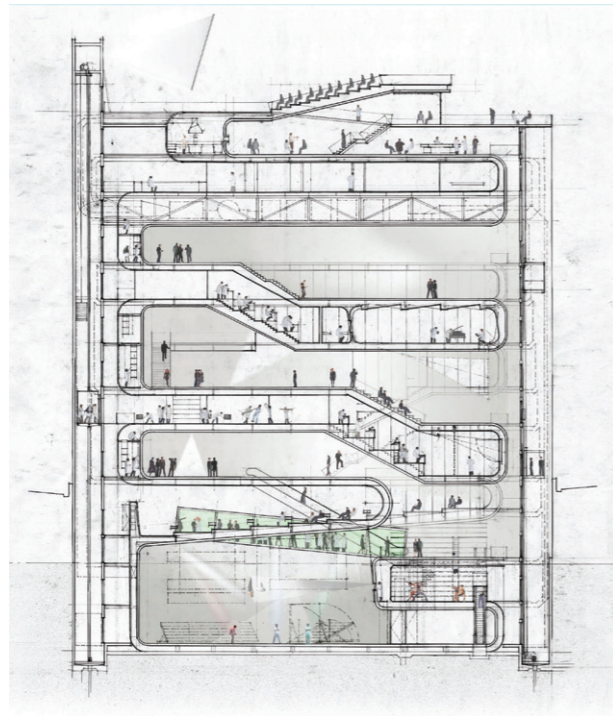>
> *- C. Alexander (1979:x)*

Fig. 151. Section through the Eyebeam Museum of Art and Technology, 2001; courtesy of DS+R

PRECEDENT | PROGRAMME/FORMAL

DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO, 1979 -
REINTERPRETATIONS OF THE STAIR

In an article part of the series Reinterpretation (Holt & Looby2016), a single construction component is identified and traced through the work of an architect or firm. The article, The Suspension of Disbelief, focuses on the use of the stair in Diller Scofidio + Renfro's (DS+R) work who are defined as "an interdisciplinary design studio that integrates architecture, the visual arts and the performing arts."

Holt & Looby (2016) argue that the built forms of DS+R explore the human condition conceptually and this notion is explored by focusing on the stair - an element of construction which facilitates activating an individual and engaging with space and "enacting the essence of theatricality in the built environment." The stair becomes more than a mere device to enable vertical circulation, but acts as a form of communication, "enabling and activating space either as an attractor or as a visual platform." The stair is the device to incubate ideas used in theatre that produces a tectonic resolution to conceptual moments that sought to expose and question everyday life, but manipulating the stair is a difficult task due to associated regulations.

Fig. 152. The Sunken Overlook at 10th Avenue, The High Line; New York, N.Y.; photo by Iwan Baan
Fig. 153. Julliard school; photo by Iwan Baan
Fig. 154. Julliard school; photo by Iwan Baan

DS+R create an amphitheatre-like space in the High Line Part I (2009-2011) which expands the stair and landing, creating views toward the street below becoming an "in-between space for the everyday citizen to contemplate the ordinary in a new dimension." (Holt & Looby 2016).

The foyer of the Julliard School (2009) includes a staircase which morphs into seating. This device allows for informal gathering, meeting and a place to view the street.

An inverted staircase on the street forms the entry to Alice Tully Hall (2009) creating a point at which the public can sit and observe the happenings inside the lobby.

"Unifying across all of these projects is that the viewer begins at the top of the landing and descends into a prescribed view of everyday life below — playing with a sense of vertigo, instability and vulnerability through the suspension of the stair positioned downwards." (Holt & Looby 2016).

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Diller Scofidio + Renfro explore the human condition, voyeurism and the everyday in their body of work. The projects highlighted display the interrogation of the stair so as to achieve new ways to exhibit the aforementioned subjects. The projects also highlight that conventional architectural elements, such as the stair, can be utilised in a variety of ways creating new opportunities for interaction.

Fig. 155. Section through the The Zizek house, Antonas, A. 2011.

ARISTIDE ANTONAS, 2011

THE ZIZEK RESIDENCE - THE HOUSE FOR DOING NOTHING

Philosopher Slavoj Zizek (2008) begins his book *Violence* with the dilemma proposed by Sartre (1946) in *Existentialism and Humanism*. The story revolves around a young man during World War Two. His mother is ill and he is torn between tending to her and joining the Resistance. Zizek proposes that there should be a third option - withdrawing to an isolated place to work and contemplate, away from the situation at hand providing an "intellectual solitude" from which one could "wait and see" (Leopold 2011).

Leopold (2011) discusses that Zizek's house comments on the impossibility of "stepping back", away from life for a moment. Our busy lives coupled with access to the global network through an internet connection prevents us from retreating to the cave, as Nietzsche's Zarathustra once did. Antonas (2011) describes the house as follows:

The responsible house seems to be formed by a negation to this "city sharing" condition. Its prototype is not produced out of sharing an existing finite land but out of an image of a house in an "exotic" infinite landscape similar to the video game interfaces we encounter in the Internet. There is no finite surface to share determining this project: the land it is proposed for could be any land. In an Internet city the sharing options for the space seem based to a possibility of infinitely extending the available field: the online and offline space that "we" will occupy in the future would be a space that can never be "itself" and will always be infinite, composed as an interior: at the same time it will always be a conscious representation of something always already missing.

Antonas (cited by Pohl & Najera, 2011) continues:

The apartment is structured as a unified single space divided by mobile elements and curtains. A swimming pool is supposed to give a rhythm of a body's temporality. Printers and a good connection form the material part of the common world and the invisible public sphere. All services are performed through the existence of a "courtier" system that distributes products to the units on demand.
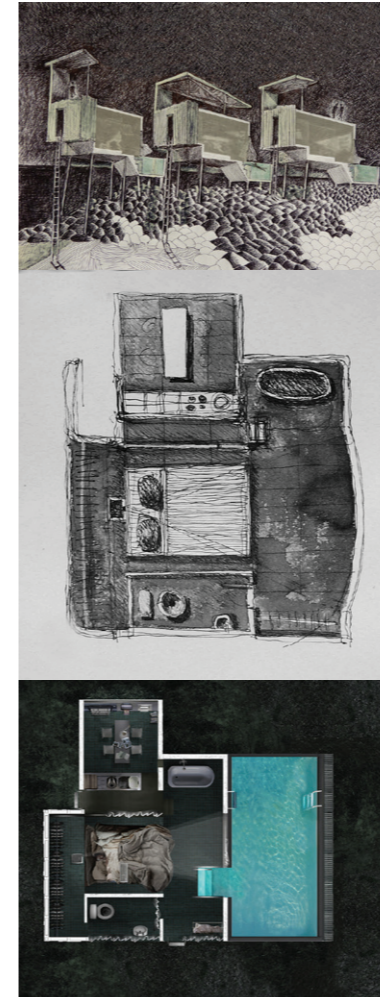

Fig. 156. Drawings of The Zizek house, Antonas, A. 2011.
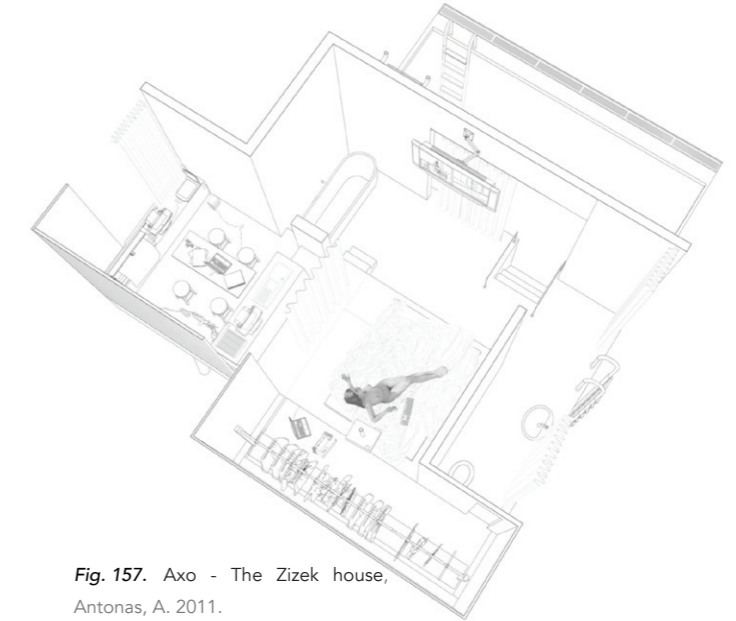

Fig. 157. Axo - The Zizek house, Antonas, A. 2011.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This precedent proposes that seclusion, and stepping away from society is a means to reflect on one's situation and connection to the larger community, but more importantly to reconnect with oneself. The pool for example, is an opportunity to engage with "the rhythm of a body's temporality." (Antonas 2011).

Zizek's House by Aristide Antonas is discussed as a precedent to strengthen the argument presented in the preceding chapter.

PRECEDENT | THEORY