



WATER IN YEOVILLE

CONSIDERING FANTASY AND FRAGMENT
IN RESPONSIVE URBAN PLACEMAKING

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In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister in Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Marzanne Roux
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ABSTRACT

Johannesburg's urban fabric is characterised by fragmentation. The natural landscape beyond and its remnants in the city are absorbed in a diffuse urban landscape. In the development of the public park in Yeoville, it is evident that an escalation in the population exacerbates urban expansion characterised by fragmentation and dissolution of the urban form.

The scheme proposes the use of water for leisure as a means to establish a relationship between the city's users and the natural environment. In the pursuit of responsive urban place making control is taken over the effect of fragmentation on urban development in the park and the fantastical nature as well as the use of water is considered in public urban spaces where it has largely been absent.

An existing pool is the catalyst for the programme of swimming and recreation where unbounded fantasy transcends the user from the physical boundaries of the pools of water to become one with the natural environment. The proliferation of existing types of fragments finds expression in a series of courtyards that are spatial types of enclosure that offer retreat and seclusion from the context to meet the demands of the overburdened public space. The use and inherent nature of water informed the form and concept of water collection, storage, treatment and use for swimming and cleansing and is central to the narrative of navigation of the courts and pools.

The value of the architecture as a contextual response lies in the exploration of the manifold relationships between the city user, urban fabric and the natural environment and urban as well as human scale at which the haptic experience unfolds.

Keywords: urban, swimming pool, water, fantasy, fragment, park.

EKSERP

Johannesburg se stedelike weefsel word gekenmerk deur fragmentasie. Die natuurlike landskap en dit wat daarvan oor is in die stad word in 'n uiteenlopende en verbrokkelende stedelike landskap geabsorbeer. In die ontwikkeling van die publieke park in Yeoville, is dit ooglopend dat 'n styging in die bevolking stedelike groei wat gekenmerk word deur fragmentasie en ontbinding van stedelike weefsel, vererger.

Die skema beoog om deur middel van water gebruik vir plesier 'n verhouding te vestig tussen die stedelike gebruiker en hul natuurlike omgewing. In die strewende na reaktiewe stedelike plek-maak word beheer geneem oor die effek wat fragmentasie op stedelike ontwikkeling in die park het en die fantastiese natuur sowel as die gebruik van water word oorweeg in publieke stedelike ruimtes waar dit grootliks nagelaat was.

'n Bestaande publieke swembad is die katalis vir 'n program van swem en ontspanning waar die gebruiker deur ontbonde fantasie fisiese grense van poele water oortref om een met hul natuurlike omgewing te word. Die doelbewuste voortbestaan en groei van bestaande fragment-tipes vind uitdrukking in 'n reeks binnehowe wat ruimtelike tipes van omsluiting - wat afsondering van die konteks te weeg bring - om die vereistes van oorlaaide publieke ruimtes te verlig. Die gebruik en inherente natuur van water het die vorm en konsep van water-opgaarding, berging, behandeling en gebruik vir swem en reiniging ingelig en is 'n kerngedagte in die narratief van ontdekking van die binnehowe en poele.

Die waarde van die argitektuur as kontekstuele reaksie lê in die ondersoek na die meervoudige verhoudings tussen die stadsgebruiker, stedelike weefsel en die natuurlike omgewing op 'n stedelike sowel as 'n menslike skaal waar 'n tastbare ervaring ontvou.

Sleutelwoorde: stedelik, swembad, water, fantasie, fragment, park.

Address: 47 Raleigh Street, Johannesburg, 2198

Location: The Public Park, Yeoville, Johannesburg





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The photograph depicts a Sunday afternoon pool gathering in 1961 at the suburban home of Bram and Molly Fischer. Bram was the leader of the SA Communist Party at a time when physical intimacy between people of different races across colour lines was strictly prohibited. The depicted scene is one of many gatherings where other activists of all races and backgrounds joined him and his family in the unthinkable transgression of the Immorality Act. (Gevisser 2013: 112)

Stephen Clingman, Fisher's biographer writes that where this political family came to swim together, a new kind of South Africa could be represented. The pool at Beaumont Street was a mirroring element of other possibilities:



Figure 1.1 The Fischer Swimming Pool

"Its liquid absolutions would combine the amniotic with the amnesiac, and the scandal of varied skins immersed in the same lazy water could simply be forgotten. [...] In a world of apartheid's fetishisms all the more outrageous to white puritanism for its refusal to be anything more than ordinary, the pool altered no obvious dispensations, stopped no removals of communities, gave voting rights to none, it became its own kind of enchanted domain. [...] With their Sunday swimming parties the Fischers were reinterpreting – through the prism of their activism – the utopia, the bounded paradise, represented by the suburban swimming pool." Gevisser (2013:119)

THE FISCHER POOL ON BEAUMONT STREET JOHANNESBURG

INTERMISSION 1 PROLOGUE



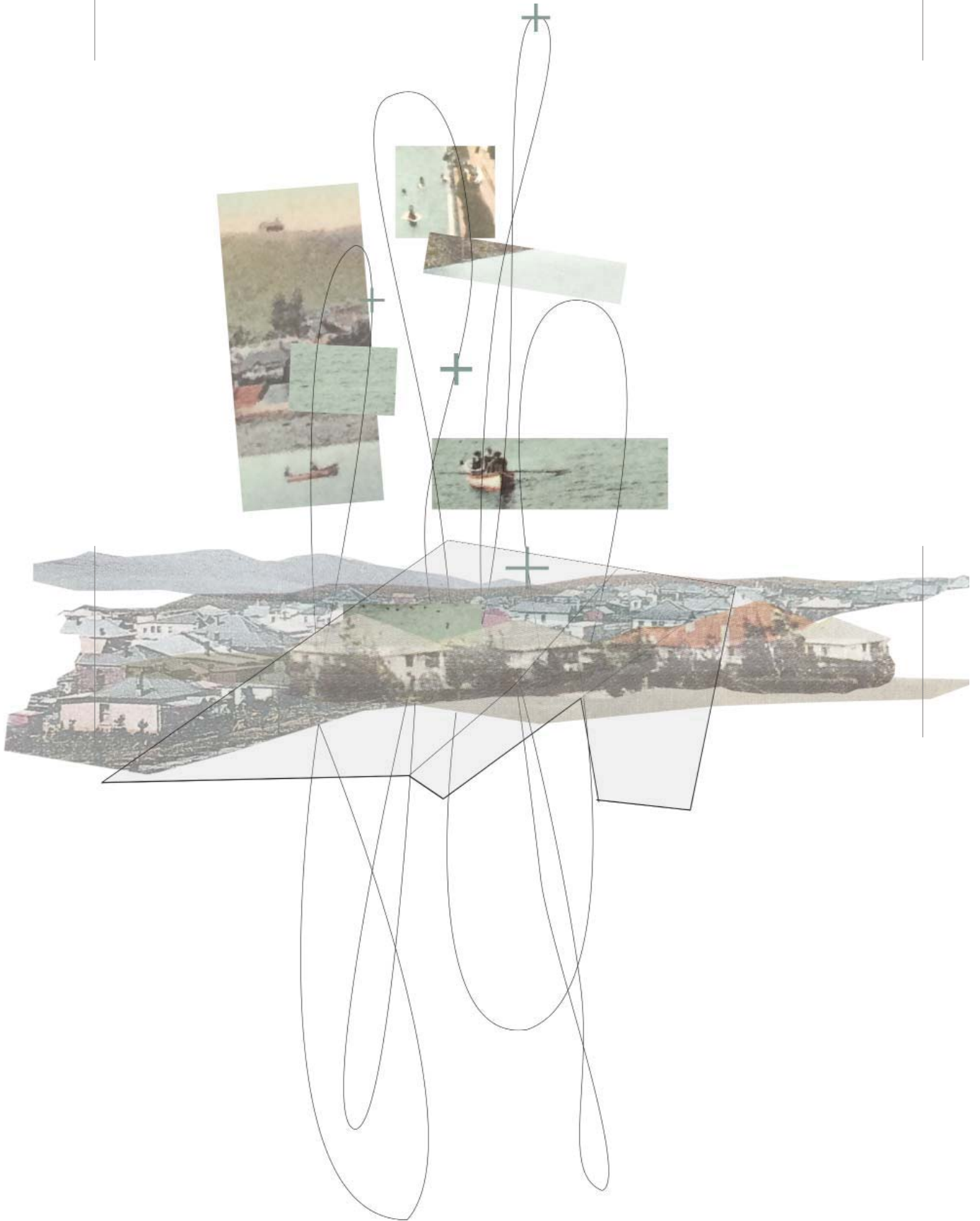


Figure 1.2 Conceptual illustration of intentions, Author

1. SETTING

1.1. A SPATIAL VOCABULARY

The scenario at the Fischer Pool introduces an influential spatial vocabulary of physical and non-physical boundaries and fascinated situations. It is a vocabulary that has been used by contemporary authors included in this study and is used to describe the origin, development and contemporary spatial condition of Johannesburg. It has subsequently been adopted to animate an understanding of the context and a reaction to it through design.

Fantasy

The notion of a fertile imagination that creates or enacts space that transcends and isn't necessarily defined by physical parameters. In this project this concept is referred to as fantasy.

Fragments

Where space is physically marked with limits and boundaries to sustain these fantasies, the notion describes the inevitable fragmentation of the urban fabric. The concept is referred to as physical fragment in this study.

At the onset of the investigation the relationship between these two concepts of fantasy and fragment is clear. It is easy to distinguish the prospector's desire for material wealth and commodity after the discovery of gold in Johannesburg as the catalyst for the development and onset of continued fragmentation of the landscape and later the city fabric. As the investigation continues, these concepts can no longer be chronologically distilled to actions of a fertile imagination and its repercussions in the timeline of city's development. They become reciprocal and invigorate each other.

The scene at the Fisher Pool therefore/also illustrates how the definitions of these concepts are elaborated. The Fisher Pool is an enclosed and limited space within a suburban dwelling, a physical fragment of its neighbourhood. The discriminatory nature of its boundary incites an enactment of enchanted domains that dissolved physical and figurative boundaries.

1.2. A CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE

The design reacts to the context of urban fabric in Johannesburg by navigating these concepts of space and time. Because it is clear that the contemporary condition is in a dialogue with its past and inseparable from its development over time the study was conducted by first investigating the formation of the city over time on a metropolitan scale and later a suburban scale in Yeoville where the design intervenes in The Public Park

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Urban development in Johannesburg is subject to densification and fragmentation. The natural landscape beyond and its remnants in the city are being absorbed in a diffuse urban landscape. As a result, one of these fragments, Yeoville. The spatial type of the pool is the looking glass for the shortcomings in its fragmented and fantasised built environments

1.4. INTENTIONS OF THE SCHEME

- nostalgia's role in creating a Place of repose -

Investigate the use of water for leisure in an urban environment

Water's role in establishing a relationship between the natural landscape and the city's users

To study the nature and use of water in architecture in ways that capture and embody its cyclic and amorphous nature.



The study that follows depicts a process of rational investigation and collection of information of place, followed by intervals of intuitive response and decision making reactions based on the information.
This cycle repeats itself multiple times over the course of the study.

INTERMISSION 2 THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

