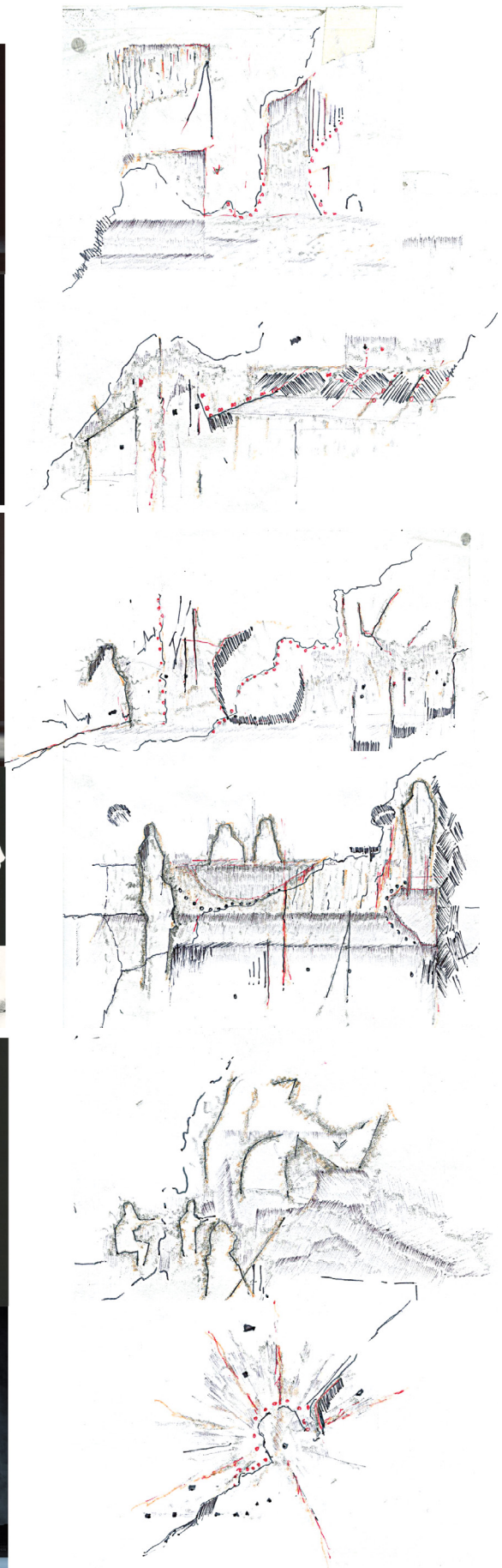
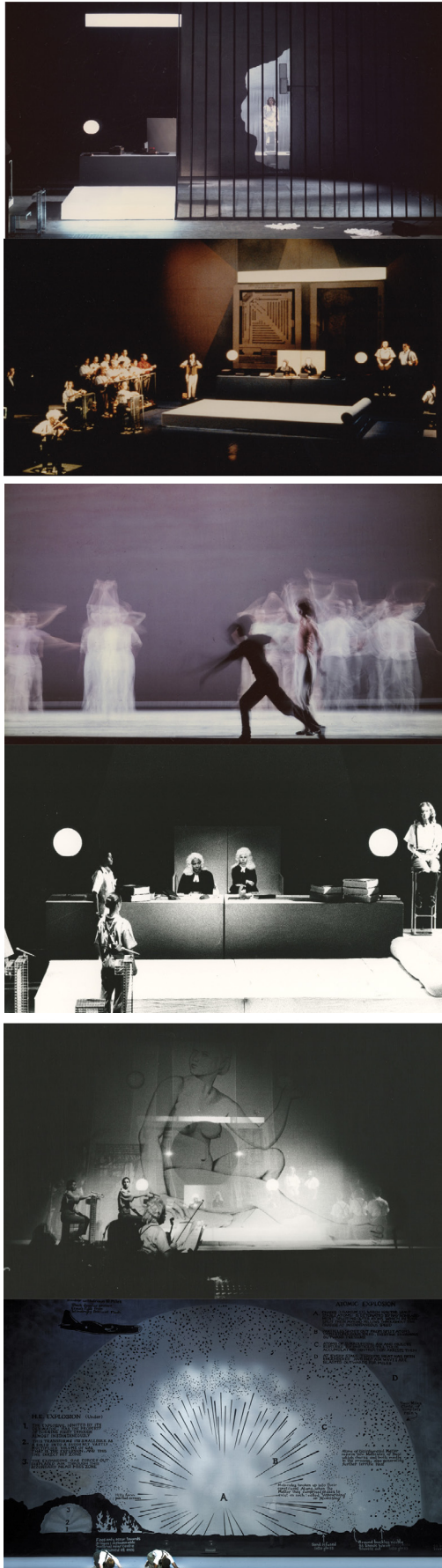


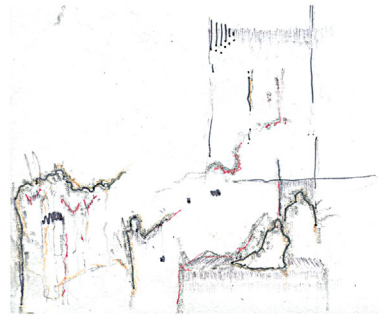
CHAPTER FOUR

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Figure 24: Translating einstein on the beach (theatrical production) by Robert Wilson into forms and spaces (process is intuitive) (hand drawings by author 2016 and photographs by Wilson [no date])



Literature review



4.1. Introduction

The issue of communicating narratives in designs is important to this research as the dissertation consists of a narrative that has to manifest in a designed landscape. In this review, the author is trying to understand if a scenographic design approach in creating performance spaces (where the narrative is performed) can inform the author's understanding of the art of storytelling using space. In the previous chapter, the dissertation discussed the debate concerning meaning and expression in designed landscapes. In the same way that landscape architecture theorists, such as Jane Gillette and Marc Treib, emphasised an approach that moves away from creating meanings in gardens (Gillette 2005), scenography theorists, such as Laura Grondahl, believe that "Scenography is increasingly conceived of as event, experience and action, rather than a set of physical elements or representational or metaphoric images" (Grondahl 2012:2). This is a move away from a representational approach to space making. She further emphasises this point by stating that unplanned encounters should be generated for the performance rather than transforming texts into interpretable signs because people do not read meaning. Where landscape architecture theorists such as Susan Herrington argued that gardens can mean because designers can shape landscape elements to communicate messages (Herrington 2007), there are authors in scenography who have written about approaching performance space "as a place that creates meaning on the level of physical space and the space described in the text" (Arlander 2011: 69). However, this investigation takes a scenographic approach that emphasises *event, experience* and *action*, rather than an approach that focuses on meaning and interpretable signs.

The literature review is presented in four themes or subtopics that the author finds relevant for the research. The first section will discuss the similarities between scenography and landscape architecture design principles. The second section will discuss the similarities between scenography and landscape architecture design process. The third section will discuss the idea of comprehending the narrative. The

forth section is a conclusion that will discuss the research objectives, the gaps within the research and the possible lessons that can be taken from this review to the rest of the investigation.

4.2. Similarities between scenography and landscape architecture design principles

In order to create a design, scenographers may use basic elements of visual production such as line, shape, texture, colour and ornamentals (Tripod 2016) to add to the quality of the visual experience in a performance space. In landscape architecture, “elements of composition are the visual qualities that people see and respond to when viewing a space” (Hansen 2016:1).

The first element is *line*, which is used to define shapes, form and express movement in a particular direction. In theatre production, scenographers manipulate lines to achieve effects such as openness when two vertical lines separate as they rise, and oppression when the same lines move closer to each other with an increase in elevation (Tripod 2016). Lines in landscape architecture are used to define shapes, forms and control body and eye movement towards a given direction (Hansen 2016:1). The second element is *colour*, which is used to communicate visual information about a theatrical production (Donaldson-Selby 2012:72). Moreover, it is used to influence an appropriate colour palette that enhances the mood and atmosphere of a play. Colours may be described as *warm (reds and yellows)*, *cold (blues and greens)* and *intermediate (yellow-green and blue-violets)* depending on how they are used by a designer. Colour selection can either be *monochromatic* (variant use of one colour), *complementary* (use of opposite colours on the colour wheel) or *analogous* (use of adjacent colours on the colour wheel) (Donaldson-Selby 2012:72-73). According to Catherine Dee (2001:194), colour in landscape design is associated with light and it changes as the light changes. An essential consideration when designing with colour is the climatic factors. When creating a colour palette, the designer considers seasonal colour of plants and different shades of the chosen colours.

The third element is *texture*, which is used to communicate tactile quality (roughness, softness) of designed surfaces. In landscape design, texture communicates how the surface of landscape materials (soft and hard) is either *coarse* or *fine*

and how it influences the visual and tangible qualities of the surface material. The fourth element is *space and shape*, which when defined can be used to control movement of characters within a performance space (Donaldson-Selby 2012:73). In landscape architecture, spatial design is the process of creating specific forms and shapes for a particular place. Space can be created “through the use of interpretation of: existing site forms, geometry, metaphor... and historic paradigms” (Dee 2001:37). In order to implement the elements of design effectively, design principles such as harmony, balance, proportion, emphasis, rhythm, unity, repetition must be applied.

Proportion refers to the relationship between individual spatial elements and the relationship among all spatial elements in a design. It affects people’s perception of beauty and can give an impression of awkwardness depending on the relationship between elements (Nicoleta 2009). Proportion in landscape design can be understood as the scale of design elements in relation to other design elements. The human scale is the absolute scale because other elements in a design are measured in relation to it (Hansen 2016:7). Balance can give a sense of stability and evenness if elements are *symmetrically* distributed. It can also give a sense of instability or imbalance in situations where the elements are *asymmetrically* distributed (School Curriculum and Standards Authority 2012:12). In landscape design, balance is a principle used to determine the visual attraction of a setting based on a central axis. It can either be symmetrical, asymmetrical or perspectival (Hansen 2010:7). In some scenarios, the scenographer might choose to emphasise particular information which is deemed to be most important in a theatrical stage. This can be achieved by making one area or costume more emphatic than others. The use of light, colour or texture may direct the spectator’s attention into the emphatic space or costume (Nicoleta 2009). In landscape architecture, emphasis may be achieved through the creation of foci which consist of distinct forms and spaces (Dee 2001:149). If there is to be visual order on a performance stage, the designer must make sure that there is unity in the use of design elements. Dee asserts that if people are to understand the order of a place, then a certain degree of “unity of form, elements and detail” needs to be established (Dee 2001:18). This is achieved through the use of *repetition*, *limited material palette* and *specific geometry*.

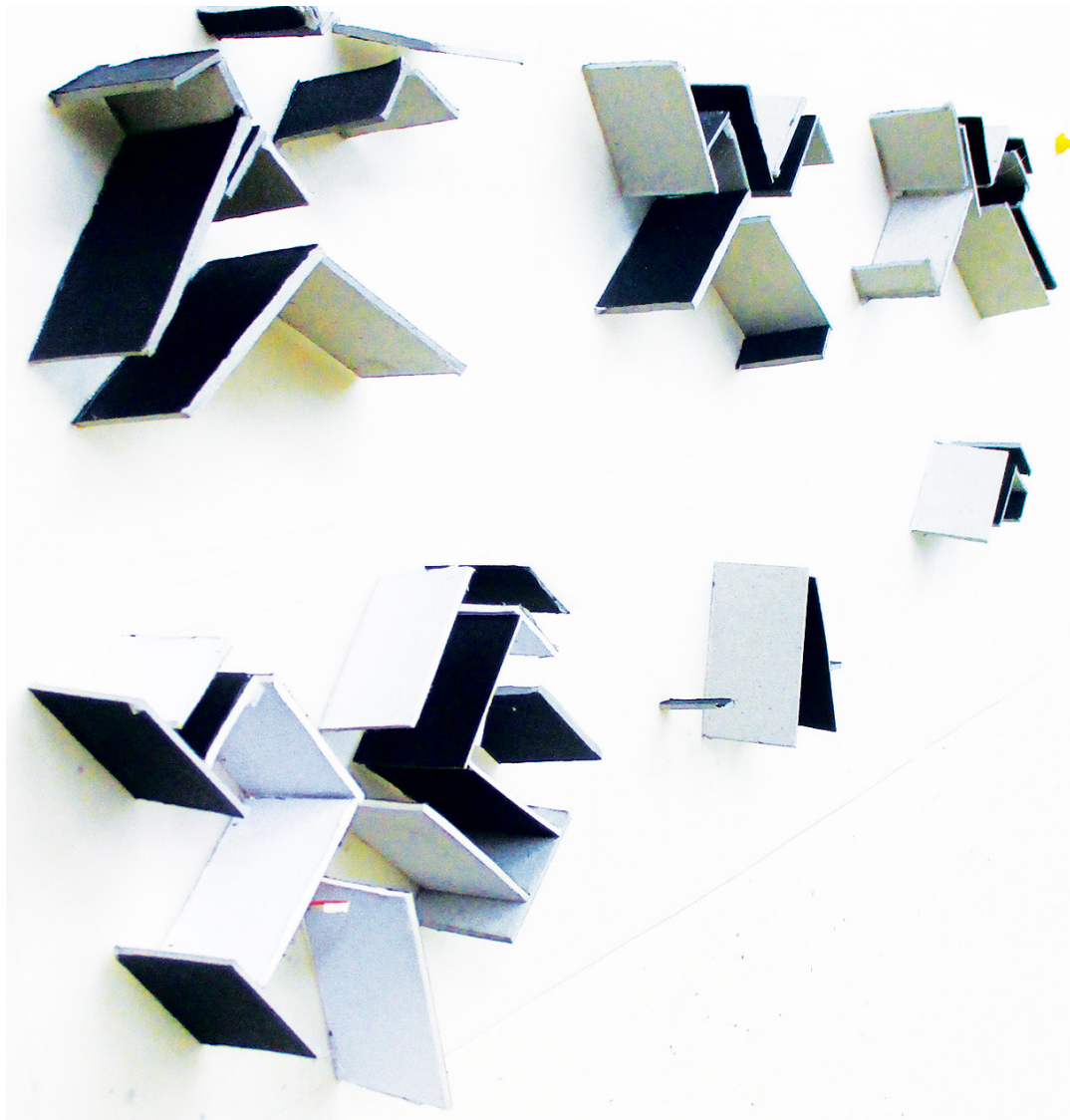


Figure 25: **Interpreting the idea of composition in blocking so to arrange movement and spaces** (intuitive process) (Author 2016)

4.3. Similarities between scenography and landscape architecture design process

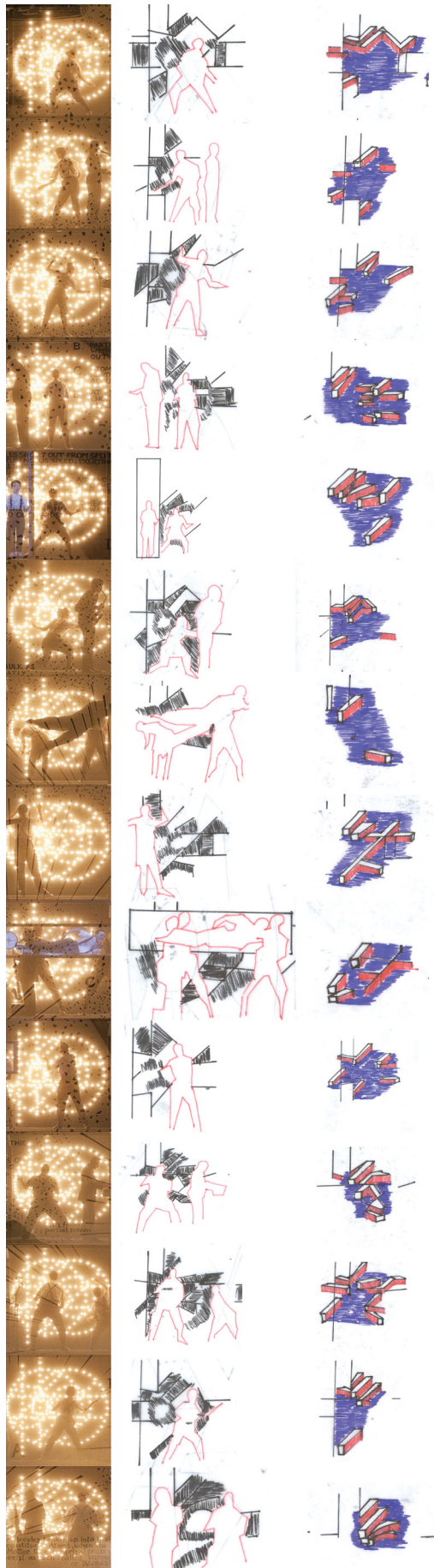
In an attempt to learn from the scenographic design process, the author found that the process is similar to the landscape architecture design process. In some cases, the similarities are direct, but in others they are indirect especially when different terms from both disciplines are used for the same meaning. The job of a scenographer is to convert texts or scripts into a physical performance space. The analysis of the text results in a summary of themes that the scenographer will attempt to visualise into a performance space. As Pantouvaki puts it, “The task confronting the scenographer is to convert verbal references into visual ideas and

then, in collaboration with others involved in the production, into a unified visual ensemble” (Raesch 2010:67). The task of a scenographer is the same as the task of a landscape architect who through the design process searches for answers to a design problem. In landscape architecture, the process can be understood as “a framework or outline of various steps. Its success relies upon the designer’s observations, experience, knowledge, ability to make proper judgements and creativity” (Booth 1989: 283).

The design process conducted by a scenographer begins by an in depth study and understanding of the text. In the process of reading, he or she begins to make interpretations by making use of visual transcripts which may become a storyboard (Howard 2001:13). This initial stage allows the scenographer to identify the functionality of the space, its pragmatic aspects and to figure

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Figure 26: Translating movement gestures (blocking) from the play *einstein on the beach* by Robert Wilson into spaces (intuitive process) (hand drawings by author 2016 and photographs by Wilson [no date])



out how the narrative and the performance will be communicated (D'Arcy 2012:1). The first step in scenography is similar to the first step of research in the landscape design process proposed by Hideo Sasaki. Research is divided into three categories which include: verbal research (reading), visual research (drawings) and experimental research (exploration of ideas) (Gottredson 2014:16). In addition, the initial step of the scenographic design process can be compared to Christophe Girot's second *trace concept* of *grounding*. Grounding is the process of reading and understanding a site through visits and analysis (Girot 1999:62). The understanding of the script permits the scenographer to develop design ideas based on research and the understanding of the social and cultural context (Raesch 2010:69) personified in the script. The scenographer develops his or her designs by making use of thumbnail sketches, detailed sketches, ground plans and models that he/she sends to the director (Donaldson-Selby 2012:74). This part of the process is similar to the landscape design development phase where ideas begin to manifest. It is through the examination of the information gathered in the research phase that the landscape architect begins to convey design solutions (Fredson 2014:25).

The second phase of the theatrical design process is the realisation of the design into a final design product. This is a stage where scenographers report to a technical team to evaluate decisions on technical construction details and the actual rehearsals of the play (Raesch 2010:72). This phase is similar to the evaluation phase in a landscape design process. The design is refined and re-evaluated (Gottfredson 2014:26) against the aims and objectives that were set at the beginning of the process. The final stage for both disciplines is communication. Scenographers make use of ground plans, elevations, sectional views, isometric views and three dimensional drawings to communicate (Tripod 2016). These methods of communication are similar to the traditional methods used in landscape architecture.

4.4. Comprehending the narrative

After all the design phases have been completed, "the audience is encouraged to engage imaginatively and subjectively with the performance through the medium of the visual-spatial construct of the stage" (Iball and McKinney). This engagement is the only



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way of telling if the play was successful in communicating its narrative. According to James Hamilton, a spectator is said to have understood the performance if he or she “(1) can describe the object that was presented over the course of the performance, (2) reacts physically in the right ways to what is happening in the performance as those things happen, or (3) adopts the moods responsive to what is happening in the performance as those things happen” (Hamilton 2007:23). The performance is the very means of communicating with the spectators and therefore, the work of scenography begins to manifest through *bodily movements* and *performative gestures* (D’Arcy 2012:3).

Blocking in theatrical productions is one way of communicating texts or narratives that can be adopted to landscape architecture. Blocking deals with character movement and decides where the action happens on stage in accordance with the script (School Curriculum and Standard Authority 2012:4). However, it is similar to the idea of dealing with circulation on a landscape design project, but it can also be an alternative approach to dealing with circulation. The importance of blocking in theatrical productions is that it makes actors understand their role in a performance, their relationship with other characters and the gist of the performance (Frick 1974:1). The first aspect to look at in the blocking process is *composition*, which is the arrangement of characters on stage by making use of emphasis and order. The purpose of composition is to communicate the playwright’s intentions for the actor and audience. It is one aspect that cannot be ignored because without it staging would be disorganised and chaotic. In order to effectively implement composition in blocking, emphasis is applied in the process. Emphasis entails that a central character is given more audience attention at a given time when he or she is active. Emphasis is achieved by grouping actors in one area and isolating one actor in another by either elevating or lowering the isolated actor on stage. Once composition has been implemented, the scenographer will design a ground plan in which all elements of the stage set are arranged. The second aspect to consider when blocking is movement. Movement in stage production has meaning. People move because something motivated them to and not because they can. For example, in a scene where there are two characters and one of the characters is threatening the other. The character doing the threatening must move towards and not away from the threatened otherwise “his movement

belies his speech regardless of how convincing his delivery” (Frick 1974:61).

The use of lighting in theatre production is another way of communicating texts or narratives in addition to blocking. The structure of the discussion is based on John J. Rankin’s *Basic principles and techniques of entertainment lighting*. The function of lighting is to “convey special meaning about a character or the narrative to the viewer” (Lathrop and Sutton 4). According to Rankin, the first function of stage lighting is *visibility*. The lighting designer manipulates light so that the audience can see what he wants them to see without the light spilling into areas that need to remain hidden. The second function is the *revelation of form* by making the actors stand out from their background. The third function is *placing the action* by representing the setting of the performance (time and place is emphasised). The fourth function is *mood*, which tells whether the production is a comedy or drama. For example, comedies are usually bright whereas dramas are usually dark with shadows. The fifth function is *composition*. Stage lighting is composed to create an overall image of the scene especially in events such as music concerts where there is no scenery. The sixth function is *reinforcing the story* (Rankin 2007:4). Lighting in theatrical productions is described in terms of its *quality*. “When the director manipulates the quality of the lighting, or the relative intensity of the illumination, he can control the impact of the setting or the figure behaviour has on the viewer [and can emphasise the intended central focus of the frame]” (Lathrop and Sutton 4). The quality of the light can be described in terms of its *intensity*, which is how bright or dim the lighting is. Light intensity affects the mood created as dark and bright lighting can either create a drama or comedy scene. Light is also described in terms of its colour with the main colours being red, blue and green (Donaldson-Selby 2012:65). The third aspect in terms of light quality is distribution. This describes the direction of the light when peripheral and directional lighting (hard) is used or the non-directional when diffuse lighting (soft) is used (Brightgreen 2015:8). The fourth aspect to consider in terms of light quality is movement, which is quality attributed to the movement of day light from morning, afternoon and sunset.

4.5. Conclusion

The initial intent of the research was to study scenography theory with an aim to investigate

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how a scenographic design approach can be adopted to landscape architecture in order to fill the gaps that exist in the landscape architecture discipline when it comes to communicating narratives. However, the above studies suggest that there are more similarities than differences between the two disciplines. The design approach, elements of design, aesthetic principles of design, blocking, lighting, script, and the communication through drawings are concepts that are already applied in landscape architecture. In most cases, what differentiates the two disciplines is the wording but the meaning intended will be the same for both disciplines. The shortcomings in the research is that the author did not find unique scenographic concepts that landscape architects have not thought of. However, there are basic scenographic design principles that overlap with landscape architecture and can be effectively used to facilitate a visual narrative in a landscape design project. The first principle is *negative space*. This is often used when the designer wants the viewer to focus on a certain element. The element could be located in the centre as a focal point. Negative space results in drama and tension in a scene and it provides a visual pause or breathing room around main elements to bring out focal objects (McGuire 2015). The second principle is *composition by emphasis (grouping)*. This principle is applied when the designer wants to put emphasis on an individual or character that is active in a particular moment and space. The individual is isolated from the group by either elevating or lowering him/her or making him/her adopt a body language that is different from the rest of the group (Frick 1974). The third principle is *depth* which is achieved by dividing a scene into three sections (foreground, middle ground and background) with an aim of creating illusions when objects are placed on the visual plane. The spacing between the background, middle ground and background is what creates the illusion or depth (McGuire 2015). The fourth principle is *repetition* which is used to emphasise an idea by visualising and repeating particular elements. The fifth principle is *blocking*, which is used to arrange the movement of characters from one moment in a space to the other. In order for movement to occur, there must be something that motivates the character to want to move from one space to another (Frick 1974). The sixth principle is *contrast*, which is achieved by placing elements with opposing visual characteristics next to each other for example, a large wall next to a bench can suggest dominance. The seventh principle concerns *space and movement*. The emphasis is placed on how an individual experiences space from different directions. The eighth principle is the use of directional cues that consist of visual elements that direct the viewer towards a focal point (McGuire 2015). These design principles will be applied in the design of an urban square at the Pretoria Main Station.

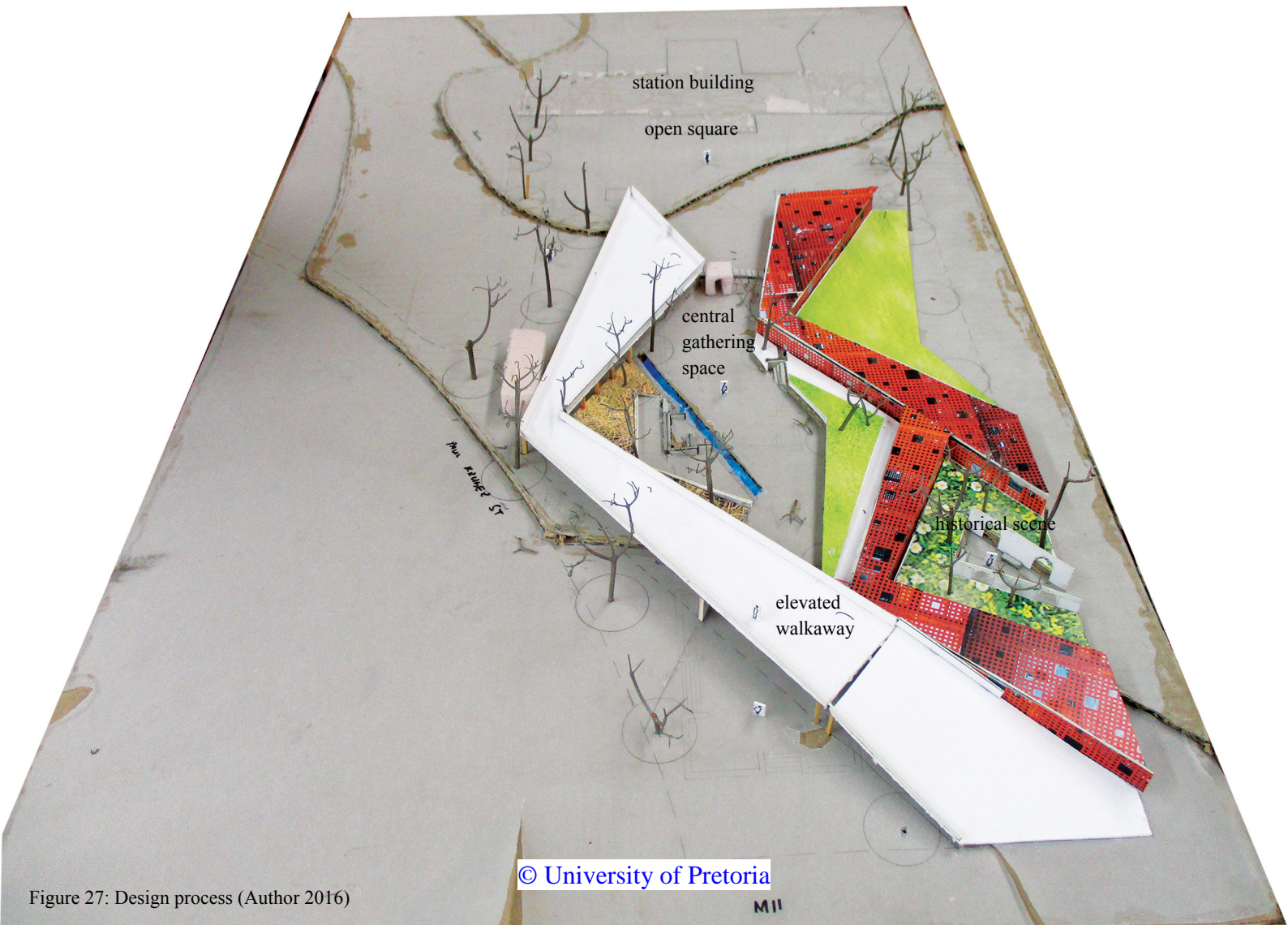
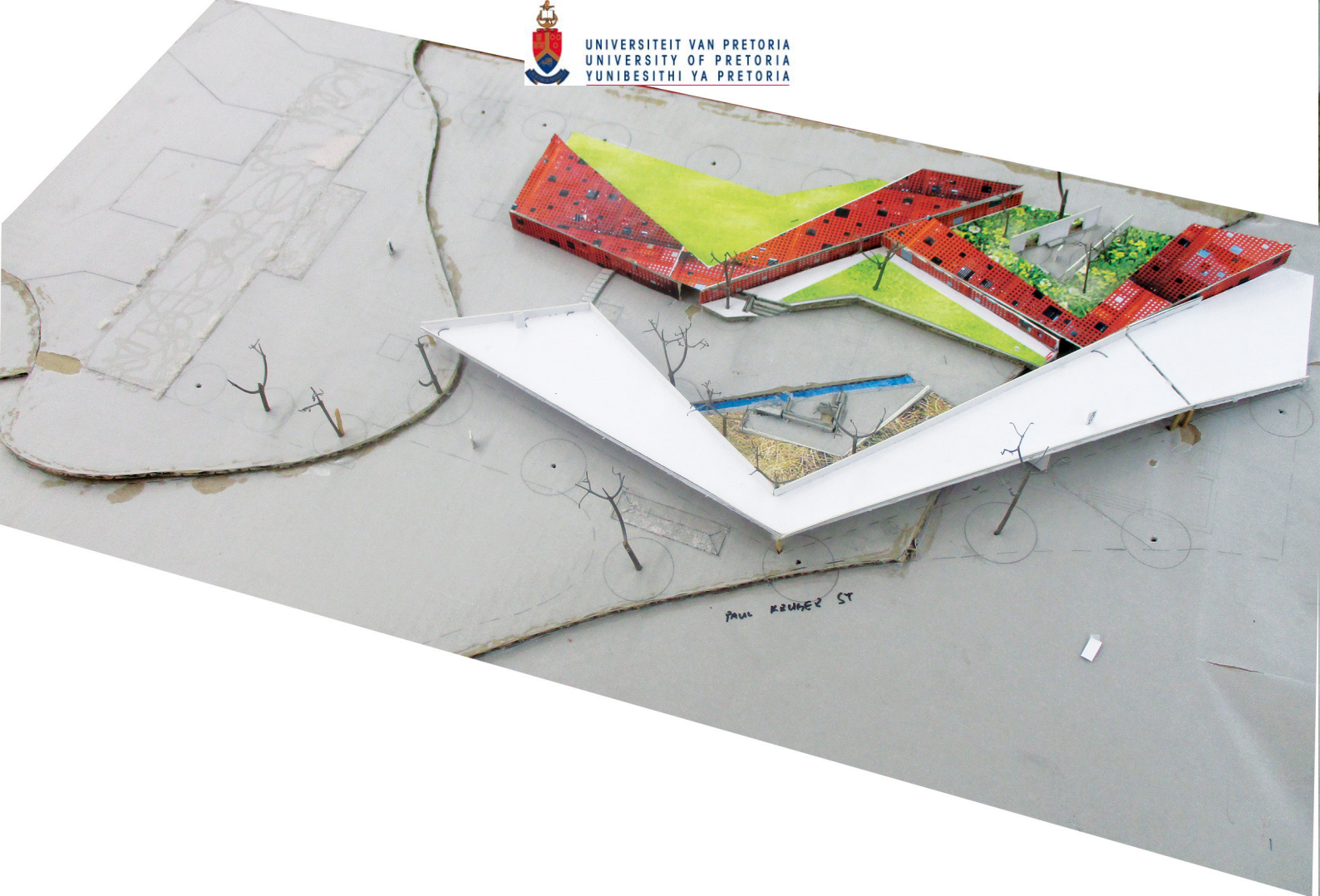


Figure 27: Design process (Author 2016)

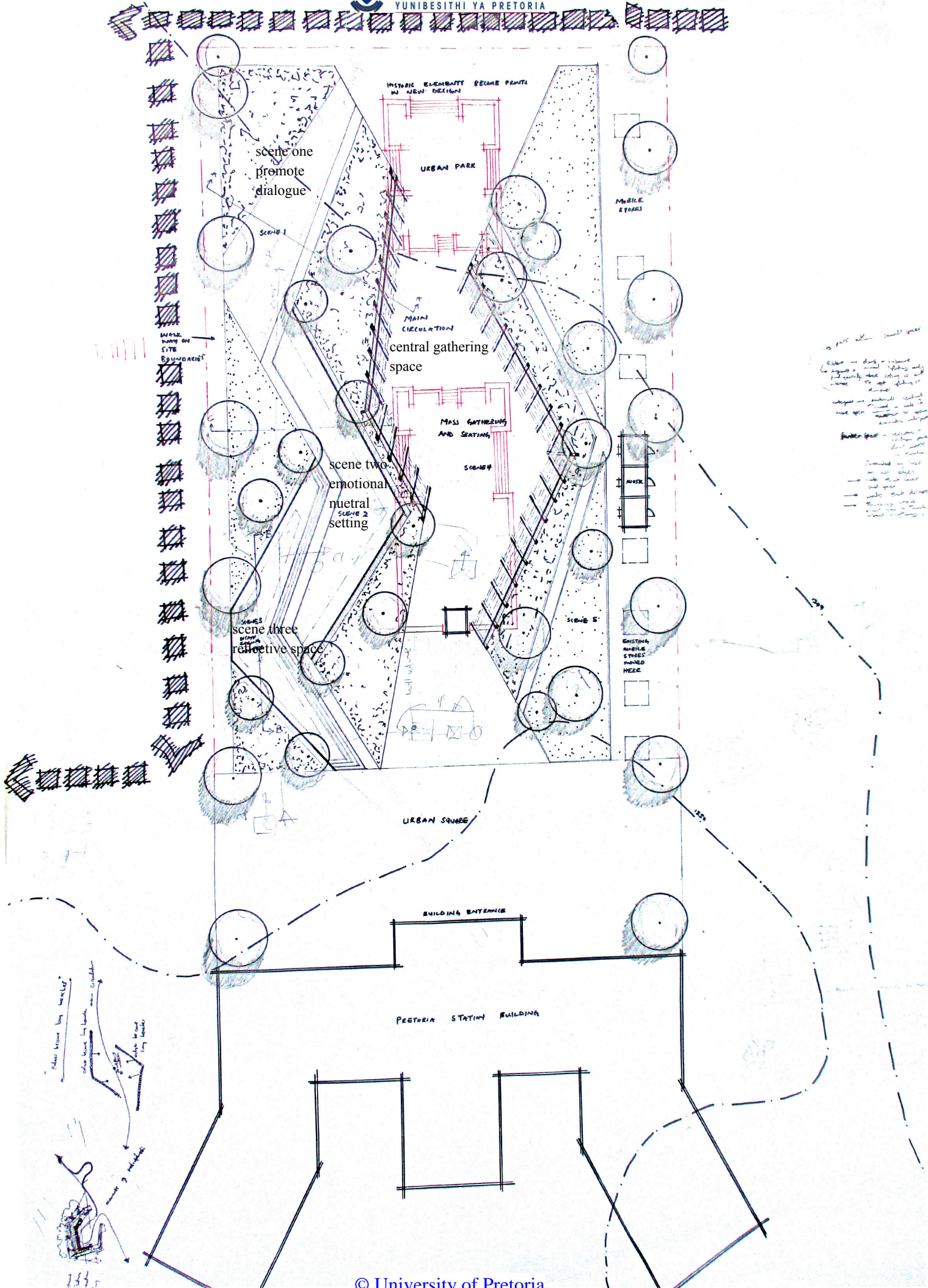


Figure 28: Design process (Creating four different scenes with different emotional outcome) (Author 2016)

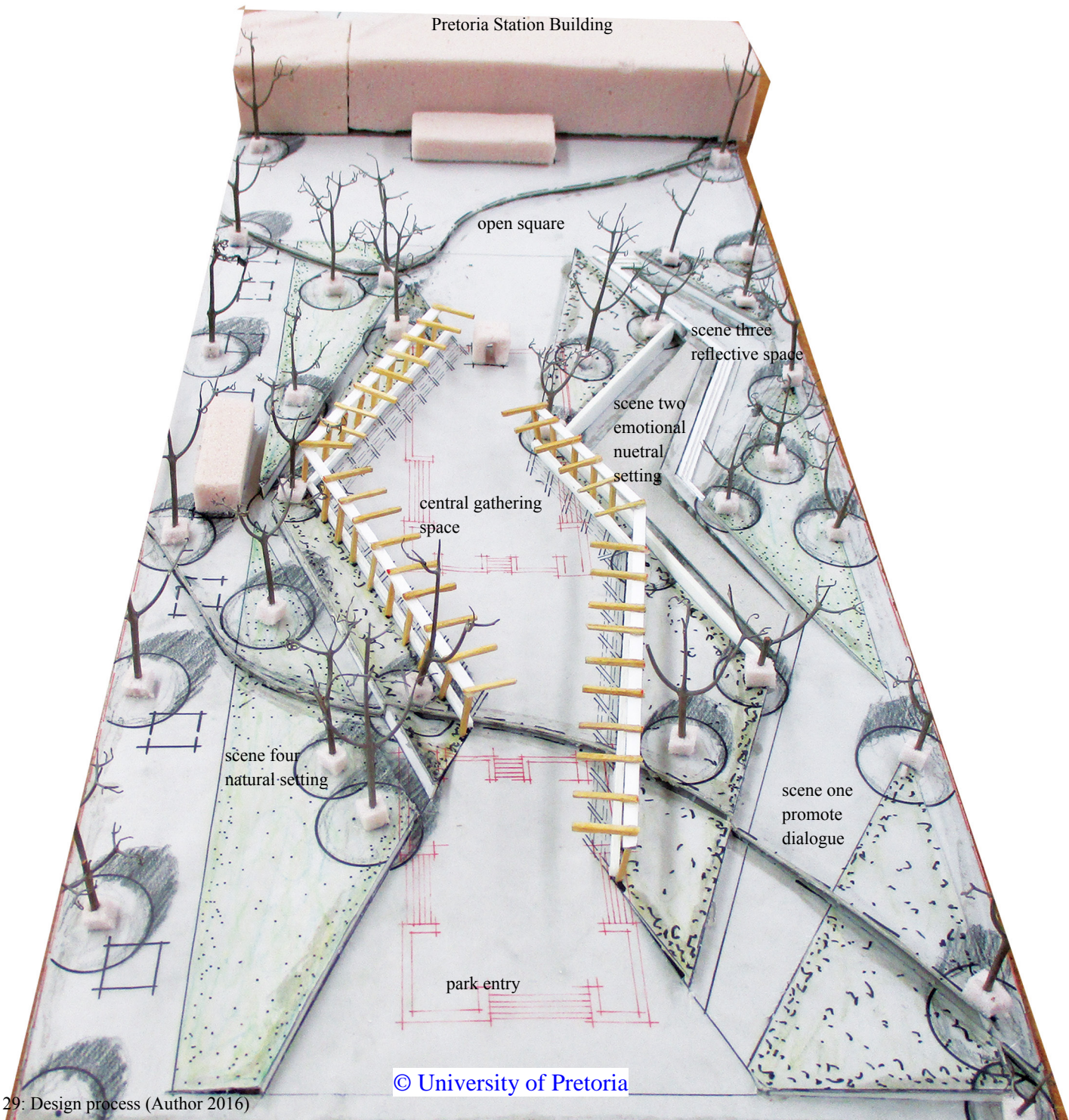
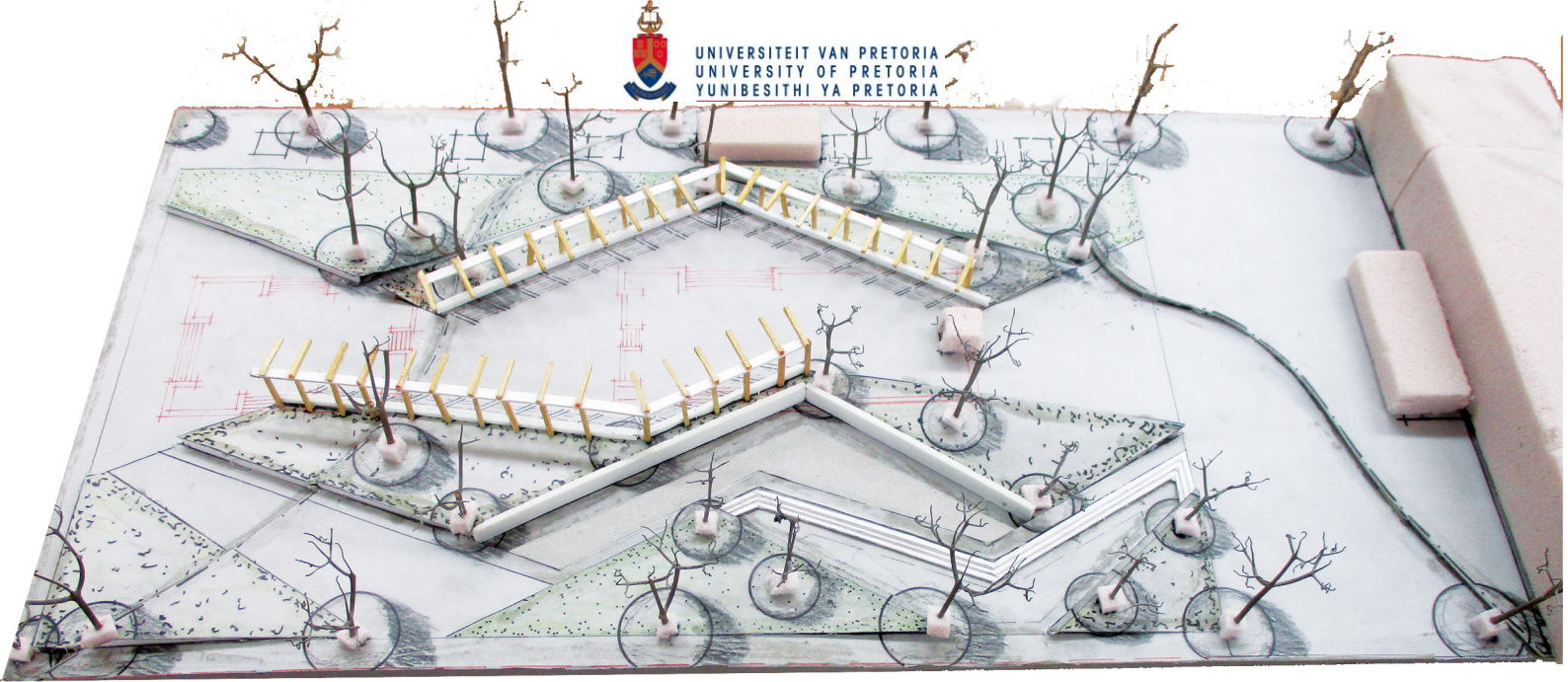


Figure 29: Design process (Author 2016)

