# hinterland

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# HINTERLAND
*a conservatory of reimagined worlds*

The imaginative reanimation of Brixton cemetery's nostalgic, remnant reality through the mechanization of its inherent narrative of escape.

*by Pieter Swart*

# HINTERLAND
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The imaginative reanimation of Brixton cemetery's nostalgic, remnant reality through the mechanization of its inherent narrative of escape: synaesthesia through the synthetic.

**Location**: Brixton Cemetery

**Vrededorp**, Johannesburg, 2092

**GPS**: 26°11'48.5"S 28°00'38.3"E

**Program**: Bioluminescent Conservatory and columbarium

**Study field**: Heritage and Cultural Landscapes

*By Pieter Swart*

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree*
*Masters in Architecture, MArch(Prof)*

*Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology*
*University of Pretoria, 2017*

*Study leader: Marguerite Pienaar*
*Course co-ordinator: Dr. Arthur Barker*

*Declaration*

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

*I further state that no part of my thesis has already, or is currently being submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.*

*I further declare that the thesis is substantially my own works. Where reference is made to the works of other, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.*

*Pieter Swart*

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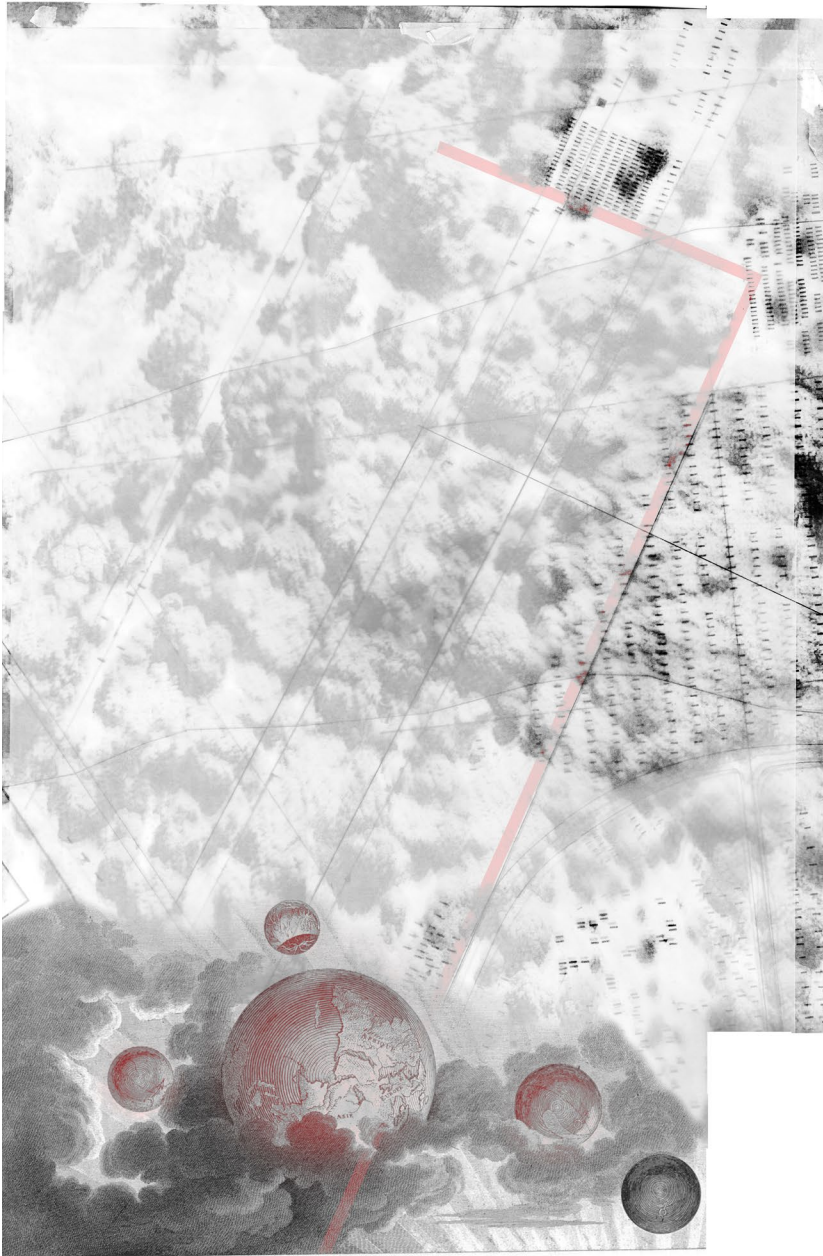
ÉLEVATION DU CIMETIÈRE DE LA VILLE DE CHAUX.

fig. 1.1. (author) *La petite mort.* Collage of Brixton cemetery and Ledoux's cemetery for Chaux as 'another world'.

Describing the cemetery Claude-Nicolas Ledoux invisioned for the *Ideal City of Chaux* (1775-1778) Gruson (2008:301) states: "In this way, the entrance in the Salt works looks like a gate to another world wanted perfect by Ledoux. This cosmic idea is to be found in a restrained shape in the cemetery of the city of Chaux which Ledoux imagined for his ideal city. In this utopian cemetery, the relation with death is a purely poetic one, since the centre of the whole cemetery is an immense round empty room, symbolizing the absolute void".

## *Dedications:*

Aan Pappa, Mamma en Cornell vir die geleentheid om iets
betekenisvol te skep, die jare se ondersteuning, hulp, geduld,
slapelose nagte en oorvloed koffie. Dankie.

## *Q*

For the kingdoms we discovered stumbling among ruins.

*Narcissus, then, goes to the secret fountain in the depths of the woods. Only there does he feel that he is naturally doubled...But at the fountain Narcissus has not given himself over exclusively to contemplation of himself. His own image is the center of a world. With and for Narcissus, the whole forest is mirrored, the whole sky approaches to take cognizance of its grandiose image.*

*- Bachelard, Water and Dreams*

## ABSTRACT

Artificiality, as a manifestation of the pursuit of escape, saturates the city and landscapes of Johannesburg. It is the narrative from which the city spawned, constructs and relentlessly perpetuates itself. This *first artificial landscape* is the materialization of escape, the synthetic, nostalgic reproduction of the known.

Brixton cemetery is nostalgic remnant existing in Johannesburg. Looming in a state suspended animation, it is an embodiment of the amnesic material and urban blight which pervades the city, created from desire to escape. The nostalgic artificiality inherent in this cemetery (produced by the desire to escape), in dire need of intervention, holds the material which unlocks the method for its reanimation.

The project investigates how architecture, as a *second artificial landscape*, can occupy the amnesic gap inherent in the nostalgic remnant to reanimate the conditions present in the cemetery and the nostalgic forest. This is accomplished through an architectural insertion which appropriates the physical, nostalgic, metaphysical and mythological layers of escape embodied in the cemetery as the strategy for intervention. The project further investigates a new burial typology which functions by either the prevention or acceptance of the inevitable amnesic condition caused by memorialization. A *Bioluminescent Conservatory* is proposed to reanimate the forest through the artificiality of escape, while the addition of a columbarium serves to expand and reoccupy the cemetery.

Conceptually, the projects investigates how the *narrative of escape* can further be absorbed into the architecture through the artificiality inherent in the cemetery's material. The idea of *negative* as an artificial reproduction is adopted as a conceptual strategy for intervention and articulation of the architecture. The *negative* as conceptual framework is explored through the artistic work of Christian Boltanski who's work painfully reveals the treachery of memory and memorialization, but also finally signifies the potentiality inherent in this amnesic inevitability to redeem, reoccupy and recreate from this gap. The cemetery and forest are reanimated by disconfiguring the mechanism of escape and the conditions which it instilled in the cemetery.

fig. 1.2. (author) Brixton
cemetery as escape from
Johannesburg.

# Glossary
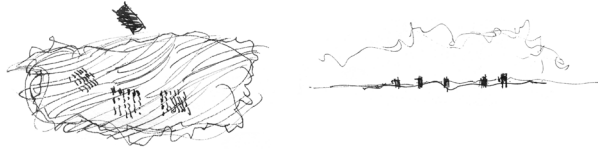
These definitions have been sourced from the Oxford English Dictionary unless indicated otherwise.

## 1

***First artificial landscape***: (author) an artificially constructed and materially present morphology (created by the anthropocene) which not only provides protection from the meaningless and hostile space of the natural world (Pallasmaa, 2011: 97), but also shrouds the chaos of the real through creating space imbued with illusions of safety. The *first artificial landscape* is not only saturated with, but always finds its origin in the desire of escaping the real. It thus represents the point from which, according to Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:11), the city "unconsciously projects, and literally constructs, its own image" and therefor its own artificially subdued reality.

**Artificial**: Made or produced by human beings rather than occurring naturally, especially as a copy of something natural. Derived from Latin artificium, based on *art-* 'art' + *facere* 'make'.

**Amnesia**: A partial or total loss of memory, derived from Greek: *amnësia* meaning 'forgetfulness'.

**Escape**: A form of temporary distraction from reality or routine, or succeed in avoiding or eluding something dangerous or unpleasant, derived from Latin: *ex-* 'out' + *cappa* 'cloak'

**Nostalgia**: A sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past, derived from from Greek: *nostos* 'return home' + *algos* 'pain', 'homesickness'.

**Remnant**: A part or quantity that is left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed. A surviving trace. Derived from Old French *remenant* meaning 'remain'.

***Uitvalgrond***: The Afrikaans word assigned to the triangular piece of surplus ground around which Johannesburg as mining town formed. *Uitvalgrond* is a distorted geometry, not only manifesting the 'grid' around which the city incrementally surfaced, but also a metaphor for the formation of its "incipient themes and infant mythologies" (Koolhaas, 1994: 30). The dominance of *Uitvalgrond* both invents the reality of the city and sustains its myth (Kreutzfeldt and Malcomess, 2013:29).
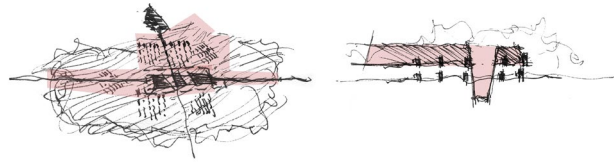
## 2

**Second artificial landscape**: (author) On a physical level, the *second artificial landscape* reanimates the cemetery through the addition of a columbarium and a conservatory, in a response to the existing conditions. The architectural in(ter)vention further acts to reanimate the cemetery through a mirroring and dismantling of the desire for escape manifested in its material as the *first artificial landscape*. This in(ter)vention draws strongly from the work of Baudrillard in his book *Simulacra and Simulation* originally published in 1981, in which he states:

> *The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory — precession of simulacra — that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. The desert of the real itself* (Baudrillard, 2014:1).

The *second artificial landscape* captures and produces fleeting wonder, accomplished through creating *negatives* of the cemetery's synthetic, nostalgic and mythologically charged material (both architecturally and botanically). Furthermore, it mechanizes the artificiality manifested by the attempt to escape from *the real*, through *negatives*, in order to expose these vestiges.

**Columbarium**: A room or building with niches for funeral urns to be stored.

**Conservatory**: A room with a glass roof and walls, attached to a house at one side and used as a sun lounge or for growing delicate plants. Derived from late Latin *conservatorium*, from *conservare* 'to preserve'.

**Revenant**: A person who has returned, especially supposedly from the dead. Derived from French: *revenir* meaning 'coming back'. This term is contextualized to indicate the reanimation of the cemetery's material, through the intervention of the *second artificial landscape*.

**Reanimation**: Restore to life or consciousness; revive. Derived from Latin *animat-* 'instilled with life', from *anima* 'life, soul'. This term is contextualized to indicate the cemetery's recovery from a state of lapsed significance, material dilapidation and metaphysical chaos.

**Negative**: (author) the architectural reproduction of the *first artificial landscape*, developed from the conceptual frameworks of Christian Boltanski's photographic installations and Anselm Kiefer's subterranean land art.

**Ontslape**: (author) An Afrikaans word meaning 'deceased', derived from *slaap*, 'sleep'.

**Verbeeld-ing**: (author) A wordplay on the Afrikaans word meaning 'copy', 'negative' or 'simulation', with its root being *beeld* 'model', 'image'.
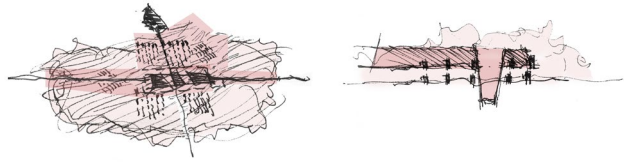
## 3

***Third intimate landscape***: (author) Reimagination of the cemetery as a nostalgic remnant of the *first artificial landscape*, accomplished through the in(ter)vention of the *second*. This is a fluid, intimate process facilitating the occurrence of *La Petite Mort* in the dweller through the *second artificial landscape*, firstly by reanimating the cemetery from its ruinous state, through intervention into the original material of the remnant. *La Petite Mort* is secondly manifested through the dweller's complete immersion in the unknowns manifested in the artificiality of the architectural intervention and its synthetic botany. Through these synaesthetic processes, the cemetery sustains significance by embracing the inevitable amnesic decline of the *first artificial landscape*.

> *Ruins, for me, are the beginning. With the debris, you can construct new ideas. They are symbols of new beginnings* - Anselm Kiefer.

**Reimagination**: Reinterpret (an event, work of art, etc.) imaginatively. Derived from Latin *imaginare* 'form an image of, represent'.

**Intimation**: The action of making something known, especially in an indirect way. Derived from late Latin *intimare* meaning to 'impress, make familiar', from *intimus* 'inmost'.

**Reverie**: A state of being pleasantly lost in one's thoughts; a daydream. A dreamy or musing state. Derived from Old French reverie 'rejoicing, revelry', 'be delirious'.

***Ont-slape***: (author) A play on the Afrikaans word *ontslape* meaning 'deceased', reimagined as 'awaken' through *ont-* 'not' + *slaap* 'sleep'. Similar to *verbeeld-ing* and *verbeelding* it is analogous to the process of deepening, or creating new knowledge through reverie.

***La-petite-mort***: Translated as 'little death', it describes the occurrence whereby the reader experiences "*jouissance*" (bliss) at the moment of 'authorship' over a text, transcending the state of "*plaisir*" (comfort and euphoria of reading) by assuming a state of reimagining only acquired through a process of loss and discomfort (Barthes, 1975:14). It describes reimaginative death when old knowledge is sacrificed or made obsolete through a process described by Swiss clinical psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) as scaffolding.

***Verbeelding***: (author) An Afrikaans word meaning 'imagination' with its root being *beeld* 'model', 'image'. The word is, however, reimagined (in Heideggerian fashion) through a wordplay on itself found in *verbeeld-ing*, intended to subtly exposure the potentiality of reimagination. In this reimagination, a deepening of knowledge and exposure to the unknown is made possible through reveries drawn from words which have lost their etymological significance.

# C O N T E N T S

PART 2            - The known

Chapter 3: Theory
**Revenants of the nostalgic remnant**

Chapter 4: Programme
**The *second artificial landscape***

Chapter 5: Programmatic precedents

Interpretation of precedents as *second artificial landscape*

Developing the negative as architectural design strategy

PART 3          - Reveries of the *second artificial landscape*

Chapter 7: Design development
**Reveries through reimagination of the *negative***

Chapter 8: Techné

# 1 [ FANTASY OF ESCAPE ]

" *verbeelding / ont-slape* "

*The creature creates a burrow, a sanctuary to escape the terror of the unknown pervading the surface. The* **FIRST ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE** *is created.*

# 2 [ NOSTALGIC REPRODUCTION OF THE KNOWN ]

*The creature is possessed by a delirious desire to incessantly reproduce the comfort of his constructed den. The terror of the unknown is exacerbated.*

# 3 [ DEMISE IN ESCAPE ]

*In the relentless endeavour to construct an artificial world, the creature is seduced by and enslaved to a nostalgia of the known. The creature meets its demise in its attempt to escape the unknown through the construction of the* **FIRST ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE**.

# Preface
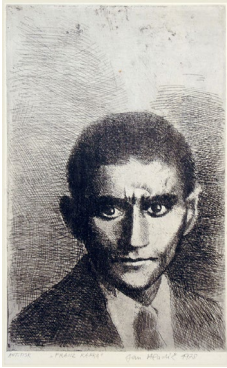


fig. 1.3. Franz Kafka.

*We are such stuff*
*As dreams are made on, and our little life*
*Is rounded with a sleep.*
— The Tempest, IV, i

*To speak of memories is to imply that paradise is more than just a dream.*
— Karsten Harries (1982:61)

**The Burrow** - an artificial nostalgic landscape for escape.

In 1931 the story *Der Bau* [1] was published as part of an anthology of unfinished works written by Franz Kafka [2]. Translated as 'The Burrow', it describes the toil of a burrowing creature [3] creating a habitable, familiar sanctuary for itself where it "can sleep the sweet sleep of tranquility, of satisfied desire, of achieved ambition" (Kafka, 1993:279a) in an attempt to escape the terror of the unknown that lurks on the surface. It is, however, the familiarity of this labyrinth and the certainty of its sanctuary that unnervingly introduces and exacerbates an insidious awareness of entrapment [4]. This in turn incarnates the illusion of a looming terror that pervades the unfamiliar territories external to his burrow. That which is so frantically guarded against

fig. 1.4.(author) An artificial landscape for escape. Nostalgic expanse in *The Burrow*.

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1 Kafka, F. (1931). *Der Bau*. London: Martin Secker.

2 Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a Czechish prose writer. He is regarded as one of the most influential Modernist writers of the twentieth century, portraying the world through grotesque visions, often through the Absurdist analogies of metamorphosis.

3 The creature is presumed to be a mole. However, the only reference found in the fable validating this assumption is suggested by the words: "my forehead — that unique instrument" (Kafka, 1993:279b), a ruse referencing to the uniqueness of rationality of Man.

4 Entrapment, here, both implies the restriction of movement imposed by the burrow and insinuates the further visceral implications of this circumscription experienced by the creature.
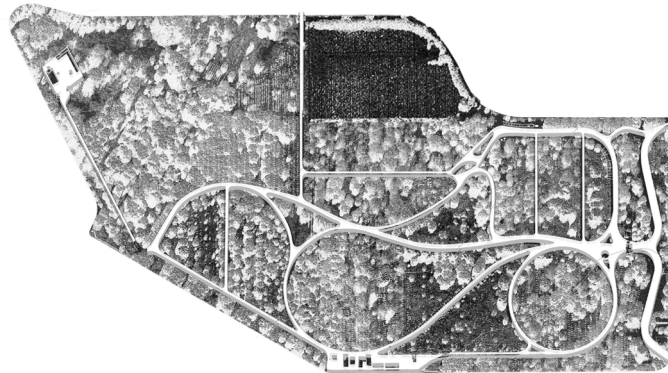
fig. 1.5. (author) Brixton cemetery as artificial landscape.

(the unfamiliar), in a sweep of irony, animates that which he fears. The perceived penetrability of the burrow's walls by this looming threat, albeit imagined, induces delirium within the creature. A frantic neurosis which is only soothed or escaped in a fervor of burrowing and fortification ensues and momentary refuge is found in the abundance of the burrow's new expansions, yet the presence of this threat persists and burrowing never surcease.

> Unable to possess the world, it tries to withdraw into its artificial environment. It intends to replace nature with artful construction. But the threatening outside cannot be eliminated. The reasoning animal of the story is, of course, a figure for man, whose anxious anticipation of what may threaten him leads to frantic building and planning. Yet the results can never satisfy what is demanded. Technology and construction increase rather than diminish the terror of time (Harries, 1982:60).

The creature finds its demise in the entrapment of its own constructions and consciousness caused by its pernicious desire to burrow and escape from *the real*. At this point one realises the duplicitous intentions of the title *Der Bau*, or *The Construction*: not only of the burrow as a necessity to subdue the terror of the creature, but also as the self-reflexive 'construction' of his neurosis perpetuated by his manic burrowing.

> The Metropolis strives to reach a mythical point where the world is completely fabricated by man, so that it absolutely coincides with his desires. The Metropolis is an addictive machine, from which there is no escape, unless it offers that, too[…]Through this pervasiveness, its existence has become

*like the Nature it has replaced: taken for granted, almost invisible, certainly indescribable* (Koolhaas, 1994:293).

This delusion is not only demonstrated in perceived safety at the expense of emotional trauma, but also alluded to by the disorientation caused by the darkened passages, its architecture, which inevitably causes the creature's blindness. The architecture that we create and inhabit not only circumscribes our movement, but also produces a muteness in our consciousness that momentarily prevents even our awareness of this muteness.

Escape is sought in the artifice of constructed worlds, and even found momentarily, yet the nostalgic endeavour to sustain the familiar, or the nostalgic propagation to acquire 'utopia' [5] is dire. The burrow enshrines futility as the experience of entrapment, through the artificial preservation and reproduction of familiars for the purpose of evading the unknown, ensures the creature's demise. Located in Johannesburg, this dissertation is an investigation of the potentiality not only latent in the artificiality of this construction, but also of how the drive to escape through artificial reproduction, can be inverted to locate architecture's potentiality for intimation. Pallasmaa describes the relation between architecture and the dweller's intimate, ontological experience, stating that:

> *Since its very beginning, architecture has structured limitless physical space into distinct places and given space its human measure and meaning. In addition to inhabiting and protecting us in meaningless and hostile physical space, architecture has given us our domicile in cosmic and mental space. 'A house is an instrument with which to confront cosmos,' as Gaston Bachelard suggests* (Pallasmaa, 2011: 97).

This dissertation explores how architecture makes intimation accessible for the dweller, by positioning it as a device for the dweller to engage with and confront the unknowns inherent in the artificial. The remnant material of Brixton cemetery having lost its significance within the city, as well as the intervention in an artificial, yet amnesic forest, pervaded with terrors, ideally positions the cemetery for such an architectural exploration. The intervention furthermore makes the cemetery reaccessible through not only restoring but also sustaining significance, preventing it from lapsing back into an amnesic state.

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5 'Utopia' from the Greek *ou* 'not' + *topos* 'place', meaning non-place. It describes a nostalgic longing, a fantasy for paradise.

*PART     I*

## *THE CONSTRUCTION*

Escape into the *first artificial landscape*
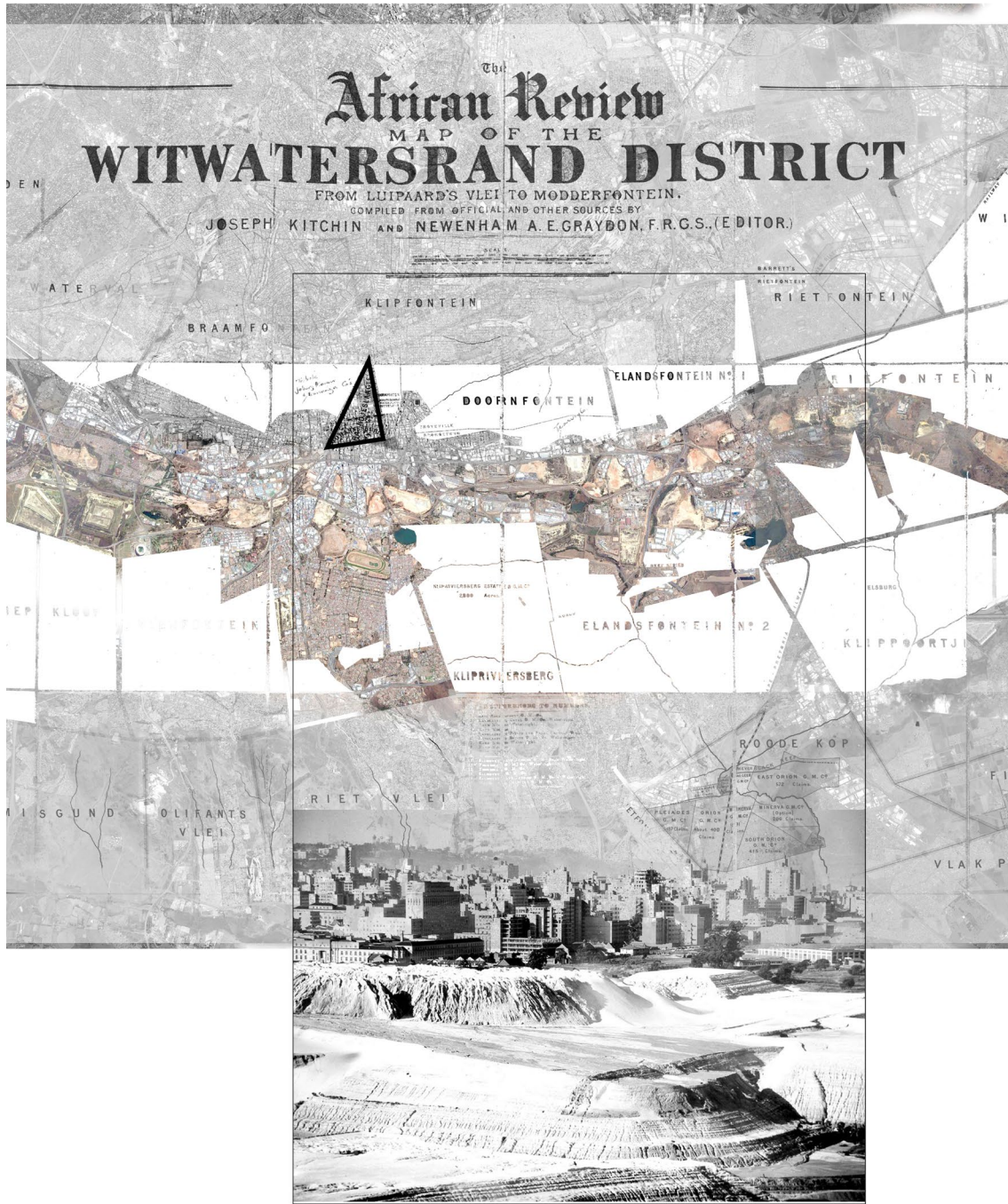
fig. 1.6. (author)
Johannesburg situated
within the Witwatersrand.
Escape into the *first
artificial landscape*.

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

**Johannesburg as an artificial nostalgic landscape to escape:**
the first artificial landscape.

The surfacing of Johannesburg as an 'instantaneous Victorian boom town' in the hinterland [6] of the Witwatersrand area is owed to a Mr. George Harrison's serendipitous discovery of the world's richest gold field on a farm in Langlaagte in 1886 — the event from which the narrative of Johannesburg always begins (Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt, 2013:20). Clive Chipkin, the pre-eminent architectural historian of Johannesburg (1929-), describes the rupture of this mining town not as an isolated event, but as forming part of a narrative of burgeoning New World cities which started populating the globe, instigated by the new Capitalist age which spawned in the nineteenth century, and the sudden insatiable demand for gold ingot by the world market brought about by financial speculation (Chipkin, 1993:4-5). The proliferation of these New World cities, he argues, had already been predicted by Marx's and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* in 1848:

> *The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere* (Marx and Engels, 1848:16).

Johannesburg erupted amongst towns such as San Francisco in California, Virginia City in Nevada, Ballarat in Australia and Kimberley in South Africa as part of a phenomenon compelled by the unbridled pursuit of wealth as confessed in a letter

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6 The definition of 'hinterland' is significant: in addition to describing a remote area away from the coast or banks of major rivers, it also denotes that which lies beyond what is visible or known (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.).

fig. 1.7.

Johannesburg as arrival city. Park Station, the Blue Room.

to the editor (c. 1893) by a prospector working on these gold fields: "We are none of use here for the benefit of our health. Money making and money grabbing is the alpha and omega of those resident on these fields" (ibid, 1993:9). A whole population of prospectors flooded to the Golden City with a frenzied gold fever and the desperate romanticism of attaining fortune.

Sarah Nuttall, an associate professor of literary and cultural studies at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, interprets the city of Johannesburg as an elusive metropolis "wrought from its surfaces and depths, from that which is apparent, on display, there to be seen...and that which lies underneath, hidden in part, heaving at times to the surface" (Nuttall and Mbembe, 2008:91). This city is defined by its artificial landscapes: mountains of prospected earth or chasms in the landscape, memorialising the industry of the past that still prevails beneath the surface. This artificiality is, however, representative of the bewilderment that drew the first prospectors to the virginal yet fortune bearing plains of the Witwatersrand, where the fantasy to escape through wealth and prosperity caused the eruption of a city — characteristically constructed around *Uitvalgrond*[7] — "without any of the constraints that usually bind other cities so tightly to their ancient past" (ibid., 2008:18). The sacrifice of assured provisions of natural resources (water,

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7 "Uitvalgrond" is a word used to define the original triangular-shaped area falling between the other farms, on which the 'town' was built. In the form of *Uitvalgrond* there resides uncertainty, perhaps most closely allied to the beginning of the city defined by speculation, randomness and escape, as manifestations of individual fantasy. *Uitvalgrond* abound in the city and define it by not only harboring these excesses, but insuring its proliferation (Kreutzfeldt and Malcomess, 2013:29).

sustenance and defence) in the pursuit of attaining wealth through the singular resource of gold only affirms the claim of finding and constructing escape.

It is clear why Johannesburg is often depicted as an arrival city, beckoning an immensity of immigrants to a utopian dream so clearly described by the number of lustrous pseudonyms it has been adorned with — *Egoli*, *El Dorado*, the Gilded city. The British novelist Jonathan Raban eloquently remarks in his book *Soft City*:

> *For every immigrant, the city is a different dream. He comes to it in flight - from persecution, from economic drought, from the stifling title-tattle of the home town - and enters it in wonder and hope[...]This continuous freshness of the city composes most of what is left of the city's power to persuade the immigrant that he has crossed a frontier into a new world* (Raban, 1988:40).

Compelled by suffering the immigrant flees to the city with a romanticized longing to escape or find sanctuary in the ceaseless nostalgic reproduction of new desires and exotic typologies in this new utopia, echoing Kafka's fable of *The Burrow — The Construction* endures.

> *All responsible building is a creative repetition of the past that is open to new possibilities. And so, again and again, colonies have sought to preserve the image of home in a new environment* (Harries, 2017:15).

Fantasy to escape sustains the reality of the city — its relentless fragmentation and reconfiguration — and the arrival city thus becomes host to a population where all its denizens are essentially *Uitlanders*, or foreigners [8], each enthralled by their own idealised fantasies and, with the city's material at their disposal, perpetuating "the large freedoms of the mining camp days [which] still determine the character of the city" (Meiring, Van der Waal and Grütter, 1986:139). The construction of the *first*

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8 Johannesburg, from its infancy, was a conglomeration of the early Voortrekker settlers, diverse cultures of overseas immigrants who flocked to the Witwatersrand, and the Indian and Black indigenous workforce who came as labourers (Meiring, Van der Waal and Grütter, 1986:139). Lindsay Bremner elaborates on this condition, in her book, *Writing the City into Being: Essays on Johannesburg 1998-2008* suggesting the categories of: the Colonist, Migrant Worker, Exile, Underground Operative, Mercenary and Expat in the essay, *Six Ways of Being a Stranger* (Bremner and Law-Viljoen, 2010:150).

**1886** JOHANNESBURG IS ESTABLISHED

SOUVENIR OF THE GOLDEN CITY'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

JOHANNESBURG 1886 TO 1936
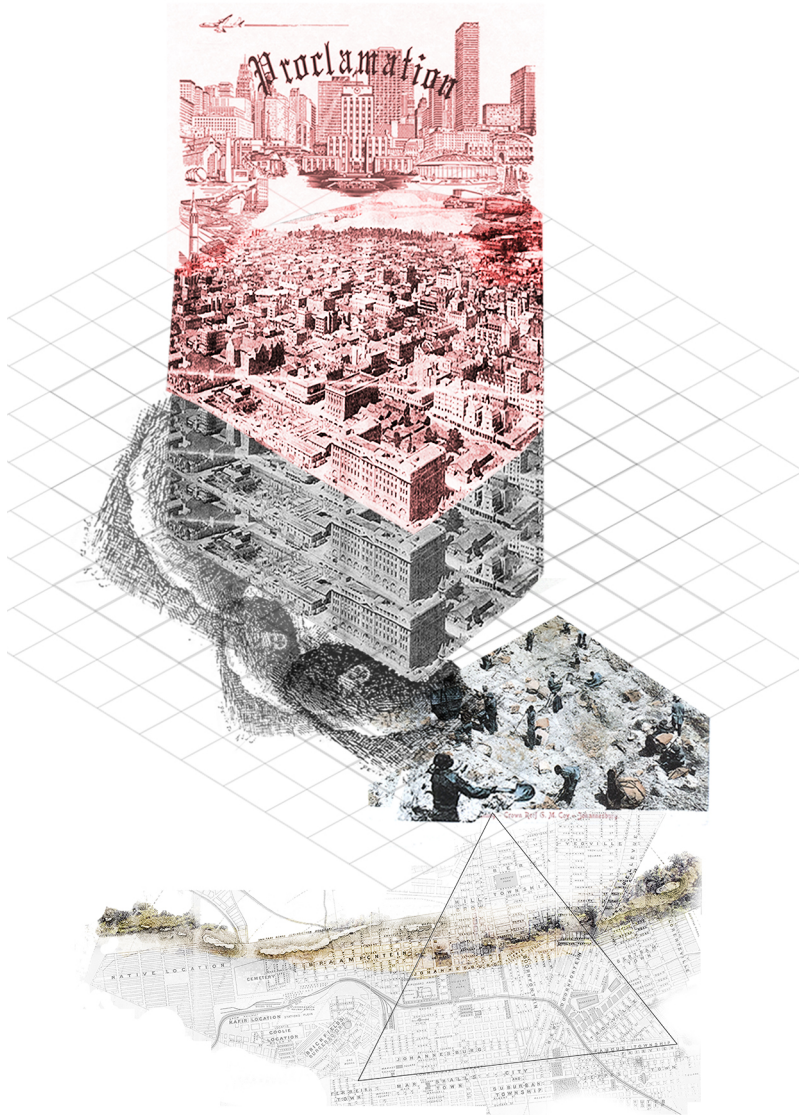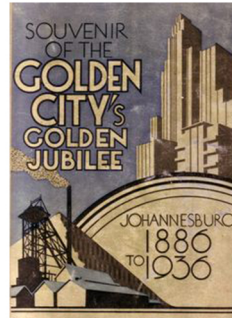
# 1 [ FANTASY OF ESCAPE ]

*Production of the* **FIRST ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE** *constructed from the desire to escape.*

# 2 [ NOSTALGIC REPRODUCTION OF THE KNOWN ]

*The city as artificial landscape is constructed nostalgically, a simulacra of the known. It is a morphology of desire "from which there is no escape, unless it offers that too"*
*- Delirious New York (Koolhaas, 1994: 293).*

# 3 [ NOSTALGIC REMNANTS OF ESCAPE ]

*Nostalgic remnants saturate the first artificial landscape as the desire to escape restlessly constructs the city and amnesia claims pockets of escape of that which is below and that which heaves to the surface.*

*artificial landscape* [9] as a new morphology is not only saturated with, but always finds its origin in the desire to escape [10] — the point from which, according to Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:11), the city "unconsciously projects, and literally constructs, its own image". Informing their reading of Johannesburg as the negative of *No Place*, by acknowledging the "possibility for the actual materialisation of 'place' within the ambiguities of the Utopian form as both impossibility and always deferred potential" (ibid., 2013:12).

### The *first artificial landscape* as nostalgic reproduction of the known.

This emerging mining town as an "instant city of strangers, aliens, and foreigners (uitlanders)" (Nuttall and Mbembe, 2008:17) was exposed to the excesses of the unadulterated fantasy of attaining escape, ensuring the vulnerability of its fabric and causing the city to be manifested in a peculiar manner of "ceaseless birth, destruction, and reconstruction of forms" with the aim to "distinguish nature and landscape… [testifying] to the presentness of the past while making way for the 'new'" (ibid., 2008:17). The book *Not No Place* conceptualises this manifestation of the desire to escape with a subtle nuance declaring that:

> *Johannesburg is a city defined by a nostalgia less for the past than the future. The image of the past is adapted to suit the city's image of itself in the present, itself a desire for its own accelerated future…The same characters are written over and over again, with a fixated nostalgia* (Kreutzfeldt and Malcomess, 2013:18-20).

Devoid of this fantasy to escape, the nostalgic city does not and would not exist. Escape through artificial nostalgic reproduction of the familiar is the city's dominant narrative. The French sociologist, philosopher and cultural theorist, Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) declared: "Simulation is master, and nostalgia, the phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials, alone remains" positioning nostalgia as a defining

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9 The creation of the  first artificial landscape coincides with Baudrillard's description of the Borges fable in which cartographers of a fictional Empire creates a map from its territory which is so detailed and vast that it obscures the real Empire, causing its collapse into ruin and creating the desert of the real beneath. "Simulation [artificiality] is no longer that of that of a territory [...] it is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard, 2014:1).

10 The romanticized legacy of the gold rush remains evident in the naming of South Africa's currency: "Rand" being an abbreviation of the term "Witwatersrand", perhaps epitomising this relation between fantasy and landscape. This linguistic acknowledgement also elevates the mythical status of Johannesburg from other cities in South Africa.

fig. 1.8. (author) An artificial nostalgic landscape for escape.

BRIXTON CEMETERY

PLAN
OF
JOHANNESBURG
AND
SUBURBS.
1897.
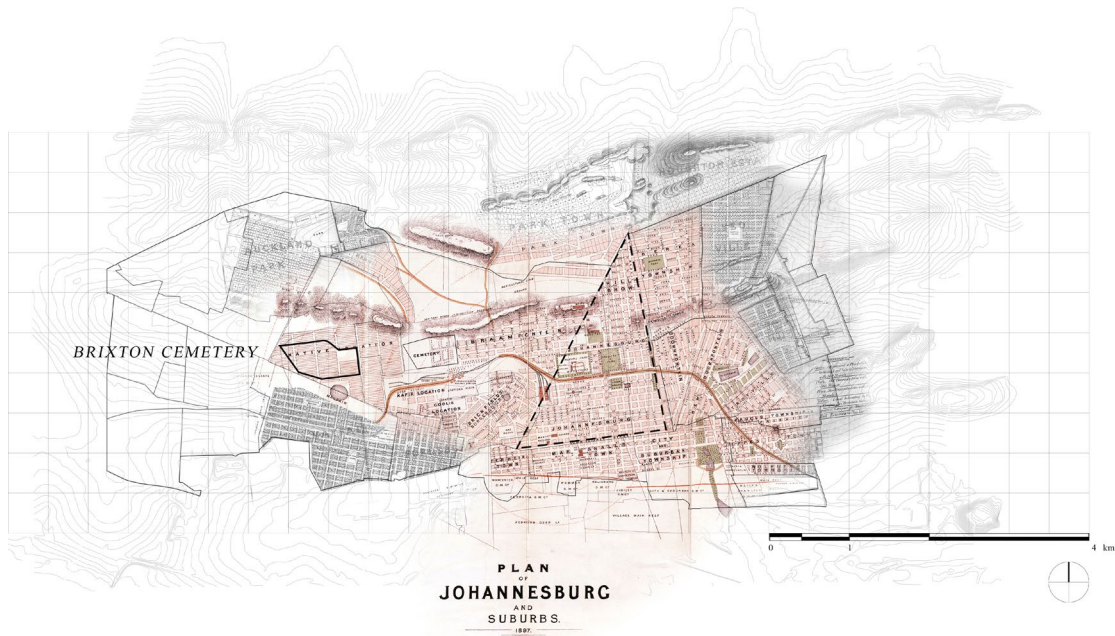
fig. 1.9. (author)
*Uitvalgrond* in early
Johannesburg.

characteristic of postmodern, hyperreal society. One can assert a stark parallel between nostalgia and escape from this insight, or rather argue nostalgia to be *the* contemporary manifestation of escape.

The self-reflective condition of nostalgia reveals itself, even under minimal observation, in the gradual transmutation of the natural landscape into the city and its architecture as a new artificial landscape for escape. Nostalgia, thus understood as a manifestation of escape from of entrapment, is visible, perhaps clearest, in the residual fabric and nostalgic artificiality of the landscapes that characterise Johannesburg: its mountainous mine dumps, the vestiges of a synthetic European forest still suffused with houses demonstrating "slavish mimicry of overseas taste" (Chipkin, 1993:10), nationalistic art-deco impulses that still trace the facades of streets, and the imaginative reconstruction of the city's formation even in its theme parks — allusions to the desire to escape through nostalgic reproduction of the known. Baudrillard stated "[w]hen the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning". The city is defined by nostalgic artificiality as a manifestation of the desire for escape, i.e., to that which is not real. A *first artificial landscape* is constructed to shroud the chaos of the real (Poster, 2001:174).

## Escape inherent in the city's artificial nostalgic nature.

The evidence of the city as escape through the *first artificial landscape* is further accentuated by Johannesburg being classified as an urban forest (spuriously captured in the public imagination as being the largest existing artefact of its kind) (Jhbcityparks.com, 2007) [11]. The legacy of the forest as artificial landscape existing from the inception of the city is apparent in the verdurous outlandish trees which cover the suburbs, although the formation of Parktown Ridge, Belgravia, The Wilds (briefly elaborated on in Appendix A) and, particularly, the creation of the city's cemeteries (originally intended as urban gardens to escape from the city), is regarded as significant events that epitomise its artificiality [12].

## Artificial natures of Johannesburg:

Parktown Ridge as artificial forest:

Parktown Ridge can be identified as an *artificial forest*, a resultant fragment of the fir and pine plantations originally planted by the Braamfontein Co. to satisfy the need for construction timber during the highly industrialized era of Johannesburg, stretching from the late nineteenth century into the middle decades of the next century. These plantations were regarded as forests and offered escape from the toil and mundanity of the burgeoning city.

Belgravia as nostalgic forest:

Belgravia, Yeoville and Parktown were established in the early years of Johannesburg as sanitariums for those who not only made their fortunes from the city, but in doing so garnered political influence. These suburbs were established to the north, among the new plantations which already offered escape and repose, however, the nostalgic character of this artificiality is evident in the longing to recreate the foreign milieus

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11 According to a survey published by the city's park department this forest hosts an estimated 1.2 million trees within parks and streets and a further 4.8 million trees in gardens (the majority not being indigenous species), while a further investment of R44-million has been contributed to the parks department for its expansion, stating the significance of the forest in remediating pollution, improving habitability of the city, fostering wildlife and increase property value. This further underscores the necessity to reanimate existing parks.

12 The construction of this forest represented a characteristic "integral to early modern articulations of urban and rural landscape [which] was the construct of the three natures—the 'first nature' of wilderness, the 'second nature' of cultivation, and the symbolic, artificial 'third nature' of the garden" (Foster, 2012:45)

JOHANNESBURG.          A Glimpse of the Sachsenwald (Hermann Eckstein-Park).
No. 3129.   R. O. Füsslein, Johannesburg. P. O. B. 6345.

fig. 1.10. Old postcard of
Parktown Ridge.



fig. 1.11. Photo of the
Wilds.



fig. 1.12. Old postcard of
Belgravia.

from where these individuals immigrated, through the import of those local arboreal species. This nostalgic reimagination was a privilege held by the opulent to further escape the relentless industry and pollutions of the city, deepened now by enticing the imagination. The creation of these landscapes further represented mastery over "wild, dark Africa" to foreign visitors who were hosted in these ostentatious estates flocking with agendas of economic and political investment.

### The Wilds as Third Nature:

The Wilds is a nature reserve established in 1937, shortly after the Empire Exhibition (which celebrated the city's golden jubilee) closed and the plants from the exhibition's rockery were transferred to a donated piece of land south of Yeoville. Ironically described as a nature reserve, The Wilds is a reconstruction of an already artificially created nature (Foster, 2012:45) intended to facilitate the dweller's escape through exhibiting a recreated nature (further discussed in the typological development of the conservatory in the theory section).

### Braamfontein Cemetery as Paradisiacal escape:

From its nascence the mining town's relentless expanse brought with it insufferable affliction creating a dire need for burial ground. Paralleling the town's rapid expanse these spaces, however, also provided  havens of escape from the industry and toil of the everyday. While Braamfontein cemetery (established in 1888) was one of the first spaces to provide such sanctuary it further acted as a bridging between the sacred and profane, clearly manifested in the tympanum both guarding the entrance and creating a portal to the sublime, an otherness further embodied in the forest:

> *Ever since ancient times, in pagan cults as in classical mythology, trees have been viewed and represented as symbols of power both human and divine. As gigantic elements that link the earth to the sky and the past to the future, they appear to embody ideals of transcendence [...] When they gather in forests — often sacred, sometimes haunted — they are most frequently described in terms full of awe* [...] *they have been incarnations of the generative force of the cosmos* (Pacini, 2007:1).

1_ Braamfontein cemetery (1888)
2_ Brixton cemetery (1908)
3_ Wespark cemetery (1942)



Cemetery Avenue     JOHANNESBURG



PLAN
OF
JOHANNESBURG
AND
SUBURBS.
1897.

1_    Braamfontein cemetery (1888)
2_    Brixton cemetery (1908)
3     Wespark cemetery (1942)

### Johannesburg's artificial nostalgic remnants / *Uitvalgrond.*

fig. 1.13. Old postcard of Braamfontein cemetery.

The *first artificial landscape* as a manifestation of escape is thus created from a binary which is essentially divergent and, again, aptly demonstrated in *The Burrow*. The familiarity of nostalgia which incessantly regenerates the old models (the Afrikaans word *verbeelding* [13] aptly describes the working of this mechanism when interpreted from its root in *verbeeld*, and will be developed throughout the dissertation), as well as that which is novel, is produced from the old when imagination (*verbeelding*) engages the unknown through fantasy . This constitutes the intimate imaginative process by which new typologies emerge, or the amnesic is revived through reimagination. In his 1994 thesis, *Delirious New York* [14], the Dutch architect, architectural theorist and urbanist Rem Koolhaas (1944-) deliberates on this theme in describing the fantasy of Manhattan:

> [...] *continuous reenactment of the same subconscious themes in ever new reincarnations and on inarticulateness systematically cultivated in order to operate more effectively can never last longer than a single generation[...] But such a method of preservation ensures its own extinction* (Koolhaas, 1994:285).

This continuous reenactment is manifested in Johannesburg's restless metamorphosis as *first artificial landscape*. It is from this point that Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:63) recognise the significance of the vulnerability of the artificial landscape's geometric fragmentation and saturation with the fantasy of escape. Appropriating the term, "*Uitvalgrond*", the Afrikaans word assigned to the triangular piece of surplus ground around which the mining town formed, they posit that the disconfigured geometry of this surface not only accommodates this narrative, but imbues itself into the city as it's creation myth. The looseness [15] of *Uitvalgrond*, not only as morphological structuring

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13 *"Verbeeld-ing"* describes image, memory or model (interpreted in the context of Brixton cemetery as both remnant and more specifically revenant), while "*verbeelding*" describes imagination (reverie).

14 *Delirious New York* is a retroactive manifesto for Manhattan written by Koolhaas in which he argues how Manhattan, as a mythical laboratory, invented a revolutionary lifestyle he describes as the 'Culture of Congestion'.

fig. 1.14. (author) Johannesburg's artificial natures.

15 In her book, *Imagining the Edgy City: Writing, Performing, and Building Johannesburg* (2013:3), Loren Kruger develops this idea of looseness stating: "Beyond the expression of subjective edginess, the term "edgy city" describes the objective layout of oddly shaped and unevenly developed districts, an urban form that has defined the city from the start. Johannesburg's growth and slump through cycles of spec-ulation and retreat over unevenly joined parcels of real estate has always eluded the order of a rational street grid" (Kruger, 2013:3).
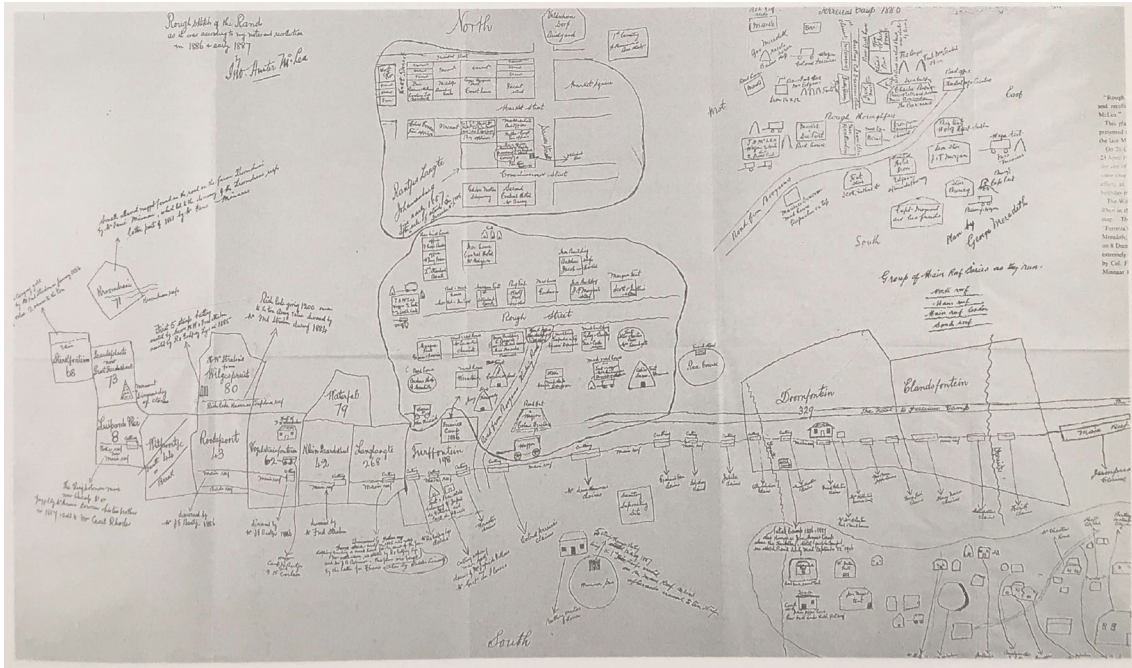
fig. 1.15. Origin of *Uitvalgrond*: first map of the erupting town.



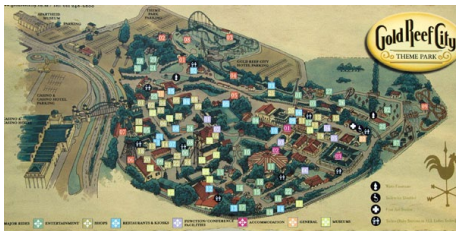fig. 1.16. Johannesburg as *second artificial landscape.*

fig. 1.17. Map of Gold Reef City.

element (Foster, 2012:44), but also as mythological metaphor of the *first artificial landscape*, permeates the city. On every scale, the city thrives on the proliferation of *Uitvalgrond*. The dominance of this narrative/metaphor invents the reality of the city and sustains its myth, making the city's fabric disconfigurable and fertile to reinvention or 'reenactment', but also acutely susceptible to cultural amnesia or 'extinction' as the lived memories which created these artificial artefacts expire, and thus the formation of urban blight (Kruger, 2013:1) witnessed in the artificiality of the city's surface: new mountains in the form of mining dumps, synthetic European forests, Neoclassical, Victorian, Art Deco and Modernist artefacts and romanticized simulacra of the old city such as Gold Reef City. These anachronistic aspects of the city saturate the surface and the subterranean [16], accumulating as nostalgic remnants, distinctly discernable in Brixton's cemetery.

Johannesburg erupted as a fantasy of escape promised by wealth. It is a nostalgic landscape (generated by an arrival culture of immigrants). It longs for escape. Its morphologies are artificial, its landscapes are nostalgic or residual. *Artificial landscapes* frame the reality of the city, they are simultaneously vulnerable to amnesia of cultural memory (with the erasure/loss of the desires that functioned to create them) and a fertile bed for imagination and the propagation thereof. This susceptibility is transposed to the dweller. Artifice circumscribes the dweller's movement and mobility, it offers momentary bliss/escape, it is limited. Artifice, however, also sustains the experience of intimacy with the city — the fantasy of escape here not only sustains the reality of the city defined by previous constructions of this fantasy, but eventually transcends this physicality by the acceptance of its inherent bifold vulnerability.

Imagination is not escape. It is a loosening of the known and a revelation of and engagement with the unknown that comes about when accepting the model, and reimagining its image. Nostalgic desire uses the image to compel imagination, thus opening a means of intimate, engaged experience through this process of redefinition and creation.

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16 Referring here to urban characters such as the old Victorian Park Station and Blue Room, the burnt down Postal Station in Rissik street and the discovery of the postal network below binding it to the station. Gold Reef City as a hyper-real (Baudrillard describing disney world) geographic reconstruction of the mining town's bewilderment, charted cartographically in an escaped realm where fantasy is monetized, is perhaps the most poignantly lucid proponent of nostalgic materiality, echoing the construction of the city as "a vast mining encampment of prefabricated components [which] sprang up on the triangular *uitvalgrond*…[where] The cycles of Johannesburg's continual building and re-building had begun" (Chipkin, 1993:6)

fig. 1.18. (author) Sacred divisions. Graves in Brixton cemetery layed out discordantly, forming denominational sections and tensions.

# Research intentions

Artificiality, as a manifestation of the pursuit of escape, saturates the city and landscapes of Johannesburg. It is the narrative from which the city spawned, constructs and relentlessly perpetuates itself. The *first artificial landscape* is the materialization of escape, the synthetic nostalgic reproduction of the known. *Hinterland* situates itself in the condition of amnesia which inadvertently reclaims the artificial nostalgic material constructed from the dweller's the desire of escape. Brixton cemetery epitomizes the *first artificial landscape*, where escape has manifested in a new synthetic granite morphology as well as a simulacral forest. The cemetery and its forest exists, firstly, to escape from the mundanity and drudgery induced by the city and the afflictions which haunted the city during its nascence. It is an isolating forest within the city, a sanctuary which, tellingly, consists only of exotic species of European, American and Australian trees imported by immigrants who, overcome with an acute nostalgia, attempted to reconstruct the familiarity and comfort found in memories of their origins. Escape is, secondly, represented in memorialization of the deceased, an attempted escape of death alleviating those remaining from a constant confrontation with the inevitability of death. Thirdly, the cemetery represents the desire to escape the suffering pervading the chaos of *the real*, attained through a simulacral reconstruction of Paradise. The forest as Paradise exists as an *axis mundi* (a device similar to the tombstones and mausolea scattered over the cemetery's surface) which escapes the banality of the city by creating a portal to a metaphysical, blissful, otherness.

Evading, rather than encountering, the unknown, through artificial nostalgic reproduction of the known, has, however, caused the desacralization of the cemetery, causing its typological metamorphosis into a surface of remnants and a forest of unknowns. This has occurred through amnesia of lived memory of those buried there as the cemetery has been passive from the 1960's. This loss of significance has resulted in the forest claiming the cemetery's material, leaving it impenetrable to the dweller and subsequently instigating nefarious occupation. Amnesia, through synthetic nostalgic reproduction, has made the cemetery physically and imaginatively impenetrable. The cemetery is a nostalgic remnant, a hinterland, existing in the realm beyond the known. It is the awareness of this inevitability of amnesia in which *Hinterland* situates itself by re-imaginatively occupying the amnesic gap encountered in Brixton cemetery as *first artificial landscape*. The architectural in(ter)vention functions to deconstruct and reimagine its artificiality to reanimate the cemetery as nostalgic

remnant. Reimagination of the artificial is accomplished through the in(ter)vention of a *second artificial landscape*.

The *first artificial landscape* is reanimated through the dweller's reimagination of its artificiality, through the voluntary encounter with the unknown which pervades the cemetery and the forest, both in the form of physical Death, artificial death (nostalgic promulgation of the known), and amnesic death (through memorialization and desacralization). The reimagination of the *first artificial landscape* is provoked through the (synthetic) architectural insertion, a *second artificial landscape* manifested as a *Bioluminescent Conservatory* (cultivating a collection of synthetic botany) reanimating the forest, and a columbarium as a response to the cemetery's dire need to expand its capacity for burial. This intervention, however, allows the dweller to engage, rather than escape, the terror of the unknown.

The encounter with the unknown is, furthermore, represented by the archetype of the mythologically forest. *The Forest* represents a chaotic realm of unknowns and obscurities confronting the dweller (the archetypal hero) upon entering. Through the confrontation with unknowns constituting *the real*, these unknowns are made less intimidating and abstract, and gradually alleviates the dweller from the desire to escape, which, as in Kafka's fable of the burrow, only results in an insidious exacerbation of the terror presented by unknowns (which cause the creature's demise). The *second artificial landscape* therefore induces the potential for an imaginative reanimation of the cemetery through this intimation experienced by the dweller when confronted by the unknowns inherent in artificiality.

A *third intimate landscape* is therefore realised by means of teasing the dweller's imagination to reimagine (synaesthesia) the nostalgic remnant in the *first artificial landscape*, within the dominant narrative of escape from which the city is artificially constructed. The cemetery is reanimated by reconfiguring and mechanizing the desire for escape to engage the unfamiliar, fostering a process in which imagination engages death as both the reality of the cemetery, but more so, as a process of reimaginative death allowing the reenchantment of this reality through *La Petite Mort* or "little death" described by Roland Barthes.

# Architectural intentions

1_ **Remnants** in the *first artificial landscape*.
Understanding the nostalgic remnants dormant in the fabric of Johannesburg as an *artificial landscape* produced by the desire to escape the terror of the unknown. The production of the *first artificial landscape* is thus recognised as a result of nostalgic reproduction of the known.

2_ Amnesia in the *first artificial landscape*.
Recognising that the nostalgic production of the known is not only a futile endeavor to escape the unknown, but that it exacerbates the terror of thereof. The *first artificial landscape* is thus saturated with amnesic pockets (the loss of individuals' nostalgia from which it was created) in suspended animation due to a resistance to imaginative engagement - the encounter with  Death/death - as a consequence of this nostalgia for escape. Death pervades Brixton cemetery both physically but also metaphorically, recognised in the amnesia of the fantasy of the cemetery as a Paradisiacal forest and loss of lived memory of those buried there. The impenetrability of this nostalgia is further exacerbated by the deferral of imaginative potentiality through memorialization.

3_ **Revenants** from the *second artificial landscape*.
Understanding the imaginative potentiality of encountering, rather than escaping, the unknown both inherent in artificiality (as a nostalgic reproduction to escape the terror of the unknown) as well as the archetypal mythological forest, through Death/death. Further investigating how Architecture, as a *second artificial landscape* can internalize and reimagine these two conditions encountered in Brixton cemetery existing as a nostalgic remnant, to reanimate the cemetery and the forest. This is accomplished by mechanizing artificiality latent in the cemetery and forest by producing negatives of these conditions manifested as the *second artificial landscape*.

4_ **Reveries** in the *third intimate landscape*
Understanding how the dweller's reimagination of the cemetery, through the intimate encounter of Death/death as the physical and mythological unknown, revives the cemetery as a *third intimate landscape*, and allows autonomy of dweller over the architecture.

5_ The reimaginative translation of artificiality found in the narrative of escape into an architectural language, through the production of negatives of conditions encountered in Brixton cemetery. Developing this language creates a framework from which architecture can be produced as an emphatic response to the artificial and amnesic conditions inherent in the cemetery. This language permeates the architectural response on the level of conceptualization, program, formgiving, materiality, construction, detailing, maintenance and its inevitable ruination. This language itself becomes an investigation ofthrough the production of negatives of conditions encountered in Brixton cemetery. Developing this language creates a framework from which architecture can be produced as an emphatic response to the artificial and amnesic conditions inherent in the cemetery. This language permeates the architectural response on the level of conceptualization, program, formgiving, materiality, construction, detailing, maintenance and its inevitable ruination. This language itself becomes an investigation of the architecture's relation to death, imagination and temporality, allowing the architecture to become autonomous through its relation to Death/death, sustaining both its significance within the cemetery as well as that of the cemetery itself sustaining both its significance within the cemetery as well as that of the cemetery itself.

## Research methodology:

The task of this investigation is to uncover both the real (profane) and the elusive (sacred) characteristics and conditions which determines (and predetermined) Brixton cemetery and its immediate context, i.e., the nostalgic fantasies from which it was created. These conditions are mapped, analysed, synthesised and conveyed, however, always tethered to the notions of escape and artificiality. These conditions are dialectical: ephemerality (mortality) and perpetuity (immortality), sublimity and banality, mundaneness and uncanny, passage and passing, horizontality and verticality, sacred and profane, familiars and exotics. Furthermore, these conditions are mapped in terms of the existing and historical, edges, surfaces, monuments and memorials, presences and voids (negatives) as spatial informants that will articulate architecture. The intention is to reveal points of significance and sensitivity where fantasy can act as an oblique between these dialectics to engage imagination. This function of fantasy and imagination is evident in Brixton cemetery; the existence of cemeteries indicates the desire for (spatial) reimagination.

Understanding these evanescent parameters is critical to the project. Although these parameters diverge from the familiar scales and modes of investigation, it is necessary to establish a relation to the prevalent and prevailing narratives that underpin the morphologies of the city, rather than investigating and fixating on the physical manifestation of those morphologies which exist in flux, temperament and amnesia, which currently, and inevitably, influence the cemetery unpredictably. Fantasy, here, is more constant than fabric.

The project will then be developed to gain further insight into the intimate interface between dweller and architecture acknowledging that escape constructs and defines the city through artificiality and imagination. Programmatic dismantling and reimagination of the characteristics of the conservatory and columbarium, through typological reconfiguration and conceptualisation, further informs the creation of an architectural language necessary for this reimaginative intervention.

### Research is conducted through:

1_ Qualitative and quantitative field research through site visits and mapping exercises,
2_ Literature studies of:

a) influences of existing, historical and projected conditions in the macro and micro context relevant to the site,
b) historical and contemporary discourses on the mythology and philosophy of escape and the production of artificiality, with special attention paid to negatives,
c) historical and contemporary discourses in art, pertaining to memory, artificiality, and amnesia,
d) historical and contemporary discourses on the mythology and philosophy of conservatories,
e) relevant architectural, philosophical and psychoanalytical discourses to inform and guide theoretical and conceptual arguments,

3_ Precedent studies drawn from art and architectural discourses to investigate the significance and potentialities of artificiality, to underpin and develop theoretical and conceptual thinking. This is done in order to develop an architectural language in relation to contextual narratives, physical context, programme, spatiality, materiality, tectonics, construction and maintanance, pertaining to the study of memory, amnesia and imagination.
4_ The achievement of the thesis will not only be in the argument, but will furthermore attempt to derive its value from volume generated through the application of this reimaginative process (as a practical demonstration of the effect of the theoretical discourse). This allows the author to engage unknowns inherent in the artificiality of his gained architectural knowledge and understanding of its language. A realm of intimation is thus created for the author, existing between the architectural process and product, and the experience of undertaking the dissertation in the pursuit of expanding knowledge.