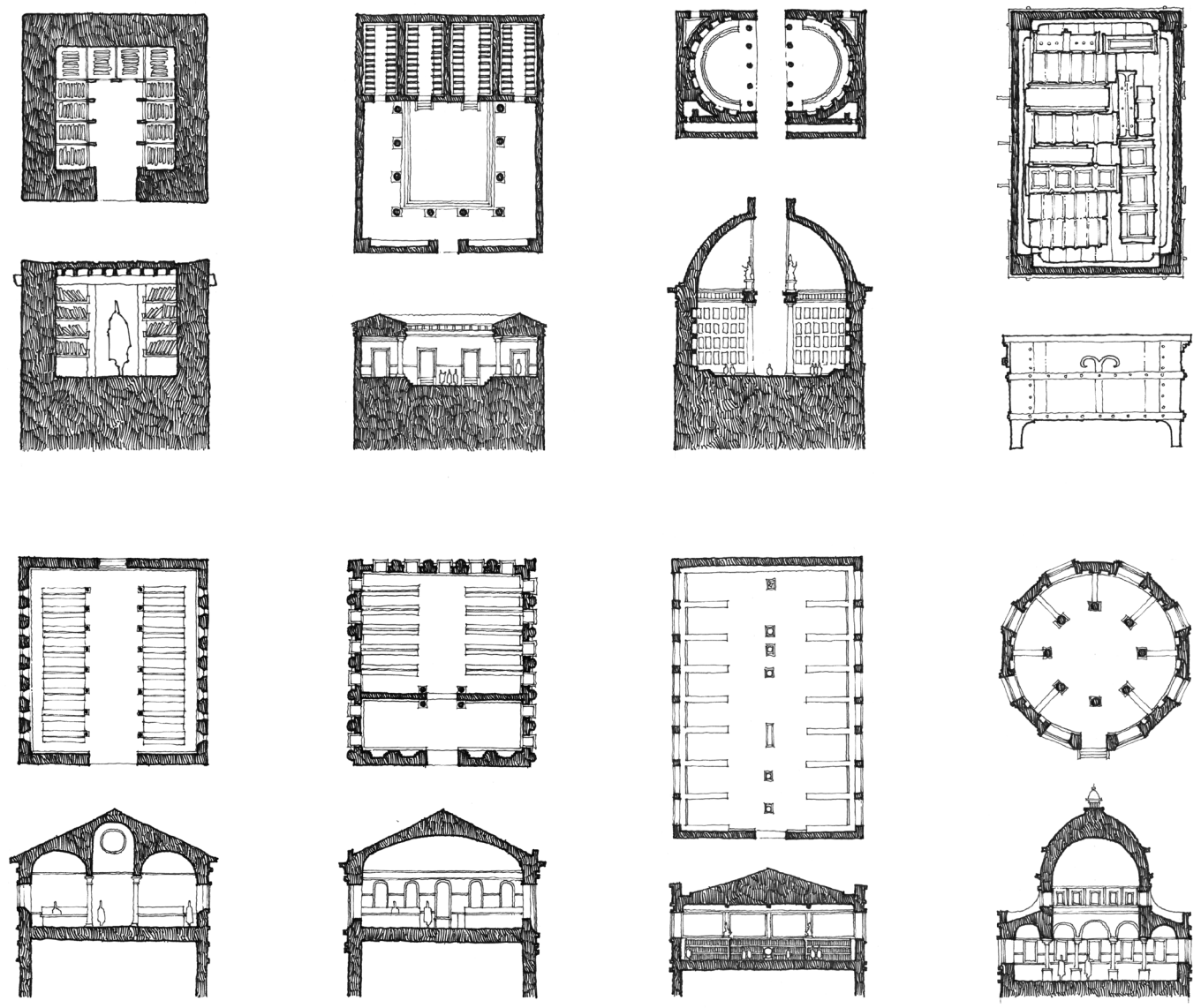

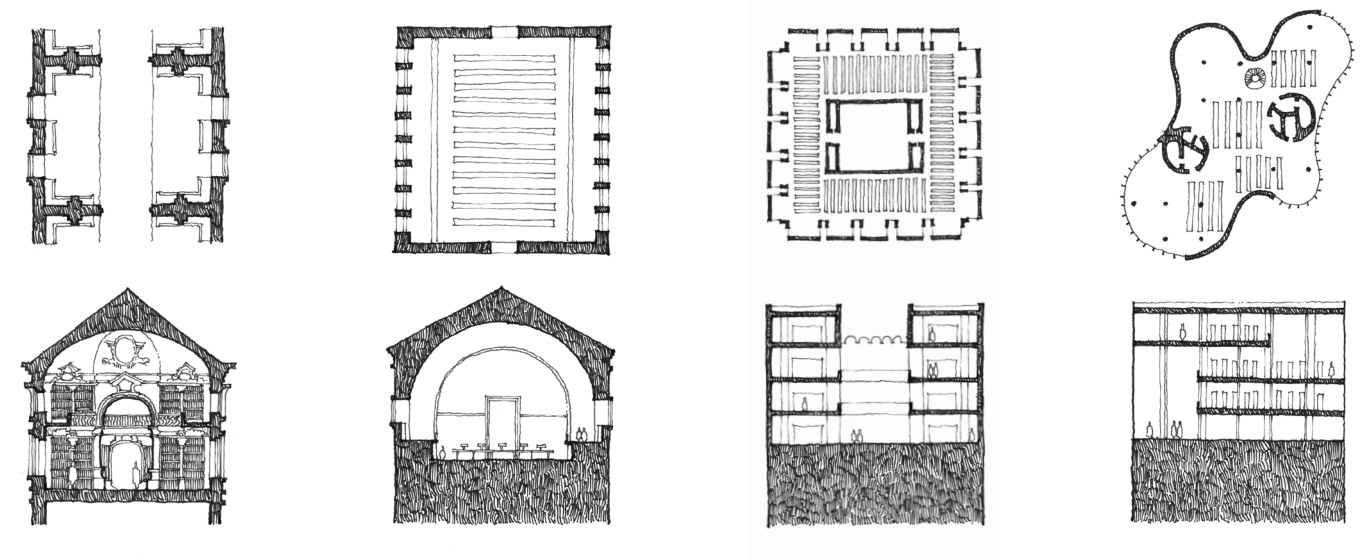

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RESEARCH FIELD:

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- University of Pretoria 2019

PROGRAMME:

Community library

CLIENT:

City of Tshwane

SITE NAME:

The Venning Rose Park

SITE LOCATION:

Erf 1528 - Arcadia
Bounded by Pretorius, Francis Baard (previously Schoeman), Eastwood and Farenden Streets
Arcadia, Pretoria, Gauteng

COORDINATES:

25°44'47.06"S
28°13'16.24"E

THE NAME OF THE ROSE

Addressing institutional placelessness through the design of a new Arcadian public library

ABSTRACT:

A placelessness defines the architectural expression of our public institutions; the sterile, the predictable and the generic characterise the experience of spaces that are meant to celebrate the identity and the ideals of a society. A pervasive and global condition helps contribute to the contemporary urban condition of sensory impoverishment and existential homelessness. As a means of addressing this condition of institutional placelessness, this dissertation proposes the design of a new community library in Venning Park, Arcadia. Through a celebration of the typical and essential character of the library type along with the critical application of June Jordaan's place-making triad, this new library offers an alternative to contemporary architectural trends that generate placeless institutions and erode the relevance and autonomy of the public library.

KEY WORDS:

Institutional architecture,
Public Library, Placelessness,
Place, Order, the Typical

“ WHOEVER MARRIES
THE SPIRIT OF THIS AGE
WILL FIND HIMSELF A
WIDOWER IN THE NEXT. ”

- The Reverend William Ralph Inge

DEDICATED TO
MY PARENTS

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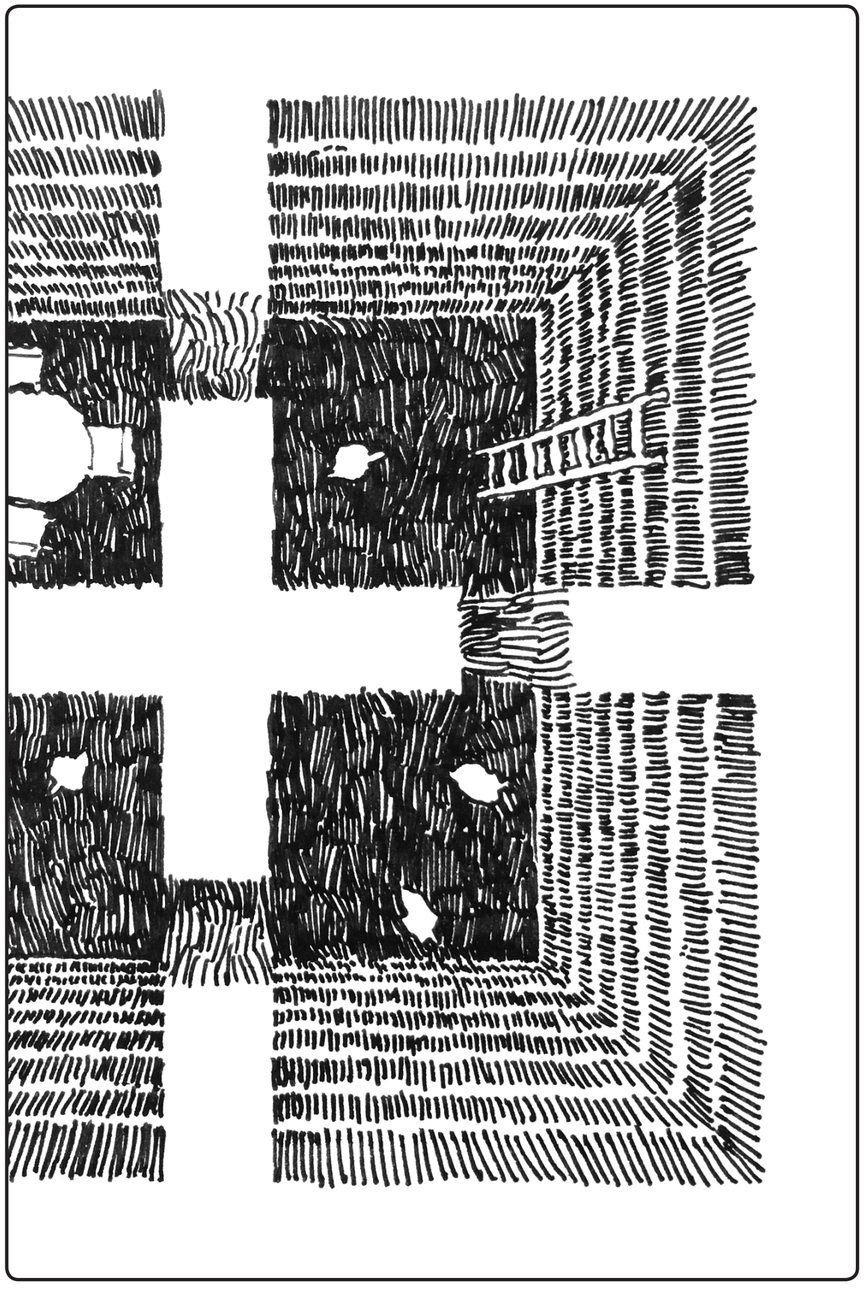
CHAPTER

01

AN EXISTENTIAL HOMELESSNESS

Introducing the issue of institutional placelessness and the necessity for an alternative.



1.1

A GLOBAL CONDITION

A placelessness defines the architectural expression of our public institutions; the sterile, the predictable and the generic characterise the experience of spaces that are meant to celebrate the identity and the ideals of a society. A pervasive and global condition helps contribute to the contemporary urban condition of sensory impoverishment and existential homelessness. The placelessness of our institutions is one of expansive, flat ceilings made up of endlessly repeating, modular panels that house coldly glowing fluorescent tubes. It is an architecture of flatness, bounded by unvaried, unarticulated and anonymous materials. Uncompromisingly utilitarian, standardised fittings and furnishings are so pervasive and ubiquitous that they have come to characterise the identity of not only our institutions but our entire built environment. These 'non-places' aggregate into the placeless geographies that define our everyday environments, conditioning our experiences and memories of the world around us.

1.2

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can the architecture of new civic institutions be designed so as to provide a meaningful alternative to contemporary architectural trends that have propagated and cemented a condition of institutional placelessness?

1.3

DISSERTATION STATEMENT

In order to establish itself as a place, the contemporary public library needs to embrace its existing, essential role and character rather than attempt to redefine itself according to shifting trends.

1.4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 - UNDERSTANDING PLACELESSNESS

By critically analysing three local examples of institutional placelessness, a deeper understanding of the condition and its architectural manifestations will be gained in order to propose a meaningful architectural alternative.

1.4.2 - INFORMING THE CREATION OF PLACE

In order to effectively inform the creation of place, contemporary theory surrounding the notion of place will be interrogated. Along with this investigation into select literature on the subject, a synthesis of the ideas of several seminal phenomenologists in the form of June Jordaan's place-making triad will be critically applied and tested as a framework with which to inform and guide the creation of architectural place.

1.4.3 - EMBRACING THE CHARACTER OF THE LIBRARY

The public library has been chosen as the ideal programme for investigation to address the issue of institutional placelessness. In order to understand its role in creating place, the essential character of the library type will be unpacked through a study of literature regarding its historical development, its contemporary civic role and any architectural traditions related to its design.

1.4.4 - EXPERIENCING AND UNDERSTANDING SITE

A combination of a study into the history of the site along with a landing visit to record initial experiences and observations of the site and surrounds will be undertaken as a means of rooting the library to its context and contributing to the surrounding character of place.

1.4.5 - CASE STUDIES AND CONTRARY ARGUMENTS

To ensure a rigorous argument and sound architectural manifestation, a series of case studies that both reinforce and contest the architectural approach taken by this study will be critically analysed and situated throughout the document where appropriate.