

Reflecting on the journey

7 Reflection

The project initially set out to investigate the current antagonistic relationship between the natural and the industrial in Silverton. Through the analysis of this relationship, it was revealed that a layered, solution was needed that engaged with the site, context and culture of Silverton on multiple levels and in multiple areas. The project became more than a mere physical expression of the relationship between nature and industry, instead beginning to question the core rituals and processes that define, create and articulate industrial and natural spaces in Silverton.

Conceptual and theoretical reflection

The idiosyncratic architectural approach and theoretical lenses contextualising this project was developed as part of the process of architectural design. As Silverton is deceptively diverse and complex, a combination of theories, each exploring key aspect of Silverton, forming a framework was deemed appropriate, allowing the architectural approach to mirror the complexity of the context.

In the theoretical research and projection phase, regenerative theory, non-modern theory and weak theory were identified as standalone and separate theories, each informing an aspect of the project on a different scale, namely: regenerative theory informing the broader concept and urban systems and responses, non-modern theory outlining the architectural approach and lastly, weak theory defining the spatial intent and the manner in which the user would interact with the space.

However, it quickly became clear that the theories were never meant to be completely separate and standalone but that the important aspects of the theories lie in the confluences between each theory where the liminal space was created. Further investigations into the implications of the liminality between the theories added richness and added layers and depth that could be explored in the architectural manifestation of this project.

As a reflection on the research and design methodology, a pattern emerges from the process that was followed, namely: with the identification of the site, problems were explored with possible solutions, however, those solutions would later prove to be inappropriate and had to be reconsidered. This cycle would be repeated until enough depth and richness were uncovered that could inform an appropriate solution to the problem, and the site and context.

Design and technology iterations and conclusions

The project set out to establish physical links and connections to the various layers surrounding the chosen site, namely: the Silverton Cemetery, the Moreleta Spruit, the industries of Silverton and the site itself. Relating and connecting these seemingly disparate layers of the site and the context with a mediating and liminal element of the architectural manifestation. This further allowed the architectural and programmatic explorations to continue the vein of connecting incompatible processes and rituals with a mediating liminal element, seen in the overlapping two main programmes of resomation and a leather dyeing facility mediated with the architecture.

The architectural and technological approach, informed by regenerative theory, non-modern theory and weak theory, became a process of layering, overlapping, disjointing and elongating the programmes and spaces in the architecture, developing the resultant design decisions.

Contribution to the architectural discourse

This architectural project contributes to the wider architectural discourse by questioning and exploring the relationship of nature and industry through the lens of liminality investigating the relationship between the profane and the sacred. This relationship between nature and industry is present in most, if not all, industrial areas of

South Africa where the pressures of environmental sustainability and regenerative design is not yet explored or integrated.

This project seeks to highlight that this relationship can be approached from more than one perspective and that the spatial and ritual/process driven perspective proposed in this project is just one of the myriads of ways. Although the outlined design, architectural and technology methodology is incredibly specific to this particular site and context, lessons can be learned to apply and inform other design projects of similar complexity and scope in the future.

Observing, refining and learning from the systems and the processes found on the site and in the context, a key aspect of regenerative theory, serves as a valuable method to start understanding the site and the problems that the project will deal with. This allows the designer to start with the known problems and solutions of the project and slowly delve into the more complex and, essentially, unknown problems and solutions.

Complex problems with multiple shareholder and implications, such as the relationship between nature and industry, cannot be solved with singular gestures and perspectives. In the tangential approach of this project, multiple perspectives are considered and incorporated, leading to a richer project with a greater understanding of the problems it is dealing with.

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