ART OF IDEOLOGY

A Denkmal Against the A-political

by
E.G. van Wyk

Project Details

Dissertation Title:	Art of Ideology: A denkmal Against the A-Political
Submitted by:	Elmar Gerbrand van Wyk
Student Number:	15077196
Course Co-ordinator:	Arthur Barker
Study Leader:	Johan Swart
Research Field:	Memory, Legacy and Identity
Site Description:	Capitol Theatre, Pretoria CBD
Address:	Parliament St, Pretoria Central, Pretoria, 0002
Site Coördinates:	25° 44' 50.10" S 28°11'13.23"
Program:	Political Media Printing Works
Client:	University of Pretoria and the Capitol Arts Revolution
Theoretical Premise:	Architecture's Political influence as Ideological and not Political as such.
Keywords:	Politics, Ideology, Anti-Monuments, Denkmal, Media, Building Envolope, Interface, Media.

Declaration of Authenticity

In accordance with Regulation 4(c) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertation and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Architecture (Professional) in the faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, Department of Architecture, at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and had not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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

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

November 2021

………………………………..

Student Signature

University of Pretoria,
Pretoria

…………………………………..

Signed at

Acknowledgements

This list is by no means extensive, however there are a few individuals that had direct influence over how this year went for whom I would like to give thanks:

Firstly to my parents, Wickus and Elsa van Wyk, for your unconditional love and support. Your calls during tough times are truly precious and your advice as enduring as only parents can be.

To Johan Swart for having so much trust in me. At times it felt as though I was testing your patience, yet your advice always managed to steer me in the right directions and inspire confidence in my decisions. Thanks for being such a great mentor!

Petri and Kim van Wyk for always being willing to help with frustrating details and specifications and, in general, just for the light-hearted conversations.

Xander and Charl for your academic advice, friendship and support. It always amazes how much I can learn from you.

Chris, Nikola, Alexia and the other members of the studio regulars (or as we call ourselves the united studio students republic) for all the shenanigans and banter.

And finaly to Karlien van Niekerk for being one of the most reliable, supportive and kind friends to have graced my path, not just during my masters experience, but during the entirety of my time spent at Boukunde. I hope you have a wonderful retirement.

Abstract

Within the relation of architecture and the political, politics precede, supersede and often undermine design. When a problem, which has political causes, is addressed formally through architecture, the result often falls short in changing those conditions as the political core of the problem, i.e. the political structure in which said problem originates from, is not addressed. As such political problems necessitates political solutions. This is not to say that architecture has no influence over our political lives or that design can not in any way engage with problems of a political cause. Rather, perhaps architecture's influence over the political is more subtle and not political as such, but representational instead, i.e. ideological. This means that design presents one with the political and coerces one into the interpretation of politics i.e. either revealing or hiding it; by politicising or depoliticising spaces. This project therefore focusses on the political influence of architecture through ideology by approaching the design with the same intent as that of the German notion of the "gegendenkmal" (meaning critical public thinking opportunity). This notion provokes structures that provide the catalyst to specific conversations about ideas current existing spaces and political affairs. It is as such a powerful tool in bringing to the fore the underlying political factors which influence our everyday lives and often undermine solutions to material issues. Following this logic, this project aims to provide an opportunity for the public to critically think about the hidden political factors of which material problems are symptoms. i.e. the aim is to reveal the political and in a sense become a 'gegendenkmal' against the a-political as staying oblivious to the political causes to problems prohibits us from ever solving them. The form in which this "'gegendenkmal' against the a-political" manifests is through the program of a political media printing works on the site of the interstitial spaces of the south western block of Church Square and the interior of the capitol theatre in Pretoria CBD. This site was chosen due to Church Square being an important platform from which major political processions start or where they end (and can thus be seen as an important space of the city's political agora). The program involves the design, production and distribution of media which all political movements and processions beget. The conceptual and design approach follows the idea of the contrast between that which is represented in building envelope and that which inhabits the building interior politically. As such the building is approached as a combination of the following ideas: the broader idea of separation of interior and building skin, sequentially revealing the program over time as one moves through the building and finally as interfaces between public and private signifying a political relation between public and private user, public user and history and public user and society. By highlighting this dichotomous relation between ideology and politics, the building provides the opportunity to consider the political that is constantly submerged within the public subconscious.

Table of Contents