

The DRC Burgerspark stands as a hidden gem in the Pretoria inner city. Due to various contextual and heritage discourse issues, the value thereof is currently gradually being carved away.

The design question was: “How can interior architecture be used to expand the meaning of Modernist churches by interpreting an adaptive reuse strategy to create an inclusive, community-building environment that stimulates inner city revival?” In answer, the design proposed a mixed-use community precinct. The site serves as a daytime community centre, an education centre, a church and an event space. It becomes a space of interactions. A space where different user typologies congregate, be it as an extension of the nearby homes, or an attraction point for exterior visitors.

Through an iterative process, the plethora of informants was condensed into one golden thread: the universal language experienced by all – the spiritual narrative. By means of a series of thresholds, light manifestations, and “service” spaces, an immersive journey into the church is curated, connecting the large church to the public street.

The design stands as a present-day interpretation of the past. A precedent for heritage developments in the inner city that can catalyse large-scale, precinct-wide regeneration of the CBD urban landscape. An interior heritage project to prompt communal acceptance of the Modernist gems that make up our Pretoria built fabric.



Figure 23: Artist impressions (Author, 2023).



Barker, A. 2020. 'Limiting binary thinking: architectural design in historic urban context', *South African Journal of Art History*, vol. 35 no. 2, pp.121-149.

Clarke, N.J. 2011. Architectural History of the Capital. In Mathwe, P.J. (ed.). *Contemporary Capital: an architectural journal*. Pretoria: Visual Books.

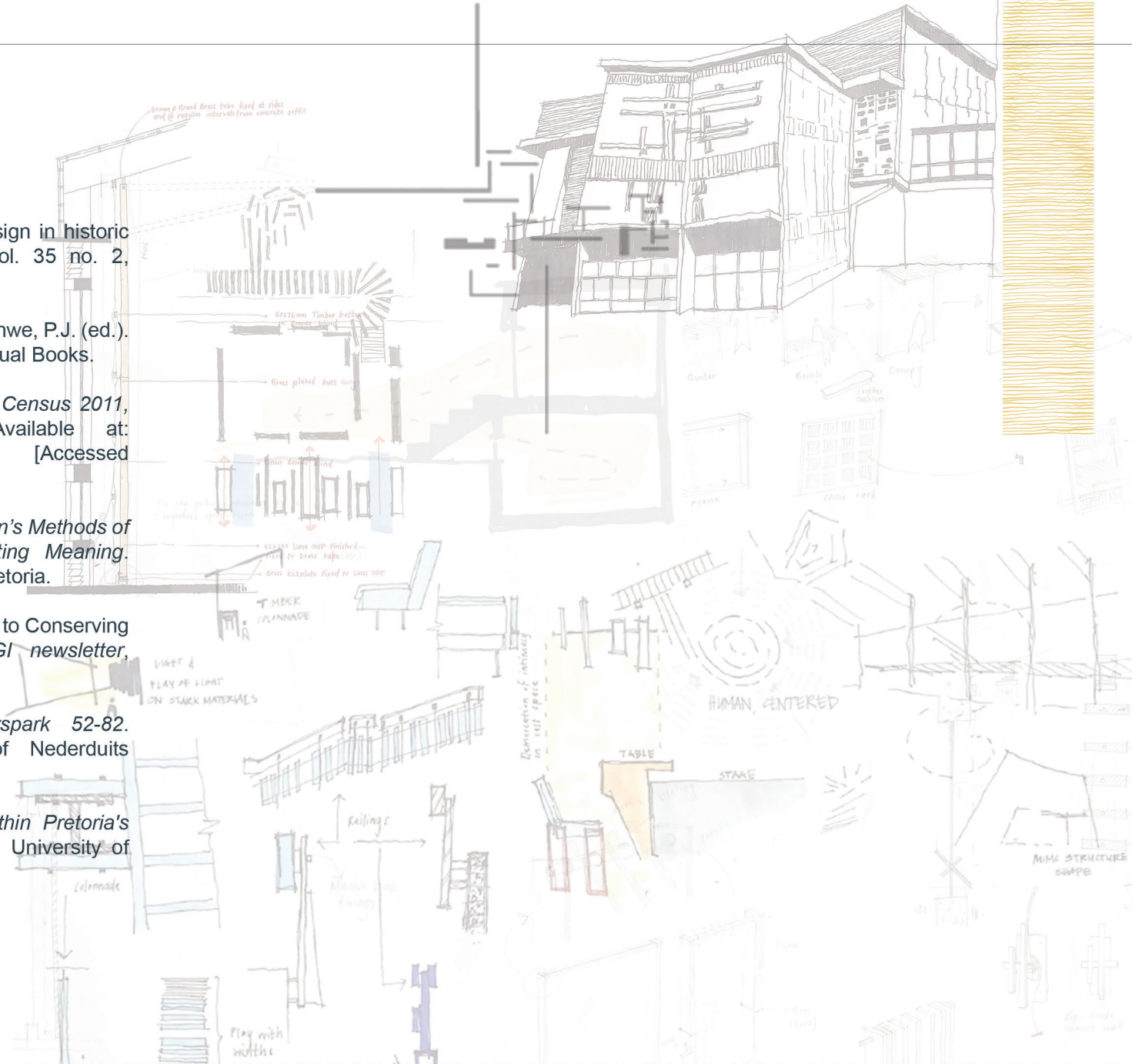
Frith, A. n.d. *Pretoria Central Sub Place 799035058 from Census 2011, Census 2011: Sub Place: Pretoria central*. Available at: <https://census2011.adrianfrith.com/place/799035058> [Accessed 2023-04-16].

Konigk, R. 2015. *An Imaginal Interpretation of Interior Design's Methods of Cultural Production: Towards a Strategy for Constructing Meaning*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Macdonald, S. 2013. Modern Matters: Breaking the Barriers to Conserving Modern Heritage. *Conservation perspectives: The CGI newsletter*, 28(1):4-9.

Schreuder, N. 1982. *Ned Geref Gemeente Burgerspark 52-82*. Commemorative publication for 30-year existence of Nederduits Gereformeerde Gemeente, Burgerspark. Pretoria.

Swart, J. 2010. *Urban church: Re-developing space within Pretoria's Schubart Park complex*. MArchProf dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.



HERITAGE VALUE MATRIX

SITE NAME: Dutch Reformed Church Burgerspark

REFERENCE NUMBER: 04/NGK

	AGE/RARITY	HISTORICAL/ ARCHITECTURAL	ARTISTIC/ AESTHETIC	COMMEMORATIVE	USE/ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	NOSTALGIC	TECHNICAL	SPIRITUAL
SURROUNDINGS	Surrounding CBD showcases signs of decay as well as new developments; layers of the ages.	Modernist character of area emphasizes importance of conservation of architectural styles.		Area stands as evidence of radical development of Pretoria under Nationalist rule in 1900's.	Area serves wide range of economic functions – institutional, educational, commercial.	Residential nature of area provides market for religious institutions and ensure constant inhabitation; street has value for homeless community as churches provide for them.	Nostalgic value for previous demographic group that resided in inner city.	Quality of construction and craftsmanship evident in condition of modernist buildings.	City block houses many churches, serving the street, area and wider Pretoria.
SITE		Relation to neighbouring Burgers Park – Pretoria's first botanical garden.			Container office on site used as lettable space for additional income; site well located within CBD; open space available for reuse.	Although no dedicated space here for, site utilized as social space for students and employees of church.			Large concrete columns in cross form serve as portal into holy site.
STRUCTURE	Design was radical for Dutch reformed Church at the time.	Initial church brought dynamic revival in inner city religion, moving from stoic religious practices to more modern.	Asymmetrical nature of building creates sense of movement in solid structure.	Separate consistory wing speaks of past use as NG church; now used as classrooms.	Hall rentable for events; all areas still in use, although programmes somewhat changed.	Visible accessibility in large ramp running outside. Building reintegrated into context to compliment current community identity.	Evokes strong memories for previous congregation (including students, ministers, residents) of previous success of church.	Building placed back from busy Visagie Street with thick concrete wall to north to block out noise.	Doxa Deo church serves as spiritual reprieve for their congregation.
SPACE PLAN	Main church space unusually placed on second level above hall. Entrances to side – usually entrance placed opposite liturgical area.	Presbytery seating was located in wing of L-shaped plan, distinctly removed from congregation as was custom in early modernist churches.		Interior space plan speaks of organization of programmes in previous church – now adapted to resemble auditorium.	Interior space adapted to form auditorium space, with stage, moveable seating and instrumental space – ensuring use value in current Doxa Deo.	Plan adapted to form less rigid organization than previous NG church, accommodating for modern congregation.	Remnants of organ, pews, liturgical area, etc. invoke memories for previous congregation of NG church.	Detail and craftsmanship of original design evident throughout, though compromised in certain areas.	Plan adapted to accommodate new form of spirituality now present in church (more praise and worship oriented).
SKIN	Rare intricate brickwork on facades; original skin elements painted over in some instances.	Thick concrete/masonry skin on northern façade for acoustic measures.	<i>Dalle de verre</i> windows spanning south wall serve as massive publicly accessible art.		Durable materiality ensures low maintenance.			Large, stereotomic skin softened by crafted brickwork and <i>dalle de verre</i> windows.	Contrast of solid/window skins create an intimate/ethereal space.
SERVICE					Ventilation and lighting through structure separated to simplify operation of each.			Timber lattice work over concrete structure intended to improve acoustics – marginally effective.	Ample diffused natural lighting through <i>dalle de verre</i> windows now obsolete due to heavy curtains and fluorescent lighting.
MATERIALITY	5 tons coloured glass imported from France Most floor finishes replaced. Wooden parquet flooring painted over; various concrete elements		Coloured windows create play of light on remaining leather pews.		Structure in concrete and masonry and timber lattice work throughout remains unchanged and in good condition.			Carefully crafted materiality now replaced with mass-produced products, increasing value of remaining materiality.	Materials adding to spirituality of space (windows & natural, honest materiality of furniture and floors) are being removed/changed.



	<p>painted over; northern <i>dalle de verre</i> window painted over; carpets over original slate tiling. Layers of renovations evident.</p>								
FURNISHING	<p>New chairs, stage and technical equipment stand in contrast to original structure.</p>							<p>Unique, crafted casework (like pulpit and pews) removed, decreasing technical quality of interior. Timber panel work behind pulpit removed, decreasing acoustics.</p>	
SYMBOLISM/ ORNAMENTATION	<p>Original symbolic elements (in brass and concrete) now in background of new Doxa Deo banners and signage.</p>		<p>Leo Theron windows depict theme "From darkness to light," through representing 5 festive events of liturgical year.</p>					<p>Cross work in masonry, concrete and brass speaks to level of craft in original design.</p>	<p>Progression in lightness of windows towards front of space emphasized liturgical area; northern window (now painted over) bathed important area in light.</p>
LIGHTING	<p>New fluorescent lighting stands in contrast to original artistic windows; original pendants removed.</p>		<p>Coloured windows serve greatest artistic value in building, both in church space and consistory wing.</p>		<p>Current artificial lighting serves function of space as auditorium.</p>			<p><i>Dalle de verre</i> windows one of Leo Theron's biggest church works, who pioneered method in South Africa.</p>	<p>Ethereal feel of <i>dalle de verre</i> windows obstructed by paint, curtains, and fluorescent lighting.</p>