



3. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

INTRODUCTION

The theory components consist of two parts, both dealing with the experience of waiting. Part One considers the concept of waiting at a psychological level. Part Two examines the physical aspects implied by waiting. The concept is briefly formulated and extracted theoretical principles are subsequently defined.

3.1 PART ONE

Waiting transpires mostly in the mind of the one who waits. It is the raised awareness of oneself and the surrounding space that the waiter has to encounter. The memory absorbs the space and generates associative meanings as one enters the journey of waiting.

3.1.1 THE IRONY OF WAITING

Schweizer (1998:4) explores the irony of waiting in his book *On waiting*. Despite today's fast-paced world, we still wait. Why? Schweizer answer is that 'the *logic of modernity* requires a reduction of the experience of time.' What really matters is the cost of one's waiting experience- not just expresses with regard to money but also considering possible emotional stresses introduced by environmental conditions. Schweizer cites the work of the French activist and philosopher Simone Weil, which advocates that waiting must be relearned as a form of attention. However, the aim of this project is to advocate the importance of waiting with regards to architecture and the fact that the experience should be explored as a guide for the design of the waiting place, which is often ignored in everyday architecture. Interior architecture can orchestrate the unification of mundane activities such as waiting and translate its associated aspects into the experience of architectural forms.

Schweizer illustrates one of the ironies of waiting by referring to Daumier's image *Un Wagon de Troisième classe*, which shows nineteenth-century third class passengers waiting to board a train. The 3rd class passengers have no pocket watches and have to wait longer in line, because their time is not associated with money (Schweizer, 1998:4).

3.1.2 TO DWELL UPON

According to Theodor Adorno (as stated by Schweizer, 1998:71), *one might almost say that truth itself depends on the tempo, the patience and per séance of lingering with the particular*.

The longer one dwell upon something the longer things are displayed and the longer they distract one from oneself. Schweizer (1998:29-30) says that the more we tarry the more receptive we are to an artwork's manifold riches. To dwell upon is to tarry, which is a special kind of waiting where one embraces the experience of waiting; in other words, one dwells upon the space. As revealed by the dwelling experience, lingering offers a closer exposure. This is the phenomenon of the detail that becomes visible to the eye. The detail is the visual stimulation derived from the space and the distraction of the body. The **gaze** is called the 'obsession with the particular'; the obsession draws the attention to an outer experience.

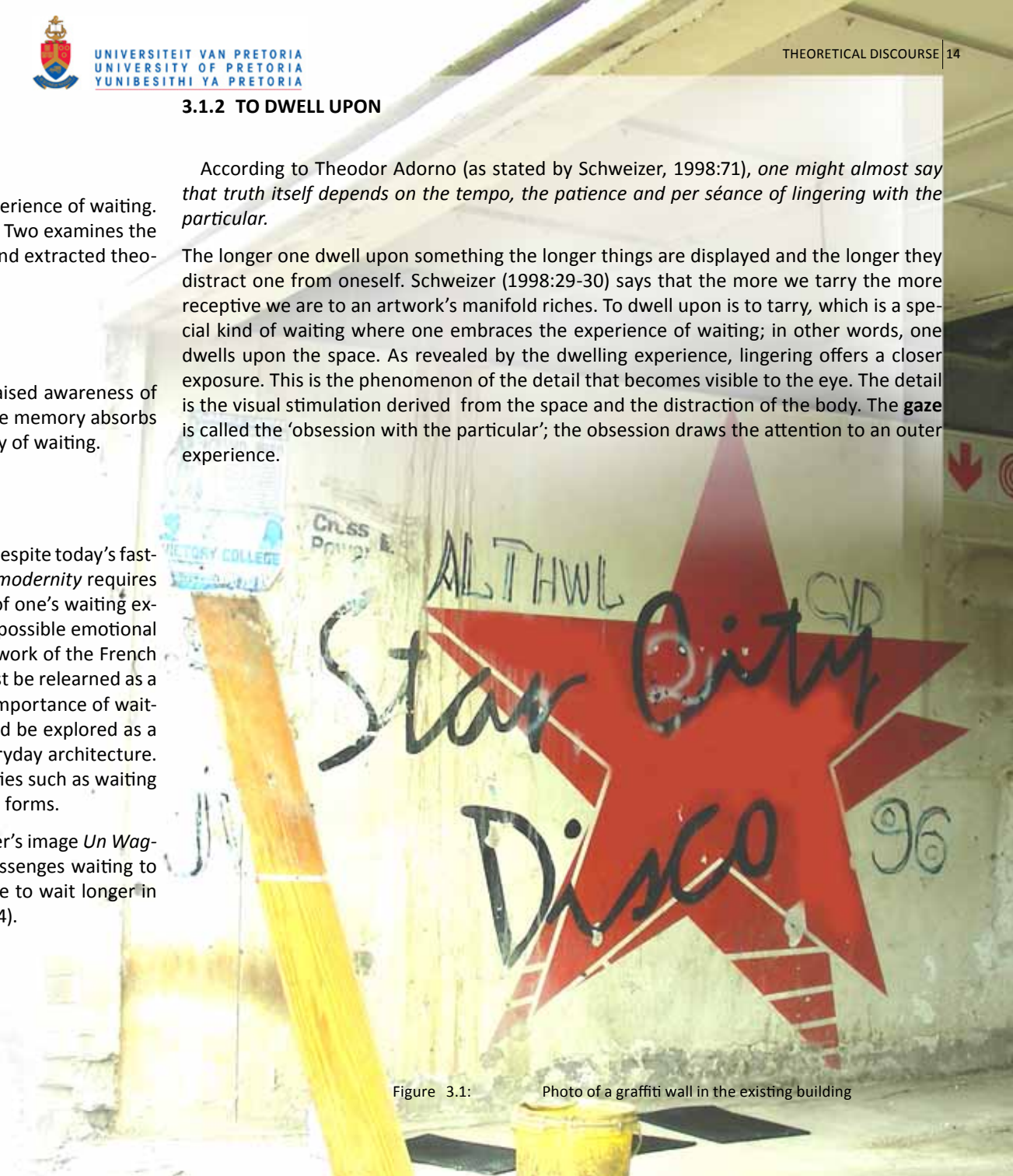


Figure 3.1:

Photo of a graffiti wall in the existing building



The lingerer's eyes lift these particulars momentarily out of their evanescence, and in this lifting we are transported into the interior of an object and feel its small strange excepted particularity. The gaze rests, tarries, lingers on its object, lifts out of its obliterating context into a privileged moment (Schweizer, 2008:38).

3.1.3 TIME DURATION AND RHYTHM

According to Schweizer (1998:16), the French philosopher Henri Bergson proposes the existence of two *temporalities*: time and duration. It is suggested that time is rather a spatial measurement, which is not calibrated with a person's will (Schweizer, 1998:16). Our perception of the passage of time differs from what can be measured; physical time is more basic for helping us understand our shared experiences in the world. Physical time is public time. Physiological time has a strong emotional connection. Time that is "felt" is sometimes slow, thick and unwilling to pass and under these circumstances thoughts are lived and consciously experienced. Waiting is therefore more concerned with duration than a certain amount of time. Time and duration can be divided into two spheres, each representing different rhythmical ideas. The one is clear and precise; the other is ever-changing and inexpressible.

Rhythm, as a projection of time and duration, may be translated into architectural mechanisms or elements that can attempt to regulate, confuse, slow down or accelerate the experiences in the waiting place. These elements can become design tools that create desired effects within the waiting space. They form a path of expression.

Symmetry in architecture is an intentional tool for creating "rhythm in space". Symmetry is the investigation of solid and void and is also concerned with the production of order in visual perception. Williams (1998) explains that architecture makes extensive use of symmetry (being a compositional art) and therefore it is possible to discuss architecture in terms of the void and the solid. Williams describes various kinds of symmetry. The first is bilateral symmetry, where two halves are divided by an axis. Where two halves of the composition mirror each other, it is referred to as orthodox bilateral symmetry (Williams, 1998:1).

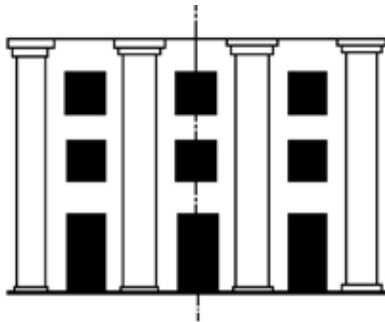


Figure 3.3: Bilateral symmetry

<http://www.mi.sanu.ac>

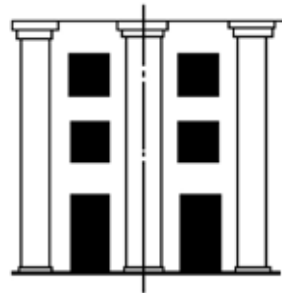


Figure 3.4: Orthodox symmetry

Similarity symmetry is the best known and deals with the identification of fractals, where repeated elements change in scale but remain in similar shapes. According to Williams 'similarity architecture results in a high degree of order within an architectural design and lends unity to a composition, (Williams, 2008:2).

Description: Sydney Opera House

Location: Sydney, Australia

Architect: Jorn Utzon

Date: 1973

The iconic sculptural shell forms of the Sydney Opera House are repeated in different sizes, depicting similarity architecture.

Reference: <http://www.wayfaring.info>



Figure 3.5: Sydney Opera House

Translation symmetry falls into the category of spatial group symmetry, where the translation of elements in one direction is found in solemn rows. The succession of rows of arches as Williams mentions, forms a strong filter in modern buildings. The translation lends itself to a super-relative quality. Only some types of symmetry which are appropriate with regard to the chosen intervention and dissertation, are discussed here. It is also important to note that most buildings display more than one kind of symmetry. According to Williams 'changing symmetries can be as important to the unfolding of the story as any of the other devices an architect has at his service' (Williams, 1998: 4)

Figure 3.6: Rhythmic structural pattern



(Image at: <http://www.bighugelabs.com>)



Figure 3.7: Columns in rows of succession

Description: Madrid-Barajas Airport

Location: Madrid-Barajas, Spain

Architect: Richard Rogers Partnership

Date: 2006

The terminal features a clear progression of spaces for travellers. The building's legible, modular design creates a repeating sequence of waves formed by vast wings of pre-fabricated steel.

Reference: <http://www.richardrogers.co.uk>



3.1.4 DURATION ENTROPY AND MEANING

The level of entropy is the degree of disorder in a given system. This is the reverse of the degree of information that is present. Hence negentropy is the build-up of information, and an increase of meaning (Rehmus, 2004:19).

In duration, the person who waits realises their own dissolving nature among things (see 3.2.2). Thus, the individual experiences a state of increasing entropy. In *Order out of Chaos*, Prigogine (1984:12) describes life as negentropic because it creates an ordered structure (body with cells) from something without order (lifeless food). If negentropy is the build-up of information or the increase of meaning then entropy is the loss of information, which has a lot to do with things that tend to progress to disorder (Prigogine, 1984:12). If something expires it becomes meaningless and it reaches a state of complete entropy.

If waiting as a physical activity within space, is a meaningless experience, then architecture has failed by not stimulating the waiter's needs. The architecture then has reached a point of disorder and it has not succeeded in providing the essence of what it stands for, which is the experience of space. Therefore architecture has to work against entropy. Designers, however, attempt to add purpose to the flow of information such that of information flow can be described as the ordering of a system (Arnheim, 1971:14). A certain level of meaning is introduced when design attempts to order systems, because order is directly related to the level of information of the system. For duration to become meaningful, the architecture should increase the level of information or order it provides. The space should be determined by the level of meaning that mechanisms add to the user's experience. The mechanisms are the architectural elements that celebrate the specific use of the building. The experience of the space involves a certain amount of information to determine the level of rhetorical power, which lies central to interior architecture as an individual discipline.

This author strongly believes that stimulating certain states of the human mind and shaping design accordingly allow for stronger rhetorical power in design. For example, the person who waits sometimes experiences the gaze that allows for the "lifting out of particulars". Design can take advantage of this state by introducing forms on which one's gaze can tarry or rest. Stimulating heightened awareness through architectural means allows people to experience buildings on a level that adds to the meaning of the spaces concerned. This type of architecture may contribute a new platform for design thereby addressing specific elements of the building for specific end users. Thus, the design attempts to increase the information or the order, therefore increasing the meaning.





Figure 3.8: Sketch imitating chaos

However, in a stricter sense, meaning is a matter of language and speech. Meaning is used to explain the form or something that is referred to. Broadbent (1969:51) explains that two categories exist with regard to meaning in architecture: one being the syntagmatic (concerned with the relationship of words in a sequence), while the second refers to the systematic (concerned with how similarity links entities in the mind). This is referred to as the associative character (Broadbent, 1969:51), and can be seen as one thing standing for something else. This concept is applied to buildings to define the relationship between styles due to a learned social contract. For example, the Modern era assumes function as the main form giver. The ordering of the printed word manifests itself in the form of education and an organised professional body. Style is therefore associative. In terms of the referential character one is able to form agendas to investigate referential meaning.

According to Chandavarkar (1988:1) 'the introduction of text gave rise to the expression of poetry within architecture. The printed word liberated architectural knowledge from the sense of place by allowing the discourse to be raised to an abstract conceptual level, where it could be discussed in terms of form, proportion and meaning.' Thus, text and communication allowed the physical form of architecture to be discussed and was hence argued to be acceptable. The printed word officially permits the existence of forms of architecture and today the word sometimes enforces meaning. It becomes a matter of the architectural form and the word, and the blurring between the entities. It may be argued that without the printed word, architectural endeavours may not be valued on their own. Therefore theory forms an integral parts of architecture in general.

This author is of the opinion that waiting, which is seen as a very ordinary,, overlooked activity, can be raised to a rhetorical level through text and poetry and expressed in architecture through elements that celebrate the experience. This very ordinary experience, unlike any other, allows us to be enveloped by a strong physical but also a deep cerebral experience (see 3.2.2). **It is in this privileged state of mind that architecture can be experienced in a very rare manner. The interplay of dwelling upon space (3.1.2), obsessions with the particular, the gaze (3.2.2), and a deep awareness of self which are all synonymous with waiting that allow for a very special kind of experience of space.** The architecture should take advantage of this state to such an extent that the architecture can be experienced on an optimal multidimensional level.

The level of meaning that elements can introduce to architecture depends on the balance between the rhetorical level of space-specific environments and the ordering of the architecture .

The temporal region of the waiting space allows the waiter's memory to derive meaning and to dwell upon fragments of the space, switching between reality and a dream. **The privileged state of the waiting place should be acknowledged because of the users' ultimate experience of self and deep awareness of their surroundings.**



Figure 3.9: Illustration depicting the experience of our environment

3.2 PART TWO

Part Two presents a brief study conducted to interpret physical behaviour of people waiting. This was done with reference to theory in order to establish relations on a physical level. The embodiment of waiting explains that the waiter experiences a heightened physical of awareness of being alone amongst the surroundings.

3.2.1 THE EMBODIMENT OF WAITING

Schweizer explains the essence of the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, where it is suggested that it is not how we pass through waiting but how we experience it during its progression not in the expectation of the end, but in the quality of waiting as such. According to Schweizer the waiter is the embodiment of the hour. According to Bergson 'it is we who are passing when we say time passes' (Bergson 1998:2) The characteristics of waiting are the experience of what the waiter feels and embodies, willingly or not.

As quoted by Schweizer (1998:18), Henri Bergson states: *We fidget, we pace, we complain, we consult our watches, we have no interest in listening to uninterrupted humming of life's depth. And yet that is where real duration is.*

It is suggested that waiting lead to what can be called ***an enlarged perception where the waiter feels or embodies the surroundings.*** Within the parameters of architecture the embodiment of surroundings is subject to the waiting experience. It is said that the temporal embodiment of waiting is the state of enforced relaxation without purpose, only because this fragment of time becomes unappreciated. According to **Schweizer (1998:21)** **those who are distracted wait superficially in the dimensions of space, while the restless waiter wait deeply in the dimensions of duration.** Thus it becomes evident that architecture, as a composer of space, can play an important role in enhancing the embodied surroundings.



Figure 3.10: Sculpture of three women waiting

Description: '*They are waiting*'

Sculpture of three waiting woman

Location: Benson Sculpture Park, Mesa

Artist: Nnamdi Okonkwo

Nnamdi Okonkwo, the Nigerian-born artist who created *They are waiting*, said he was inspired by life experiences and celebrates a 'largeness of soul'. 'It seemed like everyone was waiting for something to happen'. 'People were waiting to graduate, waiting to get a job, or waiting to get married. In the sculpture, I use the three women to interpret this in a more universal way, showing that in life, people wait. We've all gone through periods of intense waiting.'

Reference: <http://images.google.co.za>

3.2.2 THE WAITING OBJECT

According to Schweizer (1998:17) Henri Bergson explains that the person who waits is always singled out. Schweizer describes this state as follows: “The experience of duration in waiting is the experience of the time the waiter shares with things.” Waiting allows for the sudden realisation that we are like things and that the duration of the material world is also the *waiter’s* own duration; the slow unfurling of things, their dissolving. This condition refers to a constant progressive state towards complete entropy, which is ultimately what people attempt to avoid.

For the waiter feels herself as a particular thing among things. (Schweizer, 1998:41).

Just as the person who waits endures being singled out, it is also interesting to note that the waiter also singles out objects within the surroundings. The observer’s interest in an object captures the **gaze** as a method to occupy the mind. The mind is like a camera that focuses on a scene capturing a particular object. It is precisely such an unconscious space that reveals itself to the naked eye of the waiter.

Perhaps it is then possible to say that the waiting space is a place that is fully exposed to the user, a place that is revealed and felt by the waiter. No other space is as *uniquely privileged* to be experienced in such an embodied manner. The waiting space is emphasised through its naked experience and consciousness. Schweizer writes about the waiter’s gaze as an inconsistent state, which makes objects appear and disappear. **The space is revealed in fragments and the gaze allows for interruptions and isolations.**

Schweizer analyses the poem *In the waiting room* by Elizabeth Bishop. The waiter Elizabeth, suddenly realises the ‘astounding particularity’ of herself in the movements of duration.

I felt: you are an I

You are an Elizabeth

This startling discovery of self explains that it is the time frame of waiting that lifts out the waiter and places them on display; it is this state that slows down time. During waiting we avoid the sense of self, because to deal with oneself is to realise one’s waiting between transient things. Generally we don’t want our lives to pass without purpose, and thus the eerie experience of the waiting moment is captured. Bergson calls this duration and not time and it is not something thought, but lived; not something that is measured but endured, because duration is invisible.

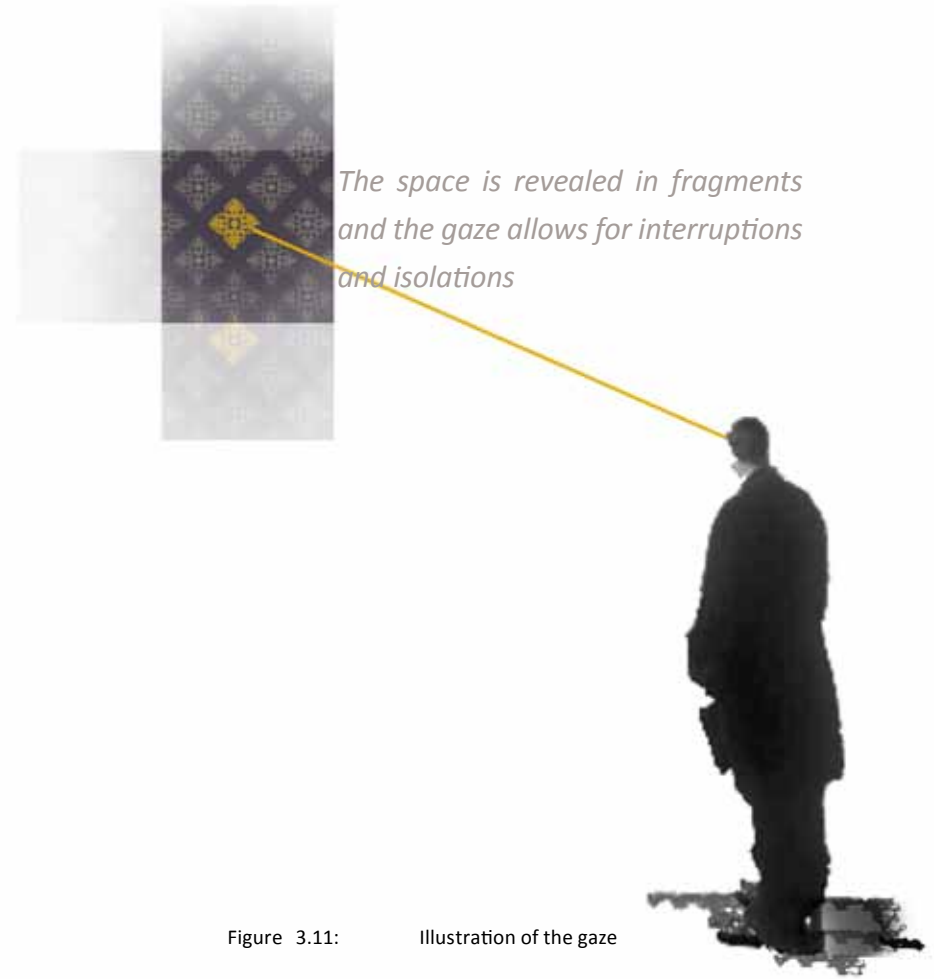


Figure 3.11: Illustration of the gaze

3.2.3 THE WAITING PLACE

In the city fabric, the waiting place provides a base for understanding our environment and exploring our world. Therefore, the waiting place, as a point where the city user can be uplifted, should be recognised as an important reference point. It is said that humans display a type of territorial behavior where they tend to want to return to places that are familiar. "A secure base is a safe haven to explore from and return to when the world feels dicey" (Gallagher, 1993:89).

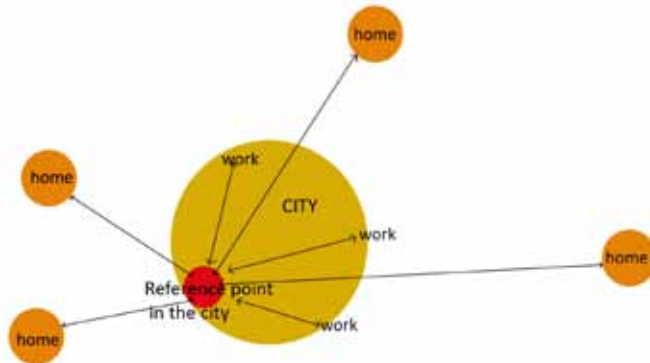


Figure 3.12: Diagram illustrating the building as a reference point

3.2.4 THE BODY AND WAITING

The physical experience of waiting affects the human body, consequently positioning the body in certain manners. Humans generally slump over after waiting for a certain period of time. The manner in which humans sit, stand, lean or move form key design guides. The body shape can give insight into the articulation of elements that can assist in this range of motions.

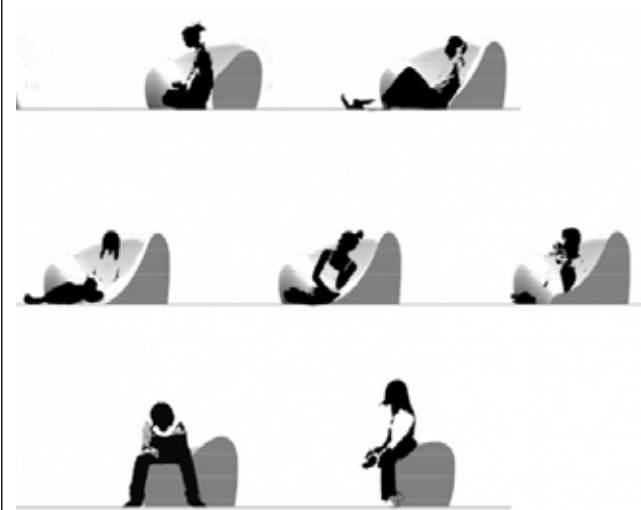


Figure 3.13: Diagram illustrating sitting postures

Description: *Umarmung*

Floor sitting couch

Design: Cheungvogl-Architectural practice

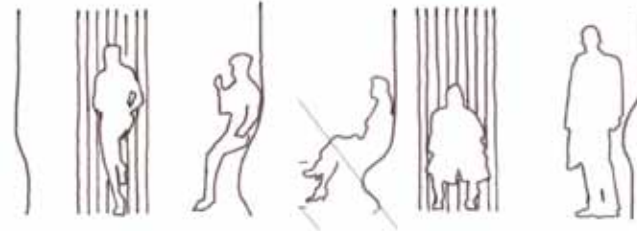
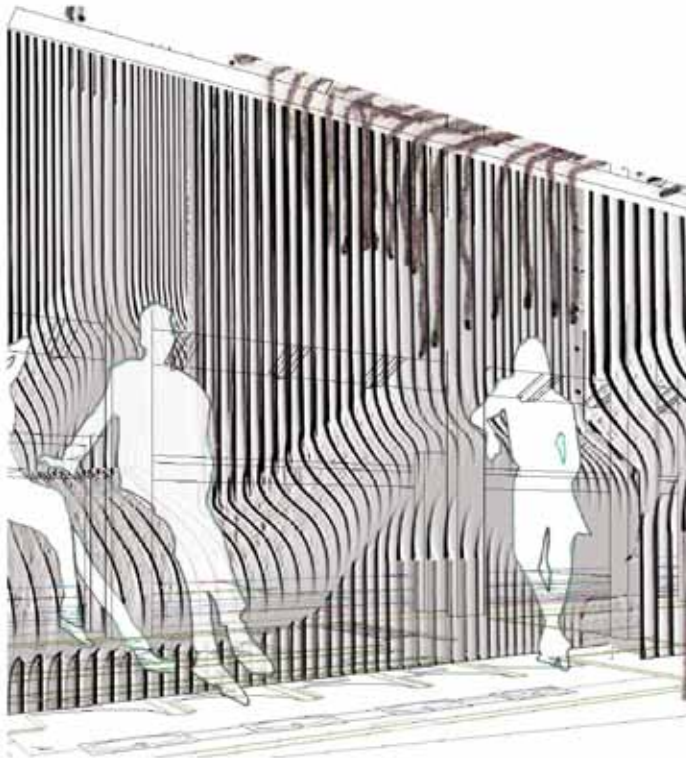
Date: 2010

The floor sitting couch was designed to accommodate comfortable positions while sitting on the floor. The curved profile is meant to accommodate the body, whether sitting up right or leaning back. The design is meant to portray a singular aesthetic while being functional. The couch is made of reinforced polyester resin with an internal steel structure.



Reference: <http://www.yatzer.com>

Figure 3.14: Floor couch



_ Concept idea

The idea is to translate a building element for example, a wall into a sculptural seating element that follows the curvature of the body.

Figure 3.15: Quick concept image

3.3 THE CONCEPT

The design process is based on a constant interplay of human experiences and the physical spaces in architecture that shape those experiences. In this dissertation waiting, as a physical and mental experience, may be interpreted as the theoretical premise from which the architecture was adapted to enrich and facilitate the spaces. Waiting, as a daily routine was documented to inform design decisions that may allow people to experience daily activities as meaningful routines.

3.4 THEORETICAL DESIGN GUIDES

_Create creating open connecting spaces and gathering points

_Create belvederes/views on which waiters can rest their eyes

_Design spaces of privacy that are sympathetic to the waiter

_Use of rhythmic patterns to create movement, stops and resting points

_Use the idea of fragments or emphasised objects within the space, which the user can gaze upon; these elements form the infill elements of the design

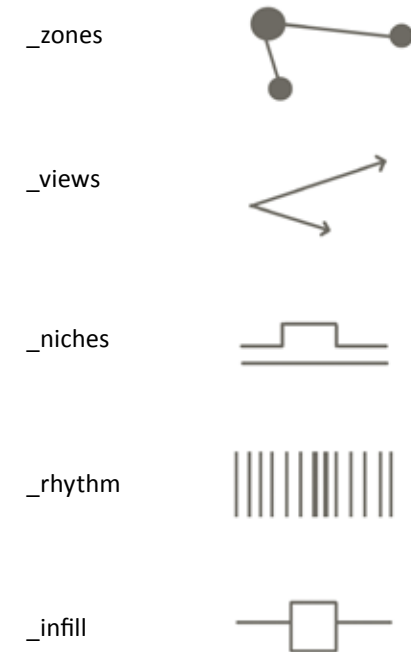


Figure 3.16: Design symbols