

3 precedent studies

Gasworks Park, Seattle

POST CLOSURE CONCEPT

Riverfronts once devoted to trade and industry—these so-called brownfields are among the badly treated sites that have become our new parks. Their former uses exhausted, architects, landscape architects, and urban planners are asked to envisage their postindustrial transformation into places for leisure activities and redevelopment. The Kruidfontein Project is no different from this apart from the fact that it is a pre-planning and design exercise and not dressing on the wound afterwards. Traditionally, industry and urban infrastructures pose a danger to our concept of landscape, at least one based on a countrified ideal. While those pastoral ideals mirror the values and landscape of a pre-industrial, largely agrarian world, today the designer's task is to transform what we might think of as ruined sites into places that challenge not only our presumption of what makes a park but also what makes a landscape beautiful. This change in attitude was prefigured in the artwork and writings of American artist Robert Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg's work was prophetic and influenced the way some designers, Peter Latz and George Hargreaves among them, look at the relationship between the industrial landscape and nature, between the ugly and beautiful.²

The adaptation of industrial ruins in a contemporary park has an important precedent in Richard Haag Associates' Gas Works Park in Seattle (1971-75).

The gas plant on Lake Union had shut down in 1956. The industrial structures were scheduled to be removed where seen by Richard Haag, as works of abstract art, who then and decided to keep them.³ The designer met with community conflict in the process. Haag described his personal evolution of seeing the industrial past in a new light "I began with the site. I haunted the buildings and let the spirit of the place enjoin mine. I began seeing what I liked and then I liked what I saw—new eyes for old. Permanent oil slicks became plains with outcroppings of concrete, industrial middens were drumlins, the towers were ferro-forests and their brooding presence became the most sacred of symbols. I accepted these gifts, and decided to absolve the community's vindictive feeling towards the gas plant. This vanishing species of the industrial revolution was saved from extinction through adaptive use."⁴

When Peter Latz designed Duisburg-Nord Landscape Park on the grounds of the former Thyssen Steelworks in western Germany, one of the most important new parks of the last decade, like Haag he believed the opposition of the natural and the industrial was not a sensible model. The site's industrial ruins—including towering

smokestacks, cavernous ore bunkers, and bermed railroad tracks—constituted not only an imperative part of the region's history but were in themselves extraordinary structures.

Latz resisted the desire to abolish the industrial traces, believing that if the realms of nature and industry were combined the experience would be richer. His proposal raised the fury of many landscape architects who supposed that parks should conform to more conventional designs and conservationists who had other thoughts about remediating a toxic area. The ground had varying levels of toxicity and pH levels suited to different kinds of vegetation. Some areas were capped, hopelessly polluted soil was removed, and the remaining areas, if left alone, will be naturally remediated over time by pioneer species such as birch and poplar. Latz understood that a designer cannot manage such a huge and intricate site, and that natural processes will to some extent resolve the character of the varying landscape.⁵

the sheer size of the park led Latz to organize the land in terms of zones based on activities, systems of plants and water, even layers of paths, such as the elevated catwalks, belvederes, and the land art-like berms of the former railroad tracks that fan out across the site. The industrial skeletons have surpassed their original rational function.⁶ Structures evoke associations, emotions, and an aura of secrecy that inspired Latz to create narratives and stories that alluded to a mythic past. His admiration of the industrial infrastructure also evokes the cult of ruins that was so fashionable in the great landscape parks of the eighteenth century, such as at Fountains Abbey, designed by William Aislabie. At Duisburg-Nord, Latz has reintroduced metaphor and a sense of the sublime into contemporary landscape. We can identify these relics in awe—metaphorically as mountains, as Latz himself has suggested, or perhaps more ominously as reminders of the human and natural devastation wrought by the twentieth-century ferro-industrial complex so narrowly familiar with the Emscher region.⁷ The traces of the past characterize not only the park and the region's culture, but also establish the park's future as much by the many recreational and cultural programs taking place at Duisburg-Nord as by the diverse native and exotic plants that are colonizing the site and launching a process of natural succession. There is a certain irony to be found in a site that once existed solely to function.

The Gasworks, is a typical scenario where we see a planned "closure concept" taking effect.

Lessons:

- A predetermined "post closure" plan, allowing for the appropriation of the mine
- The use of mining as a temporary land use
- The integrity of perceived MINE infrastructure, used in an aesthetically amiable manner.



² Reed, Groundswell 2005: pg 25

³ IBID: pg 28

⁴ IBID: pg 28

⁵ IBID: pg 28

⁶ IBID: pg 28

⁷ IBID: pg 28

The Dogon, Mali

TRANSLATION OF RITUALS MYTHS TRADITION INTO ARCHITECTURE

Taken as a whole, the habitation of the Dogon is a balanced structure that makes constant reference to the mythic tradition, yet is nevertheless open to a great variety of solutions and interpretations.

Though having a segmented political sphere the Dogon consider themselves related through myths of origin that all the various groupings have in common. In understanding Dogon architecture there is definite distinction between the "theoretical" sphere of the ideal solutions that form part of the mythic ritual and the "practical" sphere, the actual building.⁸

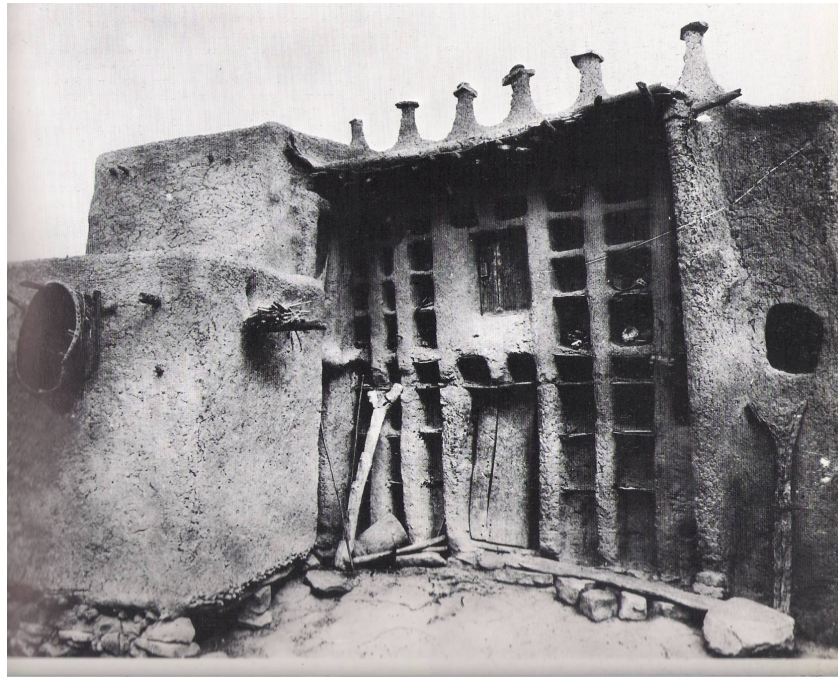


Fig 27: Dogon family house⁹

How do the Dogon translate their beliefs rituals and traditions into architecture? Taking the common family residence as a case in point, this comprises of an enclosure with stalls for animals, granaries and the dwelling itself. A door opening on the street leads into the vestibule (dolu) and a courtyard (gono); the latter is divided into an area for the animals and another for the granaries (guyo togu) and the dwelling. Access to the house is by an entrance (day) that leads into a central room (den bere) flanked by two side rooms and a circular kitchen (obolo) through which one goes up to a terrace on which open one to two store rooms. The entire construction is of banco (beaten clay shaped into the desired form) with wooden supports and beams to hold up the roof, and this is interpreted symbolically as an anthropomorphic figure:

⁸ Guidoni, Primitive Architecture, 1975: pg 145

⁹ IBID: pg 146

1. The soil of the ground-floor is the symbol of the earth and of Lebe, restored to life in the earth.
2. the flat roof, square like that of the flying granary, represents heaven, and the ceiling which separates the upper storey from the ground-floor represents the space lying between earth and heaven
3. The four small rectangular around it indicate the four cardinal points, as does the hearth itself.

Inside the house, the several rooms represent caves of this world inhabited by men. The vestibule, which belongs to the master of the house, represents the male partner of the couple, the outside door being his sexual organ. The big central room is the domain and symbol of the woman. In the Dogon tradition and beliefs the female is considered to be the life giver and means through which life is carried on. The store-rooms to the side are her arms, and the communicating doors her sexual parts. The central room and store-rooms together represent the woman lying on her back with outstretched arms, the door open ready for intercourse. The room at the back which contains the hearth and looks out onto the flat roof shows the breathing of the woman, who lies in the central room under the ceiling, which is the symbol of the man, its beams representing his skeleton; their breath finds its outlet through the opening above. The four upright poles are the couple's arms, those of the woman supporting the man who rests his own on the ground. The earth platform that serves as a bed lies north south and the couple sleep on it with their heads to the north, like the house itself, the front wall of which is its face.

This typology of building in an ordinary family dwelling in human form creates a harmony with the spaces created and adds a vitality that allows for the interpretation of the functions of these spaces translated from the human body.

By recognising in the house connotations of the human figure and those of a couple whose fertility the house is not only custodian of but also inducer, the Dogon through this simple case in point stress the importance of the value of the family unit within the social grouping¹⁰. In addition, this fundamental cultural belief then translated and becomes the built form.

Characteristic of the Dogon's translation and interpretation of the culture, rituals and traditions into the built environment the settlements on the overhanging cliffs of the Bandiagara range are a good reflection of this. The dwellings are built on the rocky slope between the great masses of fallen rock wall. Below this in the lower slopes are the fields; while higher up in the steepest places and under overhanging rocks where advantage can often be taken of the natural shelters are located the granaries, sanctuaries, mask storage places and burial grounds¹¹. Creating a hierarchical layout where the actual village appears to be a healing over the fracture in the natural landscape where the looming cliffs hang

¹⁰ IBID : pg 148

¹¹ IBID: pg 153

over it and the fields below. In this way the built environment becomes a mediator between the divine higher presence and the human productive activity below.

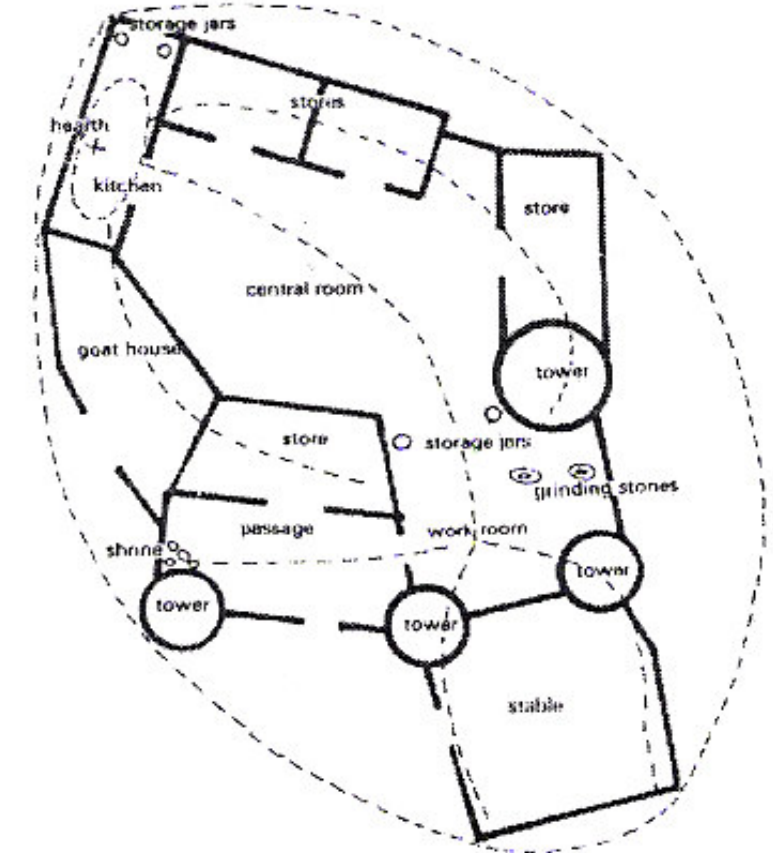


Fig 28: Dogon House plan showing the body representation¹²

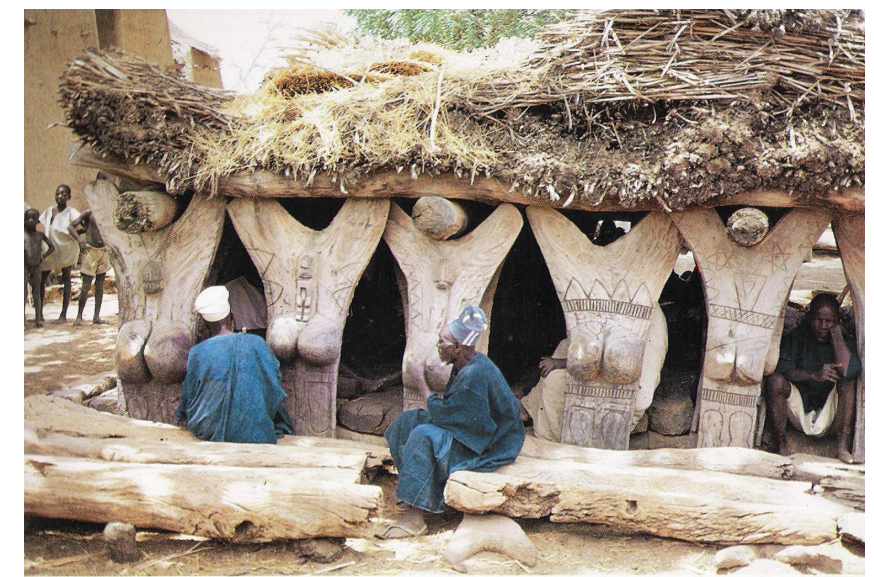


Fig 29: Dogon relief carving as building ornamentation¹³

¹² Denyer, African Traditional Architecture, 1978: pg24

¹³ Guidoni, Primitive Architecture, 1975: pg 154

Purple Daisy, Pretoria

ALTERNATIVE BUILDING METHODS

An eco-friendly complex in Lynwood-Ridge, the Purple Daisy combines rudimentary building techniques with modern materials to create a unique architectural typology.

It consists of:

- A nursery
- An art exhibition space
- The restaurant
- And several out buildings that houses plants
- A pottery studio
- Antiques shop.

The uniqueness of the Purple Daisy, also stems out of the fact that the designer and builder of this complex is in fact not an Architect. Which allows for an understanding into the rather robust details, the choice of materials that give this building its particular character.

Materials:

As a roof covering standard greenhouse polythene has been used. Suspended ob steel beams it allows for a natural pleasant ambience at all times. The idea of outside is perpetuated.

The diffused light not only becomes ideal for the various artworks on display but gives softness to a space that is bordered by harsh and/or industrial materials like corrugation, steel and gum-poles.

There is also an interesting combination of materials in this complex. The combination of materials, like wood, steel, glazing and corrugated iron sheeting: to create a building type and style that gives texture vibrancy and a sense of rudimentary while still applying 21st century techniques.

Heating:

The use of under-floor heating a unique and innovative of method only adds to the unique quality of the Purple Daisy. The mechanical driven hot air that channelled through buried chimney flues allows for a warm cosy environment winter. The buried flue's also contribute to the character that allows the Purple Daisy to stand out as a creative innovative building in Lynwood Ridge, Pretoria.

Lessons

- Combination of different materials to create a vibrant style and building type
- The abstraction of standard building elements such as doors and openings. Eliminating the idea of a door as a door but rather as a feature within its context that enhances and divides spaces
- Robust practical solutions to the South Africa climate
- The use of "rudimentary" building methods to celebrate structure
- Building technique: the simplicity and logic with which a building comes together
- An understanding of materials and structure



Fig 30: Purple Daisy images: Robust detailing (Tumubweinee, 2006)



Fig 32: Purple Daisy images: ambient diffused light as a result of the roofing material. The allowance for large uninterrupted spaces, as the need for columns and supports is eliminated (Tumubweinee, 2006)



Fig 31: Purple Daisy images: Green house polythene as roof covering, and the combination of various materials to create an interesting facade (Tumubweinee, 2006)



Fig 33: Purple Daisy images: combination of materials to create an interesting facade (Tumubweinee, 2006)