

# The Monster

Liminality, Threshold and Spatial Experience

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of part of the requirements for the degree Magister in Architecture [Professional] in the faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology.

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November 2008

Thank You:

My Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

My Parents, study leader Catherine and mentor Gary.

Piet van Heerden, Rudolf Roos.

Jean-Pierre de la Porte.

My fellow students and friends.

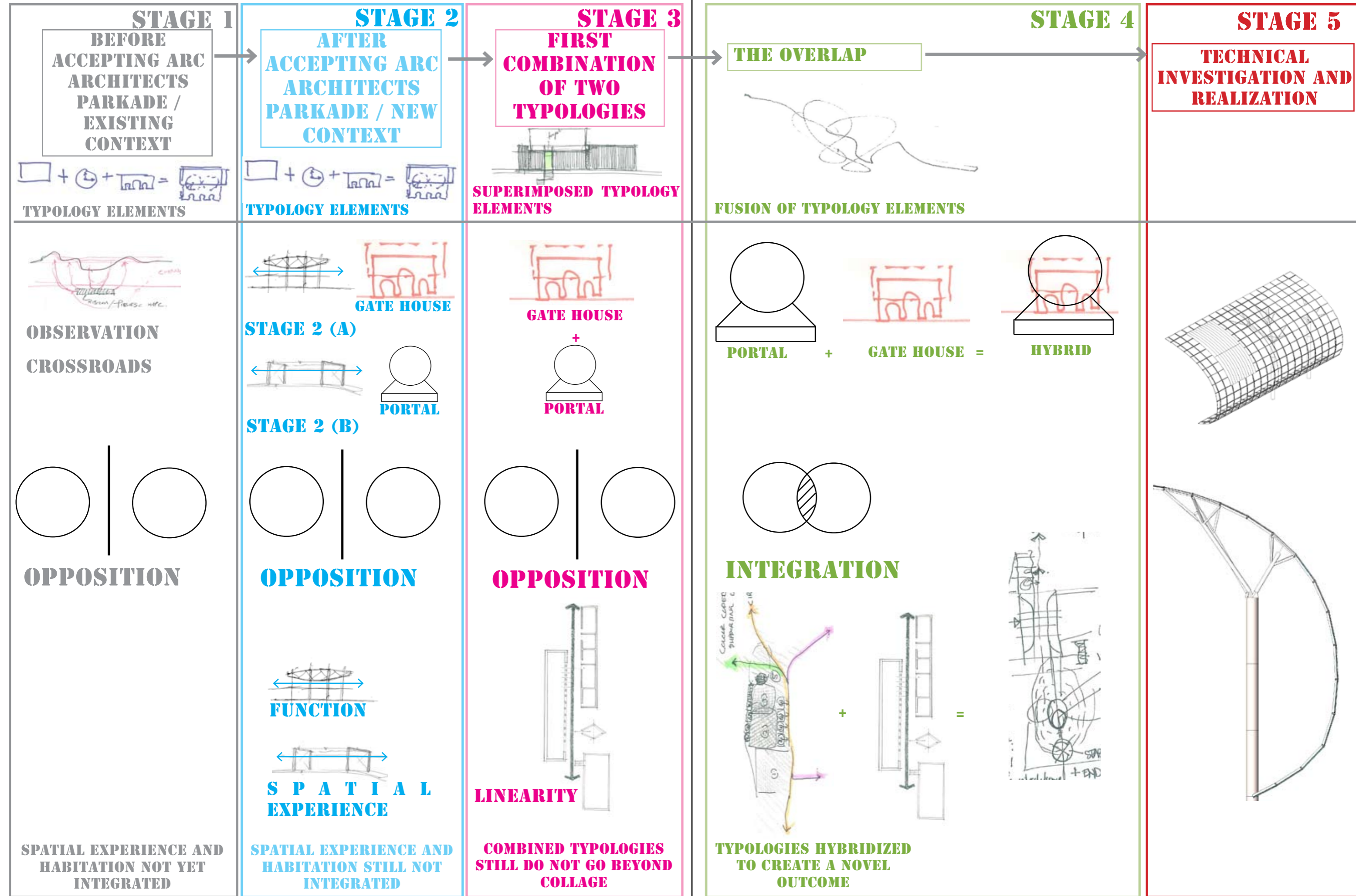
## Summary

Victor Turner (in Dodds, 1992: 82) suggests to take every day elements and rearrange them in ways not experienced every day is to create a “monster”, which will achieve liminality in architecture. The title of this dissertation is a result of this phenomenon. In this design investigation ways to transform liminality into a building are explored. Smith (2000) states, “liminality or the liminal refers to transitional space; neither one place nor another; neither one discipline nor another; rather a thirdspace in-between”. Various devices were examined to facilitate the transition from abstract concept into architectural possibility. The following devices: typology, technology, spatial experience, interlocking volumes, superimposition, programmatic bands and atmospheric effects have been examined. The final product is a fusion of theoretical notions and technology expressed as a hybridized typology, all these qualities are arranged in ways not experienced every day, resulting in a building called the Monster.

“God created paper for the purpose of drawing architecture on it. Everything else is at least for me an abuse of paper.” Alvar Aalto, Sketches, 1978, 104.

This dissertation is structured in such a way that it portrays the process followed in designing the Monster. This process has subsequently been divided into 5 stages. Each stage explores a different element of the design, and is indicated with a specific colour text box. The concepts explored are realized in the final design.

# CONTENTS: STAGES



## THE OBSERVATION

Students are only seen on campus when they are between classes. The “student life” on campus is a conducted during this in between time. Van Gennep (in Smith, 2000) refers to a rite of passage as “the precarious threshold between a person’s previous role in society and their new, evolved existence.” Personally there are similarities between studying and a rite of passage, during the liminal stage the student’s status becomes ambiguous. Students are referred to as students. The student are in a crossroads in their life. Definition of crossroads: (wikipedia: Crossroads) “a location ‘between the worlds’. Symbolically it can mean a locality where two realms touch and therefore represents liminality, a place literally ‘neither here nor there’”. Students are “betwixt and between all fixed points of classification, and thus the form and rules of both their earlier state and state-to-come are suspended” (Palmer, R E. 2001).

## THEORY TEXT BOX

The theoretical premise relates to liminality in architecture. Dodds (1992: 82) stated that “limen signifies threshold”. Aldo Van Eyck (in Smith, 2000) suggested that threshold spaces rely on the “interrelationship between two phenomena rather than their opposition”. These two phenomena in the Monster are the ‘male’ and ‘female’ views of space. According to Luce Irigaray (in Smith, 2000), male space is solid and inflexible, where female space is defined by “open conceptual possibilities.” This in turn is supported by a definition of crossroads. The Monster was specifically designed with the intent to create a hybrid which falls between classifications. Elements like collage, superimposition and fusion were explored to achieve the desired outcome. The outcome not only has a function but also conveys an experience. Based Norberg-Schultz’s definition of path.

## CONTEXT TEXT BOX

This year (2008) is the centenary celebration of the University of Pretoria. The Masters class were assigned projects with the University as the context. My study is located on the Main Campus, in Hatfield. This project is delimited to the main entrance. All entrances into University grounds can be designed in the way suggested by this project to enhance the thresholds. The University held a competition for the design of parkades to be built on campus property. Arc Architects won the competition for the parkade at the main entrance. An assumption of this project is that this parkade will be built and so becomes the context for the Monster. The Monster is situated on the threshold between the outside, the parkade and the inside of campus grounds.

## PRECEDENT TEXT BOX

Precedents were looked at for specific qualities which would contribute to the Monster, such as technology, theoretical elements, spatial experience, organization, planning, design language, contextual response and structure. These precedents were applied as techniques to convert the premise of liminality into a physical reality.

## DESIGN TEXT BOX

The design process was conducted in stages according to the aforementioned. Each stage of the design was approached from a different point of view, yet the overriding focus was to create a building which is a Monster. Only at the end did it become clear how to achieve this. The final design is a fusion of elements distilled from each stage.

## TECHNICAL TEXT BOX

The technical investigation was done to deliberately to imbue the theoretical premise into every element of the building and to support the design and theory rather than to detract from them. Further investigation of the technical stage was done into the building process and possible ways to manufacture spacial parts of the building locally.