

CONCEPTS

ORDERING SYSTEMS

Once the necessary accommodation was established, the spaces were separated into three categories. The first category defined the core functions. The other two categories were based on the African concept of public and ritual/private space. The auditorium, recording studios, archives and ablutions were categorised as the ritual/private spaces because of their fixed nature and specific requirements. The rest of the functions could be categorised as public spaces because the functions did not prescribe any specific spatial requirements.

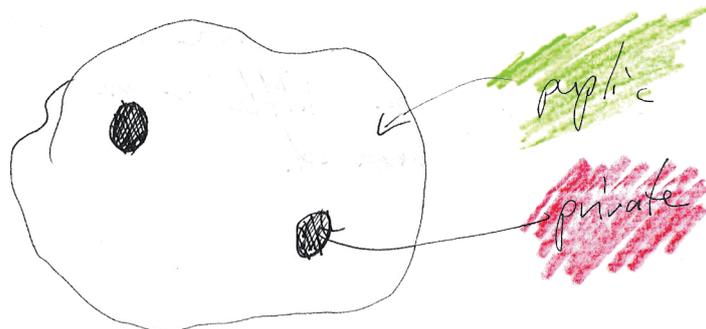


Fig. 49 African concept of space

<i>CORE</i>	<i>PRIVATE/RITUAL</i>	<i>PUBLIC</i>
Entrance/reception	Archives	Public Space
Offices	Recording Studios	Restaurant
Ablutions	Theatre	Small theatre spaces
		Hall

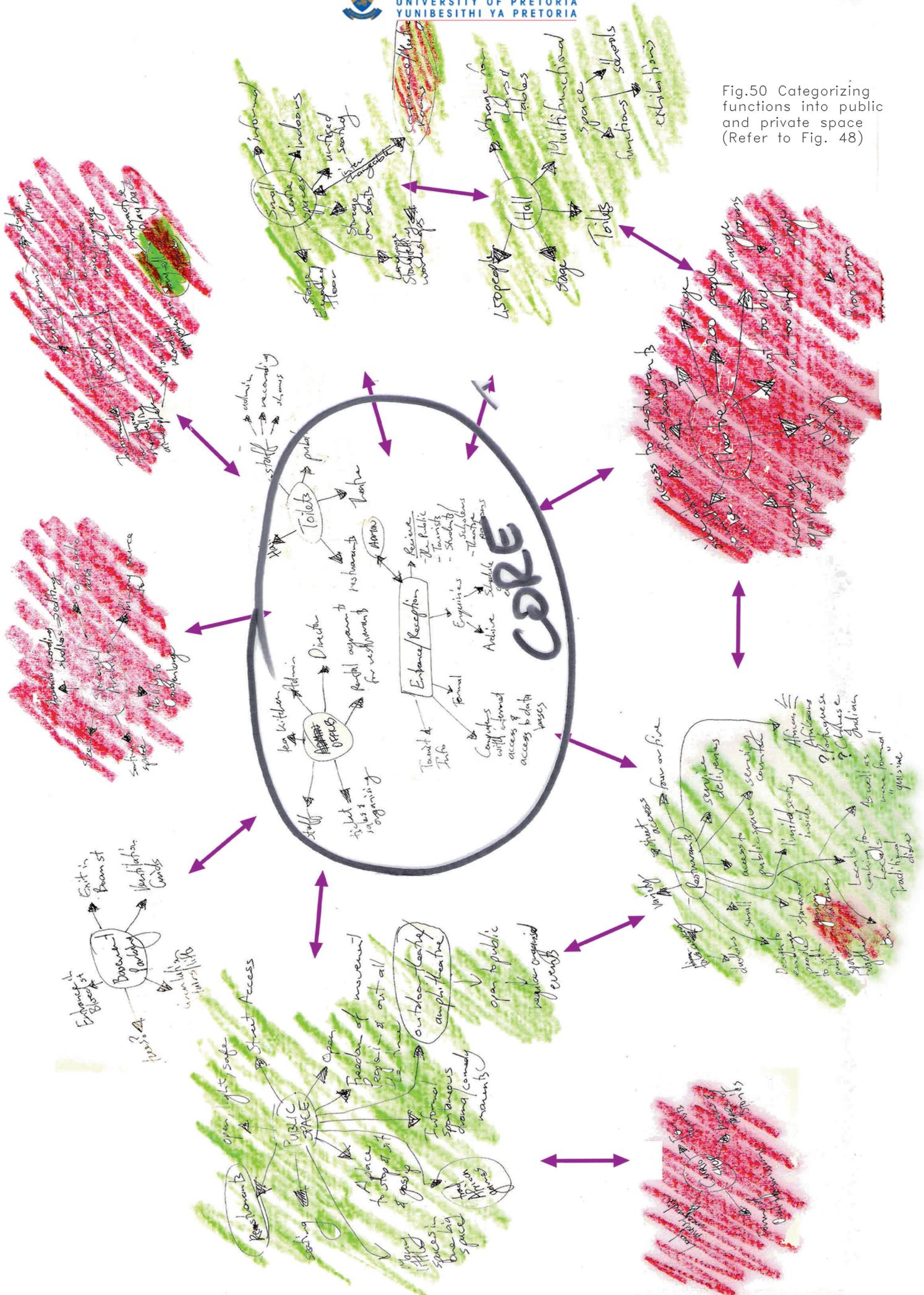


Fig.50 Categorizing functions into public and private space (Refer to Fig. 48)

A second ordering system was developed to establish the transition from the chaotic public space to the quieter spaces necessary for research and archives. The concept worked on the idea of the building being a backdrop to the storyline of a visitors experience within it. The beginning of a persons experience of the building would start in the public space which is compared to the introduction of a tale. The staircase/seating and the reception area would set up expectations, and orientate the person. The body and climax of the story occurs in the auditorium where events occur. The conclusion of the story would take place in conversations over a meal after the event.

The story continues after the actual telling of it has ended through the interpretation and understanding that remains with the visitor, who will reflect on it again at other times. The documenting and recording of stories fits into the interpretation phase, while the archives provide for further understanding and reflection.

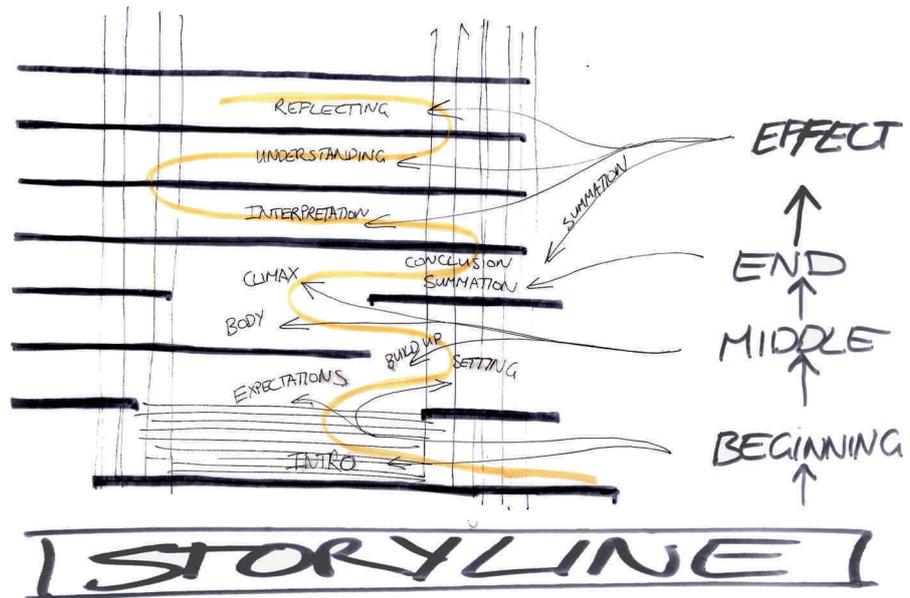


Fig. 51 Storyline concept

The flow and rhythm through the building was based on African oral tales which have an identifiable way of being told. "The narrative is structured in a linear pattern, often interspersed with digressions and marked repetitions." ... "slow rhythm, which might enrage the Western spectator, reflects the African mode of living." [Wynchank:1994:p15] These ideas were kept in mind throughout the design process.

LINEAR PATTERN
DIGRESSIONS
REPETITION (DEFINITE/ASUBW)
SLOW RHYTHM

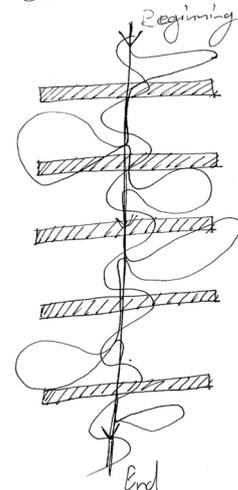
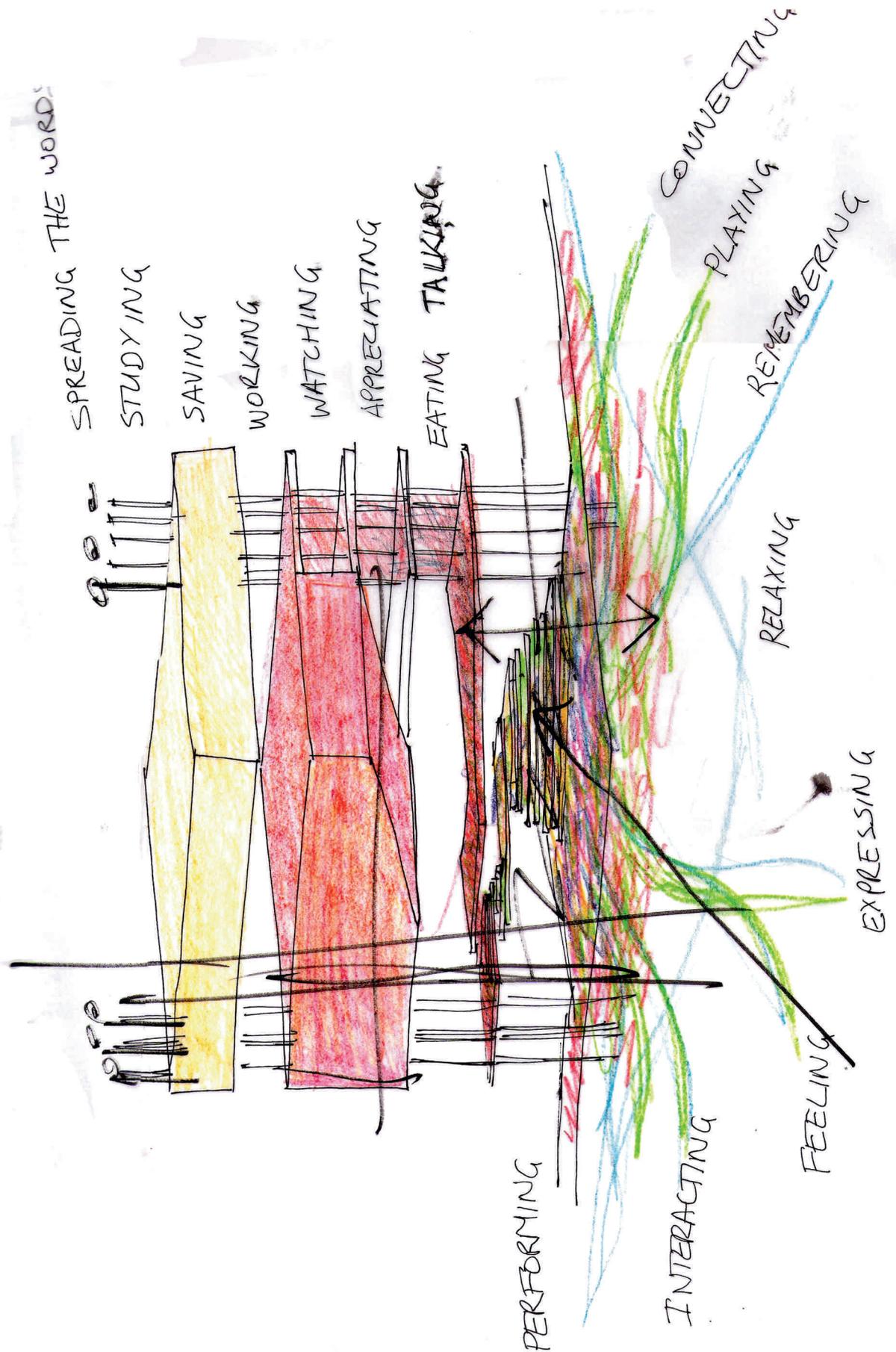


Fig. 52 Diagrammatic interpretation of the telling of African oral tales

Fig. 53 Concept sketch with colour representing desired atmosphere for spaces



A critical decision was made early on to combine the amphitheatre and the public space. It was decided that the seating for the amphitheatre would then double up as the stairs and the main entrance into the building.

DESIGN PHASE A

Once the feeling, vision and accommodation had been determined ideas for the structure needed to be explored. Toyo Ito's Mediatheque in Sendai was investigated as a possible way of resolving the structure and getting light into the deeper parts of the building.

STRUCTURE: TOYO ITO'S MEDIATHEQUE IN SENDAI

The basic idea for the Mediatheque was a large volume of glass, a square plan of 50x50m, and a height of 37m. Three elements of compositions were used: 6 linear planes; 13 reticular columns and an external skin.

The planes are thin square sheets suspended in the void at different heights. The columns are tubular steel structures which support all the floors, permit natural illumination and contain the vertical circulation and ducts. The skin consists of 4 façades and a roof.

Each one using a different architectural solution that accentuates its 2d graphic quality and differentiates it from the others.

The three elements are separate from each other, each being a self sufficient system. The building is therefore not a large solid volume.

It is ephemeral and insubstantial architecture, designed not to last.

The light almost immaterial structures "resembl[e] temporary installations that reflect the fragile dynamism of great Japanese cities." [Maffei, 2002:232]

Each floor contains a different function and different interior designers were used for each. The interiors were designed as installations. Different colours, form and materials create the "effect of stratification as if various fragments of the city had been laid one on top of the other." [Maffei, 2002:232]

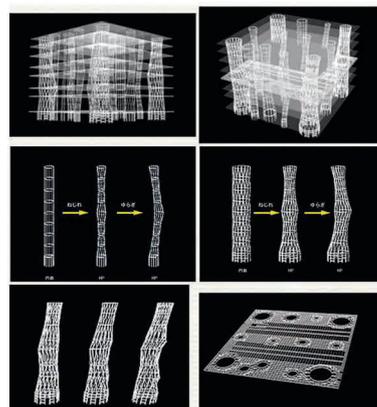
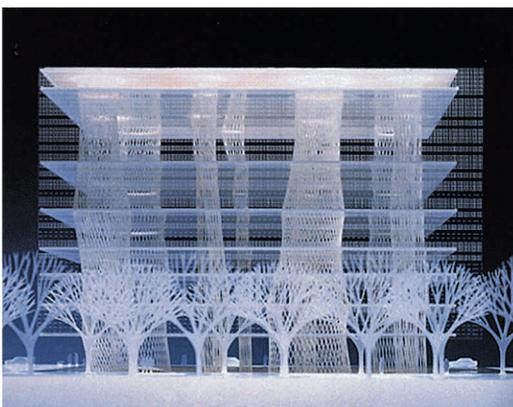
The ground floor contains a covered plaza which can be completely opened onto the urban surroundings and becomes a filter between the building and the city. The upper levels are open plan traversed by the reticular columns. Back areas are used for service functions and staff. The front is completely glazed and faces onto the main street open to the urban landscape. The public spaces are housed therein.

The neutral system of the building allows solutions to be defined floor by floor. The first floor spaces are bound by retractable synthetic white drapes. The second and third floor is laid out as a double volume library with reading rooms. A regular grid of ceiling lamps characterizes the space. On the fourth floor is a gallery with some partitioning that can be moved along tracks in the ceiling to accommodate the space as necessary. The fifth floor is an open plan gallery which can be adapted to any installation. The reticular columns can be left open to let in light or closed off with black drapes. The actual Mediatheque is on the top floor.

A computerized system of rotating mirrors is installed in the upper



Fig. 54 Photo montage of Mediatheque





part c... reflect natural light down to the lower floors, allowing the automatic control of internal illumination.[Maffei, 2002]

- The key concepts identified from the Mediatheque were:
- the reticular structural columns for circulation and illumination
 - the flexible spaces defined by users with drapery or movable partitions
 - The neutral building system allowing solutions to be defined floor by floor
 - The ground floor plaza as filter between city and building

PATTERN

Patterns have played an important role in non-literate African communication. The ability to produce patterns was a very important element of communication where writing had not developed. Patterns of numbers, geometric patterns and rhythmic patterns in beading or weaving had specific meanings and all formed part of African daily existence. An example can be found in the Jokwe people of Angola of a story network. The network is used to tell the story of the beginning of the world. (see fig.) [Zaslavsky,1979]

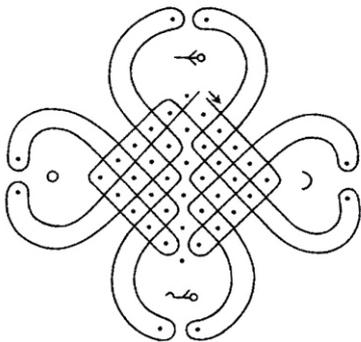


Fig. 55 Jokwe story network depicting the beginning of the world

The design process began by using the idea of a pattern on the floor with the intention of using it as a formula for planning. The site was divided into 6x6m squares incorporating a pattern based on traditional African motifs. It was a conceptual attempt at using a non-volumetric system to generate the building.

The system was too rigid and trying to fit the planning in was impractical. In addition trying to design a pattern was problematic in that it was based on aesthetic appeal and therefore going against the intention of having temporal activity driven spaces.

Conceptually, the idea of the pattern remained but the approach changed. Instead of designing a pattern from which a building could be extracted; the building needed to be designed first and then a pattern would hopefully emerge to be used as an iconic reference for the building. African patterns were often derived from stories or experiences. The message is usually there first and the patterned representation then follows [Zaslavsky:1979]. With this in mind design attempt B focused on getting the relationships and flows between the spaces to work.

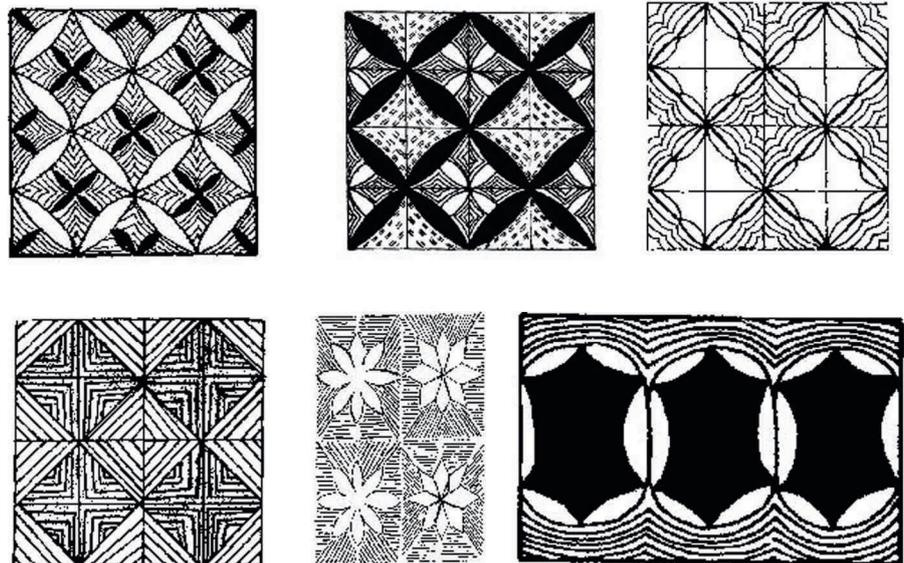
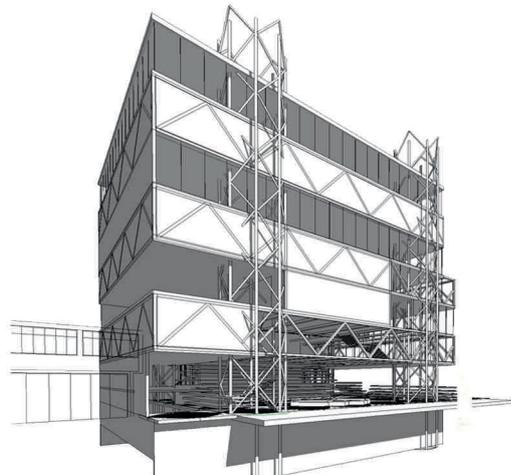
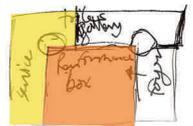
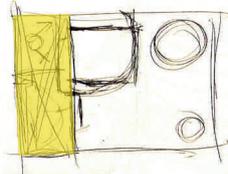
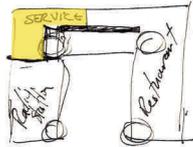
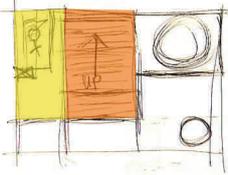
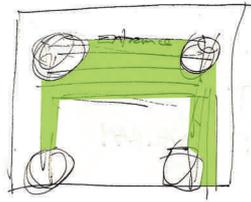
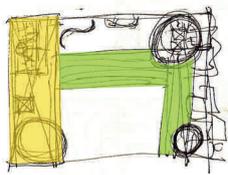
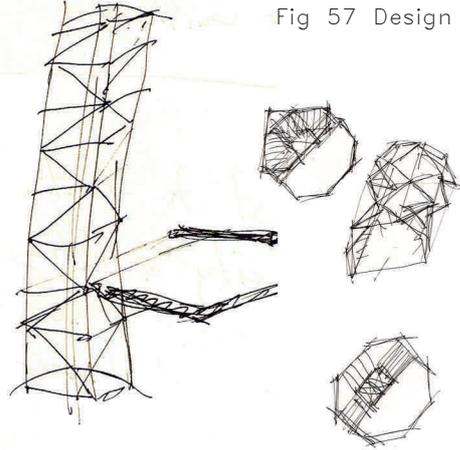
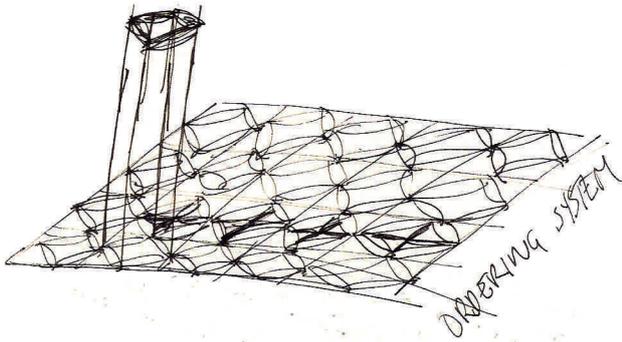
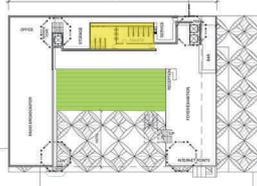
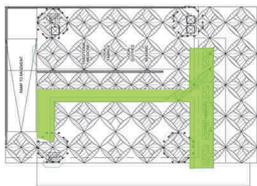


Fig. 56 African motifs

Fig 57 Design Phase A

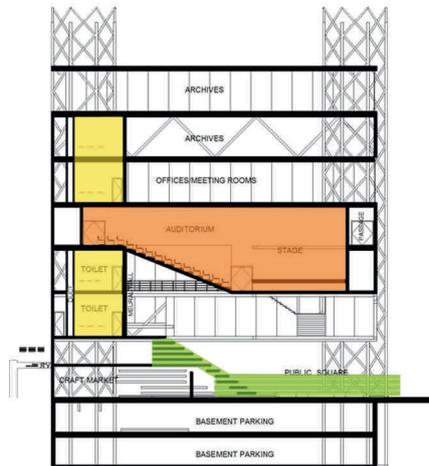


EXTERNAL VIEW SW



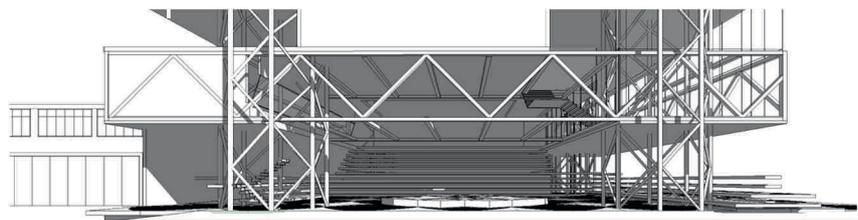
2 SECOND FLOOR

3 THIRD FLOOR



CROSS SECTION

- STAIRCASE/SEATING
- AMPHITHEATRE
- CORE FUNCTIONS



STREET VIEW OF SQUARE