



INTRODUCTION

The term “culture” and what it is that a cultural product or artefact embodies, largely refers to the context the subject or artefact finds itself in. To contextualise and bring meaning to a cultural product, it is best to remain vulnerable to one’s personal- and collective habitus (practical and perceptive environment) in which this phenomenon takes place (Browitt, 2004).

French theorist Pierre Bourdieu’s investigations into cultural theory have outlined 4 distinct ‘areas’ in which contextualisation might take place, in the realm of cultural production: 1. the artefact or work itself; 2. the producers of this work (their individual and collective existence); 3. their objectivity towards the cultural domain they find themselves in and finally, 4. the structure- and existence of this field of production within a larger umbrella context.

The individual and his or her place within this larger cultural context, are relevant factors to contemporary society in the sense that they outline culture as being:

...the currently operative set of meanings utilised by a group which establishes the guidelines for acceptable individual behaviour, and which are unconsciously encoded into a set of shared beliefs and values through the process of socialisation (Davies et al. 2003: 80).

The outcome or success of a cultural product as an entity that affects human behaviour, sits within a framework of the environment, culture and symbol sources (eg. language): key contributors in the reinforcement- and re-negotiation of its meaning.

The architectural interpretation of this contextual model is an imperative for the author's investigation, as the topic of the dissertation deals with products in their physical context.

In South Africa, centres of so-called 'cultural production' contribute generously to the nation's informal economy. Creativity and traditional knowledge work together to create artefacts that imbue the nation's culture. Through engagement with the global economy, it has rightfully earned its position within South Africa's broader culture.

In an article on cultural studies, Helene Lipstadt (2003) argues that 'art' is a field that enjoys a certain independence, but that it can be placed within a hierarchy because of its encoded meanings and layers. Craftsmanship is broadly identified as an apprentice to art in particular, illustrating that the two are co-dependent entities. The relationship is evident here, and no distinction is made between

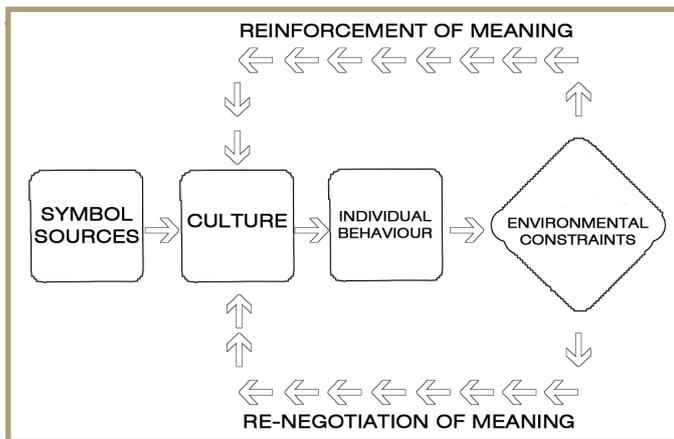


Figure 1.1: Diagram illustrating the individual within a set of constraints, in relation to a specific cultural context (Davies et al. 2003: 80).



1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Craft has not been acknowledged by the proposed client as 'creative industry' and as a relevant entity representative of creativity in a local context, as it has on an international level. Apart from the fact that crafts contribute economically on a global scale in terms of poverty upliftment, the sector can progress in terms of its reception by the nation (S.A.B.C., 18 April 2011). Perceptions have illustrated a naïve approach to craft's place within the realms of 'high society' as there seems to be a lack of knowledge pertaining to their origins and whether they are still relevant in a contemporary South Africa (Hurcombe, 2007: 535).

Craft as a part of design can also enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, but it has been marginalized to the extent that it does not. Souvenirs and curios don't do justice to the sector as representations of South African culture, but do contribute to the raising of these objects to a level with artistic value. Craft as an integral part of the creative fields, rightfully earns its place in the arts (Lipstadt, 2003: 393).

The candidate proposes to explore interior design as a form of cultural production as outlined by Bourdieu, after which the crafts will be evaluated in a similar manner in order for them to be understood in their current environment.

1.2 VISION

...interior architecture has an important role to play in the sustainable reuse of the built environment (Coles and House, 2007: 10).

A craft and design centre that focuses on the production and potential of the craft industry is envisioned. This will benefit the production of cultural products, enabling those products not held in high esteem to be elevated to a level enjoyed by other fields, once the entities of craft and design have shown (through analysis) that they are co-dependent within a specific cultural context. Craft is anticipated to be elevated to design's perceived status because it too harbours the cultural capacity necessary to be conducive to users and society. This will benefit the interior design realm as an entity that sets out to "edit cultural capital" and expose its potential (I.F.I., 2011).

1.3 THEORY OUTLINE

Theories pertaining to the culture of craft will be investigated, as well as architectural theories: phenomenology in particular. These are relevant to understand the history of the occurrence of craft. This aids understanding of what its relevance is in present-day and how particular contemporary notions of craft application have originated. Focus is placed on South African crafts and international innovation, the latter specifically regarding the development of crafts as architectural- and spatial media. Theoretical approaches to building sensitivity are applied in order for the reuse of existing fabric to be carried out successfully.



1.4 PRAGMATIC APPROACH

For the interior intervention to take place successfully, the candidate will have to gain an understanding of the following:

1. The proposed site as a vacant building and its immediate physical- and social context
2. Adaptive reuse strategies
3. Materials for use in products and space and how innovation can influence implementation
4. What local- and global perceptions of craft objects and design objects are prevalent amongst a variety of cultures in the City of Pretoria
5. The inner workings of existing production centres

1.5 REVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Symbol sources: trace and borrow from traditional- and current trends, in determining the nature of the intervention's programme- which product will be the focus?
2. Precedent studies: typological and theoretical precedents that highlight interior design and product design both as craft-inspired 'products' and results of cultural production
3. Context analysis: immediate environment as influence on interior scale
4. Building analysis: reacting to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats



1.5.1 ADAPTIVE REUSE

According to Kincaid (2002: 10), some of the reasons for adaptive reuse strategies are buildings that either become susceptible to certain changing requirements or those that have been exposed to imbalances in supply and demand for their use.

These occurrences can be amended by adaptively reusing a vacant building or replacing redundant buildings with new buildings. A building that has been vacant for a long period of time needs to be considered in its future use and the author will need to take note of: potential occupiers, the rehabilitation of the building, renewal or upgrading of the building interior, refurbishing or adapting for different types of occupancy, and finally, levels of demolition if demolition is required (Kincaid, 2002: 11).

Kincaid explores supply, demand and performance characteristics as well as decision procedures for the reuse of buildings that the author intends to explore in order to optimise the vacant building. For these to take effect, a careful analysis of the building and site is required: size, height, depth of building, structure, envelope, interior, layout, access and services. Vacant buildings pose an opportunity with regard to “found” elements: construction and materials. Furthermore, an understanding of the possible development strategies will be considered: adaptability for future uses, flexibility, extensions to the structure and/ or demolition elements.

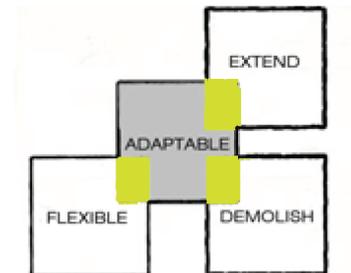


Figure 1.2: Adaptation of vacant building development potential as outlined by Kincaid (Kincaid, 2002).