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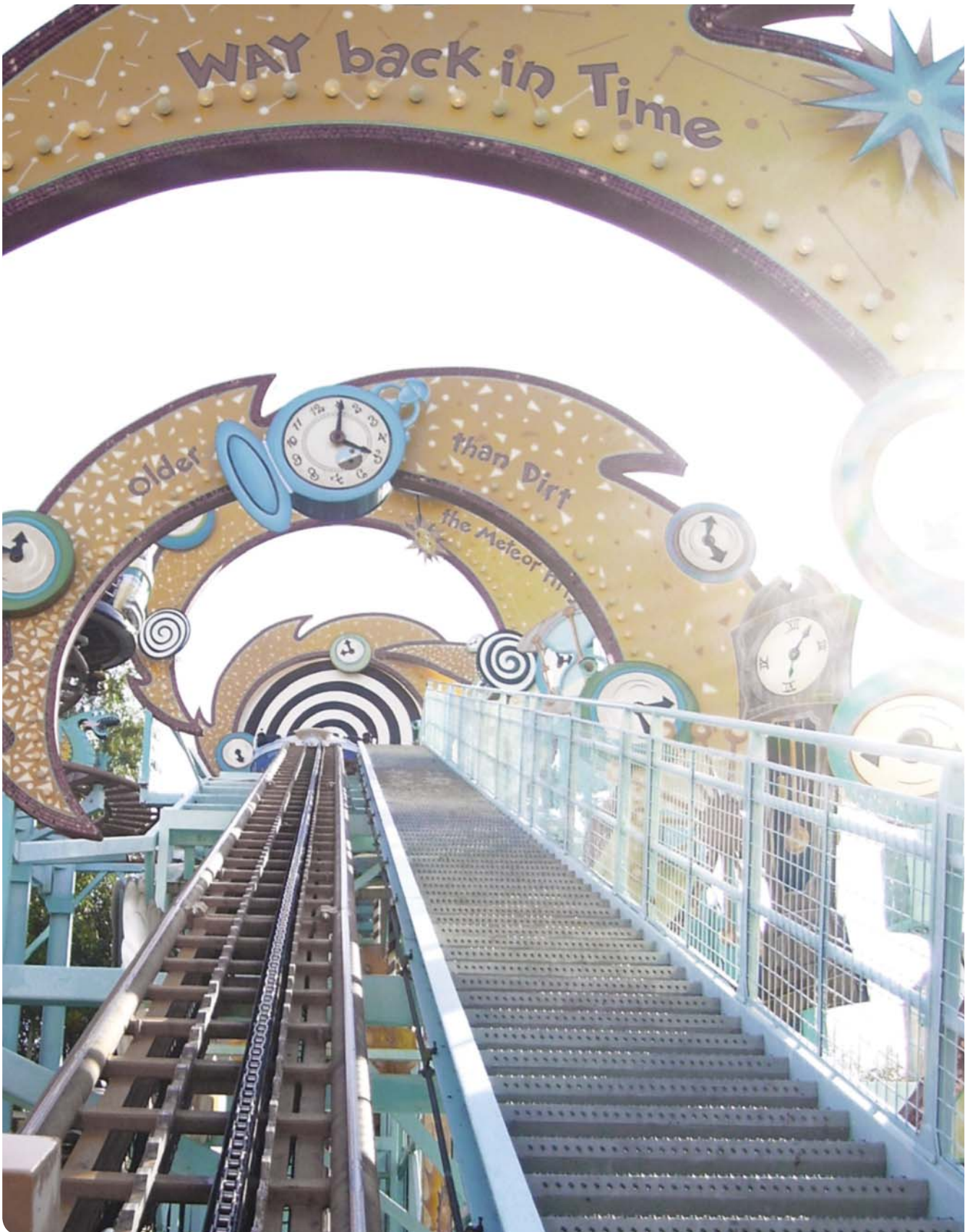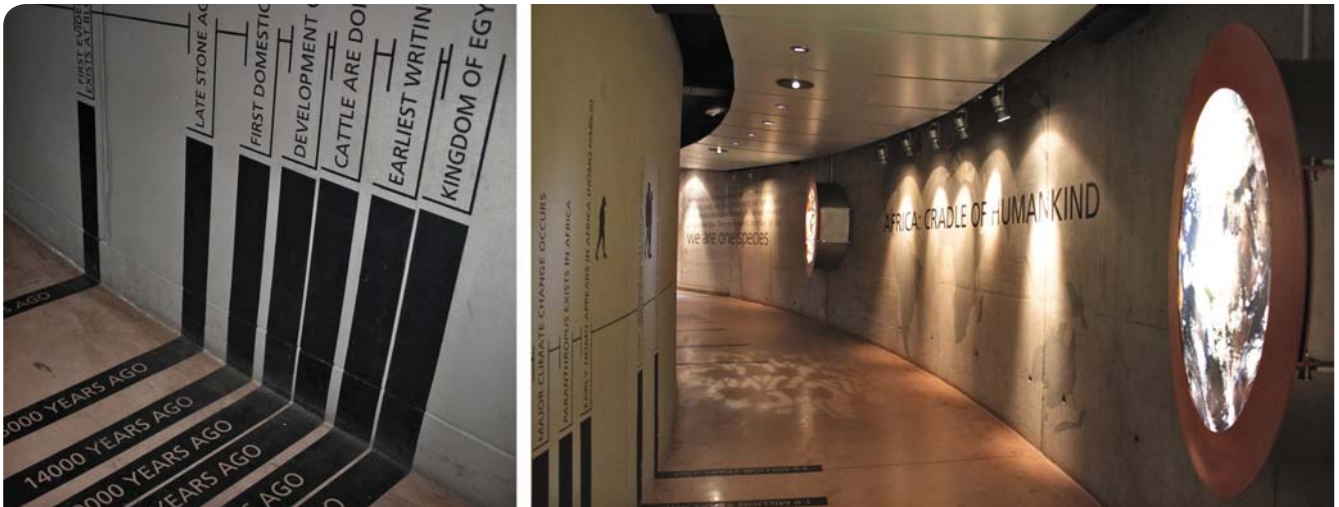
ECTURE

CAPISM

3. MICRO
THEORY

The micro theoretical discourse within the following chapter presents the issues within representational aesthetic categories which derive from the level of the image, production and the object. This micro level however does project into the metaphysical, the virtual, and challenges man's perceptions of authenticity and reality (IMG 022).

IMG 021: opposite: Representation of a journey into the past on a 'dinoland' rollercoaster in Disney's Animal Kingdom, to communicate extinction

IMG 022: Representation of a journey from the past into the future on a ramp or tunnel in Maropeng

3.1 REPRESENTATION

Architecture is a mimetic art not to be reduced to imitation. Play is a representation (*mimesis*) of action (*praxis*) in that it also for that reason represents people as doing something or experiencing something (Vesely, 2004: 367). The outlines of the archaic mind had to be welded to brute matter by something, which makes the outline comprehensible or perceptible, and that is ornament. Decorations and ornamentation give structures a quality unique to their designer and maker, a reminder that they were made and conceived by people who had laboured and left their mark (Brawne, 2003: 139). It can be

deduced that this personal mark is viewed as almost spiritual. Modern man's vandalism, idolisation of fashions and brands are debatably exemplary of the fact that buildings do not allow for the making of one's mark.

Vesely (2004: 269) illustrated the confusion and deceit of the modern situation: how art, a revelation of the truth of reality preserved in symbolic representation, differs from aesthetic representation, created and experienced as a source of sensation. The crude product of nature, the object fashioned by

IMG 023: Measuring from the measurements of nature: Henry Parker, student measuring the Temple of Castor & Pollux in Rome. Soane Museum London (Adapted by the author from Brawne, 2003:113)

the industry of man acquires their reality, their identity and value, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality (Eliade, 1974: 5). Among countless stones, one stone becomes sacred; through a force that may also reside in the substance of the object or in its form; a rock reveals itself to be sacred because it is incompressible, invulnerable, it represents that which man is not (Eliade, 1974: 4). The spirit that animates ornament is said to be the very same spirit that animates the architectural whole (Harries, 1998: 53).

According to Betsky (2000: 26) power is no longer contained in plants or animals or even in materials we extract from the land, but in the information that courses through the sprawling networks of the electrosphere that span the globe, coalescing on demand in nodes of coherence: computers, telephones and servers which have also become comfortably individual, and mobile. Mobile technologies and art point out to humanity new paths and directs to the future tearing man from his comforts; the work of art is revolutionary the house conservative, conserving comfort in the present. Harries (1998: 51), states that decoration betrays the revolutionary potential of art, by mediating between art and the everyday and accommodating the comfort of public. The word 'aesthetic,' belongs to the domain of instrumental representation where art is subjected to the criteria of science but, as a consequence, is isolated from the practical markings of life and from ethics. This is the basis of the 'crisis of representation' (Vesely, 2004: 371-372).

3.1.1 SOFT EVIDENCE

The decay of material evidence is a recurrent problem that troubles archaeologists (Egenter, 1992: 129). The *primitive stage* was represented by fibrous organic materials (lost soft evidence) that could be worked by hand alone; the hand should be regarded as the first tool. In this way ornamentation more or less becomes a structural relic of vanished soft technology (Egenter, 1992: 119). The soft technologies of crafting with the hand should be viewed as true representation and ornamentation.

The Ionic column, as example, shares a remarkable sequence (IMG 024); it was originally sacred, bore the vestments of a goddess and protected the first city as beacons in the open (exterior or not enclosed). It was then brought under the Greek's temple roof, retaining a traditional significance. Thence it journeyed to Europe, from where it was distributed all over the world as a symbol of European prestige. Is such symbolism more enduring than stone (Egenter, 1992: 125)? As the creative idea and symbolism of the Ionic column shifts from environment to environment, its physical and metaphysical function changes. In effect, the spiritual function (still with physical use) is traded for the physical function (symbolism is degraded to decoration).

Man's creations were originally made in conjunction with and directly from nature (including organic and anorganic matter) and natural material. It is evident that the natural has been retracted from this equation as man became entrapped in a lineage of 'measuring the measured' (IMG 023); that which is already related from the natural. This loss of the natural could explain the monumentalisation of architecture.

3.1.2 SEND & RECEIVE

Scientific judgements on beauty (subjective) can only be made if based on how effectively information is transmitted (Egenter, 1992: 63). What complicates the matter is that what a building communicates depends on what we want to see, what our eye expects to have presented (Brawne, 2003: 11). Beals and Hoijer (1966) claims there is sophistication and maturity in the art of all peoples but it can only be appreciated if a comprehensive understanding of the specific culture that produced the work exists. All of art everywhere communicates whether or not the artist is conscious of such communication, and whether or not a society recognizes the art medium as a means of communication; thereby eliminating the concept that only high art (excluding crafts) is capable of symbolic communication.

ORIGINS OF THE ISHTAR-SIGN (STRUCTURAL SYMBOLISM)

IMG 024: Soft to hard: The evolution of the Ionian column, from the reed type signs of the Sumerian goddess Ishtar, as predicted by German archaeologist, Walter Andræ (Adapted by the author from Egenter, 1992)

Despite general assumptions that the inundation of images leads to an *information society* which promotes high levels of communication, this *ecstasy of communication* has precisely the opposite effect: *we live in a world, where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning*. The sign no longer has any meaning (Leach, 2000: 1). *Thus meaning is exhausted in the staging of meaning* (Leach, 2000: 2). The most economic and efficient store of information about the real world is the real world itself (Vesely, 2004: 312). The wholes established by technology do not make us feel complete or satisfied; they are still experienced as splintered wholes.

According to Leach (2000: 9) art will always have a *meaning*, but that *meaning* is merely projected on to art and is determined by factors such as context, use, and associations. Hence Leach argues that to decontextualise a work is effectively to desemanticise it, and, by extension, to recontextualise it is to invest it with another meaning. This is not to deny that aloneness and emptied spaces do not evoke powerful emotions, and perhaps the distancing from a real situation does itself promote and transmit an 'art' quality (Martienssen, 1976: 12). However, the appreciation of things depends heavily on the premeditative state of the viewer instilled by the site.

Within the depthlessness of our current culture of the instantaneous, the significance of context is eroded (Leach, 2000: 87). The loss of meaning equates to the loss of place and the focus on surface. In the process of reading an object as a mere image, surface driven practice – deeper meaning is lost. The image is all there is. Everything is transported into an aesthetic realm and valued for its surface appearance, its logo (programmed for homogenous space) (Leach, 2000: 5). Human contact too has become a surface to surface, depthless encounter. Betsky (2000: 136) - urging architecture to once again be the hearth around which society gathers - would settle for an architecture that is 'no more than the flicker of a screen' if it is able to intrigue society.

3.1.3 FLAT IMAGE

The lower an ornament's representational profile, the greater the need for colour to render the ornamentation sufficient (Harries, 1998: 126). Ornamentation has deflated to a flat colourful depiction of reality: the image. The image itself has become the new reality or hyperreality (Leach, 2000: 3). It is a world of appearances propagated by the media, a commodified world of advertising (Leach, 2000: 57), where *the great majority of the public feel real satisfaction in 'recognizing' a work of art instead of recognizing themselves in it* (Restany, 1998). All that once was directly lived and deeply experienced has become mere surfaced representation. Frascari (1991: 26) adds another dimension, in stating that dissection (a means of formulating anatomical knowledge) is a favourite conceptual tool of many contemporary architects for dealing with the problem of architectural representation.

Even with the notion of the 'world as picture' in mind, we have to look beyond the directly visible spectator's setting to understand the structure that holds the scene together and that gives it meaning (Vesely, 2004: 191). Harries (1998: 132), views all the world's creatures as a book, a picture, a mirror, and a truthful sign of man's life, death, condition, and destiny. The image of a place should no longer be the static appearance or reflection of the thing but its icon's presence in the story that is built up around it. The face (brand) of the product is in a state of continuous change, for architecture to escape such a world, representation needs to once again reach deeper than surface on all levels.

3.1.4 PRODUCT

The history of architectural theory shows an obsession with product, very little importance is placed on process. Stone ornament simply replaced the body of timber construction - unfaithful to its timber origins (Rykwert, 1972: 109-110). Man turned obsessed with the visual attributes of buildings rather than how they came to be (Brawne, 2003: 81). According to Penn (2005: 180-192) the ferocious commercial agenda (often targeted at infants) producing overstimulating environments modelled on the excess of the shopping mall and amusement park, and the hyper-material culture has the same effect; where

children are only introduced to the packaged 'present' of commercial product lines, the product's 'past' and 'future' remain mysteries.

The modern aesthetic nature of architecture is the *fashionable*, which as a means of deconstructing the material independence of the discipline becomes the mediator between the tectonics of architecture and the experiencing body, *making architecture more palatable and, ironically, something to be consumed* (Da Costa *et al*, 2008). The fashionable moves freely, in small cycles, within the bigger movements of the collective.
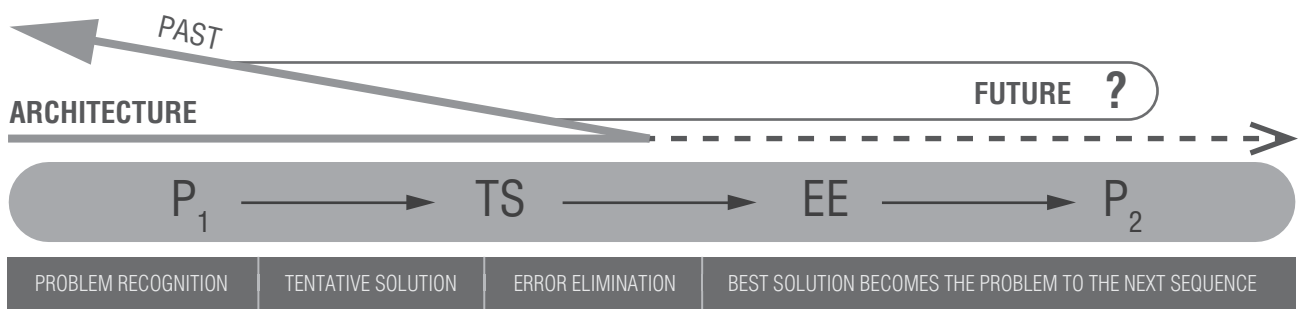
It should, however, be noted that by its very nature architecture is opposed to the economic imperative that demands first of all efficiency (Harries, 1998: 29). Martienssen (1976: 2) stated that the definitive names of the parts of a building: floors, walls, roofs, doors, windows etc., restrict the architect to a certain kind of performance. To escape from this production and rational restriction 'the names of the parts' should be viewed as mere metaphors. If we were to allow the economic imperative to embrace the whole of life, human being, too, would be reduced to just other resource material for the process of production (Harries, 1998: 50). As Egenter (1992: 103) rightfully points out, technical society no longer has any idea about the use of art, apart from its investment value. **The dominant straight line is not a creative, but a reproductive line, which belongs to the world of production (IMG 026).**

In the condition of excess - when everything becomes political, sexual, and aesthetic - any specificity in these domains is lost. When everything becomes aesthetic, the very notion of art disappears; the art world folds back on itself, then forced to dematerialize itself through minimalism, erases itself (Leach, 2000: 6-7).

3.1.5 SEDUCTION & MEANING

Seduction extracts meaning from discourse and detracts it from its truth (IMG 021); it attempts to enchant the viewer purely through visuals, to prevent any deeper level of inquiry. Leach (2000: 71) therefore contrasted seduction to interpretation. However, there was once a *golden age* of seduction, when *seduction*, *valour*, and *honour* were all part of a polite world of intrigue. This age has been covered by the deceitful filter of commercialism and rationalism. With the advent of the industrial revolution, seduction became eclipsed by an emphasis on *production*, with its concern to make everything clear and objectifiable (Leach, 2000: 73). True artwork, (with origin as valuable sacred ritual objects) became secularized as aesthetic forms, and later lost all meaning in the age of mechanical reproduction. Leach (2000: 75) gathers that seduction, like art, has been reduced to *the endless reproduction of a form without content*. Production has eclipsed the romantic seduction in all aspects of cultural life. The world is without seduction and meaning, without Anima.

| PROBLEM RECOGNITION | TENTATIVE SOLUTION | ERROR ELIMINATION | BEST SOLUTION BECOMES THE PROBLEM TO THE NEXT SEQUENCE |

IMG 025: Diagram illustrating the issues related to the progression of architecture (Adapted and illustrated by the author from Brawne. 2003: 33)

IMG 026: Bending the straight line: A metaphor to the style of the freehand line

3.2 ENCLOSURE

Martienssen (1976: 153) formed the metaphor of the *play-pen*, defined as a small space where the child can assemble his own desired equipment and provide for his own small industries. The opportunity presents itself to elaborate on Martienssen's *play-pen* for the child by adding the concept of the 'cage' for the animal, and the enclosure of man within himself paradoxically desperate to escape both from boredom, and an overload of spectacle (IMG 029). Most environments that do not work are static and sterile. Adults in the form of professional artists and architects have all the fun playing with their own concepts and planning alternatives; the builders have all the fun building environments; thus all the fun and creativity have been stolen; the community (including children) has been deprived of creative freedom.

According to Benjamin consciousness serves as a reservoir of energy to dampen the energies outside acting as a guard against stimuli (Leach, 2000: 42). Thus excessive spectacles can lock man up in himself. The ancient Greek term, *aesthesis*, referred not to abstract theories of beauty but to sensory perceptions; the raising of one's consciousness of sensory matters in excess – smell, taste, touch, sound, and appearance – allows a corresponding indifference to descend like a blanket over all else. It becomes a womblike enchanting of the individual, a semi permeable membrane that ensures a state of constant gratification by filtering out all that is undesirable (Leach, 2000: 44).

In the excessive intoxicating world of the image, the aesthetics of architecture threaten to become the anaesthetics of architecture (Leach, 2000: 45). Distraction becomes a form of business (Leach, 2000: 77). We are enclosed in a realm of flashing distraction, made effortless by invisible technologies. The flicker of form we see in distraction, out of the corner or our eye, makes more sense than the monuments intended to hold our attention (Betsky, 2000: 52).

3.2.1 MEMORY

The transformation of building space into place depends on a prior sense of place (Harries, 1998: 213). Human understanding needs a mental vocabulary of images (based on memory) for abstract categories can only be reached through such graphic representations (Frascari, 1991: 45). A visual vocabulary is utilised to make visual choices and these choices are most frequently made on the basis of known, preferred forms (Brawne, 2003: 71). Brawne (2003: 57) states that even within highly original projects this mental baggage is present.

However, before mental baggage was predominantly visual propaganda it consisted of a wider range of situations experienced – which is still present but not accessible due to the overload of images of product. Vesely describes this type of memory as never being of an isolated thing, it seems to be triggered by global similarities to previously experienced situations rather than by any number of individual facts and features (Vesely, 2004: 101). Perhaps instinct should be viewed as a pure memory, free of the doctrines of historic and worldly memories.

Children's memories are temporarily (before the real world sets in) free of this *sediment*; their creations are thus hypothetically unrationalised and uncensored by reality. The child perceives the world as new, hypothetically similar to how first man viewed the world as new; everything is strange and exciting (poetic), it could be permissible to conceptually deduce that the child is therefore the closest form of being on earth still related to archaic man. It should also be noted here that technology may flood society's memory (anaesthetic of memory) at a rate previously unknown to man, thus depriving man of sentiment, and romanticism, concepts that are easily equated with artistic and poetic notions. The Jungian view - *that the abundance of animal symbolism in the art of all periods indicates a wish to embrace into our lives not the extrinsic nature of each beast, but their shared intrinsic quality* (the instinctual) - seems to apply well here (Aldersey-Williams, 2003: 41). Memory could metaphorically be viewed as a photo-tropism hormone that directs man's progress.

3.2.2 STYLE

Contemporary architecture should reject style (the continuous reiteration of the sediment of creativity, condemning invention to a static existence). This is not to be confused with Leach's statement that *the absolute rejection of style becomes style* (Leach, 2000: 11). Thus static architectural design is an architecture bound to the laws of solid historical stylistic and material continuity (formal human sediment). This sediment is due to human sentiment, monumental and commemorative in nature, produced by following a strict rational approach to design. This emerged into the current static, monotonous state of cities that are placed (sit heavily on top of the earth) as opposed to blended within the physical and metaphysical surrounding. To clarify, every architectural problem rightfully demands an entirely innovative solution, (Brawne, 2003: 121). Thus, the existing visual language from a style should not be used directly (without internalising the process and context of the intervention).

The author's interpretation is that *Style* originated from a temporal art (collective to earth), a part of the shared spirit of place (the notion of space was still young), nationalism localised style (style became representative of the collective ego of communities), imperialism distributed style with the claiming of space, revolution turned against imperialism (ironically decontextualised style remained, the owner changed), with democracy, individualised, without place society is left confused. Without reason to congest – there is no enemy, and no excitement. The formation of identity has started over, unfortunately formed around branding (style), a scramble for economic success. Style is not, and should not become an issue (IMG 028).
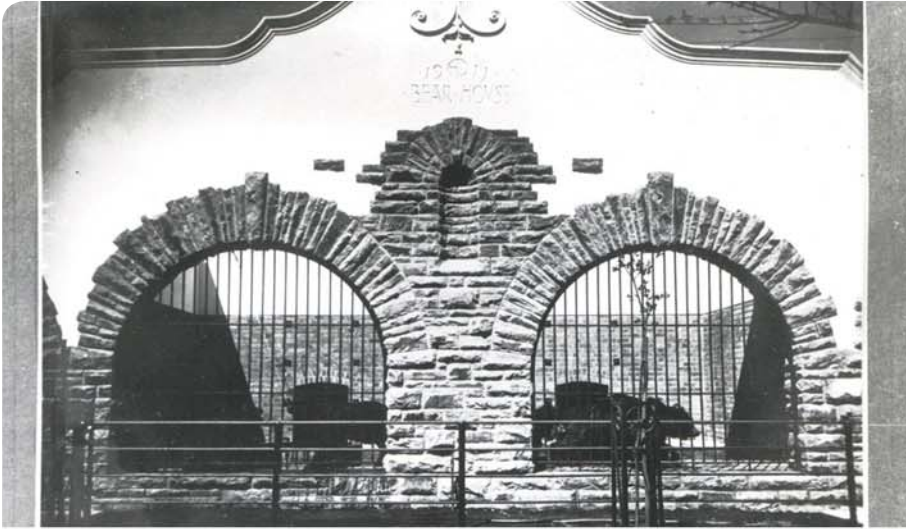
IMG 028: **top:** NZG Bear enclosure photographed in 1911, in use as a bear exhibit. **centre:** NZG Old bear enclosure used for educational exhibition space, 1992. **bottom:** The bear enclosure is currently used as a souvenir shop, 'Zoovenir,' decorated with Ndebele patterns. 26 April 2011

IMG 029: **opposite:** Lion entertainment ride in NZG competing with the real escapism the lion exhibit can provide

3.3 ESCAPISM

What prevents the world from 'soaring out of the earth's sight,' what opens human beings to material transcendence, this transcendence within the sensible, is above all, the body. To be in the presence of the earth is inevitably to be affected, moved, claimed (Harries, 1998: 159). Through signs and similes, we ascend by the means of visible things to those things invisible (Frascari, 1991: 51). This gateway between the visible (reality) and the invisible (virtual) has been open since the beginning of time. For Bataille the only way for man to escape the architectural chain gang is to escape from, or lose his own head (dismemberment of meaning); in other words, to create architecture that doesn't force semantics and subjective thought but is only set on space (Hollier, 1993).

It is the author's opinion that in war driven ages or times of need, art serves as an essential means of escape; in times of peace it becomes an individual luxury, driven by critique. Perhaps the world's current obsession with the *image* should be viewed as *escapism* from boredom. Design becomes driven by the escapism of the designer's mind (sub-conscious image), hence the *landscapes* of memory and the dream become the 'place' to reference nostalgically, to react on. The product becomes hyper naively positive, and thus an idealistic form of progression – a premeditation of the ideal reality.

The human being is a citizen of two worlds, entangled by his body in matter and rationale, but also able to transcend such entanglement, lifted by spirit to a realm of thought and freedom.

3.3.1 IMAGINATION & DREAM PROGRESSION

The pursuit of aesthetic purity has to lead the architect to create utopian fantasies, difficult or impossible to realize. Reality demands compromises, non aesthetic considerations (Harries, 1998: 26).

According to Frascari (1991: 46) dreams could be seen as a hypothetical design of the unknown; a rhetorical procedure within the labyrinth of the reflections about the physical and metaphysical possibilities of things. A dream is a mode of production by which the images (*subnotioni*) can be manipulated through dimensional and scale changes (*aumentazioni* and *diminuzioni*), combinations and analogies (*proporzioni*) resulting in the generation of new forms and understandings (Frascari, 1991: 46). Image always precedes reality, without the ideas in comic books the first moon landing would have been impossible.

Brawn (2003: 33) states that all built outcomes enter the stock of existing buildings and influences our perception of the next problem (IMG 025). What we know contributes to what we make, and what is already made contributes substantially to what it is possible to know (Vesely, 2004: 6). However dream-architecture directs architectural progression beyond the rational. Genuine dwelling means not so much a being at home but at most a continuous journeying home, a continuous homecoming, haunted by changing dreams of home (Harries, 1998: 213). Architecture should accommodate such dream journeys by becoming dream architecture – a brief escape from reality.

Public space has always been where we come to appear in finery, to participate in rituals and to lose ourselves in a fantasy world where we have a role beyond ourselves (Betsky, 2000: 50). Frascari (1991: 84) requests a return to *Mysterium Tremendum*, a forgotten dimension of Western thought, the sacred space of the active imagination, a space of extraordinary fantasy that is different from the space of ordinary fantasy and imagination.

The journey of the eye which does not involve movement of the body provides perhaps one of the most important aesthetic experiences in architecture. A zone may be occupied, used in fact, if it is visually available (Martienssen, 1976: 16). The child projects imagination on to images when engaging with it, hence taking ownership of it. Both these notions metaphysically *plasticise* the rational into something the mind plays with before the body can engage physically.

3.3.2 SKETCH

Man's first recorded attempts to define reality were not words but drawings (Egenter, 1992: 105). Designers similarly come to understand their problems through sketches. This process might be called analysis through synthesis. *In a professional culture of parallel motions, set squares, tracing paper, and ultimately, computers, a culture trapped within the ideological strictures... of capitalism, the separation between spatial practices and representations of space has become complete* (Leach, 2000: 10).

Freehand illustrators question the predominantly square environment; computers have become the digital age version of paper and pen, just as fluid in nature. Computers can no longer be blamed for this rectilinear phenomenon. Hundertwasser wanted mould - subjected to its organic law of expansion - to ferment and explode the straight line in structures (Restany, 1998).

Sometimes the hand does something that the eye then re-interprets and you get an idea from it (Lawson, 1994: 98). Sketches should be adapted, illustrated in detail (beyond popular diagrammatic drawings); detail illustrated environments could aid in the formation of analogy. By completing drawings and making them beautiful, awareness is created of the real elements that will account for such beauty in the completed structure. Architecture should once again place its trust in the intuitive mind and the intuitive hand, as tools of the intuitive spirit (IMG 031).

"Personally I am wary of the modernist contention that ornament functions as literal 'sign' and is therefore restrictive of interpretation. Rather, I think ornament functions as a kind of virtual narrative gateway to alternative spaces implied by the ornament.... Carved wave motifs suggesting actual sea, historical details like columns suggesting both the times and regions of their origins. Or spaces and ideas entirely supplied by the viewer with no relation to the original intent. Most importantly, I feel that the concern over ornamental signification is moot, because meaning is entirely inferred by the reader of space not the author.... (more or less Derrida's contention as to text, only here applied to the grammar of ornament). What ornament supplies is not a constraining narrative determined by the author, but a liberating fund of imagery out of which each reader constructs personal narrative. Environments that are rich in ornament are attractive precisely because of this enabling function and environments without ornament are notoriously difficult to attract people to, despite their popularity in critical discourse," (Rohde, 2011).

REALISTIC NATURAL HABITATS

REAL HABITAT REPRODUCED IN GENERAL APPEARANCE, LAND FORMATION, PLANT LIFE, MAXIMUM RESULTS FOR ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR & VISITOR EDUCATION

EXTENSSIVE RESEARCH REQUIRED, TIME CONSUMING, EXPERTISE & MONEY NEEDED

MODIFIED NATURAL HABITAT

REALISTIC NATURAL HABITAT NOT POSSIBLEBE DUE TO CLIMATE, LAND FORMATIONS, & EXISTING VEGETATION

ELEMENTS OF THE REAL HABITAT USED BUT SUBSTITUTES VEGETATION & LAND FORMS TO INTEGRATE HABITAT INTO EXISTING SURROUNDINGS

NATURALISTIC HABITATS

LITTLE OR NO ATTEMPTS MADE TO DUPLICATE ELEMENTS OF REAL HABITAT STYLISTIC & DECORATIVE USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS

IMG 030: far left: top: Children's play cave at Maropeng. bottom: Authentic swallow's nest in the representation of a cave: Children's play cave at Maropeng

IMG 031: far left: The blurred world of seduction: Author experiencing the enchanted virtual narration at Disney's Animal Kingdom

IMG 032: left: Replication of animal habitats

IMG 033: opposite: top left: View of the river in Disney's Animal Kingdom. centre left: The Tree of Life [2] serving as the central icon of Disney's Animal Kingdom: note the forced perspective. bottom left: Visitors exiting Disney's Animal Kingdom with the iconic 'Tree of Life' beacon structure in the background. top right: The immersion of the Gorilla exhibit at Disney's Animal Kingdom. centre right: Capturing the essence of the real places that is depicted in Disney's Animal Kingdom. bottom right: Entering Asia: the attention to detail in Disney's Animal Kingdom

The experience of viewing the Tree of Life can be likened to that of looking for animals in the clouds (The Imagineers, 2007).