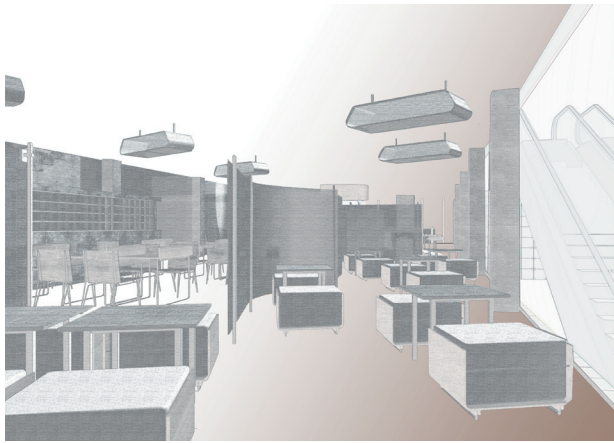


SUBTERRANEAN SPACE

INTEGRATING GENERIC COMMERCIAL ENTITIES WITHIN THE GAUTRAIN SYSTEM



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LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

METRO METAMORPHOSES

FORMULATING THE DESIGN TASK

PROBLEM STATEMENT
DESIGN PROBLEM DEFINITION
ASSUMPTIONS & DELIMITATIONS
PHILOSOPHY

CONTEXT STUDY

THE GAUTRAIN RAPID RAIL PROPOSAL
SITE
CLIENT & USER PROFILE
THE SANDTON STATION SYNOPSIS

PRECEDENTS

JUBILEE LINE EXTENSION, CANARY WHARF, LONDON, GREAT BRITAIN
TGV STATIONS, PROVENCE, FRANCE
MILLENNIUM RAIL, BRENTWOOD SKY STATION, VANCOUVER, CANADA
DEUTSCHE BAHN, BONATZ ZERO ENERGY STATION, STUTTGART, GERMANY
AIRSIDE CENTRE, ZURICH AIRPORT, SWITZERLAND
DESIGN INFLUENCE

BASELINE

DESIGN DISCOURSE

PROGRAMME
CONCEPT
DESIGN PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT:

STATION ENVELOPE
LIGHTING & FINDING DIRECTION
RETAIL & CATERING ENTITIES
SERVICES

TECHNICAL RESOLUTION

STATION CIRCULATION AND ACCESS
FIRE & EMERGENCY SAFE AREAS
HEATING AND VENTILATION
INFORMATION

DESIGN DRAWINGS

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES

CONTENT

Archives - Naam Mem'i



LIST OF FIGURES



INTRODUCTION



METRO METAMORPHOSES



FORMULATING THE DESIGN TASK



CONTEXT STUDY



PRECEDENTS



BASELINE



DESIGN DISCOURSE



TECHNICAL RESOLUTION



DESIGN DRAWINGS



CONCLUSION



BIBLIOGRAPHY



APPENDICES

LIST OF FIGURES**METRO METAMORPHOSES**

- FIG 001 The cramped interior of a City and South London carriage
 FIG 002 Art Nouveau entrances of the Paris metro, designed by Guimard c. 1913
 FIG 003 Harry Beck's original diagram for the stylized London Underground map
 FIG 004 Current iconic London Underground map

FORMULATING THE DESIGN TASK

- FIG 005 Proposed Gautrain with route alignment map
 FIG 006 Sengkang station, North east line Singapore

CONTEXT STUDY

- FIG 007 Stylized Gautrain map
 FIG 008 Arial photograph of Sandton Central
 FIG 009 Arial photograph of Sandton station precinct and surroundings
 FIG 010 Nelson Mandela Square and Sandton Library, Sandton convention Centre, Sandton City Shopping Centre
 FIG 011 Site photograph, Rivonia and West intersection
 FIG 011 The multidimensional user profile

PRECEDENTS

- FIG 012 Canary Wharf: Open vertical space from concourse to platform level
 FIG 013 Canary Wharf: Escalator banks connecting to a glass canopy entrance at ground level
 FIG 014 Canary Wharf: Section
 FIG 015 Canary Wharf: ticketing machines placed neatly on the side of passenger routes create clear and legible space
 FIG 016 Canary Wharf: Plan of platform level
 FIG 017 Canary Wharf: Glass and steel canopy entrance
 FIG 018 Canary Wharf: Open concrete concourse with ticketing machines
 FIG 019 TGV, Valence: Staircase expressing passenger routes
 FIG 020 TGV, Valence: Section and photograph illustrating the central glass box floating over the platform and tracks
 FIG 021 TGV, Valence: Longitudinal Section of valence station
 FIG 022 TGV, Valence: Duality - Duality - robust concrete platforms in contrast with the glass and steel station structure
 FIG 023 TGV, Avignon: Avignon station's continuous sloping concourse
 FIG 024 TGV, Avignon: Section Avignon station
 FIG 025 TGV, Aix-en-Provence's curving facade indicates the station entrance
 FIG 026 TGV, Section Aix-en-Provence station
 FIG 027 TGV, Aix-en-Provence: Mezzanine levels and bridges offer an overlook on the Aix-en-Provence station activities
 FIG 028 Brentwood: The luminous Brentwood station hovering above ground
 FIG 029 Brentwood: combination of wood, glass and steel creates warmer natural tones for aesthetic appeal and transparency for safety
 FIG 030 Brentwood: 3 dimensional section
 FIG 031 Bonatz: Model of the proposed Bonatz Zero Energy station

FIG 032	Bonatz: A punctured concrete shell illuminates the platform level and makes a connection with a public park above
FIG 033	Bonatz Sections
FIG 034	Airside Centre: Plan and Section
FIG 035	Airside Centre: The tranquil waiting lounge overlooking the Zurich Airport runway
FIG 036	Airside Centre: The timber finished retail components are inserted next to passenger routes and function independently to avoid interfering with passenger flow
FIG 037	Airside Centre: Cafe bars are positioned at either end of "malls" along passenger routes

DISCOURSE

FIG 038	Concept development June 2005
FIG 039	Concept development June 2005 Sections indicating Retail and catering zones clipped on to the main station envelope in orange
FIG 040	diagrammatic exploration of shape and development of station circulation - movement from entrance to platform
FIG 041	Vertical and horizontal progression in station composition
FIG 042	Station envelope as framework
FIG 043	concept development of lightbox-wall with integrated signage
FIG 044	Stainless steel fitting with integrated LED for signage
FIG 045	Lightbox-wall with integrated signage
FIG 046	Signage concept
FIG 047	Retail box as separate entity inserted in station envelope
FIG 048	Plywood and bent steel book display units with drawer extension for storage
FIG 049	Interior of Cafe bar showing dining area
FIG 050	Interior of Cafe bar, cocktail bar with screens
FIG 051	Plywood and bent steel tables and chairs of Cafe bar dining area
FIG 052	Concept development of toilet and washroom facilities
FIG 053	Toilet and washroom facilities

TECHNICAL RESOLUTION

FIG 054	Speedstile, electronic access control units
FIG 055	Modified and adapted Octopus smartcard as part of the automatic ticketing
FIG 056	diagrammatic illustrations of back projection principles





The idea of building underground is fascinating. From a designer's perspective the creation of architectural spaces beneath the earth's surface is a great accomplishment. Without building facades and a predetermined exterior shell it seems to be the ultimate interior and engineering challenge. Despite the enigma hereof, many people are startled by this concept as underground spaces are commonly associated with uncertainty; depicted by dark and confined passages. Many metro stations, especially older, more traditional ones, are detached from their external context. It is this disconnection that generates confusion and results in fear. Subterranean spaces have a unique atmosphere and the experience of being underground is quite different to that of being in a building or structure above ground level.

When one enters a subterranean space you are confronted with a change in light quality and intensity. Artificial light, though used as the primary illumination source in most building structures, visibly play a more significant role due to the deficiency of natural light. The prominence of artificial light simultaneously enhances an awareness of the shadows and contrasts it produces. It is this "play" of light and dark that creates a mood and atmosphere different to that of other spaces. Furthermore, one becomes dependent on the provision of information, which can manifest in various forms such as signage, to orientate and direct oneself. Textures and finishes act as narrative tools that direct users safely to their destination. The scale and size of the space and the elements placed within it, is also experienced more intensely by users because of the contained nature of the space. Scale is therefore fundamental as the spaces can easily become uncomfortable and cramped.

Though the subterranean experience is different, it does not imply that it is superior. It simply means that those differences should be acknowledged, which necessitates that underground spaces require

a unique approach in their design in order to allow them to be appreciated and functionally utilised.

The underground metro has become the most common occupant of subterranean space across the world. Thus it's also the most obvious choice for an investigation and a design with a subterranean nature. In the South African context the Gautrain Rapid Rail Link presents the perfect opportunity to introduce the novel concept of travelling underground.

This dissertation will investigate the functioning and progression of the metro with the intention of creating a design methodology aimed at initiating an underground culture fit for the contemporary South African society. It aspires to produce a station that would enhance the commuting experience, firstly by presenting a pleasant, safe and legible station and secondly, by offering retail and catering options to add