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IDENTITY IN TRANSFORMATION

re-programming pretorius square

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To my parents
For their everlasting love and support

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ABSTRACT

‘ the city is the best organ of memory man has yet created ’ (Mumford in Costonis, 1989:111)

An urban landscape is the tangible expression of social values and identity representative of past achievements and future aspirations of a society. Iconic buildings remain long after the ideals they represent have changed. However, heritage icons can hold negative connotations to future generations if they remain as markers of a controversial history. South African social history is strongly representative of an identity under transformation. As the capital city and seat of government, Pretoria is a nationally significant symbol of this identity of change.

The architectural landscape of Pretoria is already rich in well-preserved historic fabric and icons to past figures of political power. However, there remains a lack in opportunity for current citizens to engage with this historic fabric and little opportunity for new expressions of social identity. Figure 1.1 is a collage of well-known architectural objects which make up the visual identity of Pretoria. The historic symbols have an ever diminishing relevance to the current inhabitants of Pretoria’s inner city.

Sorensen’s *Frame of Mind: Memory Matrix* (Figure 1.2) represents the experiential aspect of architecture as a medium for narrative. The spaces and landscapes hold meaning tied to personal memory strongly associated with identity in a dynamic or liquid state.

The importance of memory in the establishment of a collective or social identity and the preservation of this memory for future generations is imperative to any civilization that wishes to progress from the past. Architecture transcends physical structure as the aesthetic representation of identity. The architecture of public buildings specifically, embody intangible elements such as memory, meaning, culture and value.

The experiences of the past can serve to enrich the knowledge of the present and progression to future generations. As such architecture should be viewed in accordance with literature, music, art and film as a collective depiction of the transition from past ideals to the contemporary values and future aspirations of a living city. Sites of historic importance within the Central Business District (CBD) will be investigated as qualitative research to determine the significance of these sites to current citizens. This will be used to determine the best location and manifestation of an intervention that will create a dialogue between the citizens of today and the urban landscape, encapsulating Pretoria’s history of social transition which indicates heritage as a living time line.

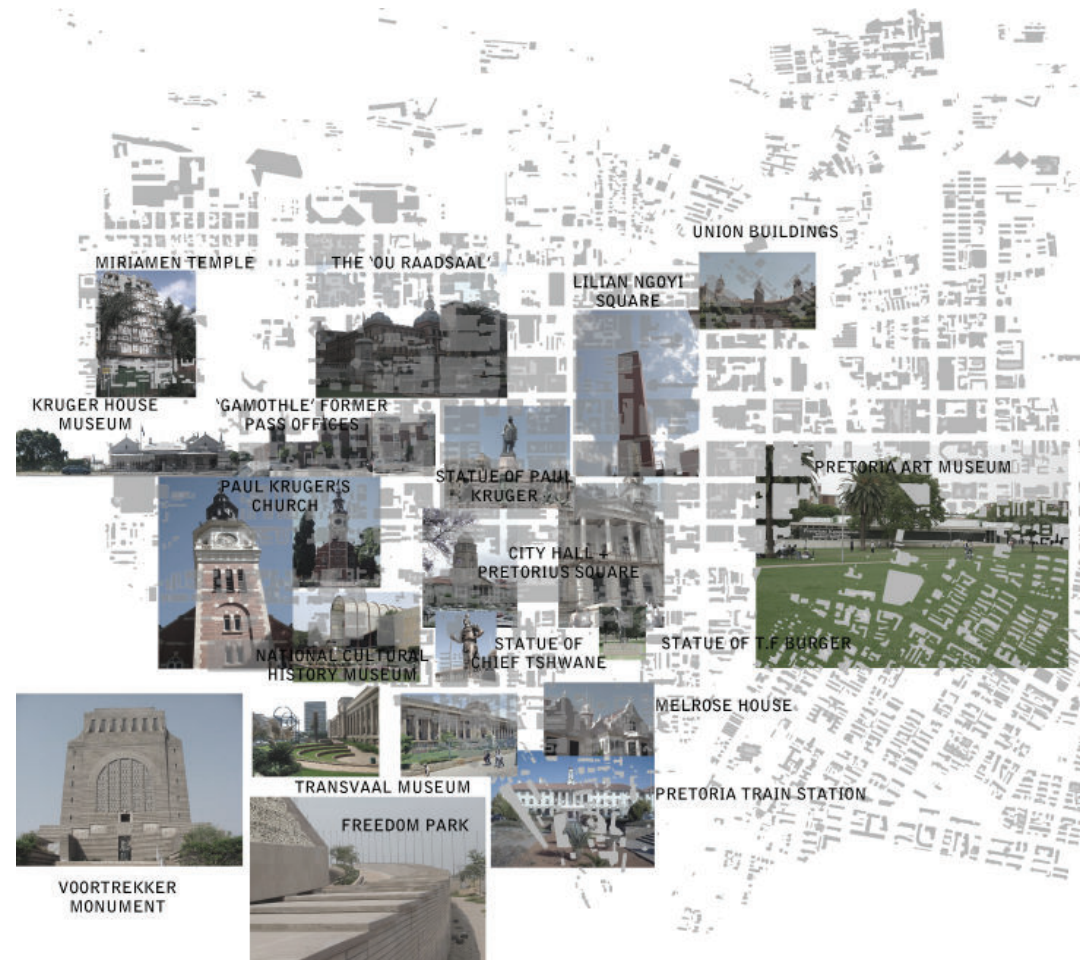


Figure 1.1: A Visual Collage of Pretoria's inner city icons
Author, 2010



Figure 1.2: (Right) *Frames of Mind: Memory Matrix*,
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