



3 THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION

Utopian Beginnings

Modernist Misgivings

South African Perspective

Conclusion

utopian beginnings

Like many pioneer cities, Pretoria was established on the utopian principles of the Voortrekkers who looked to create a place where their ideals would be expressed eternally. The mountains and rivers provided natural borders which offered a defensible space for the creation of a new settlement (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.2 represents the various identities of Pretoria given by Lipman (2003:114) as 'the *nagmaal* village, the capital of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR), the seat of British occupation, the early nineteenth century town growing into city status.' Although the initial ZAR and subsequent periods of political power failed, the citizens of Pretoria merely traded a current utopia for the next, creating a series of historic societies each with its own set of values and traditions iconified by a different architectural style.

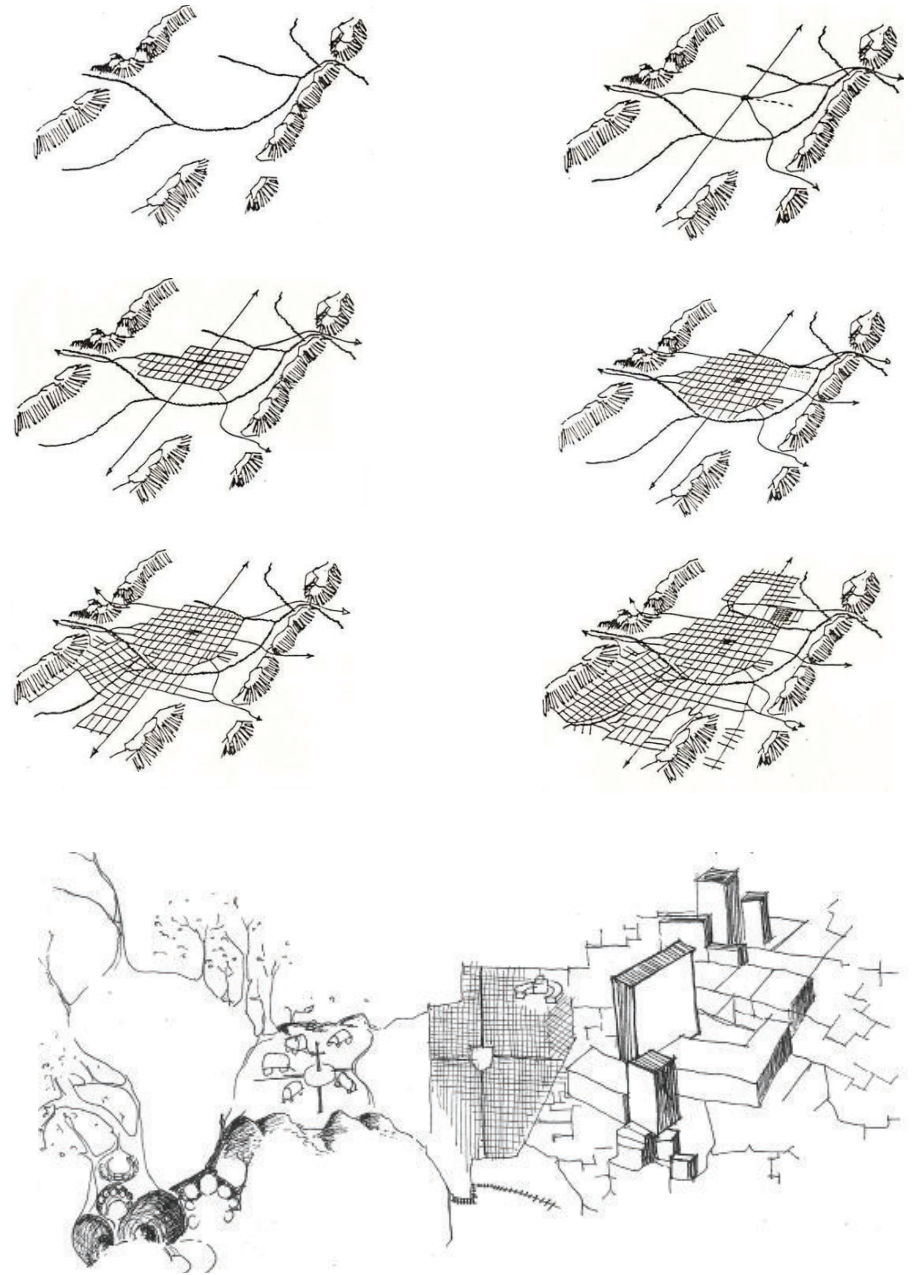
These utopias follow one another but exist in isolation, thereby dividing the associated cultures as separated periods. Today the icons of past political figures have a selective representation to the inhabitants of the city, adding to the further separation of past and present values although the heritage of an identity under transformation is something which can connect today's social concerns to that of Pioneer settlers.

The preserved presence of memorials to a volatile history could be what Mumford cautions against when talking about the creation of 'totems' which become, 'completely irrelevant to our beliefs and demands' (in Costonis 1989:111).

Similarly, Lynch cautions that the 'preservation of the environment (may) encapsulate some image of the past...that may in time prove to be mythical or irrelevant (because) preservation is not simply the saving of old things but the maintaining of a response to those things.' (in Costonis 1989:111)

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 depict the transformation of Church Street over time and provide an example of 'totem' heritage in the context of Pretoria. Church Street, a historic east-west axis and once major processional route (Figure 3.3), has been vastly modernized, with little regard for the past ceremonial importance it once represented.

Figure 3.4 shows the current context of Church Street west as a primarily vehicular route. There is also little regard to maintain the pedestrian orientated scale of the heritage structures or their relation to the civic activities they represented in the past.



Previous Page-
 Figure 3.1: (Top)
 The Beginning of A City
 images from : Jordaan 1989:27

Figure 3.2: (Bottom)
 Pretoria's successive Utopia's,
 modelled after Lipman 2003:114
 2010, Author

Current Page-
 Figure 3.3 (Top)
 Current day street-scape of Church
 Street looking west
 2010, Author

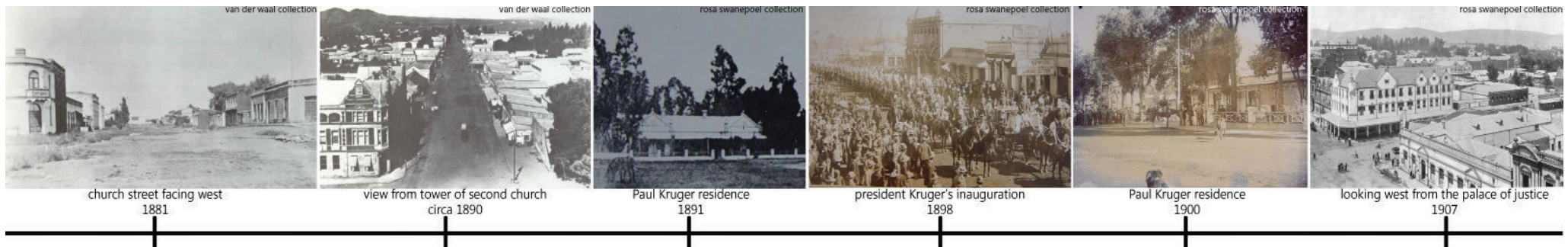
Figure 3.4 (Bottom)
 Transformation of Church Street
 University of Pretoria, various
 collections



Paul Kruger Church
 Still used as church today
 built in 1890

'Gamothle' building
 Once - Pass Office and Bantu Labour Office
 built in 1932
 Currently - under renovation for museum management office

High Rise residential buildings



church street facing west
 1881

view from tower of second church
 circa 1890

Paul Kruger residence
 1891

president Kruger's inauguration
 1898

Paul Kruger residence
 1900

looking west from the palace of justice
 1907

modernist misgivings

The modern movement is one such isolated utopia of Pretoria's development yet still largely represents the city's architectural identity today. Pretoria's landscape is a museum of Modernism, with historic buildings preserved as isolated markers of colonial heritage. Figure 3.5 shows the progression of colonial heritage structures to the modernist landscape which continues to dominate Pretoria's inner city today.

Amongst these influences, there is little opportunity for expression of non-western built heritage. However, it was Modernism itself which iconified the human ambition for progress. Early Modern architects were celebrated for originality and the pure implementation of technology without ornament.

In its conception, Modernists used the movement to challenge traditional forms of thought, prizing 'experimentation, radicalism, and primitivism in disregard of conventional expectations.' (Jekot, B 2009:1) Renowned artists of the early twentieth century such as Picasso (Figure 3.6) and Gauguin (Figure 3.7) sought inspiration from non-Western cultures to find new means of expression.

Despite the clear parallels between 'primitive' tribal expressionism and the work of European artists, this influence often '[disregarded] the fact these African objects were born of age-old traditions themselves' (Jekot, B 2009:2) leading to the false notion of Modernism being synonymous with unprecedented innovation.

Internationally, this Afro-centric inspiration on modern architecture was belatedly translated in the late work of Corbusier and Niemeyer as buildings began exhibiting the influence of elementary and expressive forms found in traditional architecture and regional art.

The advent of modern architecture, specifically that of the International Style in African colonies was associated with the response to the search for new identity while at the same time, often negating the heritage of indigenous space making. Although Modernist art drew inspiration from expressionism and the search for identity through creativity, Modern architecture became gradually ever more ornamental. By replacing traditional buildings and making ancient construction techniques redundant, Modern buildings became less concerned with the user or context, relying on a wide-scaled reaction to general social behaviour.

Africa itself is a diverse continent with multiple cultural influences as well as geographic and economic diversity. As such Modern architecture, with its agenda to solve large-scaled social problems, failed to adequately represent the needs of a nation of people with conflicting social behaviour, ethnicity and desires. An stylistic approach to building, dictated by fashion rather than design proved Louis Sullivan's warning that:

'...formulas are dangerous things. They are apt to prove the end of a genuine art, however hopeful they may be in the beginning to the individual. The formula of an art remains and becomes more and more dry, rigid and shrivelled with time while the spirit of the art escapes, and vanishes forever,' (in Costonis 1989:113).

Figure 3.6

(a) Tribal Dan Mask

Origin Unkown - (<http://www.sudanforum.net/showthread.php?t=50389>)

(b) Picasso - *Head of a Woman*

1907 - (<http://www.sudanforum.net/showthread.php?t=50389>)

(c) Picasso - *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*

1907 - Housed in Museum of Modern Art, New York

Figure 3.7

(a) Gauguin - *Arearea (Joyousness)*

1892 - Housed in Musée d'Orsay, Paris

(b) Gauguin - *Femmes de Tahiti [Sur la plage] (Tahitian Women [On the Beach])*

1891 - Housed in Musée d'Orsay, Paris



Figure 3.5: Architecture largely representative of Western classic and Modern Influences
2010, Author



Figure 3.6: Influence of African art on Picasso



Figure 3.7: Gauguin's bold, untamed landscapes inspired by the people and lifestyle of Tahiti

south african perspective

By the early twentieth century, Africa had been divided between European super-powers; Britain, France and Portugal and to a lesser extent, Germany, Italy, Spain and Belgium. There was little opportunity for modern buildings to translate the previously contextually and socially relevant forms and spaces using new materials and technology. The architectural influence of these conquering nations was termed as the International Style and sought to represent architecture in strong contrast to the indigenous precedent while at the same time representing a new post-colonial political situation.

Apart from North African countries, which assimilated Western technologies to the existing Islamic and African built heritage, the role of modernism in colonial Africa 'was credited with the salvation of the underdeveloped- no room was left for dialogue to take place. Only in later accounts did Modernist pieces become bridges from the West to "approved" non-western architects' (Jekot, B 2009:2).

The first architecture school in South Africa opened in 1923 in Wits, Johannesburg. Before this, South African architects were trained in European or American traditions, which were applied to the South African landscape as a testament to colonial power. (Jekot, B 2009:3) Modernist architects working in South Africa were heavily influenced by the Western world. Striving to emulate the architectural products of Berlin, Philadelphia and New York, the stylistically motivated designs failed as a socially appropriate response to the Apartheid context unique to South Africa. The unchanged high-rise Modern buildings which remain in Pretoria today are synonymous with the ideals of the time, representing the oppression of the elitist white-only neighbourhoods.

Pretorian designers Helmut Stauch (Figure 3.8), Norman Eaton (Figure 3.9) and McIntosh sought an architectural expression unmotivated by colonial ideals. The examples of a regional approach to Modernism are typified by the work of 'the Transvaal Group'. The name, first coined by Le Corbusier, applies to the Modern designs erected around the 1940s in Pretoria and Johannesburg. The new vernacular was an amalgamation of local material with European Modern influences to form architecture of Critical Regionalism, representative of the local context. The photographs in Figures 3.9 (a) and (b) convey the architectural response towards climatic concerns. These buildings are typical examples of the stylistic inspiration of Expressionist Modernism, heavily influenced by the environmentally responsive architecture of Brazil in use of shading and passive cooling devices. (Jekot, B 2009:4).



Figure 3.8: Helmut Stauch - Marchie Mansions, built 1935
Schoeman Street, Pretoria

University of Pretoria - Van der Waal Collection
(<http://hdl.handle.net/2263/9981>)



Figure 3.9: Eaton - Netherlands Bank of South Africa Main Office, built 1953
Church and Andries Street, Pretoria

(a) Recessed facade to provide shading over fenestration
Author, 2010



(b) Overhang detail on roof
University of Pretoria - Norman Eaton Collection
(<http://hdl.handle.net/2263/9541>)

Manifestations of the African influence in Modernism can be seen elsewhere in the work of Mozambican architect, Pancho Guedes (Figure 3.10). These unique buildings have a strong contextual approach and cultural influence, using the African traditions of applied relief, earthen texture as well as non-linear forms and spaces unique to each project. These characteristics can be seen in the traditional vernacular houses built and conceived by home-owners often suited to specific family needs.

Modernism's conception as a solution to social disparity led to its inevitable and eventual global failure, culminating in the disbandment of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1959, founded thirty one years earlier. 'The grand narratives of social and historical changes were rejected as part of machinery of domination of an enlightenment seen through tinted glasses' Lipman in Architecture SA, (January 2007:95)

The cultural concerns of Pretoria's citizens have moved on from the 1960's, yet the urban environment remains predominantly expressive of a Modern world. Subsequently, **the city's architectural development reflects the ideals of European colonial and Modernist eras** while further isolating the people of today from the city as a cultural manifestation. Similarly when talking about Pretoria's historic and cultural value, it is clear that the very idea of significance is subjective as selective aspects of history are memorialised while others ignored so that shared relevance or heritage of a united public is an illusion.

As the capital of a developing democracy, Pretoria's architectural heritage, strongly representative of the West, needs to be more inclusive of the intangible historic landscape and current social situations in order to be truly expressive of the continued cultural development of its citizens. Le Roux suggests a historical dichotomy of space-making which occurred in the past as 'within apartheid thinking, architecture and the programmes behind it were designed to separate social and cultural differences. In contrast, political resistance happened through ephemeral activities that used space in mobile and tactical ways.' (Le Roux in Art South Africa Dec 2005).

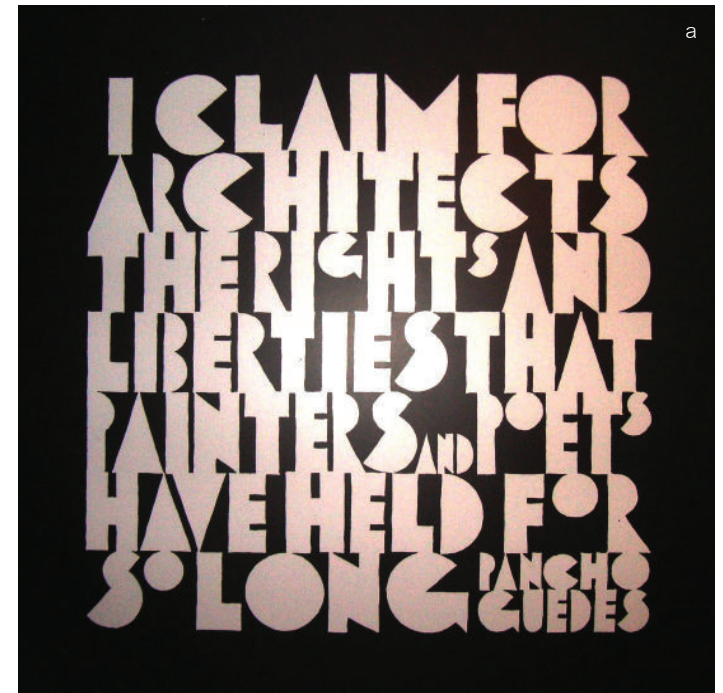


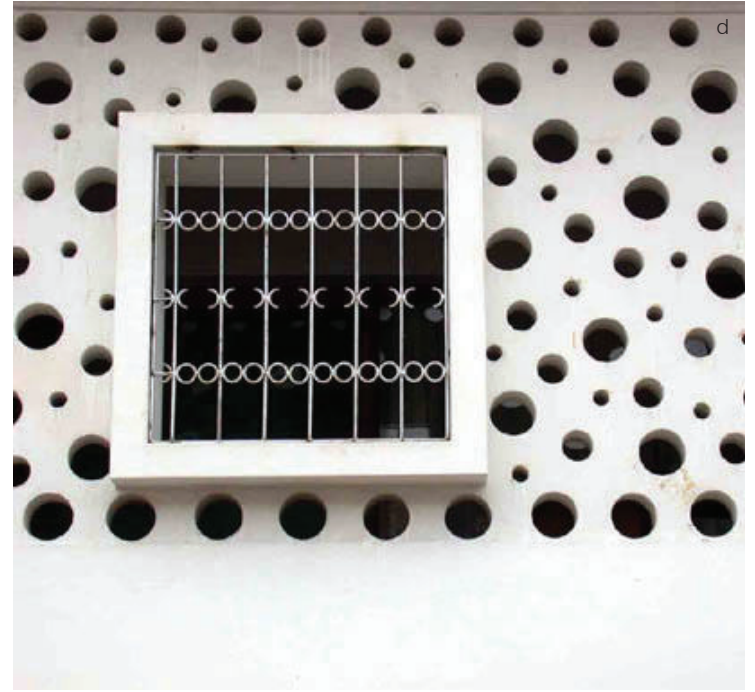
Figure 3.10: Examples of Guedes' work, drawing on both African and Western traditions Maputo, Mozambique

(a) Manifesto declaring architecture as art
(http://www.archiafrika.org/files/Pancho_Guedes)

(b) (http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2194/3615261002_0cf2ca5e14.jpg?v=0)

(c) (http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3388/3615213034_b66b60584e.jpg)

(d) (http://www.archiafrika.org/files/Pancho_Guedes_02.jpg)



conclusion

The redevelopment of Pretorius Square aims to achieve a common ground between the search for an expression of contemporary design whilst maintaining the link to the historic fabric. The architectural heritage of Pretoria is based on utopian principles with the icons of each phase existing as preserved monuments to a past era. Pretoria's architectural identity is representative of the modern utopia, which often disregards the significance of heritage.

Traditionally Modernism has been the symbol of new power in Africa, representing ideals of colonial or European society. The Modernist attitude to built heritage can be symbolized by Figure 3.11 which depicts the conserved façade of the nineteenth century Pennsylvania Fire Insurance Company overshadowed by the twentieth century Penn Mutual Tower. The historic layer may be visible in its preserved state but the representation and meaning is lost when treated as a 'Paste-on Solution' (Costonis 1989:114).

The once innovative architectural approach of the early twentieth century has become a stylistic approach to city building and has led to the city dwellers' separation from the heritage of the built environment and without much opportunity for contemporary creative stimulation or expression.

This notion suggests a need for a collective approach to public space, using both the heritage of formal and informal social spaces to allow for the freedom of spontaneous public interaction. The anti-functional aspect of a civic space will provide rather than impose 'places of encounter across social divides' (Le Roux in Art South Africa Dec 2005).

There is potential for re-interpretation of the old to create new, socially relevant platforms for civic life without destroying the memory of existing heritage. It is clear that the concept of an 'African aesthetic' is meaningless without the context of time and place. Good civic architecture should allow for the change in user identity rather than to typify it by establishing a style which may become irrelevant for future generations.

The re-interpretation of Pretorius Square will embody the notion of improving and adding to the urban fabric. This will involve creating a space that can inform user interaction with the existing heritage thereby initiating a dialogue between the memorials and users of today. The result will be to **introduce new thoughts of historic relevance and ownership**. In this way, the intangible symbolism of the icons to the past will remain open to individual perception and the creation of new memories, rather than be ignored, destroyed or overridden.

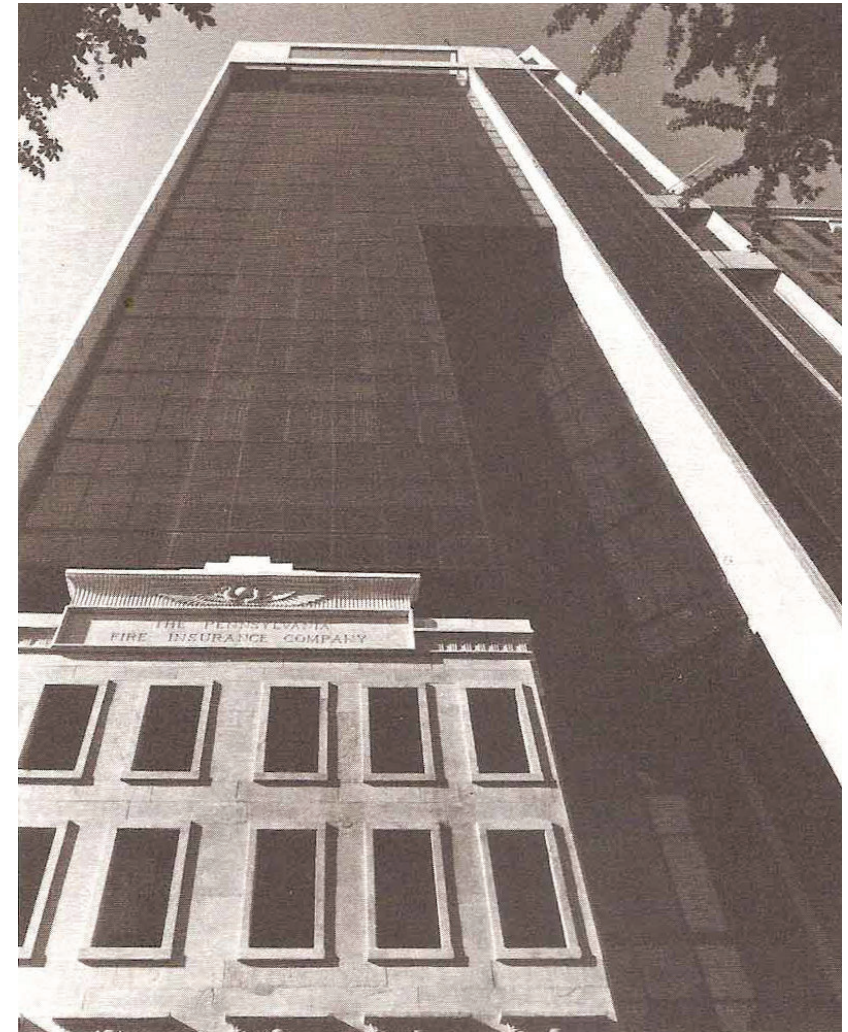


Figure 3.11: Preservation without Interaction
Costonis 1989:114