

Chapter 5: Precedent Studies

This chapter investigates existing projects in order to guide the design decisions for the proposed landscape intervention. Each project has been analysed according to Henri Lefebvre's tri-partite relationship of Symbolic, Physical and Social space which was discussed in the theoretical chapter.

5.1 District Six Museum

Location: Buitenkant Street, Cape Town City Centre. Western Cape. South Africa

Client: District Six Beneficiary Trust and The City of Cape Town

Architect: Lucien Le Grange, Architects and Urban Planners

Description: District Six was originally established as a mixed community of freed slaves, merchants, artisans, labourers and immigrants in 1867. It was a vibrant centre with close links to the city and the port. In 1966, it was declared a white area under the Group Areas Act of 1950 and 65000 people were removed from the city to the outlying Cape Flats. The District Six Museum was established in December 1994. This scenario can be compared to the case of Marabastad: it involves memory, protest, restitution and redevelopment. A previously 'mixed' community lived in an area that was subjected to forced removals. The demolition removed all traces of buildings and physical elements, yet the landscape is highly regarded as an important depository of memory (Prosalendis & Kolbe 2004:130-139).

Symbolic

One of the aims of the Museum is that it seeks to place itself at the heart of the process of reconstruction of District Six and Cape Town through working with the memories and experiences of dispossessed people. It offers itself as a centre for former residents of District Six and others to recover, explore and critically engage with the memories and understandings of their District Six and apartheid pasts, for the purpose of remaking the city of Cape Town (The District Six Museum Website).



Figure 40. Floor map in District Six Museum (Author, 2009)

Physical

The physical manifestation of this precedent is the District Six Museum situated in Buitenkant Street in the City Centre of Cape Town. There are no physical remains of the District Six that once existed.



Figure 41. Visitor's Commentary Cloth (Author, 2009)

Social

On the entrance level of the museum there is a historic Street Map of District Six that covers most of the floor. Ex-residents were invited to walk its streets and mark out the places they knew and their addresses.

The Visitor's Commentary Cloth allows people to communicate with the exhibition and the old District Six by scribbling messages on the Cloth.

A large open air sculptural festival in the landscape was used to make a final statement and protest against forced removals. There was a jazz and dance hall with music performed by well-known local musicians. Throughout the day there was entertainment for the children, as well as a marquee with board games and stalls with food and refreshments. Informal tours to the sculpture sites allowed the artists to talk about their work. (District Six Museum Website)

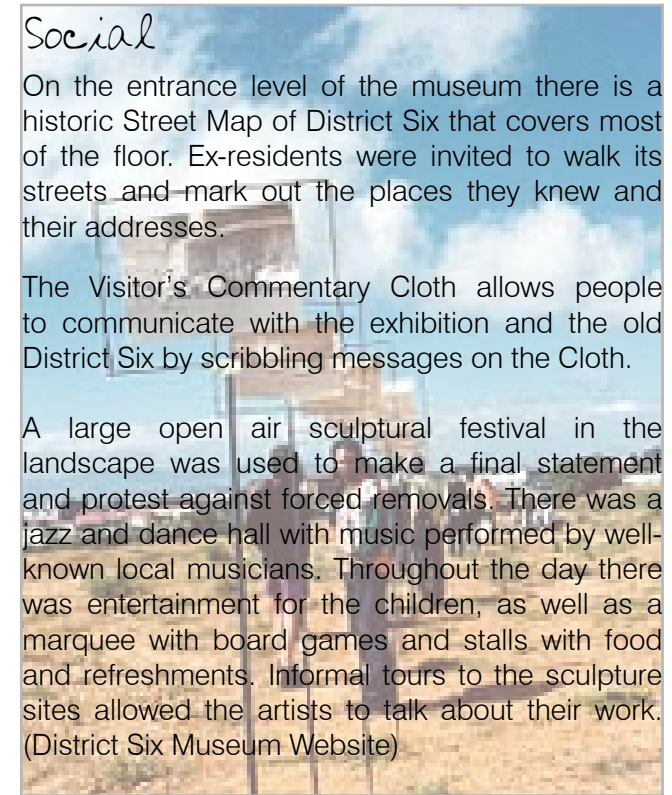


Figure 42. Sculptural Festival (<http://www.districtsix.co.za/frames.htm> accessed on 08/04/2009)

5.2 Sophiatown

Location: Johannesburg. Gauteng. South Africa.

Description: On 9 February 1955, 2 000 policemen, armed with guns, knobkerries and rifles, forcefully moved the families of Sophiatown to Meadowlands, Soweto. The Anglican church was a significant building in the history of Sophiatown and people hold memories of events that were carried out there. Therefore, the church is a pivotal memorial landmark in the area and most of the memorial interventions are conducted here. Furthermore, a museum in the form of a building is planned for capturing oral and written histories.

Symbolic

On the 9th of February 2005, the City of Johannesburg held a memorial service for those displaced families, followed by a tour of the suburb, with former residents telling their stories.

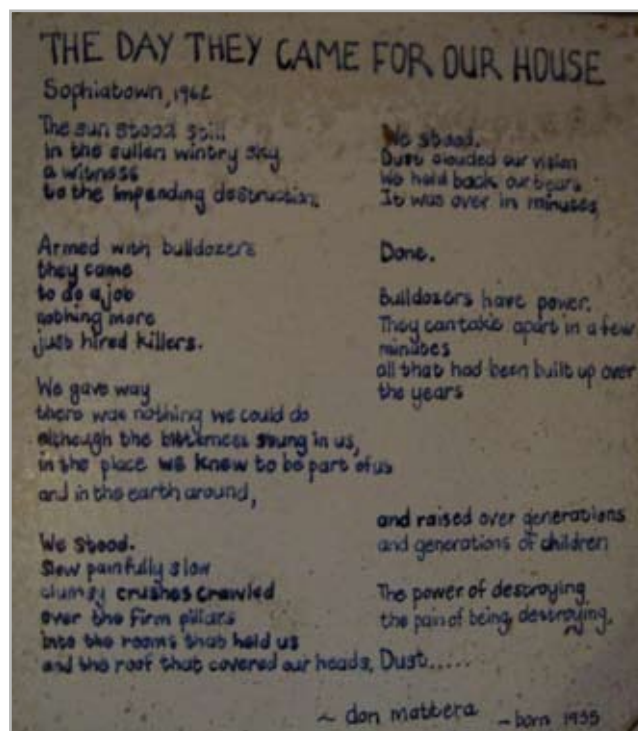


Figure 45. Tile in the floor of the District Six Museum (Author, 2009)

Physical

A memorial wall, a Gerard Sekoto mural, a huge floor map of old Sophiatown, and the recreation of a beautiful 63-year-old mural at the Anglican Christ the King Church in Sophiatown, are the latest developments in capturing some of the suburb's past memories.



Figure 43. Tared parking area in front of the Anglican Christ the King Church where floor map is planned (http://joburgnews.co.za/2004/april/apr20_sophiatown.stm accessed on 20/05/2009).

Social

The City is planning a Sophiatown Heritage Precinct, which will involve a community-based museum where oral and written histories of former residents will be recorded; an interpretation centre will include a place for cultural activities like theatre, art and music; and a walking trail taking in memorable sites like the Anglican Church (Sindane, <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/sophiatown50.htm>).



Figure 44. Mural 'Sekoto in Sophiatown' depicts archbishop Trevor Huddleston walking the dusty streets (Davie, L. 2005. City of Johannesburg)

5.3 Newtown Cultural Precinct

Location: Western sector of the Johannesburg City Centre. Gauteng. South Africa. It is defined by the marshalling yards and railway lines to the north, the M2 motorway in the south, West Street in the east and Quinn Street in the west.

Client: Johannesburg Development Agency

Architect: Several, including GAPP Architects and Urban Designers

Description: Newtown is a historical suburb of Johannesburg that has undergone a major urban rejuvenation intervention. The vision for the area is that it should be dynamic, vibrant, sophisticated and cosmopolitan with a very strong identity and unique character. Newtown has become associated with the heritage and culture of Johannesburg and is known as 'The Cultural Precinct'. This precedent shows that through the initiative of the Johannesburg City Council- through the Johannesburg Development Agency- an area was uplifted from a degenerating suburb into a vibrant and cultural precinct. The materials and street furniture used are robust and add to the character of the space (Meyer 2006: 24).

Symbolic

It has a unique sense of place and a unique character with numerous references to art and culture. The naming of Mary Fitzgerald Square as well as streets such as Miriam Makeba Street is also very significant.

Physical

Kippies, the world renowned Market Theatre, Moyo Restaurant at the Market, Nikki's Oasis, Newtown Music Centre and the Oriental Plaza just around the corner from Newtown. The Brickfields housing development within Newtown ensures that there are pedestrians throughout the day and creates the perception of a safer living environment (Johannesburg Development Agency Website).

Social

Incorporation of business, recreation and residential. A pedestrian and restaurant culture is developing in the area and the JDA plans to host cultural festivals. It is being developed into a vibrant, mixed-use area with a unique character based on existing cultural facilities.



Figure 47. Statue of Brenda Fassie (Steyn, 2008)



Figure 48. Pedestrian friendly, good signage, unique bollards, traffic calming (Author, 2009)



Figure 46. Informal traders utilise the space frequented by pedestrians (Author, 2009)

5.4 Constitutional Hill

Location: Cnr Queens and Sam Hancock / Hospital Streets, Braamfontein. Johannesburg, South Africa.

Client: Constitutional Hill is funded by Blue IQ, the Gauteng provincial Government, the City of Johannesburg, the Department of Justice and the philanthropic organisations and delivered by the Johannesburg Development Agency.

Architect: The Constitutional Court was designed through a partnership between two firms: Urban Solutions and OMM Design Workshop

Description: Constitution Hill is where the Constitutional Court is located and consists of a unique mixed-use development in the Inner City of Johannesburg. Constitution Hill is the site of Johannesburg's notorious Old Fort Prison Complex, commonly known as Number Four as well as the Women's Jail, where thousands of ordinary people were brutally punished before the dawn of democracy in 1994. Many of South Africa's leading political activists, including Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, were detained here. In addition to the permanent exhibitions and educational programmes, Constitution Hill offers venues for hire, location for film shoot service, day and night tours, a full calendar of public programmes and exhibitions that bring the site to life and enable the public to connect with the activities of the Constitutional Court (Constitutional Hill Website).

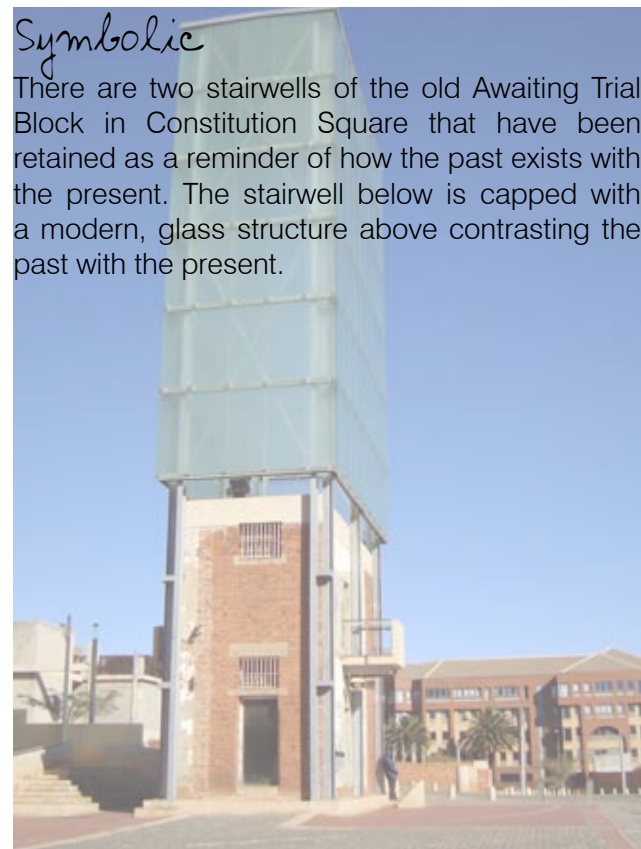


Figure 51. Old stairwell becomes visual beacon- emphasizing the past by contrasting new materials with old ones (Author, 2009)

Physical

Great African Steps were built using the bricks of the demolished Awaiting Trial Block. This is a walk between the past and the future, with the legacy of Apartheid on one side (the notorious Number Four prison) and the open glass of the Constitutional Court to the left symbolising the values of freedom, equality and dignity.



Figure 49. Great African Steps- using old materials in a new way (Author, 2009)

Social

On Constitution Square there is the "We the People Wall". Any person can participate in the building of Constitution Hill by reading messages written by others on the wall, and leaving your own: a record of what democracy means to us, the first generation of free South Africans.



Figure 50. An exhibition of messages written by visitors, engraved onto steel squares (Author, 2009)

5.5 Church Square

Location: City Centre of Pretoria, South Africa

Client: City of Pretoria

Architect: VS Rees-Poole

Description: Church Square lies at the heart of South Africa's capital city, Pretoria, and is a public space that is very popular and used successfully. In 1854 Edward Lewis Devereux and William Skinner built the first church on the site of church square. Every three months farmers from surrounding districts came to camp on the square to celebrate communion (Allen, <http://www.churchsquare.org.za/content/museum.html>).

Symbolic

The name of the square relates to an historic church that once stood on the site. Memory is captured in a name.

Physical

The physical component of Church Square consists of public open space with trees, grass, pedestrian routes and a sculpture of Paul Kruger.

Social

The social component includes people selling flowers, fruit, newspapers, and ice creams. There are a several buskers who provide entertainment and the square acts as a gathering space for protests.



42 Figure 52 Church Square Collage (Author, 2009)

5.6 The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe/ Holocaust Memorial

Location: Berlin. Germany

Client: Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas

Architect: Peter Eisenman

Description: The Memorial is created by 2,711 gunmetal grey reinforced concrete stelae, each uniquely positioned on a uniform grid to form a wave like progression across undulating topography which drops to as much as 2.4m below surrounding street level in places. This is a memorial that does not make use of symbolism or words, rather it is the experience of moving through the concrete stelae that evokes the memories and associated feelings of isolation and confusion of the past (Anonymous, <http://www.goethe.de/kue/arc/dos/dos/zdk/en3581894.htm>).

Symbolic

An overwhelming sense of disorientation is increased by the askance tilt of each stele. Collectively, these leaning monoliths create an apparent liling wave motion across the field from east to west and from north to south (Anonymous, <http://www.concretecentre.com/main.asp?page=1113>).

Physical

All of the stelae have an identical plan dimension of 2.38 x 0.95m, although they vary in height from 0 to 5m, progressing from the field's boundary to the central areas. Precision positioned to a narrow spacing of just 0.95m, the stelae create parallel and orthogonal footpaths. Visitors progress from the ground level edge forms into central places where looking up earns a mere glimpse of sky between the towering, concrete forms.

Social

There are few social activities concerned with this project. The aim is to target people on an individual and emotive level.



Figure 53. Holocaust Memorial (Verster, 2007)



Figure 55. Concrete stelae (Verster, 2007)



Figure 54. Walking through memorial (Verster, 2007)

5.7 The SIEVX Memorial

Location: Canberra. Australia.

Client: The SIEVX project was founded in 2002 by Steve Biddulph, a psychologist and parenting author, Rob Horsfeld, a uniting Church Minister and Beth Gibbings, an artist and project manager.

Designer: Mitchell Donaldson

Description: In October 2001 a small fishing boat sank in international waters, several hundred miles south of Indonesia. 353 people died, some in the sinking and some after many hours in the water. Only forty people survived. They were refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan. The boat, named the SIEVX – from the Australian naval term, Suspect Illegal Entry Vessel number 10 – was only 19.5 metres long. Australian newspapers carried news of the event, but in the midst of the national election campaign the story vanished until the memorial event. Every secondary school in Australia received a letter inviting their participation in a collaborative effort to suggest design ideas for construction of a memorial place. This anti-memorial differs from a traditional monument in the fact that it is not sanctioned by a civic authority; it is purposely disturbing and provocatively challenges the permanence of traditional memorials. It shifts the subject of memorials from heroic figures to victims, to ordinary citizens and to those whom society ostracises (Ware 2008: 61-76)

Symbolic

The design encourages multiple readings of contemporary political and social issues, prompts different levels of physical interactivity and emphasises the informal and the local as opposed to the formal and the national ideal (Ware 2008:72).



Figure 57. 2007 SIEVX Memorial In-Ground Installation (Ware, 2008)

Physical

The design selected was from a year 11 Brisbane student, Mitchell Donaldson. It consisted of 353 poles which were to sweep through a gently undulating landscape, divide to form the abstract outline of a small boat and then trail off into the water. The individual poles which represented lost children were three feet high and those for adults were five feet high. The arrangement of the poles would include the shape of a boat to the exact dimensions of the SIEVX, allowing visitors to walk amongst them, experiencing the small, confined space which held so many people.

Social

The memorial group again turned to the broader community to adorn the poles, inviting grieving family members, community and arts groups, schools at all levels from primary through to university and church groups to decorate a pole.



Figure 56. SIEVX October 2006 Memorial Event (Ware, 2008)

5.8 Conclusion

The analysis of the precedent studies revealed that memory is an important part of the landscape and forms an integral part of a landscape design. It can be expressed in the form of a museum (District Six Museum), a public building (Constitutional Court) or a sculptured landscape (SIEVX Memorial and Holocaust Memorial). The precedent studies introduced possible materials that could be used and gave suggestions as to how symbolic space could be transformed into physical space.

Similarly to District Six and Marabastad, Sophiatown is an area that underwent spatial dislocation. A museum is proposed for the Sophiatown Heritage Precinct where the oral and written histories will be stored. The author wonders, “why should these histories be stored in a museum and not expressed in the form of a landscape design?”.

In both Constitutional Hill and the District Six Museum memory workshops were held where people could record and express the stories and memories that they held. In the District Six Museum there are tiles in the floor that express memories, stories and poems. At Constitutional Hill there is the “We the People Wall” where anyone can leave a message, which gets engraved onto a steel square. Therefore the interactions of the people add new layers of meaning to the site.

In the opinion of the author, Newtown is a successful example of good public space. From the analysis it is evident that the three types of space support one another. Physical space in the form of unique bollards, benches, a large square, well defined streets and pedestrian zones; social space identified as the restaurants, the social interaction that takes place in the square, vendors selling their wares and cultural activities; and the symbolic space includes the naming of Mary Fitzgerald Square. Newtown also has a very uniquely African vibe with the presence of the wooden bollards, the Market Theatre, old industrial buildings and Jazz bars. These physical structures add to the social space of the precinct and also hold meaning and contribute to the symbolic space.

In comparison the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin emphasizes the physical space more strongly than the social space. It is very experiential and emotive, however, there is not much else to do other than to walk through

it. A landscape design can be sculptural in form, but it should provide the opportunity for interaction and activities within it.

A landscape design can only be successful once the symbolic, physical and social space of that urban environment support one another.