Design Discourse

This section explains decisions made during the design process.

Through a study of the existing Urban Fabric the following decisions were made:
- To link Paul Kruger Street to the existing arcade system.
- To conserve the Savelkoul, Fatti’s and Afrik House buildings.
- To leave the Pretoria Office Supplies building untouched, as it is of economic value.

The proposed building is located on a newly created 2002 sqm erf on the c/o Paul Kruger and Schoeman Streets. The existing buildings are demolished, save for sections of the colonnade which are incorporated in the design.

Building Form
The proposed building creates hard edges to Paul Kruger and Schoeman Streets. It is orientated inwards, arranged around an elevated public square. The square is planted, offering a place of rest for the city user. See Fig 6-2 to 6-3 for building mass.
Spatial Organization

Vertical Organization:
- Top 3 floors residential (private floors)
- First floor level with cultural activities that live out onto the elevated (public floor)
- Ground floor level with retail activities that includes an arcade linking Paul Kruger Street to the Van Erkom arcade system (public floor)
- Basement level with parking and storage spaces (private floor)

Figure 6-2 and 6-3 show the building form and functional layout. Red= Residential Blue= Cultural Yellow= Retail

Services areas for the public levels and the basement are concentrated in the Eastern block of the building. This includes areas for air-conditioning plant rooms, ducts for mechanical ventilation, and is where wet areas of the public floors are located.
Assumption

The proposed building connects to the neighbouring FinPark building in many ways. The assumption was made that the owners of the Fin Park building would allow and support the proposed connections. This includes the arcade links, the connection at basement level, as well as potential shared use of the Fin Park loading zone. The concept of shared facilities does not have the support of the City Council, but is a proposal and an assumption for the purpose of the study. The resources and space saved by not duplicating a basement entrance and delivery zone makes it justifiable. The resultant increase in total rentable and usable area may well cover the rent payable to establish this.

Retail Arcade

A baseline requirement was set for approximate shops sizes of 100 square meters. The arcade creates more active edges and allows more shop fronts. The new arcade position was determined by the existing arcade layout. (See Fig 6-1). A visual link from the vertical circulation core of the FinPark Parking Garage to Paul Kruger Street is created. Passersby in the Van Erkom arcade will see sections of the new arcade flooded with natural light, while other sections remain shadowed, so inviting exploration.

On entering the arcade from the Van Erkom side (Fig 6-7 Red arrow indicates entry), the ceiling opens to allow a glimpse of sky. Looking up into the void, the building edge above can be seen, with balconies protruding. A sky bridge will be
seen even higher up. A vine partially covers a timber trellis. The Western Stairs and an Elevator form the third border to the Arcade entrance, the elevator glazed to the arcade to make vertical circulation apparent, and to lead the eye upwards.

The arcade is edged by shops. Besides allowing access to Paul Kruger Street, the arcade offers four possible routes to explore the rest of the building. The Western Stairs and Elevator is one of these routes.

Past the elevator and stairs, a smaller arcade ‘corridor’ offers views to the elevated residential block supported on slender columns, as well as glimpses of a raised square. This relatively narrow link is open to the sky. A colonnade softens the Eastern edge. The Western edge is sculptural: A ramp rises over a pond, and the square steps gradually lower. Restaurant tables spill onto the paved surface to activate the space that has movement and linkage as its critical characteristics. The Ramp is the third route from the arcade. It links the Retail arcade to the residential and cultural square levels.

Shop fronts in the Retail Arcade are intentionally designed with minimally glazed surfaces. Products will be set in framed views in an off-shutter concrete wall. This proposed shop front design will suit certain products and shops better than others, but the decision was made because the arcade functions not only to link or sell, but also to act as ‘foyer’ for the Tshwane Art Gallery on first floor level...

The middle section of the arcade has a relatively low ceiling of 2.7 m. Limited natural light will fall through glass blocks set in the slab above. From the relatively small shop windows that frame their products, electric light shines, to highlight the products rather than the space. Planters for trees above are visible in the arcade. The large concrete shapes protrude into the arcade, as if guarding the space. All of this creates a feeling of enclosure in the middle section of the Arcade.

As Paul Kruger Street is neared, the arcade with low roof and introverted shop fronts suddenly explodes into a naturally lit double volume space. A steel staircase cuts back into a glass box that deforms from the blow. In the void above the double volume fully glazed shop a sculptural artwork is suspended with cables. (See Figure 6-6)

A conscious attempt was made to make the staircase as inviting as possible. From the arcade, trees can be spotted through a curtain-wall above. The stairs climb to an unobstructed opening, quick and easy to reach,
and giving an opportunity to inspect the suspended artwork. Once on the stairs, a clear view into the gallery is gained, and more artworks are visible to invite the viewer in. For the first-time visitor, the concrete shapes in the middle section of the arcade will only be understood as planters when stepping into daylight, and onto the square.
The Square

The multi-level elevated square is the heart of the building, dictating the layout of the surrounding building functions. The Tshwane Gallery, the gallery coffee shop, the Auditorium foyer, as well as Talking Beads are directly accessible from the highest level of the square, referred to as the cultural square. A lower level of the square gives access to the residential units.

Other than trees planted on the cultural square that offer shade, and possible sculptural artworks, the square is devoid of organizing elements. The square is envisioned as a place that allows for random happenings: Whether open-air art exhibitions, informal markets, government officials on their lunch break or ladies making crafts at Talking Beads utilize the square, the public space would be a city resource. The same can be said for the stairs, a potential meeting or resting place that may function as amphi-theatre for informal gatherings.

The densely spaced trees provide shade, and the surrounding building dampens the worst traffic noise. The gradually ascending staircase offers a seat to watch the activities around and on the square take place. The square will be a pleasant breathing space for the city.

Residential Component

Thirty-eight new flats will be made available in the Pretoria CBD. This includes two-bedroom units, single-bedroom units, and open plan bachelor units. The residential component requires natural lighting and ventilation. The building form is ideal for this purpose.

To avoid the traditional dark corridors often associated with city flats, circulation spaces for the residential spaces were considered as potential communal spaces.

To ensure privacy for flats on the level of communal spaces, the floor level of these flats were raised one metre above the communal space level. A one metre high balustrade wall, or placement of windows at least 900mm above floor level ensures visual privacy. The communal circulation space is placed on the inside of the residential units, allowing views to the square below. The same principle is used for stairways and open corridors. In this way passive observation of the square, as well as the communal space is established. The activities on the square form a backdrop for the flats. Life in the residential component offer the same to the square.

The individual flats were designed to allow ease of use and adaptability. Sliding and folding doors are used to allow edges to disappear and spaces to flow seamlessly into each other. Balconies are split with a folding door: When open the balcony is truly usable for social functions.

The balcony balustrade is an off-shutter concrete panel, decorated with mosaic work. Each individual flat, or floor will have a unique mosaic design. From the square the artwork will be visible, and individual flats can be distinguished.
Figure 6-10  View on entering the cultural square from the arcade stairs

Figure 6-11 Concept Sketch of Multi-levelled Square

Figure 6-12 Balcony Concept Sketch
Architectural Expression

As with the relation of the square to the flats, city buildings form a backdrop to the activities of the people that occupy the city. With a central public square, as is the case in the design, this is truer than ever. The material palette was kept small, as the edges of the building are there to give shape to the space. Materials are used honestly and functionally. Robustness of design was a baseline requirement, and influenced the choice of materials. See the technical report for a complete list of applied materials.

Gallery

The gallery’s prime location in the CBD allows the perfect opportunity for arts education and public exposure to the South African Fine Arts. While all functions in the building are dependant on each other for their existence, and while all other functions are business orientated (including Talking Beads), the gallery focuses on education. The gallery would not be likely to exist on its own site in the CBD. The multi-functional nature of the building allows for it to exist here.

The gallery is entered from the square. The lobby is dominated by planters overhead that will be decorated, potentially with mosaic artworks, by local artists. The glazed Northern façade of the lobby retains contact with the square. The gallery is also visually connected to the arcade below, which keeps it in contact with the city floor, while being separated from it entirely. (See arcade section Fig 6-6). A walkway over the arcade space links to the Auditorium foyer, which can also become an exhibition space.

Adaptability was a critical design informant for the gallery. Exhibitions can easily expand or contract. The Western and Southern Galleries can join or operate separately. A 66 square meter storage space, easily accessible through the service elevator is available. Exhibitions can expand to the Auditorium foyer, or even onto the square. The client suggested the possibility of a commercial aspect to the gallery. Smaller galleries that can function separately, allow exhibition space to be rented out.

The Gallery Coffee Shop lives onto the square. This allows it to be a generator of income in its own right, while activating the square and still offering refreshment to gallery visitors. It can operate completely separately from the gallery, and so serves the Auditorium.

Lighting is a critical aspect to gallery exhibition. Artworks must be exhibited under consistent lighting levels. Natural light is present in all galleries in the design, but serves as an additional, indirect lighting source, used to lend character to individual galleries, while electric light is depended upon to ensure consistent lighting quality for the artworks. See the lighting section of the Technical report for more detail.

The interior exhibition spaces were designed with minimalism as intent. The walls, floors and roof form a space to view art in, and should not compete with the art on display. An off-shutter pigmented concrete finish is proposed for the interior. The walls will be white.
pigmented, while shades of grey power-floated concrete make up the floor. The off-shutter concrete will retain a texture, to break the clinical appearance there-of, without influencing the way the artworks are viewed. The gallery ceiling is shaped to let light reflect downwards, and lightly coloured.

It was envisioned early in the design process that the nature of the building would justify installation art. The opportunity was created for this in and around the building, to attempt to make the building a public artwork. Architecture is a functional public art. This may be made understandable through the incorporation of mosaics on off-shutter concrete, as on the planters and balconies. The retail arcade atrium space is sculptural. Visible from the square, the gallery foyer, the arcade, the shop below and the auditorium foyer, and artwork suspended above the shop will be visible from all angles. This space creates the opportunity for artworks designed specifically for it. Changing the installation seasonally will encourage repeated visits.

Some contemporary South African Artists' work

Fig 6-14 Norman Catherine’s Negotiater 1991 Oil on cancas 90x150cm (WILLIAMSON, 1996: 30)

Fig 6-15 Rober Hodgins’ Gallows Boy 1995 Oil on cancas 121.5 x 91cm (WILLIAMSON, 1996: 36)

Fig 6-16 Jane Alexander’s Born Boys 1998 Sculpture (CANTZ, 2002: 68)
The Auditorium

The auditorium is available for audio-visual presentation, for use by the art gallery and Talking beads, and rentable for private use. The gallery coffee shop can be rented in conjunction with the auditorium.

Audio-visual presentation as a medium is prevalent in the contemporary art world. The auditorium could also specialize as an art movie house, or as a showcase for independent South African film. The auditorium is suitable as an entertainment venue.

The auction of artworks is another possible source of income for the gallery, for which the auditorium would serve perfectly.

The educational potential of the Auditorium in the city is vast and just as the square, could easily become a resource to the CBD.

The Auditorium form can be clearly distinguished from the exterior of the building. Rotated 7.5 degrees to the vertical on plan, the flat building edge is broken as the auditorium edge steps back, and then projects outwards to gain more presence on the street. In this way the building mass can also be understood as consisting of smaller parts.

Talking Beads Workshops and Offices

Talking Beads produces arts and crafts. The building requirements are minimal, as all activities, including the exhibition of crafts, the offices and workshops simply require space. The Western stairs and elevator celebrates, and effectively is the Talking Beads entrance, also giving access to the basement storage space. The public square is available to Talking Beads. Work and sales can spill onto the square, so displaying the goods on offer. An open working area on second floor level, above the square, gives more options to the craft makers and for exhibition of goods. The Talking Beads facilities can be made available for adult education during the evenings. The Talking Beads Market is where the interaction with the street occurs.

Talking Beads Market

Located under the Auditorium, the market is glazed to the street, the arcade and the square. The market celebrates the square entrance, and the first level of the elevated square with trees and benches will be visible. Aligning with the auditorium above, the market edge steps back from the otherwise consistent street edge, broadening the sidewalk and encouraging one to enter. (See Fig. 6-17)

The colonnade is broken in front of the market. People can always be seen waiting for the bus on this section of the Paul Kruger Street sidewalk. Seven bus stops line the site. The market offers crafts while-u-wait.

The market activities will happen in clear view of the surroundings. The traditional idea of a market as a place of bargaining and activity determined its important position at the square entrance. Movement is possible through the market to the square, and the activities will surely extend onto the sidewalk and the square.

Tables, or booths in the market can be rented to independent and informal sellers of arts and crafts. The tables/display cases will have be lockable section for overnight storage.

Colonnade

The section of Paul Kruger Street where the site is located is unique in that it has a continuous covered colonnade.
Fig 6-17 View to the building from Paul Kruger Street
The section of colonnade in front of the existing Pharmacy building will be conserved as a memory of the existing, while a new concrete roof colonnade is introduced to maintain the continuous covered walkway. The colonnade is only broken in front of the market, to make the main square entrance more visible.

The colonnade roof at the Retail Arcade entrance Paul Kruger Street is at a higher level. The first floor slab is effectively extended over the street. This roof over the sidewalk is then understood as the roof of the shops, as it extends into the building. This blurs the sidewalk boundary, making the sidewalk part of the building, the building part of the sidewalk. The glazed edge allows passers-by glimpses of the elevated square.

The pharmacy colonnade is conserved specifically, because of the memory of the pharmacy that has been located here for many years. The shop behind this section of colonnade is also reserved for Willie Pieterse Pharmacy.

### Basement

The new basement is reserved for private parking, supplying 42 parking spaces available to the flat residents (single parking space per flat), and 3 parking spaces each for the Gallery and Talking Beads. Extra parking can be rented from FinPark if required. The neighbouring 24 hour parking garage is a resource allowing easy vehicular access to the building.

The basement is accessed through the 24-hour FinPark Parking Garage Basement. Access to the FinPark basement is controlled, gained with a swipe card. The same system will be used to secure access from the FinPark basement to the new basement. Talking Beads and Gallery storage, as well as lockers for flat residents are also located in the basement.

### Future Development

As Paul Kruger Street develops as an important axis for Pretoria, the density will increase. The city block will undoubtedly be under development pressure. It is proposed that the following guidelines are imposed on new developments on the city block north of the site:

- The Savelkoul and Fatti’s buildings must be conserved and maintained.
- The Afrik House building façade must be conserved
- Any new development on the site must integrate the Afrik House façade in such a manner that it is celebrated and remains discernible from the new development.
- Arcade link to Van Erkom arcade must be established, preferably through the current Afrik House site.
- Any new building facing the proposed Cultural square must have an active edge to the square e.g. shops, restaurants, building entrance, vertical circulation, extension of the square, etc.
- Any new building facing the cultural square must be stepped so as to maintain winter solar incidence for the Northern Flats.

Proposed Building functions:
A multifunctional development would be considered ideal.
Retail on ground floor critical, preferably linked to the existing arcade system
Restaurants and entertainment venues on first and ground floors
Offices on higher floors
Residential units on higher floors

Figure 6-19 Future Development
- Proposed Building Groundfloor in red.
Buildings to be demolished in dashed line. Red arrows indicate links
Figure 6-20 View to the square