

# Inner City Sanctum

Employing an Architectural Lexicon that  
Exalts Linguistic Culture.

MARK de VEREDICIS

28075782



## Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated my parents, Dr Shifra Klebanoff, Dr Nicola de Veredicis and my brother David de Veredicis for their continued support and extensive culture they have given to me since birth.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my study leaders Derick de Bruyn and Dr Arthur Barker for constant motivation and inspiration throughout the year.

I would also like to thank Theo Gertsch for counsel and editing my dissertation to a humane level. Matthys Barnard Chrisna Viljoen and Jeandre Dednam for editing and conceptualisation, and Christoffel Mentz for advice and always helping me pin up.

### Project Information:

Address : Corner of Lilian Ngoyi (Van der Walt) and Helen Joseph  
(Church) Streets

Pretoria CBD, Tshwane metropolitan District  
Gauteng, South Africa

25°44'48.3"S 28°11'38.2"E

Function - Linguistics Understanding Centre

Research Field - Heritage and Cultural Landscapes - Urbanism



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Masters in Architecture (Professional) - MArch (Prof)

Department of Architecture  
Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa  
2015

Study Leader: Derick de Bruyn  
Studio Master: Dr. Arthur Barker

## ABSTRACT

In the CBD of Tshwane, a cross societal and cultural architecture, that is of and from place, will be used to create an inner-city sanctum of a lingual repository that connects all walks of life in a societal apotheosis.

The site under investigation is seen as a politically and economically charged precinct within the CBD of Pretoria/Tshwane. Although it does not allow for human activity to proliferate to its fullest capacity, the inherent intention of the surrounding buildings is clear but their language doesn't talk to one another. An architecture that juxtaposes but also synthesises the existing is required. A contained within this program, dealing with language connects all walks of people, initiating inclusivity and a self restorative interaction between society in a bottom-up approach to node creation and synthesis of existing nodes in the CBD.

A mimetic architecture will be employed to contextualise the surrounding buildings' formal intentions, to be employed as a basis for morphogenetic and neo-language architecture. This will be used as an unanimous translator of architectural built form and programme of linguistic translation. The architecture is from and out of place in an architectonically genetic level. By epitomisation of all architectures of context and distilling them into a succinct and openly intelligible form of morphed essentialist building blocks, a universal translator of context is achievable.

The program has a public interface on street level and of publishing and exhibition, retail and semi private repose spaces all focused on the proliferation of linguistic exchange and architectural language acknowledgement or cognisance to the average citizen.





## Plagiarism report

In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and thesis, I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further state that no part of my thesis has already, or is currently being submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that the thesis is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of other, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.



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MARK de VEREDICIS

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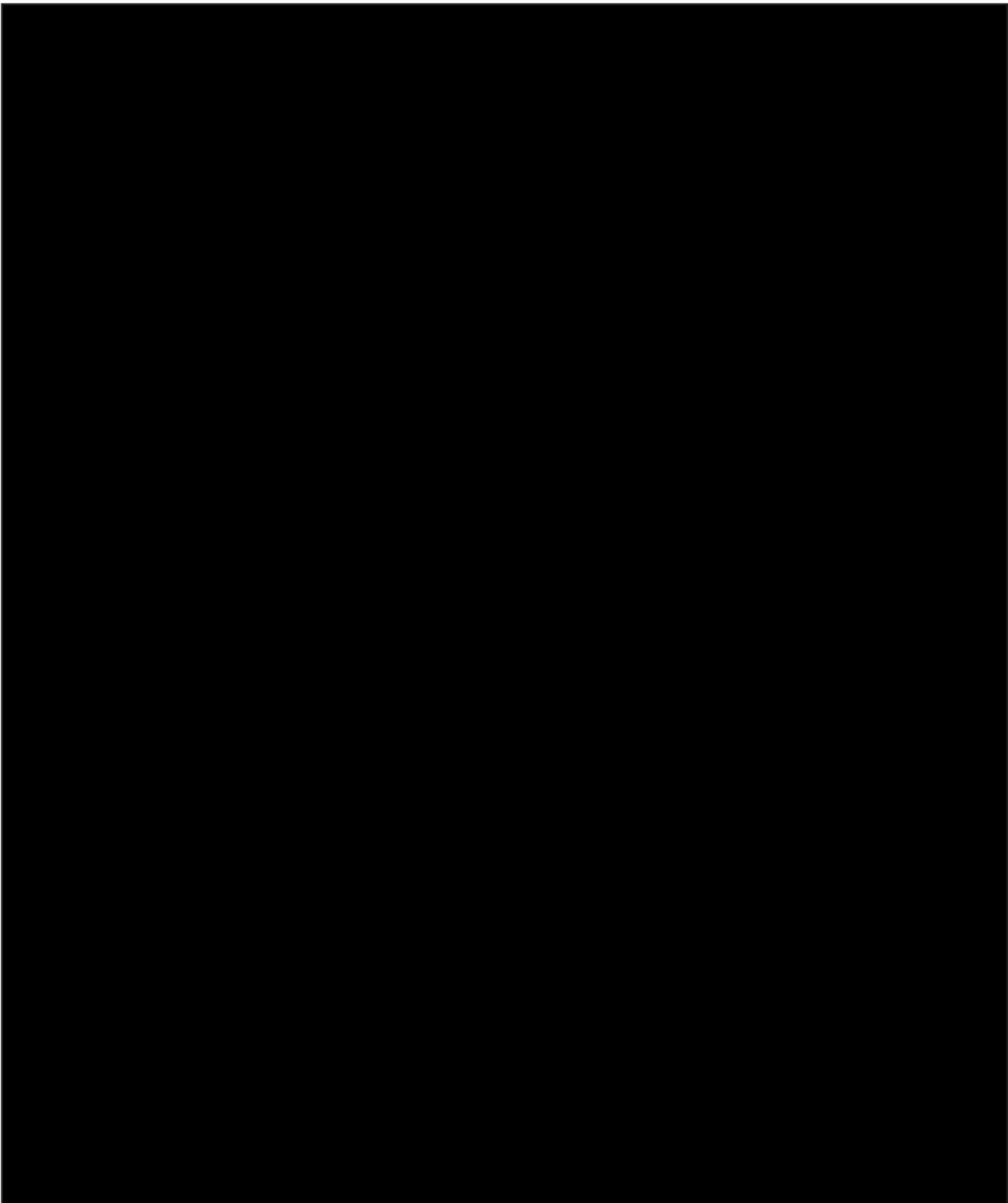
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# PART ONE

## INTRODUCTION

# Kiki & Bوبا









# Preconceived Mappings

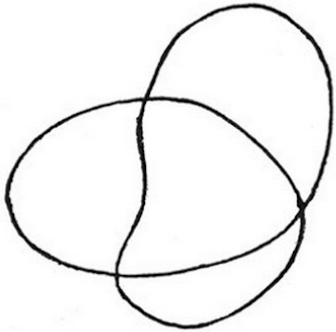


FIG. 18

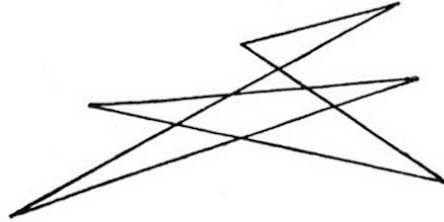
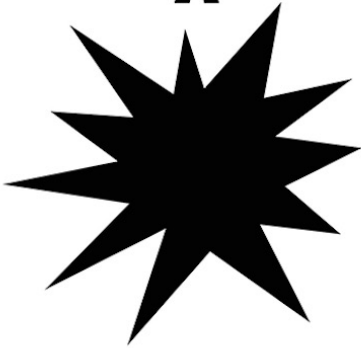
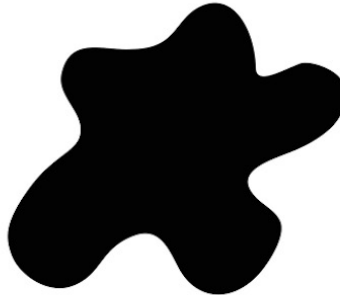


FIG. 19

**A**



**B**



THE KIKI AND BOUBA EFFECT.

In 2001, Vilayanur S. Ramachandran and Edward Hubbard repeated Köhler's experiment using the words "kiki" and "bouba" and asked American college undergraduates and Tamil speakers in India "Which of these shapes is bouba and which is kiki?" In both groups, 95% to 98% selected the curvy shape as "bouba" and the jagged one as "kiki", suggesting that the human brain somehow attaches abstract meanings to the shapes and sounds in a consistent way. The study shows that even children as young as 2 years old - too young to read - may show this effect as well. (Ramachandran, S & Hubbard, E. M. :2001)

Ramachandran and Hubbard suggest that the kiki/bouba effect has implications for the evolution of language, because it suggests that the naming of objects is not completely arbitrary. The rounded shape may most commonly be named "bouba" because the mouth makes a more rounded shape to produce that sound, while a more taut, angular mouth shape is needed to make the sound "kiki". The sounds of a "K" are harder and more forceful than those of a "B", as well.

The presence of these "synesthesia-like mappings" suggest that this effect might be the neurological basis for sound symbolism, in which sounds are non-arbitrarily mapped to objects and events in the world. More recently research indicated that the effect may be a case of ideasthesia. "sensing concepts" or "sensing ideas" is defined as a phenomenon in which activations of concepts (inducers) evoke perception-like experiences (concurrents).

The idea that kiki or bouba represent specific forms based on their sound or lettering presents an idea being able to analogously compare differing forms or representations thereof. This is better understood within a semiotic context. This idea of form giving intended or unintended meaning, represents the proponents to understanding built meaning. Formal signs are decoded by a viewer, although they all exude an unintended meaning (apart from the intended sign) which is very subjectively received. Everyone has a different interpretation, but most people have a common vision about a designed form or space. This semantic cognitive understanding is useful in deciphering built form to a ubiquitous audience.

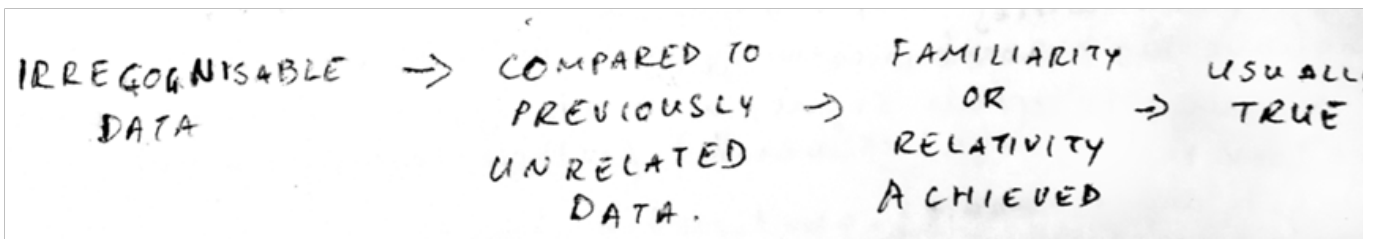
**The understanding of form within an urban context and the search for a semiotic link to understanding it becomes the main premise of this dissertation.**

## Project Intention

Not understanding something at all is pure bliss. One does not find the necessity to want to know more. However with the slightest inkling of interest, the first question of one's surroundings sparks the snowballing of curiosity. Once one knows one thing, one desires to know the others that have specific pertinence to the first thing. A concepts ability to grasp more and more interest from the subject.

## Hypothetical Statement

Is it possible to entice a person to question his built surroundings, and inevitably himself in that reflective and self-referential process?



An unrecognisable form -> Gives off an intended meaning as well as an unintended meaning -> which in turn gives off a sense of place and space to the viewer. This gives rise to a triumvirate of form function and beauty all at equal levels. Together they give the built object a sense of importance within the formalist extremes - from a building which causes a sense of iconoclasm in its own right - to a means to a contextualism within the greater built context.

1. This unrecognisable form has its genetic and constructive basis in visible forms that have been mimed from the built context.
2. This unrecognisable form will have its basis in the viewer now starting to question his surroundings.
3. The viewer then gains a sense of intelligibility of the surrounding built entities in the context.
4. This act then sparks a snowballing of desire to want to know more about one's surroundings.
5. The viewer then possibly gains a cognisance of how to read and interpret the surroundings more so than if there was no unrecognisable form in the first place.
6. The viewer then will question more to find out more and eventually gain more interest about the surround he/she exists in.

## Approach to the site in question.

A preface for how the site was addressed must be established. The site was discussed in a semiotic manner and then buildings were personified into “characters” and based on the average user of each building respectively, but also as a means at haptic quantification of the emotions that each specific building exudes, pertaining to the architectural style, form, and domineering or timid personality with regards to their situation within the urban fabric within political, social, financial and historic spheres. Each seem to be battling for a personal right to exist, and they do not pay much homage to any other form that exists around them - They are islands of power.

The iconoclasm that can be read from each of these buildings’ very internalised and formally striking elements ends in a cacophony of architectural languages, with each striving for importance in their conceived zeitgeists.

These architectonic time periods or fashions ranged from the eclectic - Neo-Wilhemians Metro Cycle House (Guldenfinger building) to the Internationally styled white tower of ABSA bank, the Metabolist - Brutalist South African State theatre, and the Neo historicist Sammy Mark’s Shopping centre and square.

## General Issue

Within the interminable bustle of the inner city of Pretoria, so many different types of people inhabit the CBD, each with different understandings of what architecture is or should be . These interpretations are lost in sea of historical irrelevance and each style seems to be fighting with each other for an identity that is unique to them. These cultural icons are formally unidentifiable to the common user because their formal intention is apparent but not openly understandable. This results in an urban scenography that doesn’t talk to itself or its inhabitants, and gets lost in a sea of mistaken identity and shrouded intention.

## Functional Impetus

An area within this metropole has been identified as a hotspot of activity from both past and present. It spans diverse and extreme political regimes, populated by various types of people that perform diverse programmes ranging from retail to clerical finance, informal trading to rest and repose.

The relationship between architecture and language is explored through semantic and semiotic understanding of the nature of this urban landscape. The proposition of an intervention that assists in this understanding is needed.

Because of the multiplicity of different users that frequent this site in the CBD of Tshwane, the site becomes a perfect platform for the interplay between people across all class, castes, races or religions. This is why a centre for the interpretation of language and colloquialism is appropriated. It becomes a direct representation and a functional impetus to synthesising the multiplicity of cultures that frequent the area.

The proposition for a semantic strip on Church Street is glorified to the level of societal apotheosis by means of a linguistic centre that connects all walks of life in one synthesised but multifunctional and multi-charactered building. This urban framework aligns closely with the 2055 vision for Tshwane.

## A Contextual Icon

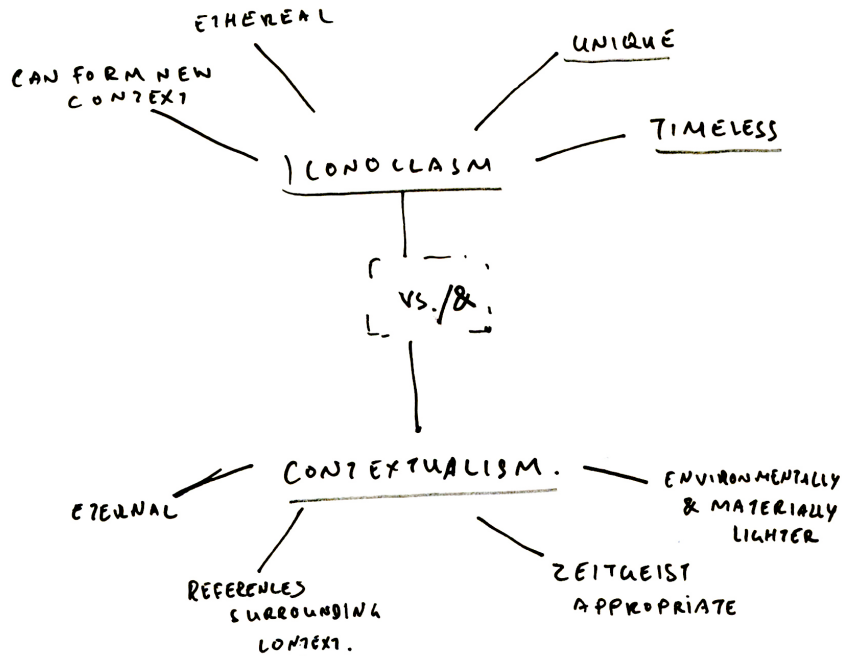
The intention of this proposed architectural intervention has its basis in understanding the historically contentious ideologies that are prevalent on site. While proliferating their programmes into the urban realm by re-appropriating space in a novel and neutral way, the architecture must contrast the harshly biased surrounding buildings prevalent on the immediate site.

The building that promises this should reenact the connection between the cultural and natural environment. A sanctuary or publicly sheltered repose park would provide humane necessities to the proximity of Pretoria CBD. Possibilities for a new language of architecture is what is sought. The parameters will not ascribe the form to be the alpha and omega of universal architectural language - but to find one that can encapsulate political and cultural diversity reflected in our society, and become a formal interpretation of the zeitgeist of the times.

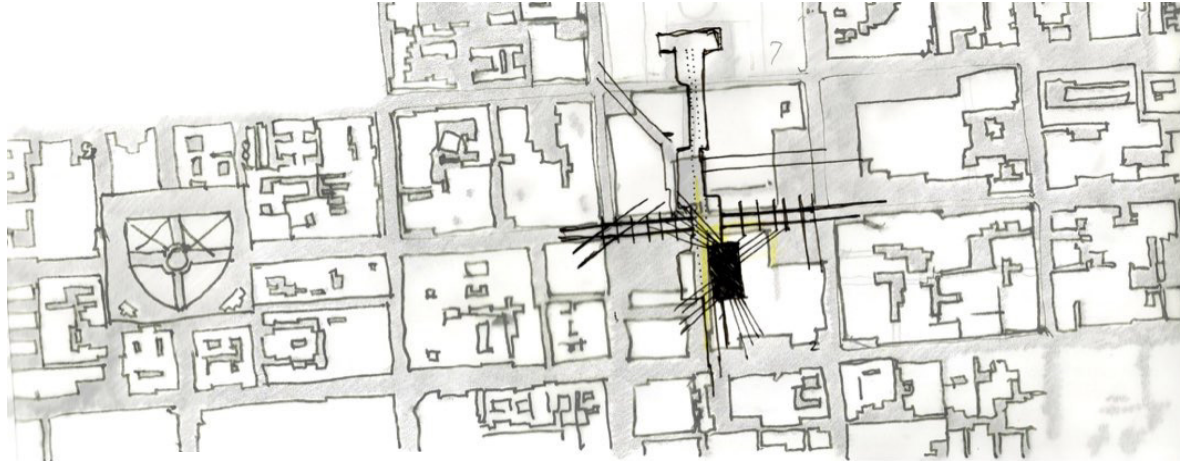
What is sought regarding an architectural stance or ideology would be a middle ground or golden mean for buildings within a city as a whole. This intermediary stance would attempt to fall between a sense of iconoclasm and contextualism. Iconoclastic buildings have the ability to form a new context.

They either are isolated islands of architectural ideology, or they are one subjective architectural ideology superimposed on a landscape that belongs to a general populous. Iconic buildings can be iconic for their form or clear ubiquitous function. While contrastingly, contextualism in architecture references the natural landscape and the built context around it.

The building being explored in this dissertation is created in an attempt at finding this fringe zone and being iconically contextual or contextually iconic. ( Dr Arthur Barker Futurespaces.co.za)







Parti diagramme of connecting functions and open spaces.

## General Issue of Architecture on Site.

The site with its plethora of functions and intended or unintended use tends to diverse architectural form. These forms have no apparent discourse between each other. They only speak an internalised conversation of self-referential importance, instead of stylistic and formal lucidity that assists in the understanding of the space and times - the zeitgeist - that the architecture was built in. What is necessary is an iconoclastic architecture that openly elucidates the programmatic intention as a lingual repository. At the same time it must also encourage the union with regards to its immediate context, albeit an urban scene with juxtaposed and conflicting histories, each requiring a justified memorialisation.

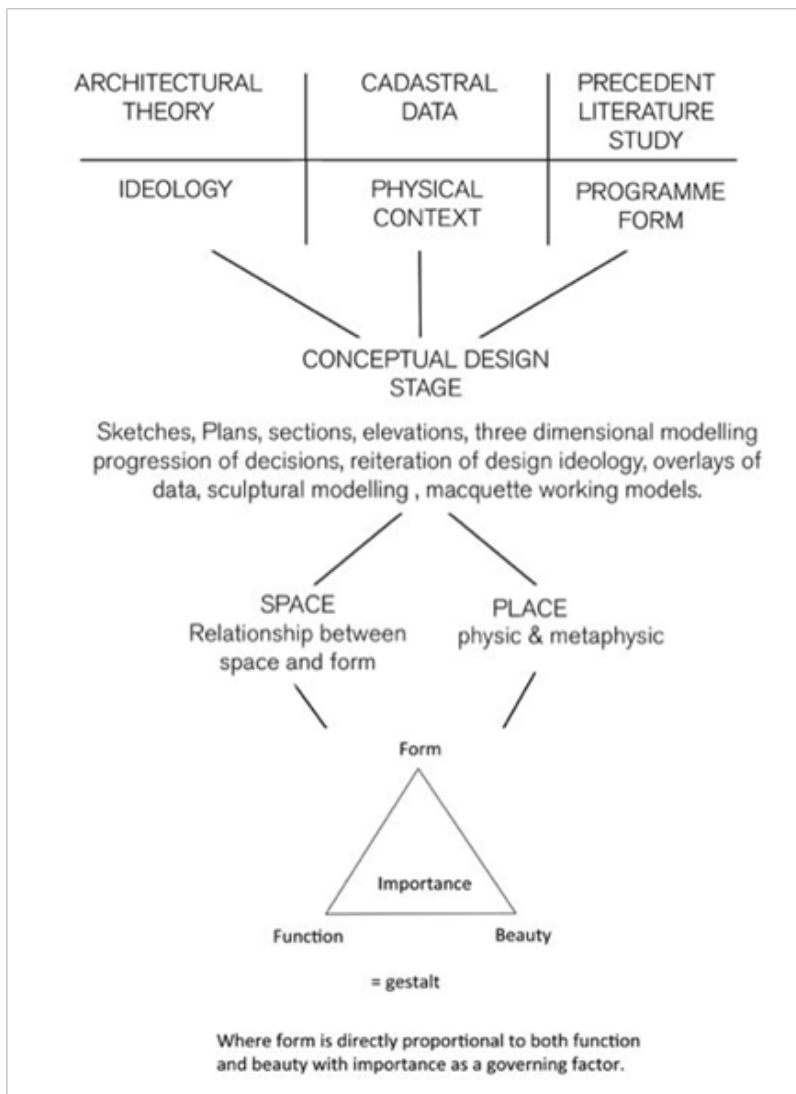


## Research Approach

An epistemological approach to architecture will be explored, By first researching and understanding built form, conjectures can be made with regards to the architecture that can be inserted therein.

## Research Methods

This image shows a research methodology that will be adopted to further investigate the insertion of an architectural intervention on site. It is a complex iteration cycle that will be revisited and checked against itself throughout this investigation.



## Main Problem Statement.

What is required is a new image of iconoclasm that references history of the place and provides a fitting zeitgeist for future generations to concisely understand the present. It should also present a sphere of contextual sensitivity to the built environment it exists in.

How not to be a superficial imposition on the landscape and urban fabric.

How to be of surface, not surface architecture.

Whether architecture itself has a universally understandable language.

Whether it is possible to have architecture that is self-evident in its formal language and not encoded in precognitive enigma.

If studies of preconceived architectonic languages are undertaken over time it becomes plausible to determine languages for contemporary architectural understanding.

Whether language and meaning be extracted from tangible and intangible meaning of one's surroundings and its extant context.