

# DOMESTICATING MODERN MOVEMENT SPACE

**Adaptive Reuse of the Meat Board building as a serviced office facility.**

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Submitted in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the degree Master of Interior Architecture (Professional) in the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology

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## JESUS CHRIST

For divine inspiration and new joy every morning. Thank you for Godly vision and your continuous blessing on my life.

*Proverbs 29:18  
If people can't see what God is doing,  
they stumble all over themselves;  
But when they attend to what he reveals,  
they are most blessed.*

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Lief, thank you for your unconditional love and support and for drying many tears. Thank you for 'escape adventures' at times when life got unbearable. The best is yet to come!

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## ABSTRACT

The Meat Board building is an icon of Modern Movement heritage with Brazilian influences in Pretoria. The building claims cultural and heritage value due to its association with renowned architect Helmut Stauch, its contextual influence on the Pretoria regionalist style and finally, to its national architectural contribution.

The current condition of the interior of the building contributes to an outdated, lifeless and dull working environment that directly contrasts the intended vision of a friendly, light-hearted working environment as originally described by the architect (Stauch 1951:3). The current interior is unresponsive to user needs and this results in a disconnection between the building and the user. Subsequently, there is an apparent dissociation between the heritage value and the use value of the building.

This dissertation explores the operation of a service office facility in a collaborative working environment as a programme in which the Meat Board building can be reused. The proposed typology caters for temporary and/or short-term office space needs. The interior of the proposed serviced office facility aims to be more adaptable to the needs of the contemporary office user. The analogy of a hotel is used to guide the operation and aesthetics of the facility.

Abercrombie (1990) compares entering an interior to the intimate experience of becoming human in the womb. The womb is fundamentally the first association we have of residential space. Irrespective of the character or scale of the space we may experience when we enter this world, Abercrombie states that we tend to associate an interior space subconsciously with this first sense of belonging. By understanding the habits, rituals and comfort zone of our personal room, we are able to engage with an interior space (Abercrombie 1990: 5). The dissertation further deals with the theme of inhabitation in the public sphere. The capability of the interior design discipline of improving human well-being by design is explored. Issues such as the claiming of personal space, customization of space, sense of belonging and self-expression are addressed.

The overall aim of the dissertation is to determine a viable reuse strategy for the Meat Board building by drawing inspiration from the original intent of the architect and from the existing (original) fabric.

## EKSKERP

Die Vleisraadgebou versinnebeeld die moderne-beweging-erfenis met Brasiliaanse invloede in die Pretoria-omgewing. Die gebou het kulturele en erfeniswaarde as gevolg van hoofsaaklik drie aspekte, naamlik, 1) die assosiasie met die welbekende argitek, Helmut Stauch, 2) die invloed wat die gebou uitoefen op Pretoria-regionalisme en 3) die nasionale bydrae tot argitektuurerfenis.

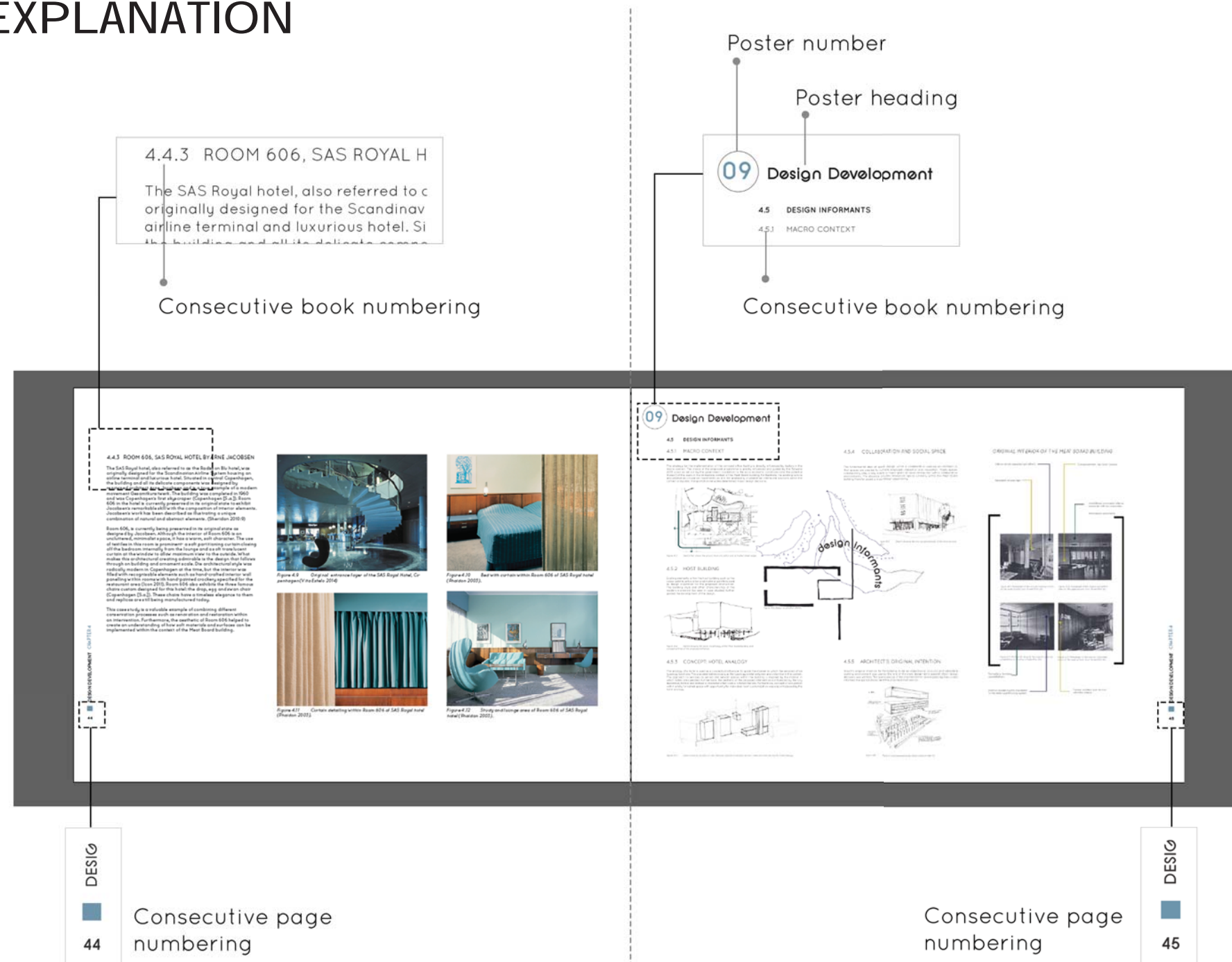
Die huidige toestand van die interieur in die gebou veroorsaak 'n ouderwetse, leweloze en onaantreklike werksomgewing wat kontrasteer met die aanvanklike visie wat beskryf is deur die argitek as 'n vriendelik en lughartige werkomgewing (Stauch 1951:3). Die huidige interieur kom onsimpatiek en stug teenoor die behoeftes van die gebruiker voor en diskonnekteer die gebou en die gebruiker. Dit veroorsaak uiteindelik dissosiasie tussen die erfeniswaarde en die gebruikswaarde van die gebou.

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die werking van 'n toegeruste kantoorfasiliteit in 'n samewerkingsomgewing as 'n program waardeur die Vleisraadgebou hergebruik kan word. Die voorgestelde tipologie poog om die behoeftes vir tydelike en/of korttermyn-kantoorspasie te ondervang. Die interieur van die toegeruste kantoorfasiliteit poog om meer aanpasbaar vir die behoeftes van die kontemporêre kantoorgebruiker te wees. Die idee van 'n hotel word as analogie gebruik om die werking en estetika van die voorgestelde fasiliteit te stuur.

Abercrombie (1990) vergelyk die ingang tot interieur met die ervaring van menswording in die baarmoeder. Die baarmoeder is fundamenteel die eerste kennismaking met residensiële ruimte. Benewens die karakter en skaal van die ruimte waardeur ons in die wêreld kom, assosieer die mens, volgens Abercrombie, 'n binneruimte met hierdie eerste ervaring van 'behoort-aan'. Die verstaan van gewoontes, rituele en gemaksones van persoonlike ruimte stel ons in staat om ook by ander binneruimtes betrokke te kan raak (Abercrombie 1990:5). Verder adresseer hierdie verhandeling ook spesifiek die tema van bewoning in die publieke ruim. Die geleentheid wat interieurontwerp as 'n dissipline bied om die welstand van die mense te verbeter, word ook ondersoek. Kwessies soos die opeis van persoonlik ruimte, die verpersoonliking van ruimte, die beleving om te behoort en selfuitdrukking in die interieur word ook hanteer.

Die oorhoofse doel met hierdie verhandeling is om 'n lewensvatbare hergebruikstrategie vir die Vleisraadgebou daar te stel wat geïnspireer is deur 1) die oorspronklike bedoeling van die argitek en 2) die bestaande gebou.

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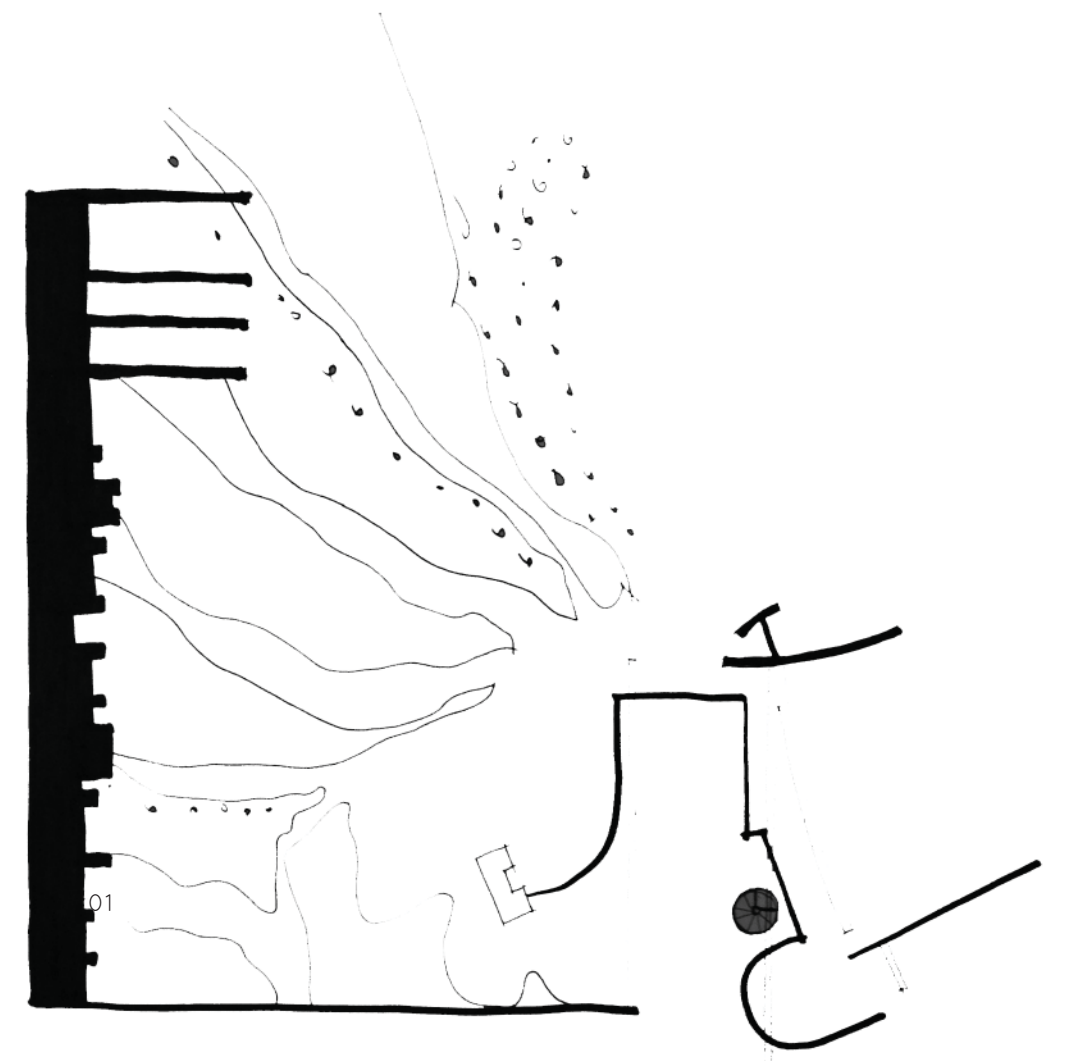


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01

# PROJECT OUTLINE

# PROLOGUE

This dissertation was born out of a fascination with the aesthetic and the experimental nature of the Modern Movement.

## 1.1. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The following list is a clarification of key concepts used in this project.

### **Modernist**

The usage of style or terminology that is typical of the Modern Movement (Meriam-Webster [S.a.]).

### **Modern Movement**

Architectural movement of the 1900s. Architects of this period rebelled against conventions of previous eras and aimed to address contemporary social needs by the taking advantage of new materials and construction techniques (Henket & Heijnen 2002: 44). New architectural aesthetics were influenced by elements such as artistic movements, depictions of cars, aircrafts and essential technology (Henket & Heijnen 2002: 44). Ambassadors of the modern movement rejected a form of ornament and proclaimed the concept of function that dictates form (Bose 2008).

### **Modern**

Relating to, or characteristic of the present or the immediate past (Meriam-Webster [S.a.]).

### **Gesamtkunstwerk**

Synthesized work of art composed by various art forms (Meriam-Webster [S.a.]).

### **Conservation**

The umbrella term that includes all the processes of how a building is cared for in order to preserve its cultural heritage (ICOMOS 2011).

### **Preservation**

Maintaining fabric in its current condition whether in a good or deteriorating condition (ICOMOS 2011).

### **Renovation**

In practice, renovation may involve rehabilitation, rebuilding and several other activities. In addition, renovations are usually more extensive and costly than other activities for a given building. (ICOMOS 2011).

### **Retrofit**

The upgrading of a building to meet modern standards or requirements in terms of energy efficiency, security and fire protection (ICOMOS 2011).

### **Technology**

A manner of accomplishing a task especially using technical processes, methods or knowledge (Meriam-Webster [S.a.]).

### **Inhabit**

To live in, to have a home in, to be present in (Meriam-Webster [S.a.])

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

The modern movement marks a particular point in architectural history where traditional conventions are challenged and radical design experiments manifested. The Industrial revolution at the end of the 19th century resulted in the mass production of iron, steel and glass (Henket & Heijnen 2002: 44), and created infinite prospects for architects in terms of construction and materials. Many of the twentieth century architectural icons are still admired today, but the ageing of these buildings is a global reality and the conservation of these buildings is a burning issue. In the current realm of conservation, Modern Movement buildings are often neglected and vulnerable, as the majority of conservation practice tends to focus on pre-twentieth century buildings (Henket 2008: 13). The approach to conserving Modern Movement buildings does not in essence vary from pre-twentieth century buildings as Henket states (2008:13), but the challenges faced with the process are of a different nature than those of earlier periods (Kindred 2007:1). From a technical perspective, the restoration processes of Modern Movement buildings are often challenging due to the experimental nature of the architecture (Henket & Heijnen 2002: 44). The stark reality of ageing buildings is that when the function becomes obsolete or it is no longer economically viable, owners become uninterested in spending money on the upkeep of these buildings (Henket 2008: 13) and this can ultimately lead to demolition.

As the world evolves and technology develops, it is inevitable that the user requirements change in existing building environments and the interior design discipline has a key role to play in the renovation of these buildings. The interior of a building is important as physical space with objects that allow inhabitation by working, entertaining or relaxing. Secondly, the interior of a building is crucial as container of experience. Abercrombie uses the metaphor of being born from a mother's womb to describe the psychological association with the interior space as shelter or a 'psychologically crucial container' (1990:5). Our understanding of the interior, according to Abercrombie, is largely influenced by the experience of birth (Abercrombie 1990:5). This explains why the influence of interior space on the human psychology is of great importance. The interior of a building is not merely a space of physical interaction, but a space that triggers meaning and associations differently for each user. The interior of buildings is after all where users spend most of their time, being constantly confronted with what is around them. The following statement by Frank Lloyd Wright further describes how crucial the interior environment of a building is both to its users and to the state of the building as an object.

'The space within becomes the reality of the building.'  
 (Brooks 1979: 9)

## 1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Meat Board building was designed by the renowned architect Hellmut Stauch and can be described as a local monument of the Modern Movement. The building claims cultural and heritage value due to its association with renowned architect Helmut Stauch, its contextual influence on the Pretoria regionalist style and finally, to its national architectural contribution.

'With the Meat Board paving the way, other Brazilian-influenced designs followed' (Gerneke 1998:217)

According to Gerneke (1998:217) the building is the first Modern Movement building nationally that demonstrates Brazilian elements such as moveable louvres and garden elements as a climate specific approach to the Modern Movement architecture of the time. The building subsequently was a major influence on the development of the Pretoria Regionalist style. Remarkable handcrafted elements and design innovation in terms of materials and construction contribute to rich cultural heritage that should be preserved and exhibited for future generations.

The building is situated on the edge of the Pretoria CBD, in Arcadia, which is an ideal location for a contemporary, state of the art office building. The building is privately owned but currently occupied by the Department of Public Works. The overall structure and exterior of the building is intact and in a relatively good condition, but the interior space is underutilized, lifeless and dull and contrasts the intended vision of a friendly, light-hearted office space as originally described by the architect (Stauch 1951:3). There is an apparent dissociation between the heritage value and the use value of the building. The current detrimental quality of the interior space contributes to an isolated, outdated working environment. The building is located on a vibrant street corner that forms part of the surrounding public transport networks, but the current blunt street corner facade discards any public interaction. The building as a whole is unresponsive to the modern corporate practice, and social patterns of office users.

## 1.4 AIMS/ OBJECTIVES

1. The project intends to determine a viable reuse strategy for the Meat Board building by drawing inspiration from the original intent of the architect and from the existing (original) fabric.
2. The project intends to increase the functionality of the Meat Board by remodelling the building as a competitive office complex that responds to current user requirements and contextual opportunities.
3. The intervention aims to add softness and an element of adaptability to the current harsh and impersonal office environment.

4. The proposed intervention aims to diminish the disconnection between the user and the building.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the original intent of the architect? Is this intent realistic and relevant within the context and current paradigm?
2. What elements of the existing fabric can be used as inspiration to generate a design language for the proposed intervention?
3. How did working space evolve since the modern movement? What are the contemporary trends within the design of working space?
4. What factors contribute to the disconnection between the user and the Meat Board building?
5. What role does the interior designer play in the way that people inhabit space?

## 1.6 DELIMITATIONS

1. In order to complete the M(Int)Prof dissertation, the following assumptions are made:

BRIEF:

The current owner of the Meat Board building approaches an interior designer with the need to renovate the building into contemporary office space in order to attract a corporate company (companies) as tenant with the aim to increase the overall rental income of the building.

To implement the abovementioned brief, the following assumptions are made:

- \_ The formal client of the project is the owner of the Meat Board building,
  - \_ Existing tenants are relocated into new venues.
2. This dissertation focuses on the design of public space within the building and does not deal with offices on detail design level. Proposals for the spatial planning of the offices are made on building scale and proposals are made for the aesthetic quality of the office environment within the building.
  3. Proposals are made for upgrading of building services within the scope of the interior designer, but these diagrams will be review and

specified by the appropriate engineering professional.

## 1.7 METHODS

### \_ Literature studies

A literature review was conducted to create a broad understanding of current trends within the workplace.

### \_ Case studies

Case studies were performed to gather information that can be applied to design.

### \_ Historical Research as design method

As one of the aims of the dissertation is to develop a reuse strategy by drawing inspiration from the intent of the architect and from the existing (original) fabric, it was necessary to carefully study and interpret all the available information of the original Meat Board building. The original intention and vision for the building by the architect was studied by referring to articles written by the architect himself and by other journalists. Access to photographs of the original interior as designed by Stauch helped to interpret his intension as described in written format into spatial observations. Wang (2013: 174) describes the nature of historical research as interpretational due to the absence of empirical data. He advises that the researcher must make use of various methods to unveil and understand historical evidence as it is interpreted by his state of mind and his personal frame of reference. Furthermore, the existing (original) fabric was studied in terms of materials, construction methods and colour palette and was used as design inspiration.

### \_ Mood board as design exploration method

Mood boards were composed in order to explore the aesthetics of the proposed interior and how it relates to the existing fabric.

\_ From the start of the project, the site was the one constant factor that guided the development of the project. Figure 1.1 demonstrates the design process.

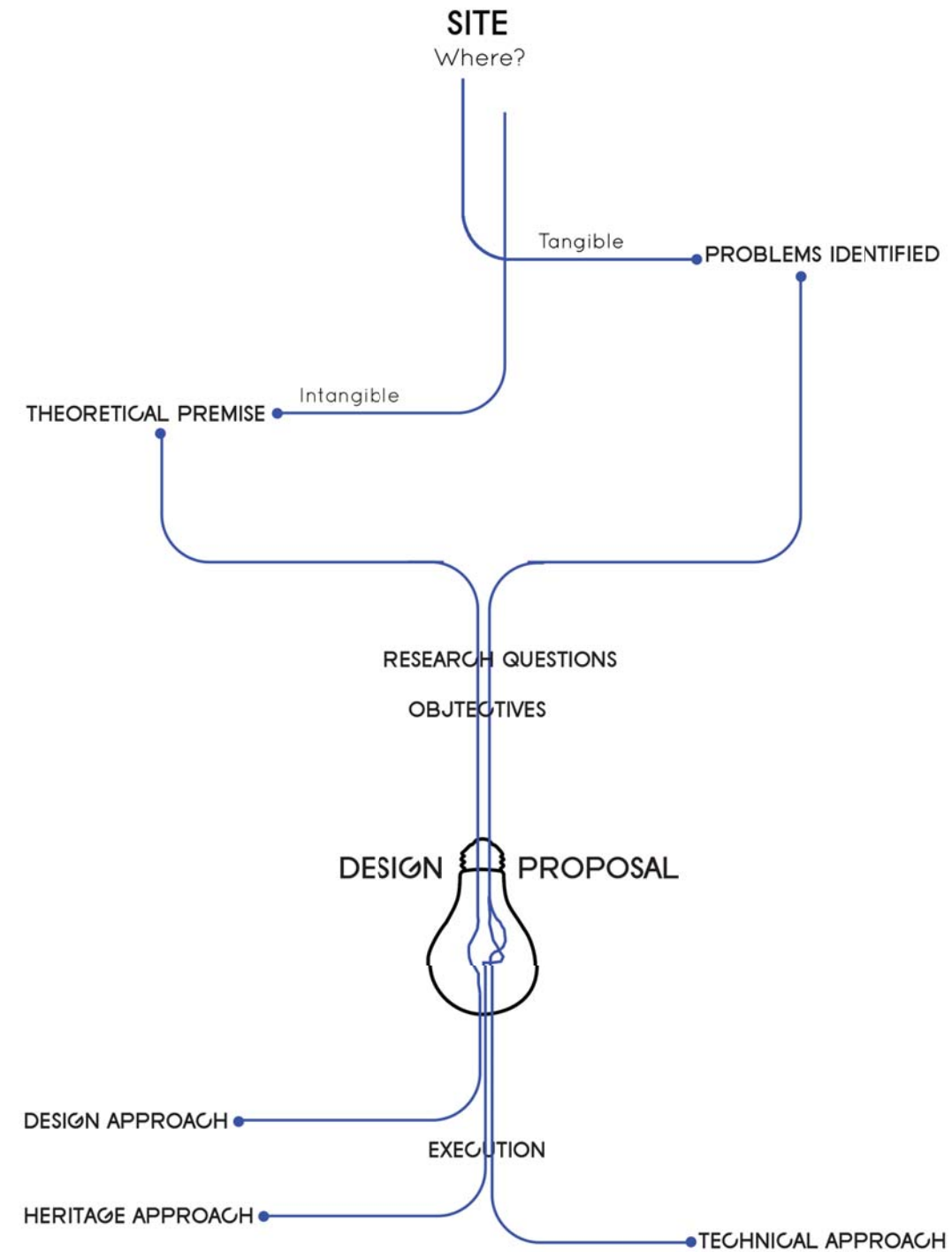


Figure 1.1 Diagram demonstrating design process.

# 01 Domesticating Modern Movement space

Adaptive Reuse of the Meat Board building as a serviced office facility.



## ABSTRACT

The Meat Board building is an icon of Modern Movement heritage with Brazilian influences in Pretoria. The building claims cultural and heritage value due to its association with renowned architect Helmut Stauch. Its contextual influence on the Pretoria regionalist style and finally, to its national architectural contribution.

The current condition of the interior of the building contributes to an outdated, lifeless and dull working environment that directly contrasts the intended vision of a friendly, light-hearted working environment as originally described by the architect (Stauch 1951:3). The current interior is unresponsive to user needs and this results in a disconnection between the building and the user. Subsequently, there is an apparent disconnection between the heritage value and the use value of the building.

This dissertation explores the operation of a service office facility in a collaborative working environment as a programme in which the Meat Board building can be reused. The proposed typology caters for temporary and/or short-term office space needs. The interior of the proposed serviced office facility aims to be more adaptable to the needs of the contemporary office user. The analogy of a hotel is used to guide the operation and aesthetics of the facility.

Abercrombie (1990) compares entering an interior to the intimate experience of becoming human in the womb. The womb is fundamentally the first association we have of residential space. Irrespective of the character or scale of the space we may experience when we enter this world, Abercrombie states that we tend to associate an interior space subconsciously with this first sense of belonging. By understanding the habits, rituals and comfort zone of our personal room, we are able to engage with an interior space (Abercrombie 1990: 5). The dissertation further deals with the theme of inhabitation in the public sphere. The capability of the interior design discipline of improving human well-being by design is explored. Issues such as the claiming of personal space, customization of space, sense of belonging and self-expression are addressed.

The overall aim of the dissertation is to determine a viable reuse strategy for the Meat Board building by drawing inspiration from the original intent of the architect and from the existing (original) fabric.

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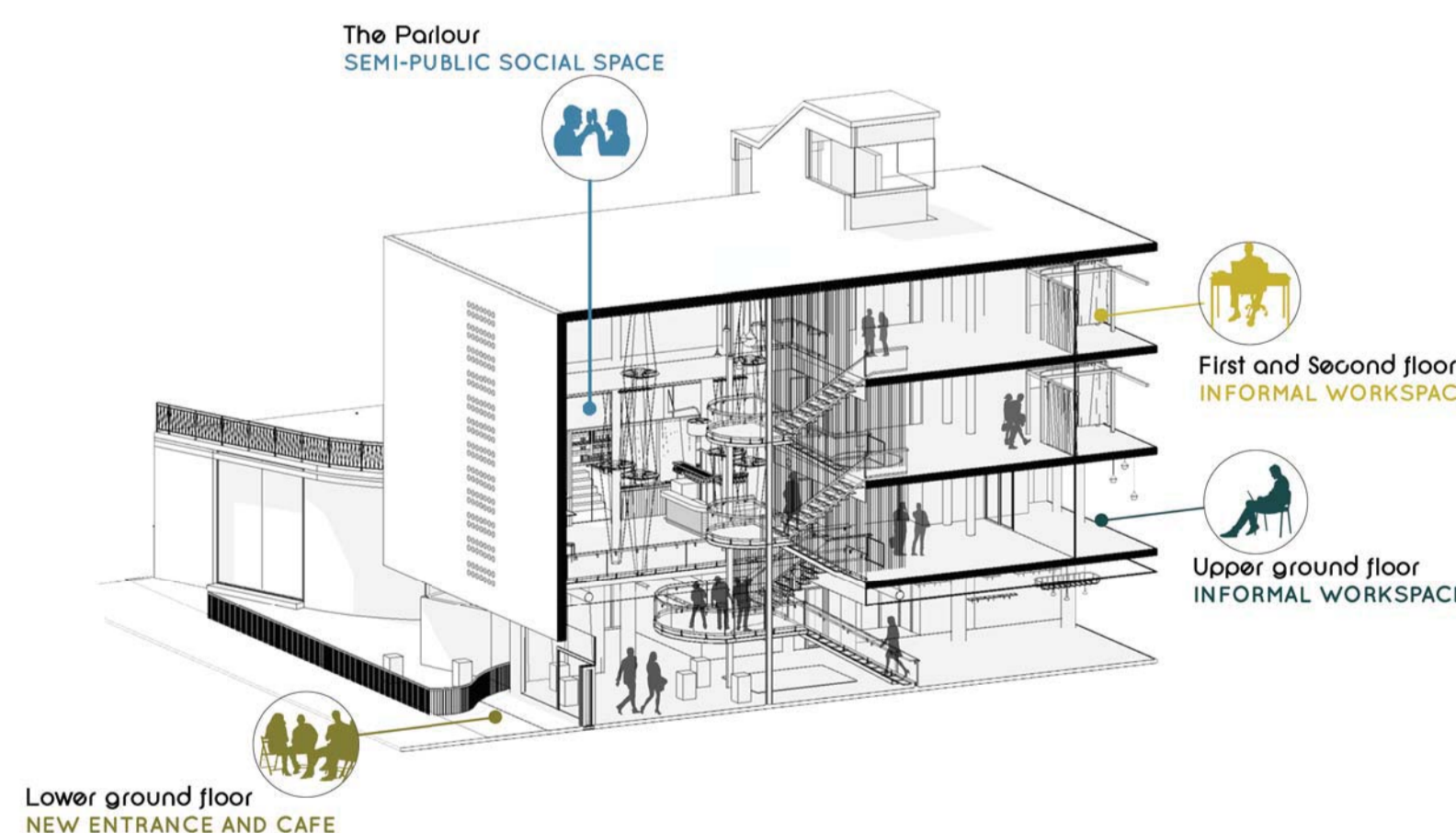


Figure 1.3 Diagram showing different areas of design focus in the project.

### 1.8.1 PROJECT LAYOUT

