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9.3 LETTER FROM DESIGN EXAMINER

M. (Prof) Assessment of dissertation (design component) by external examiner.

Name of candidate: Siyabonga Mahlanu

Title of Dissertation: A Sense of Place and Belonging

Name of external examiner (design): Thomas Chapman

Date: 11 Nov 2016

Comments:

GENERAL: This project asks some very relevant questions. I sincerely enjoyed being taken on the student’s dynamic journey through some difficult theoretical terrain. The student’s passion and interest for design is evident throughout the project and I am looking forward to finding out whether any of the research questions posed at the beginning of the document have been resolved through the design process.

STRENGTHS:

- Precinct-scale planning: The project demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the site and has made some very mature decisions at the urban precinct scale, with a sensitive scalar and placemaking response to context.
- Design iterations: The student has successfully used model-making to refine the design and the latest iteration shows that the student has developed a critical understanding of scale and context.

SHORTCOMINGS

- Precedent Studies: Although not directly related to the design process, my feeling is that the student could have constructed his entire argument through a far more critical review of precedent studies. I am not sure that the student has visited any of the projects in Chapter 5, as the reading and understanding of the work is thin and far too kind! My feeling is that the student should have supplemented the formal/architect-designed projects with other successful examples of community spaces that demonstrate the type of tectonic and spatial qualities he is trying to create in urban design, we would call this a ‘tissue’ or ‘scaffold’ study. There are some anecdotal studies of incremental growth of ROF houses but this is far too generic. I am thinking the student should showcase a successful Chisa-Nyama or canwash etc. and analyse it in minute detail.
- Large Urban Design (Ch 3): I find this portion of the project very naïve, and should not be termed an urban design framework, rather a research/though framework. The interventions read as very ‘top-down’ proposals which contradict the students very well-considered precinct planning in later chapters (from pg 80 onwards).

ASPECTS THAT NEED CLARIFICATION

- Precedent Studies: Some kind of synthesis statement/diagram that demonstrates a better/more critical understanding of the precedents.
- Overall Form: There is a great deal of architectural information lacking in the document that I am looking forward to seeing in the final presentation.

CREDIBILITY OF ARGUMENT AND BIBLIOGRAPHY: No Comment (Design examiner only)
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DECLARATION

In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously 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 been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

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

Siyabonga Lunga Mahlangu

December 2016