1. Introduction

"I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades' curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of space and the events of its past…" (Calvino 1972:10)

"Public spaces are where communities rediscover their unity" (Aymonino & Paolo Mosco 2006: 361) – this is the space where events take place and it is defined by the architectural object. The author is of the opinion that relatively few formal public spaces exist in South African cities. This does not prevent the public from creating their own public space. Open space and empty parking lots are turned into informal spaces where people with similar interests meet (fig. 1). Regular events take place over the weekends in parks, where crafts and food is sold (fig. 2-3). The street is also used as public space even though it lacks the basic public amenities, such as seating, shade and ablutions.

Bearing this in mind an open terrain between the suburb of Salvokop and the railway tracks that border the centre of Pretoria is selected for the investigation.   Its proximity to Freedom Park and the city centre, and the large scale of the site makes it ideally suited as a contemporary public space. Freedom Park is the latest urban intervention in Pretoria. However, the value of the park suffers due to its nature as an island in a sea of infrastructure. Access to the park is made difficult by the surrounding railway tracks, empty fields of the former marshalling yard. Investors already show interest in this open space next to the railway (Freislich 2006, interview, 17 May), but commercial buildings with no social agenda may exacerbate the problem of access. This is not a unique problem in Pretoria. Little provision is made for pedestrians and people using public transport. New developments do not grow from the core of the city, resulting in fragmented urban clusters that can only be reached by car.

Cleared land at the base of Salvokop Hill is the only reminder of the rail industry that once occupied the site. Underneath a thin layer of contaminated soil lie the tracks of a vanished marshalling yard. Half [1] of the plants that grow in this place are exotic (Siebert 2002:2). There is a small rubbish dump, high tension wires, twin footpaths and the Pretoria skyline looming to the north. It is quiet save the trains and taxis clattering and calling as they pass nearby.

The focus of this dissertation is the dialectic between an object and the spaces it creates. This dialectic is investigated by way of 18th century English and French Picturesque traditions, contemporary art and the work of contemporary urban theorists Stan Allen and James Corner of Field Operations, Raoul Bunschoten of Chora and Michel de Certeau.

The site analysis attempts to look beyond the objective information provided by traditional analysis. This implies a methodology that approaches the site from eye level - the way a pedestrian would approach it. Activities and user groups are identified around the site. Precedent studies on international and national; formal and informal public spaces are investigated in order to gather appropriate working concepts, models and methodologies. A scenario is then diagrammatically presented. After the design investigation a conclusion is reached after which a detailed technical investigation of one of the three proposed buildings synthesizes the theoretical and conceptual work into a concrete architectural form and closes the dissertation.

[1] Forty species have been recorded for the study area. 75% are exotics of which only 10% has a potential use for the local community. 40% of the indigenous species can be used by the community but these plants are already threatened by invasive exotics. Therefore development is encouraged in this area (Siebert 2003:2).

Fig. 1 *Heys Memorial Hall* parking (Author 2006)

Fig. 2 *Magnolia Dal,* vietnamese festival(Author 2006)

Fig. 3 *Magnolia Dal,* vietnamese festival (Author 2006)

2. Theoretical discourse

In 1992 Rachel Whiteread turned an old Victorian house inside out (Townsend 2004:19). The shuttering used to construct Whiteread's *House* (fig. 4) was to be demolished along with the houses next to it as part of an urban renewal. The project is humanist. It is about the human subject and architectural space.

Adrian Searle (*ibid:* 19) points out that: "What, finally, has been exposed is an empty setting, a place where people once led a life of intimacies, grew up, grew old and died. And one might add, fucked, rowed, worried, slept, ate, shat, fought, laughed and lied. No one looks out of the windows anymore, no one puts out the milk-bottles on the stoop; no on shouts 'Kevin come in your tea's ready' or returns home late from the pub and fumbles with the keys to the lock." Whiteread's work privileges space and not the object.

Focus is shifted from architectural objects to the spaces they create - the role of the object is being re-examined. Spaces and their associated atmospheres have been a sustained interest in the West. In the minimalist art of the 1960s much was made of the viewer's movement through the field surrounding the objects (Mariño 2004:105). In post-minimal practices place, surrounding objects is redefined as the enactment of a situation (*ibid:* 105). Also, the French sociologist, Michel de Certeau, in his seminal text *The practice of everyday life (*1984) writes on the movement of pedestrians through the spaces of cities and how this movement is influenced by objects. In South Africa this interest is evident in Ivan Vladislavić's recently published *Portrait with keys*. Vladislavić has a recurring theme of flaneurism, with strangers meeting in the leftover spaces of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Thus, public space is no longer simply a platform for viewing architecture, but rather architecture becomes a tool to manipulate urban spaces.

2.1 Manipulation of space

"I say it is the sculptor who orders and animates space, gives it meaning." (Isamu Noguchi cited by Hunter 1979:85)

The architectural object need not be a mere container of space, but is able to create an atmosphere - similar to props on a stage used to create ambience. To echo Ilhyun Kim's sentiment on objects: objects matter when "architecture embraces the entire atmosphere in which human activities are engaged" (Kim 2006:164).

To exemplify: in July 2005 Richard Serra's installation *A matter of time* opened in the Guggenheim Bilbao's largest space – the Arcelor Gallery (fig. 5). This gallery, measuring one hundred and thirty by thirty meters, has always been considered to be too large to host contemporary art. Moreover, the space dwarfed Serra's eight piece installation. Once all eight of the pieces were installed, the experience of the gallery changed dramatically. Serra leads the viewer down dark corridors, dead ends and open spaces. The monotonous gallery space is turned into a series of different experiences. The metal plates have an emotional impact as the heavy sculptures bear down on the viewer with no visible connections keeping them in place. Some of the walls are sandblasted and appear to be soft, but on contact the cold metal underneath is felt. The installation, although unsettling, heightens the viewer's awareness of the space created by it.

Objects need not be at the same scale as the Serra sculptures to influence the space around them, in fact they can be on the scale of graffiti. *Paint drip risks* is a group of three graffiti artists, active in the

Fig. 4 *House* - Rachel Whiteread, 1993, concrete (Dimitrakaki 2004:118)

Fig. 5 *Matter of Time* - Richard Serra, 2005, 430cm high 6cm thick sandblasted steel sheets, Guggenheim, Bilbao. (McGuirk 2005:86).
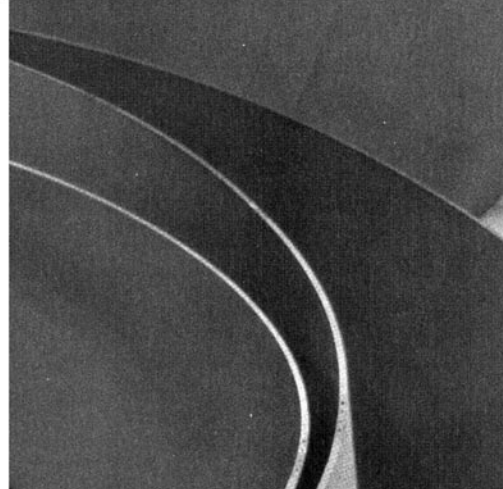

Fig. 6 *The Broken Column* - François Nicolas Henri Racine de Monville, (1774-1789), photographer Michael Kenna (1988) (Ketcham 1994:76)

Left: Fig. 7 Restoration architect, Olivier Choppin de Janvry, co-owner of Désert de Retz, in front of the unrestored *Temple of Pan,* 1993 (Ketcham 1997:90)

Middle: Fig. 8 *Tartar Tent, Isle of Happiness,* construction 1774-1789, restored 1972-1993 (Ketcham 1997:84)

Far left: Fig. 9 Graffiti - Paint Drip Risks, Cape Town (Spot 2006:14)

southern suburbs of Cape Town. Their graffiti often appears in circulation routes that are used by people who have no choice but to walk there because they can't afford private transport (fig. 9). The graffiti object draws the passer-by's attention to the fact that the space is frequently used, although no-one else is in sight – whether a comforting or discomforting idea. The subject of the graffiti also comments on the conditions of pedestrians – a leaking tap is ironic because very little public facilities for water, ablution or seating is provided in a typical South African public space.

2.2 Sluces and streams: movement through space

Objects change the way people move through space, by either serving as markers on a map, guiding movement from one point to the next, or by manipulating the topography. Objects placed in urban space only allow a few possible routes through the space. Pedestrians will only use a few of the routes. However the walker also increases the number of possibilities when using shortcuts and detours (De Certeau 1988: 98) – this causes unpredictable emergent behaviour. The implication is that the arrangement of architectural objects does not necessarily dictate the way that urban space is used.

Raoul Bunschoten, director and most prominent member of *Chora* (a cross between an academic research institute, urban design office and think-tank for urban policy)*,* uses the term *Prototype* to explain this arrangement of architectural objects (Bunschoten 2002:5). According to Bunschoten a prototype is an organisational structure that is part of the architecture of urban spaces that results in emergent spatial, social and political structures. By giving urban spaces prototypical character the designer creates identity which in turn stimulates the evolution of society.

Psychogeography was invented by a cultural movement in Paris, the Lettrist International (formed by Isidore Isou and Gabriel Pomerand), between 1946 and 1957 in an attempt to reconfigure their movement according to a nomadic lifestyle (Ford 2005:34). "Psychogeography. The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals ." The description was made by 1958, after three years of experimentation. The chief means of psychogeographical investigation was the *dérive* (*ibid:* 34)*,* and was continued by the Situationist International, an artistic movement led by Guy Debord that aimed to upset establishment*.* The *dérive* entails a roaming pedestrian drift that undermines the structure of the city by locating transient atmospheres outside the control of centralized authority (*ibid* :35) The first *dérive* (fig. 11) in the streets of Paris (1953 - 1956) was more about drifting from bar to bar where they met Algerians, West Indians, and Jewish people (*ibid:* 35).

The main elements of *dérive,* as explained by Guy Debord: "In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives for movement and action, their relations, their work and leisure activities, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. (…) From the *dérive* point of view cities have a psychological relief, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes which strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones." (Guy Debord, 1956 as cited by Ford 2006:35). This explanation implies that the organisation of architecture, by restricting movement, has an influence on the psychology of pedestrians.

Another example of how objects influence movement is the English Picturesque Garden, popularised during the eighteenth century by garden designers such as William Kent, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton (Murray 1987:17). The word 'picturesque' is derived from the Italian *Pitteresco*, meaning 'after the manner of painters'. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Picturesque, as a way of looking at nature as if it were a series of pictures, was elevated to a visual philosophy. This is evident through the writings of William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, Richard Payne Knight and Humphry Repton. "Nature", wrote Sir William Chambers (Murray 1987:31), "is incapable of pleasing without the assistance of art." The Picturesque Landscape is a reconstruction that fascinates. It is dotted with objects (fig. 6-8, 10) testifying of a nostalgia for the arcane village and a lost civilisation suggested by Gothic or Grecian ruins (Van Eeden 2005:55). These objects encourage movement through a landscape that otherwise would have

THE NAKED CITY
ILLUSTRATION DE L'HYPOTHÉSE DES PLAQUES
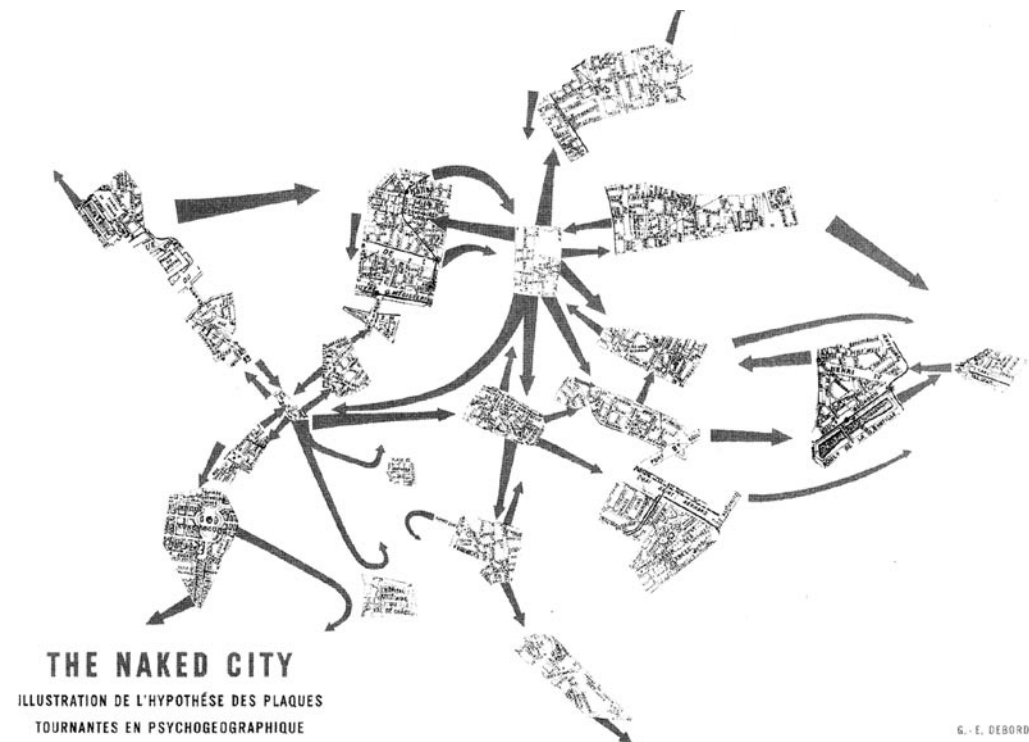TOURNANTES EN PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIQUE

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Fig. 10 *Carte générale du desert* - Georges Le Rouge, 1785, engraved map (Ketcham 1994:1)

Fig. 11 *The naked city* - Guy Debord, 1958 (Ford 2005:35)

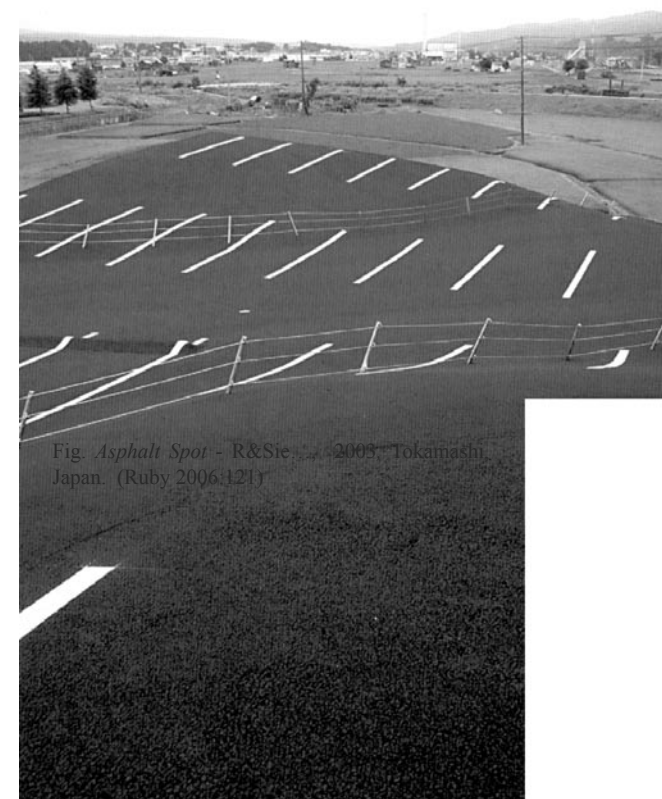Fig. 12 *Lava Floor* - Olafur Eliasson, 2002, www.olafureliasson.net

Fig. 14 *Asphalt Spot* - R&Sie… , 2003, Tokamashi, Japan. (Ruby 2006:121)

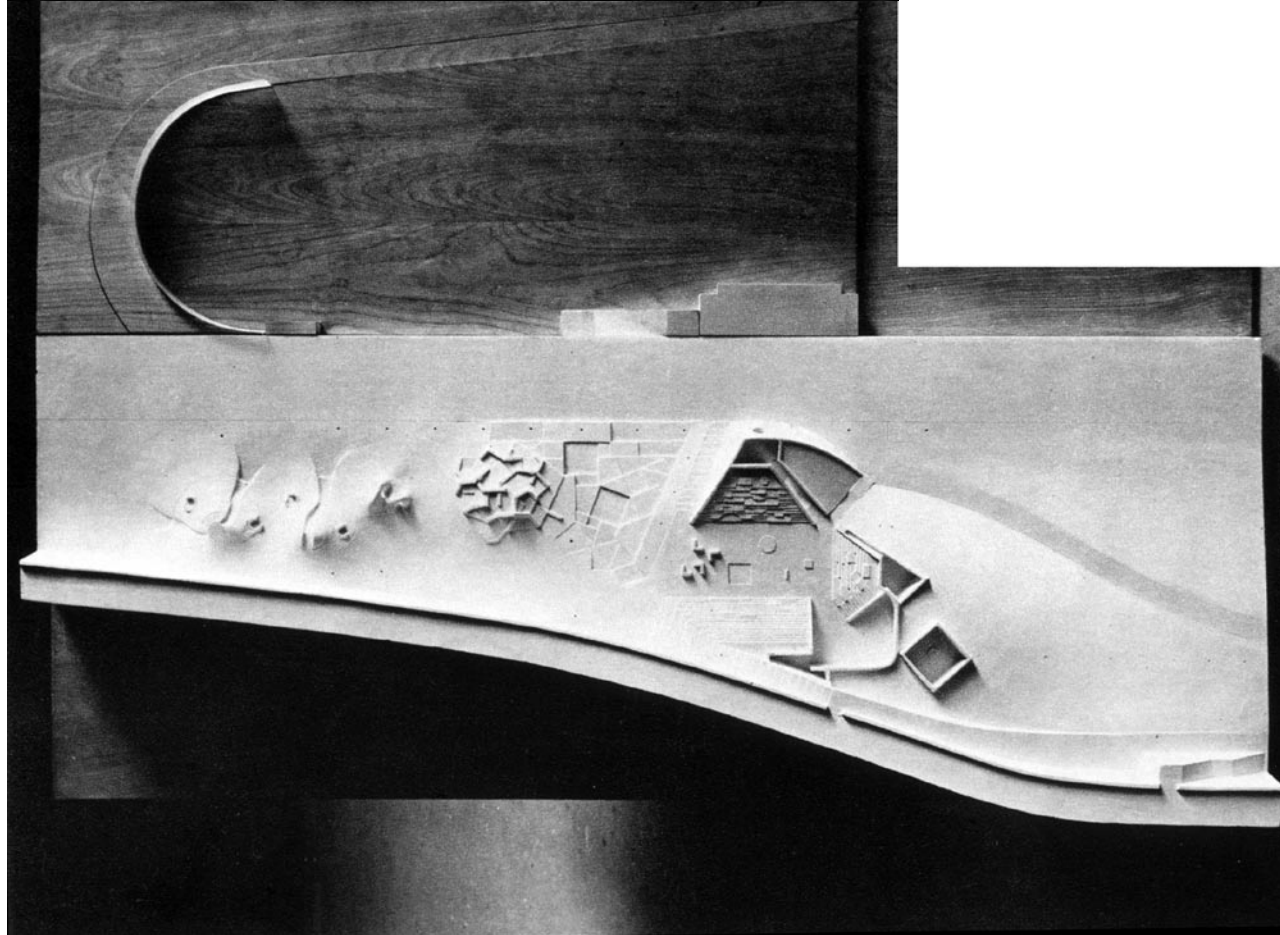Fig. *Asphalt Spot* - R&Sie , 2003, Tokamashi, Japan. (Ruby 2006:121)

Fig. 15 *Asphalt Spot* - R&Sie… , 2003, Tokamashi, Japan. (Ruby 2006:121)

Fig. 16 *Contoured Playground* (planned for Central Park, New York) - Isamu Noguchi,1940, plaster (Hunter 1979: 57).

Fig. 13 Isamu Noguchi, playground planned for Riverside Drive Park, New York (with Louis Kahn), 1964, plaster model (Hunter 1979:59)

16   17

held no interest. The placing of the objects within the modified landscape creates an atmosphere which is commodified for leisure and entertainment.

In an attempt to bring sculpture closer to the experience of space, the Japanese-American artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), examined the idea of sculpture as landscape (Hunter 1979:55). The result is a play-park for children called *Play Mountain* (1933). *Play Mountain* was designed as a communal playground, including a pool, gymnasium and skating facilities (*ibid* :56). The playground was to be built in the shape of a gently sloping, tiered pyramid, with a usable interior. The design was presented to New York's Park Commissioner, Robert Moses, who rejected the design. *Contoured Playground* (1940) (fig. 16) followed *Play Mountain,* and was a more practical and functional scheme of a manageable scale. The design principle of biomorphic abstraction was applied. *Contoured Playground* was not built either and was part of a series of 'tactless and pointed rebuffs' over the following three decades (fig. 13) (*ibid* :57). Furthermore, Noguchi stated that his interest was "the creation of space as an extension of sculpture" (*ibid* :55).

Another example of the attraction of objects is *Echigo-Tsumari Art Necklace Project*, a venture in which architecture and art projects are used as tourist attractions to entice visitors to the disused landscape around Tokyo (Ruby 2006:118). R&Sie…'s contribution was a car park (fig. 14 & 15). The asphalt appears to be cast directly onto the meadows without levelling the site, resulting in an undulating asphalt terrain. Sightseeing spots are usually accompanied by car parks, however in this instance it is the car park that is the attraction.

The movement of the observer through space is one of the themes investigated by the Danish artist Olafur Elliasson. *Lavafloor* (2002) is an installation that features a gallery floor covered igneous rocks imported from Iceland (fig. 12). As the observer moves through the space his/her balance is unsettled while the rocks crunch underfoot. By manipulating topography, movement through space becomes awkward, heightening the observer's awareness of movement and the art work underfoot.

It seems we can deduce that objects do not inherently have the ability to influence space; they are capable of being merely decorative, alternatively they alter their environment and encourage people to congregate around them. However, such objects capable of influencing their environment are not always clearly distinguishable from the ground on which they stand. Architecture, as is often the case, can be placed haphazardly on its site, having negligible effect on the use of the surrounding public space (fig. 17). Alternatively it can be employed to organise and suggest ways in which the space may be used (fig. 18).

Fig. 17 *Plains* - William Lamson, 2004, Kansas (Lanson 2005:42)

Fig. 18 *Cloud Gate* - Anish Kapoor, 2005, www.gallagher.com