Making Memory Space: Recollection and Reconciliation in Post Apartheid South African Architecture

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DECLARATION

I have undertaken the writing of this thesis alone. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award. The content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program. All ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signed

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ABSTRACT

Post Apartheid South Africa presents a fascinating platform from which to discuss the complexity and contestations around the creation of memory space. Through examination of multiple modes of dealing with memorials and museums, (the traditional and conventionally understood emblems of authoritative memory), this thesis seeks to explicate how memory is addressed in a society that is attempting to come to terms with a recent past. In so doing, it aims to understand how memory becomes codified into architectural space, how that physical manifestation may be altered over time, and examines some of the complexity inherent in creating new spaces that seek to represent an often volatile and contested past. The traditional palette of the architect: materiality, site, aesthetics and form all contribute to creation of new national narratives and in so doing, reveal the difficulties in revising existing memories as they are articulated through architecture.

In order to appreciate how South Africa specifically is approaching memory, I have established a taxonomy that highlights differing modes for dealing with the physicalisation of recollection. Within each case study, questions arise over the success and failures of each modality, which lead to broader discussions about opportunities for gaining insight into how memory space may be addressed in other countries, those facing a colonial past or coming to terms with recent memory themselves. While it does not present a comparative analysis, this thesis seeks to illuminate some of the difficulties inherent in the creation and maintenance of memory space that accurately reflects the population it purports to serve, while generating ‘meaningful’ architecture.

The study is broken down into the following components:

TOPPLING TOTEMS The Voortrekker Monument is an examination into existing architectures of an out-dated regime, questioning how meaning is ascribed to architectural space and seeking to understand how easily that significance may be revised.

EXPERIENTIAL MUSEUMS The Apartheid Museum presents case studies of how memory is conveyed meaningfully to contemporary society, looking at the international language of museums, questioning how specificity is lost in a desire to situate the past on a world stage. The economy and commoditisation of memory forms a central component of this study.

CANNIBALISED SPACE The Constitutional Court offers an investigation into the repatriation of spaces potent as sites of trauma. It examines how sites of trauma become significant places for recollection and presents spatial opportunities for a form of rehabilitation of those sites.

SOCIALLY INTEGRATED MEMORY The Red Location Museum presents a study of a new mode of creating official narratives of recollection within a society resistant to official narratives. It looks at architectural solutions to situating memory within the daily life of a society rather then distinguishing official memorials by setting them and by association recollection apart.
Ultimately through an examination of the treatment of memory space in South Africa, issues around the complexity of dealing with memory in general become apparent. The aim of this thesis is to draw out some of these narratives so that they may elucidate some of the broader relationships between architecture and collective memory.
PREFACE

During my recent travels, I was struck by the constant state of change that characterises the political landscape and the impact of this on the remnant, reeling society — socially, politically and most importantly to me, spatially. Inherent in this state of change as witnessed in many of the cities that I visited — (particularly western and central Europe, India and Southern Africa) are spatial markers that remain resident in cities long after events have turned from being current to the nebulous place of memory. These spatial markers — what they are, how they are treated and how they are created - became an area of fascination for me. They articulate the memorialising impulse of architecture at its most deliberate and also at its most random and highlight the extent to which the desire to record, retain and acknowledge aspects of the past, in a spatial and visceral manner permeates so many societies. This static, grounded and monumental manifestation of events of the past allows the irregular, impermanent and fluid state of memory a physical state, marking it constant and unchanging. How does architecture, as seemingly static, convey meaning over time to a variety of audiences? How is this meaning attributed? How is it inscribed onto or into space and how is it eradicated from social constructions of space? What are the primary forces that operate on it?

I became particularly interested in officially sanctioned spaces, which celebrate the past, primarily museums and memorials, which I have come to think of in terms of their ability to facilitate or construct memory. The distinction between official narratives of ‘memory space’ and arbitrary remnants of memory space has emerged largely because of the extremely personal nature of space and the extent to which spontaneous memory is borne out of uniquely personal connection with all spaces. While private recollections are harder to appreciate, public memory space is intended to stand in as a surrogate for private recollections and to reveal or reflect the official and ‘true’ version of the past.

Our contemporary world has witnessed a great deal of change and technological advancement that has led to fluidity of information exchange in a radical and dynamic fashion. Inherent in this phenomenological state is the compression of time that exacerbates both the intensity of events and the closeness with which we experience and understand them. Extreme political upheavals become internationalised as well as personalised through the nature of this experience. The memorialising impulse of architecture, which has existed since the notion of the primitive hut, has emerged with greater ferocity in this time of flux, a counter to the fluid changeable nature of contemporary space and society while offering some permanence and stability to our sense of who we are, what we are and where we belong in the world. Yet while the impulse itself has remained largely unaltered over time, the nature of its expression has changed as questions have emerged over the appropriate ways to make manifest that impulse. How can memory be dealt with in world of palimpsests and political upheaval? Where might we place ourselves relative to that desire to recollect the past and how might architecture be used to facilitate greater meaning in different social and political contexts?
INTRODUCTION

The mind . . . is like a house – thoughts which the owner no longer wishes to display, or those which arouse painful memories, are thrust out of sight, and consigned to the attic or the cellar; and in forgetting, as in the storage of broken furniture, there is surely an element of will at work.¹

In the name of reconciliation, a blanket amnesia is being imposed on South Africans: what you forget you forgive, and what you forgive you reconcile yourself to. The only problem with this rather generous approach to history is that there are lessons to be learned from the past. This somewhat utilitarian fact aside, there is something distinctly sad about losing one’s past, however bitter one may feel about some of it.²

Built form has long been a temporal manifestation of memory. Memorials and museums serve as furniture in the house of a city, initially new and exciting, then gradually forgotten. They exist, still present but faded representatives of a different time. This thesis is an examination of the spatial production of collective memory and its corollary: cultural amnesia. It is an interrogation of the mechanisms that facilitate the transmission of memory into built form, so that recollection may slip from the nebulous state of the personal perspective, and assume the significance of cultural and national artefact. It is based around the assertion that physical space has the capacity to assume meaning beyond its function as architecture and that built form can be utilised as a vehicle for conveying specific meaning, for creating and maintaining collective memory and for perpetuating national narratives.

Memory as it exists within a city operates at almost every level. It occurs for individuals as a form of private recollection and for communities as a public one. The space of shared memory is deliberately established to bridge the memories of individuals, to make common a sense of the past and to draw collective narratives that reiterate recollections. This state of recollection is termed collective memory (also understood as social or cultural memory) and is broadly defined as widely shared perceptions of the past.³ The analysis undertaken in this thesis is confined to an exploration of public sites of memory - architectural forms - that are intended to affect a community at large. The memorialising impulse of architecture has made manifest the memorial and the museum as artefacts of the past, so that in many urban environments these architectures exist as repositories of a historical narrative. This writing is an examination of ‘memory space’, a term that refers specifically to officially sanctioned

spaces that are intended to facilitate recollection and to trace a narrative of a nation’s past, in particular museums and memorials. This thesis is investigating how memory may operate spatially in order to create such space, to understand the effectiveness of the lens or looking glass that the built form becomes. In this respect, the task of creating memory space that is relevant and appropriate to the society that it serves is complex. Such spaces are affected by a multitude of forces: individuals, groups, institutions, history and culture among others. Pierre Nora’s suggests that the actual sites of memory can be many of these aspects: ‘material’, ‘symbolic’ and ‘functional’. This thesis seeks to examine the intersections between these sites of memory and memory space. It questions how memory may be constructed or influenced by physical space and asks what some of the implications may be. This work aims to examine the connection between spatial construction and memory production and to reveal some of the complexities and connections inherent in their relationship.

While memory exists on both a personal and national level, memory space is constructed and maintained in order to facilitate a particular ideology or to sustain a national narrative. In the case of post Apartheid South Africa, memory space is challenged to go even further. Museums and memorials are attempting to acknowledge personal accounts of the past, and to gain relevance for a diverse population traditionally disconnected from civic space. They are seeking to reflect and appropriately acknowledge the trauma of the past, while suggesting modalities for reconciliation. In a country weighty with sites of trauma, building professionals are attempting to address existing built form, to recognise its significance and to understand the meaning inculcated into various significant sites of the past. Simultaneously, they are attempting to generate a contemporary form of memory practice born out of a more locally-generated aesthetic and meaningful to an African population. South African memory space is attempting to straddle the challenges of designing for both the local and the global so that the totemic indexes of South Africa’s past may be registered on an international scale as well as a national one.

Consequently, this thesis presents an investigation of the state of memory practice in South Africa through the examination of four particular case studies. These examples have been selected because they each present a differing approach to the production of memory space in South Africa, while collectively revealing the complex forces at play in contemporary memory practice. They shed light on some of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the production of meaningful memory space, the difficulties in creating accurate versions of history (or at least one that complies with the contemporary narrative of the past), and the challenges of producing relevant memorials that satisfy divergent recollections. Most significantly, memory space in South Africa is attempting to establish a tone of reconciliation in relation to the past, so that it may present a model of peaceful accord. The four case studies allow for an examination of the successes and limits of such attempts in a society.

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that is seeking to memorialise the past and to move beyond it yet still operating in its aftermath. Memory space is torn between seeking to reflect the multifarious perspectives on the past, thus ensuring the continuance of recollection, and the desire to counter the existing bias of the Apartheid regime with a revised narrative of the past which assumes a similar tone of authority.

This thesis begins with an examination of what constitutes memory space and how memory may be made manifest physically through spatial production. The investigation stems from an acknowledgment that memory space may serve a significant function in a society on the cusp of change, seeking to recognise events of a recent past in a present still resonating from the effects of that past. Official memory space exists within a contemporary urbanscape, a palimpsest of the past that connects it to the present and future through built form. Memory space often acts as a physical link between the present and the past allowing individuals to move into the ‘twilight’ of recollection. The notion of twilight is developed by Andreas Huyssen, a social historian and theorist, who situates memory in the space between reality and our ability to recall it. This state of being describes the complexity of recollection and its impossible position between the events of the past and our memories of them. Huyssen’s notion of twilight poetically depicts the mercurial relationship between memory and history, and articulates the separation of the past with our ability to recall it. It is this nebulous state of being that forms the landscape of this writing, the background in which all memory is situated. Huyssen argues that the schism between remembering (and its corollary – forgetting) and the forms of expression that mark recollection, i.e. the structures of representation itself, offers opportunities for creative expression. It is precisely an examination of these structures and an exploration of the underpinnings and machinations of such spaces that forms the basis for this work.

In the course of this discussion it becomes apparent that memory space exists in two primary forms. On one hand, it exists in the form of ‘traumascapes’, or spaces that have witnessed acts of horror and as a result have inadvertently become synonymous with the past itself. On the other, it exists as sites of official memory such as monuments and museums that were deliberately constructed to convey a specific narrative of an existing regime. Determining how to treat the former has become particularly fraught, as debate over locations such as Ground Zero, New York, in the aftermath of the attacks on the twin towers in Manhattan has recently shown. Reverence and a sense of respect for the victims may result in a form of stasis at the site, which is left as it was, void or ruin as memorial. The site of a historical event is also considered to resonate with a form of latent charge through its role as witness of atrocity - an embodiment of horror - which renders the built form somehow complicit in the act itself. Architecture in this sense can become an incarnation of the events of the past. This can be seen in the treatment of sites of trauma on a grand scale, such as Auschwitz in Poland or on a small scale such

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as the house of British multiple murderers Rose and Fred West. Often eradication of the building is the preferred method for dealing with the distressing permanence of the built form as totemic index – an inadvertent memorial to events of the past. In contrast, deliberately constructed memorials and museums assume a symbolic role within the community. They are intended to operate as a repository for collective memory sanctioned by those in power. As a result they are constructed in such a way that they embody the agenda of those who commissioned them, and regularly convey a controlled narrative of the past. Their positioning, size and status within the cityscape ensure that they assume a totemic significance so that as civic architecture they can become iconic landmarks within a city. Furthermore, museums and memorials are no longer confined to the traditional limits of collection and display. Memory space is extending beyond the built form as purveyor of truth to present a new kind of reality. This space marks the intersection between the museum and its artefact, so that either the built form itself becomes the artefact or the experience of visiting the space does.

The city is filled with residual markers of this kind, both those that operate at a civic level and those that embody personal recollection. In this way the cityscape becomes a form of palimpsest, which reveals and conceals the events of the past according to residual built form. Many, if not all cities bear the signs of the past, constructed and scarred by acts of history. In contemporary times, this is particularly evident across Eastern and Central Europe where acts of war, resistance and regime change have marked the cities in significant ways. As relatively recent events, these acts are physically memorialised through the establishment and retention of spatial markers that form totems in the urban fabric. As the city undergoes transformations through time, it must address and acknowledge sites of the past, a reality made evident by the presence of the heritage sector among so many city-planning committees (such as the South African Heritage Resources Agency - SAHRA). In a society that has experienced significant political upheaval or regime change such as South Africa, the need to contend with such sites becomes notably more fraught, as the entire urban context may require addressing in some way. As a nation-state encounters the transformations that accompany regime change, it is charged with the responsibility of tackling such spaces and reconciling the new environment with the impact of what has gone before. Furthermore, moves are made to produce new areas of memory space to create a contemporary built form that more accurately addresses the concerns of the current political regime.

Inherent in the discussion around the physical manifestation of memory space are questions around the operations of collective memory and memory itself as they function within spatial production. This thesis traces a relationship between physical space and power, showing how architecture is utilised as

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8 Writing on this is extensive. For a useful summary refer to: Neil Leach, Architecture and Revolution – Contemporary Perspectives of Central and Eastern Europe (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
a mechanism of power, to create new physical and ideological languages. It does not seek to explore the cognitive operations of memory, rather to examine and critique differing modes of memory space in order to better understand the relationship between physical space and recollection and the extent to which that can be successfully controlled or designed. This study uses memory in South Africa as a springboard for an analysis of the mechanisms around the production of memory and the construction of memory space. The demise of Apartheid has provided an opportunity for re-examination of the status quo in a society that is seeking to privilege memory and the process of recollection. In attempting to find an appropriate voice for South African memory space, wider implications of the mechanisms of these architectures come to light. While unique to the South African context, discussions around the successes and failures of that memory space proffer insights into the machinations of memory space at a broader level. It is my objective that in understanding how the spatial production of memory operates in South Africa, we may draw conclusions about the possibilities and limits of architectural memory practice in other environments.

The conscious manner with which South Africa addresses the past presents a unique context from which to examine memory and the construction of memory space. The specificity of the situation stems in part from the overarching trauma inherent in the existence of Apartheid itself, which impacted the county socially, politically and spatially. Apartheid spans approximately 50 years and is a historical imperative unique to South Africa. Yet arguably, its roots emerge from a previous history, one that foregrounds it in a colonial context. Thus the country has a long history of spatial appropriation that has resulted in the dominance of one cultural perspective over another. During the years of Apartheid, space was utilised as a tool for articulating the specificities of the laws of Apartheid and making manifest the racial divisions. These were inculcated into every aspect of built form. The Apartheid government formulated a deliberate policy of marginalisation and segregation in their approach to civic space, which has widely impacted on black South Africans’ ability to relate to civic spaces and to find a personal connection with state architecture. Within South Africa, sites of the past, both as locations where the realities of Apartheid were enacted and those that reflected selective narratives of the past (such as museums and memorials), have become politically contested ground. In order for the country to move forward in a cohesive and multicultural way, the government is seeking to address these sites and to acknowledge their place as talismans in the landscape of Apartheid, so that the general population may begin to come to terms with them. In other countries that have experienced regime change, Central and Eastern Europe for example, outdated symbols and monuments are re-examined and often discarded in favour of politically expedient messages. The challenge for post-Apartheid South Africa following the elections in 1994 has been to address this endemic vision of the

past and then restitute it in the minds of the people. At the same time South Africa is seeking to redefine its national identity and to position itself as a viable entity in the globalised world. As a result, contemporary South Africa is treading a fine line. It is seeking to simultaneously facilitate collective memory, to allow for individual memory, to retain a local identity and to situate itself within a more global context. Significant sites of South Africa’s past are at the centre of ongoing dialogue and re-evaluation. The ultimate aim of the post Apartheid government has been to develop a sense of national unity through the repositioning of these architectures, resituating them in the emerging narrative of South Africa’s past in the hope that a sense of shared nationalism would blossom as a result.13 Socially, politically and culturally entrenched perspectives on racial superiority and disregard for human life have marked the entire country over a period that extends long before the decades of Apartheid codified such practice.14 As a result the trauma of the past has had ramifications for the entire population as well as the physical environment. These attitudes were perpetuated by built form using spatial tropes to reiterate attitudes of racial superiority and political power. South Africa has begun its process of addressing the past from a position of acknowledging the power inherent in memory space. It does so through recognition of the built form as a significant entity in the production of memory with power to impact the future.

As architecture that embodies an official narrative, memory space can collude with the maintenance of additional political messages. These contribute to broader reflections of national identity, political power and social connectivity. In the context of South Africa, this capacity was made explicit by a deliberate policy of exclusion and representation that highlighted a singularly white perspective of the past while eliding the validity of other positions. Such policies, in combination with the physical exclusion of the black population, have ensured a schism between official memory space and its relevance in the minds of the majority of South Africans.15 Thus new approaches to memory space in South Africa primarily seek to make museums and memorials relevant and meaningful to a population traditionally excluded from civic space. While the city itself acts as a repository of memory, recollection is only accessible to those who witnessed the past, for it is contained within the bounds of individual experience. Contemporary memory space is charged with the responsibility of honouring divergent narratives of the past and conveying that sense to an audience that is in turn diverse.

Recollection exists in two primary forms: first, in terms of personal accounts of the past - private memories, stories and personal artefacts that make up unique and individual accounts of the past; and second, in terms of collective memory which forms the basis of the broader communal narratives of the past. Within a built environment, recollection can operate both as a means of facilitating

14 Noeleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall (eds.), Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post Apartheid City (Oxon: Routledge, 2007).
remembrance and as a method for learning about the past. Thus memory space often functions with a duality depending on the audience it serves - it allows witnesses of the past to recall moments of that time, and serves a didactic purpose of educating those who are unfamiliar with the event itself. During Apartheid, many individuals were denied acknowledgement of their personal accounts of events, while collective memory was utilised as a mechanism for furthering the Apartheid agenda. In many respects this made it a falsely conceived collective memory. In contrast, the contemporary approach to memory in post Apartheid South Africa has been a deliberate validation of personal experiences in the hope that they will become shared and in so doing an emergent form of collective memory will result. This mode of dealing with the past is best exemplified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which encouraged individuals to talk about their own experiences in a public forum. Thus expressions of private memory, as manifest in public memory space, seek to reflect revised definitions of what constitutes memory, whose memory is valuable and how it might be meaningfully expressed. The hope was that through acknowledgment of events of the past, and by allowing some form of shared catharsis, memory can be used as a mechanism for unifying communities, rather than highlighting difference. In this way trauma may be shared and understood through collective expressions of the past. Thus the government is attempting to honour all visions of the past, regardless of which community they derive from and to situate them in the broader narrative of South Africa’s history. The spatial implications of this are examined in the course of this thesis, as new perspectives on the creation, retention and expression of memory space become apparent.

Official representations of the past are readily adjusted to suit shifting perspectives and political positions. Collective memory is often altered according to political expediency, with subtle inclusions and omissions assisting to convey specific engendered meanings. Yet representations of the past are simultaneously shaped by the desire to appear accurate, to reflect truthful and honest accounts, and in so doing address the needs of the public. The complexity of this position of memorial-as-honest account notwithstanding, the deliberateness of such an approach offers insights into how societies and nation-states determine what to remember, who and how, in the context of political expediency.

Throughout this investigation, some primary questions emerge: how is architecture being transformed to adjust to new concepts of memory and recollection? How does memory operate spatially? What is the impact of these memory spaces on the city? The first case study, investigated in Chapter Two, examines the Voortrekker Monument, an existing icon of Apartheid attitudes. The Voortrekker Monument embodies the most traditional and deliberately immutable form of memory space, a solid and purposely symbolic memorial constructed with the intention of presenting an uncontestable version of the past. As context and perspectives on that past have now changed, this chapter explores whether meaning inculcated into memory space may be revised over time. It examines the

significance of site and built form in the production of memory space and reveals the extent to which collective memory can be deliberately constructed and attributed to memorials. This chapter explores whether meaning is attributed to space or whether spatial form can construct meaning, make real historical claims or facilitate national identity. It examines the extent to which time and context affect the meaning inherent in memory space.

Chapter Three presents an emerging form of memory space, which I have termed the ‘experiential’ model. The Apartheid Museum, based on the Holocaust Museum of Washington DC, proffers a linear version of the past, made powerful through a deliberately immersive simulatory museological environment. This case study reveals the impact of the global on the local and brings to light the influence of international tourism on the construction of specific local narratives. Contemporary memory space, as demonstrated through the Apartheid Museum, is reliant on an enveloping, visceral spatial experience that simulates the past through spatial reconstruction in an overtly theatrical way. It highlights the difficulties in the construction of contemporary memory space, due to the desire for a more lurid experience, on a par with the entertainment of a theme park. The Museum emphasises the extent to which memory space is a constructed environment, one that, like the Voortrekker Monument, produces surroundings potentially more intense than the reality already experienced. In so doing, memory space joins the realm of the theatrical, the make-believe and the hyper-real. What are the implications of this telling of the past?

Chapter Four counters the artificiality of the production of the Apartheid Museum by discussing the treatment of a symbolic site that witnessed the machinations of Apartheid. This case study presents the Constitutional Court, part of a precinct constructed out of some of the most notorious buildings of Apartheid - the old Fort and Number Four prison in Johannesburg. The new court is created through a consumptive process of demolition and reconstruction, wherein components of the original buildings are reconstructed into the form of the new. Through the demolition and reconstruction of parts of the original site, the past and present are brought together in a literal and metaphorical way in order to create a memory space that acknowledges the past but suggest that reconciliation can only be achieved through moving beyond it. The court reveals a kind of hybridised memory space: simultaneously recollective and productive - allowing new inhabitation as a mechanism for moving beyond the past. This case study articulates how much the act of inhabitation contributes to the construction of historical narratives and makes evident the extent to which production and the physical act of building is considered an articulation of the past. Much like the Voortrekker Monument, but with differing results, the actual bricks become arbiters of meaning.

The case study in Chapter Five also situates memory space in the present, by deliberately addressing the transitory nature of memory through a paradigm shift in the museum modality. The Red Location Museum puts memory at the centre of contemporary community life so that the museum becomes a
form of ‘active’ environment. It attempts to allow for a fluid interpretation of the past through a less authoritative museum display. At the same time it seeks to create a memory space that operates with duality in the present as an active site of inhabitation. Unlike the court which remains civic, this museum seeks to acknowledge the individual through the use of a specifically contextualised building, generated from the community and scaled to facilitate private interaction. It acknowledges the need for a memory space that operates on a more visceral level but attempts to ground the act of recollection into the everyday, through the dissolution of boundaries between civic and community memory space.

These examples of South African memory space barely skim the surface of a country whose spatial landscape has been so largely shaped by political forces. Inherent in these sites are traumas, which promulgate memory and recollection. This thesis does not seek to address memory in South Africa in its totality, but rather to suggest that within the enormity of spatial practice of that country, insights into memory itself and its relationship with architecture might be gleaned, which may affect memory practice in other countries. Awareness of how memory and architecture operate in tandem may allow the production of more dynamic memory spaces in other countries - spaces currently less accepting of the status quo. Through an appreciation of emerging approaches to memory and a less global worldview, it is hoped that memory space might emerge that seeks to reflect contemporary notions of memory and acknowledge the place of individual recollection within the broader whole.
1. MEMORY AND SPACE

Post Apartheid South Africa presents itself as a particularly interesting position from which to begin examinations around the production of memory space, both in terms of treatment of existing sites of memory and the creation of new architectures. In many respects this is due to the specifically articulated role that memory plays in the consciousness of South African society and the fact that it is imbedded in every aspect of the built environment. As a result, the past resides as a form of living entity in the present, with physical reminders of Apartheid and colonialism inherent in many aspects of the urban environment. These emblems of the past exist as both sites of atrocities and architectures that enabled them. Furthermore there is a deliberate, active policy at official levels acknowledging the presence of memory in the society and seeking to deal with it. This leads to a vigorous discussion around the treatment of memory in both an official and unofficial context. The shared presence of memory and recollection within this society has the potential to result in divisive action or to facilitate commonality, and it is the power inherent in this entity that makes the role of memory so significant. As Gary Baines comments, ‘If those with the power to control the construction of the past have the means to shape memory, it is essential to understand how they do so.’ It is in this climate of considered memory practice that ‘memory space’ in the form of museums and memorials takes on additional meaning.

Museums and memorials, as deliberately conceived memory space become, to some extent, a physical manifestation of the past and a revelation of attitudes to the future. Such built forms assist in perpetuating national myths, and in so doing facilitate a form of carefully constructed collective memory. These two in combination can become a significant force in the production of national identity through the creation of accessible mythologies of the past in built form. As a result their treatment establishes an attitude to the past, one which may set a precedent for the future. The intention of this thesis is to undertake an examination of a specific scenario – Post Apartheid South Africa - so that it may allow for the drawing of broader conclusions on the nature of memory as it relates to officially-sanctioned built form. This first chapter presents an examination of the theoretical framework through which the case studies may be understood. It presents brief discussions of the primary notions of memory and forgetting, history, museology and urban relationships as a context from which to examine memory practice in South Africa. With this background, the relevance of the case studies, their relationship to one another and their significance in discussion around memory practice will become apparent.

Built form and the twilight of memory

The assertion that built form can contribute to collective recollection and contemporary production of self-image is articulated by Robert Bevan who comments, '[A]rchitecture has become a proxy by which other ideological ethnic and nationalist battles are still being fought today.'\(^{19}\) This notion recognises the role that architecture can play in the maintenance and production of national narratives, which in turn give rise to the creation and establishment of national identity. Thus the conscious construction of museums and memorials in a society actively shaping its national identity can contribute significantly to how that identity emerges. In this respect memory becomes a palpable entity in the present.

The German theorist Andreas Huyssen identifies memory as a state of being: between living the event and the act of recalling it. He defines this state as a ‘twilight’ existing in the nexus between the past and its recollection. Acknowledging this state renders memory a contemporary act dependent on a past that is understood and altered according to perception, time and representation.\(^{20}\) The act of interpretation and translation that must occur between the recollection of a past event and its incarnation in physical form necessitates a mediated perspective on the past, the beginning of the process of shaping the recollection according to social agendas, or political expediency. This thesis argues that it is the mechanisms of addressing this state of being that in many respects forms the basis for the production of memory space in South Africa. The country is held taut between recollections of the past, and its shadow in the present. The continued existence of memory in contemporary society forms the basis for collective memory in South Africa. Unlike other countries that have overturned a dictator, or overthrown a regime by violent means, the dismantling of Apartheid was peacefully negotiated between the government and the ANC. This situates the past and the usual characterisations of regime and accompanying terminology of ‘perpetrators’ and ‘victims’ in a differing light. The demise of Apartheid has not resulted in a radical change of lifestyle for much of the population. Although the period of Apartheid is described by definitive historical dating it began in essence long before it was codified and its ramifications continue to be felt in the present day.\(^{21}\) Consequently, memories of trauma are well entrenched and the boundaries between past, present and future less easily determined.

Memory and history – narratives of the past

History in Apartheid South Africa was carefully constructed to produce a specific kind of memory. In some respects history becomes a form of collective memory or vice versa, where both history - as the


\(^{21}\) At times it has been considered politically expedient to attempt to differentiate Apartheid from colonialism, a distinction that is problematic in how it characterises history. The complexities of this are discussed in Chapter Two.
dominant narrative, and collective memory - as the dominant recollection, become shared perceptions of the past. Examination of this relationship has formed the basis for memory theory since the 1800s. The contentious relationship between history and memory is based on the disjunction between facts, which can be agreed upon and personal recollection, which is often a subject of conjecture. Even though it is generally accepted that factual representations of the past are as much of a construct as recollections of the past are, history is held in higher esteem as ‘truthful’ while memory is broadly regarded as suspect and less reliable. The notion of communal memory is often presented as oppositional to formal history, an elusive, fluid alternative to social memorising. While individuals may all share an experience, their recollections of that experience differ greatly. As memory is influenced by so many factors, none the least that of time, shared memory is widely afforded greater ‘honesty’ by virtue of its commonality, than personal recollection. In South Africa personal memory has been transmuted into shared memory through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that seeks to highlight commonality and shared experience. Arguably, such recollection is as much a construct - susceptible to manipulation, disruption and forgetting - as the narratives of history itself, which can also be moulded to conform to a specific agenda. The case studies in this thesis explore the extent to which messages, narratives and recollections may be facilitated by civic memory space. They examine some of the mechanisms that are deliberately formulated to encourage the development of the specific historical narratives that facilitate the emergence of national identity. Museums and memorials are the official architectures that acknowledge this method of social production and embrace it, and South Africa highlights new ways that we may approach memory and by association memory space.

Maurice Halbwachs, a primary theorist on memory posits that memory has a collective, social function, rather than a purely individual one. This function is the force behind national remembering and self-definition, which can be hugely significant in the construction of revised national identity. Collective memory is potentially powerful in a country such as South Africa where each individual nurses a private memory, for the commonality of the collective memory offers possibilities for framing the past in a particular way. Halbwach’s theory on memory has extensive implications: one, that individual memory is a function of collective memory; two, that memory is always subject to active social manipulation and revision; and three, that social memory is linked to social forgetting. Thus according to Halbwach individual accounts of the past are the mechanism by which shared memory is formulated. However, this collective recollection can be readily shaped according to social desire, or political expediency, which can lead to the possibility of selective recollection or social forgetting. Halbwach’s assertions have significance in the production of memory. They reveal the importance of dealing with memory and its physical manifestations in order to create secure national identity. How memory may be manipulated becomes key in understanding how collective memory may be shaped.

Museums and memorials, as physical embodiments of collective memory, and representatives of civic institutions are surely culpable in the establishment and maintenance of specific memory narratives. By making tangible the intangible and providing physical form to the nebulous past, memory space proffers a solid perspective on the past, one that cannot be readily eradicated.\textsuperscript{25}

Yet, the mercurial nature of memory calls into question the reliability of history which is often presented as a definitive version of the past. Many theorists have contended with the differing notions of memory and history. Pierre Nora defines memory as existing in an ongoing state of change, vulnerable to remembering and forgetting and history as a sanctioned representation of the past, a discourse, which distrusts the fluidity of memory. He asserts that a form of constructed history has replaced actual recollection. Nora posits a dual concept of ‘lieux de mémoire’ wherein a sense of the past is constructed from a specific entity and the ‘milieux de mémoire’, wherein the past emerges from lived history and social practice.\textsuperscript{26} Jonathan Crewe highlights the need to distinguish between cultural memory and history, suggesting that one is often substituted for the other over time resulting in a murky interchange that allows for the corruption of memory or authoritative historical narratives.\textsuperscript{27}

Distinctions between memory and history become increasingly difficult to determine because of the resemblance, overlapping and intersection between the two. History and memory are considered to be mutually exclusive when in fact, the production of one often informs the other. Architecture contributes to this dissolution through the authoritative nature of built form that often adds to a specific vision of the world, or a set of values, but does so discretely. Memory space is intended to allow for recollection, but the concretised architectural form often presents an authoritative perspective on the past.

In countries or situations where memory of the past is still active in the present, the character and form of the memory often contribute to revised visions of self. The notion that this recollection can be influenced or modelled according to political aims or social desires reveals the power inherent in concepts of memory. Such ideas form the basis for the social construction of memory as defined by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, who suggest that politics manipulates the past to invent traditions that serve its interest. They argue that the past becomes a vehicle to vindicate actions of the present or future. This is shown to be evident in recent examples, such as the attacks on the Twin Towers of Manhattan. The resulting political events illustrate the extent to which collective memory can be utilised to facilitate political aims and to justify action based on a shared sense of the past. In some ways this recollection becomes a mandate for revising the status quo, the result of which can

\textsuperscript{25} The notion that memory space is immutable and therefore uncontestable is a contentious one, that is discussed at some length through the course of this writing. It may also be argued that precisely because of its very materiality and physicality monuments are accessible and open to challenge and discussion. This is not without complexity and is discussed in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{26} Pierre Nora, Realms of Memory (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).


\textsuperscript{28} Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (eds.), The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
sometimes be radical change. Architecture as a physical embodiment of public memory provides a useful vehicle for understanding both the attitudes of the time and consequently attitudes to the past that the built form purports to represent. Gary Baines comments, ‘Public memory reflects the structure of power in society because that power is always contested in a world of ideological differences and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of society itself.’

He goes on to point out that public memory, as a body of beliefs and ideas, is utilised as a means to understand the society from which it originates, a state of discussion and evaluation that is centred as much on the present and the future as it is on the past. He suggests that a dominant memory emerges, one that becomes an explanation for the present – justifying the social or political order on the grounds that it was justified by history. Baines’ point reiterates the usefulness of understanding the forces behind the construction of memory space. In so doing we may gain insights into the rationale for behaviours and attitudes in the present, which in turn may lead to discussion about the future.

Memory in South Africa

Memory exists as a living entity within contemporary South Africa and as a result is particularly susceptible to manipulation as it can change shape and emphasis over time. In a country where memory is still present in the collective conscious, how shared memory is characterised will be very significant in forming national identity as well as facilitating a sense of commonality or difference. It is this conscious grounding of memory in the present and the clear realisation of its import in the unfolding of post Apartheid South Africa, that makes memory study in this context so relevant. As South Africa seeks to redefine itself in both a local and global contexts, memory is a primary player in how this is achieved. Memory space becomes a tangible manifestation of this process. South Africa is significant in recognising the role of collective memory in facilitating reconciliation and in acknowledging the potency of individual accounts of the past. By seeking to create a broad narrative that addresses both of these notions, South Africa is re-evaluating some of the most basic premises about historical meta-narratives. This move, in turn, provides opportunities for the production of memory space. It is hoped that through the integration of individual and collective memory, a shared sense of history will develop.

In some respects this acknowledgement identifies the difference between collective and individual memory, for one occurs at a personal level, private and formed by singular sense of the past, while the other becomes shared and shaped by a mutually determined recollection of the past. Collective memory becomes a form of authoritative memory, one sanctioned

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31 Although this is also experienced in other countries, the past has a heightened significance in South Africa for it impacts on all aspects of daily life in the present. Consequently attitudes to the past may impact profoundly on ideas about the present and hopes and expectations about the future.
and reiterated by official means, so that it becomes incorporated into an official version of the past. South African memory space is attempting to address this limitation by acknowledging the unique perspective of individuals while utilising the collective memory in the construction of revised national narratives. The spatial implications of attempting to reflect both the individual and collective notions of the past are examined in this thesis.

Memory space is caught between a desire to generate a permanent marker of historical events and to accurately reflect or facilitate recollections of that past. Furthermore, it also seeks to ensure that the creation of memorials assists in addressing the past without rendering recollections of it mute through the establishment of physical articulations of the past. The perception of architecture as immutable has contributed to the desire to immortalise memory through built form. In part this is due to an acceptance of the fallibility of memory, so that we attempt to aid the memory by concretising it, or collecting tokens that may assist in reminding us. Physicality makes tangible the intangible - rendering it true or at the very least more real. Ironically however, it is the static, authoritative posture of traditional museums and memorials that renders memory space so problematic. The memory embodied in the memory space is often criticised as being inaccessible, singular and gradually silenced over time. Consequently, museums and memorials are now being called upon to more accurately describing the nebulous state of memory without relinquishing that sense of stability. Ironically they are also called upon to highlight the individual experience over the collective, to emphasise the personal over the shared. The singular perspective of the past is contested by the desire to acknowledge multiple viewpoints or to permit an individual experience to take precedence over collective ones. Memory space is now seeking to facilitate an amorphous experience that allows for the personalised perspective of a local and the more globalised perspective of a tourist. Yet at the same time, museums and memorials retain their position as architectures of the nation, ones that exemplify iconic notions of nationhood and identity. They are expected to withstand the ravages of time and to provide a form of visual permanence in a constantly shifting cityscape.

**Memory and Apartheid**

Apartheid codified a process of marginalisation and dismissal of the non-white population in South Africa that has existed in various forms since ‘discovery’ of the Cape in 1652. Architecture assisted in facilitating this policy, both in terms of the physical separation that it perpetuated and in terms of nationally iconic buildings. Museums, as sites reflecting the regime, told a carefully constructed narrative of the past to an exclusionary white audience. (Under Apartheid, Black South Africans were

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only able to visit museums at designated times). As a result the museum became another icon of the Apartheid regime, an institution that facilitated racial segregation and oppression. The narrative within its walls was an ideologically conceived one, based on a one-sided and singular version of events. Jo Noero identifies this mode of constructing history - a long established practice in South Africa, inside museums and out - as operating on two principles, those of erasure and clearance.\textsuperscript{37} Clearance ensured the eradication of any traces of the past to permit the establishment of a historical perspective that operated entirely on its own terms, untainted by influences or other official versions of the past. Erasure was a policy of deliberate omission of any details or traces of the past, which may undermine or disrupt the official narrative, effectively confining history to a hermetically sealed box.\textsuperscript{38} Traditional notions of display, which contain and confine, presenting an authoritative perspective on the past, heightened the effectiveness of this mode of defining history. They permitted selective recollection and facilitated a form of nationally sanctioned forgetting, resulting in the construction of a discriminating history. The very act of dismissal inherent in the construction of officially sanctioned museum sites and the erasure of traces of non-white perspective, has resulted in a disjunction between museums and memorials to the past and their resonance in the minds of the general population of South Africa today.\textsuperscript{39} Large, imposing architecture and a static mode of display disregarded the African emphasis on oral tradition and told a deliberately constructed narrative of the past. This act of selective remembering ensured that the dominant ideology became the only version of the past, dismissing the existence of alternative narratives and disregarding the possibility of personal memory.

This, in combination with sites of trauma existing within the landscape of the new South Africa demands a revised and considered approach to dealing with memory space, one which highlights inclusion and commonality and allows for acknowledgement of the past without dismissing the unique perspectives of an individual’s sense of history. In many respects, this marks a deliberate shift away from Eurocentric notions of what constitutes the past, and how it may be narrated.\textsuperscript{40} To counter the divisive and destructive approach to the past, the post-Apartheid government sanctioned a totally new and open approach to the act of memorialising. As Nelson Mandela remarked,

\begin{quote}
During colonial and Apartheid times, our museums and monuments reflected the experiences and political ideals of a minority to the exclusion of others . . . having excluded and marginalised most of our people, is it surprising that our museums and national monuments are often seen as alien spaces? . . . When our museums and monuments preserve the whole of our diverse heritage, when they are inviting to the public and interact with the changes all around them, then they will strengthen our
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
attachment to human rights, mutual respect and democracy, and help prevent these ever again being violated.\textsuperscript{41}

To this end, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established, to (among other things) bring personal memory to the fore and from it establish a collective unity. It was designed in the hope of replacing ‘entrenched visions of society and conceptions of self based in legislated difference and police separation, with the construction of a new social order grounded in inclusion, democratic representation and unity, while still nurturing and valuing diversity and difference.’\textsuperscript{42} As part of this reconciliatory approach, official institutions of the state were called upon to assist in the facilitation of new narratives and the construction of memory in a way that would acknowledge their place as a living entity in the society.\textsuperscript{43}

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was largely based on the Chilean commission that was established to determine crimes under the military junta between 1970 and 1990, called the \textit{Comision National para la Verdad y la Reconciliacion}. The TRC in South Africa was investigating human rights violations that occurred between 1960 and 1994; hearings began in 1996. The hearings were a national project based around the notion that the act of telling the past would facilitate commonality and healing for all South Africans, and the recollection and the breaking of silence would ‘heal the country, re-establish the state and construct the nation in a moral universe.’\textsuperscript{44} The TRC was empowered to grant amnesty to any full disclosure of human rights abuses where political motivation could be proven, with the hope that this would encourage the ‘truth’ to come out while reconciling perpetrator and victim.\textsuperscript{45} Such an approach situates memory and recollection at the centre of national forgiveness and progression, in the hope that individual memories will give way to a form of collective memory, which will allow the country to move forward. Consequently, critical narratives in the emergent social, political and cultural identity of a new South Africa were based around the act of remembering and forgetting.

The TRC succeeded in articulating the individual hurt of some of the population and forced many to acknowledge the trauma in their midst. But, in seeking commonality and drawing broad analogies between individual testimonies, the creation of shared recollection arguably undermined the unique specificity of individual commentary. In many respects the TRC forms the basis for memory practice in


\textsuperscript{43} Janet Hall, \textit{Op cit}, p.175.

\textsuperscript{44} Charmaine McEachern, \textit{Op cit}, p.xv.

\textsuperscript{45} Brandon Hamber and Richard Wilson, \textit{Op cit}, p.2.
South Africa, and establishes a model for ideas around recollection and the construction of shared narratives. It is this formal articulation of trauma and the specific shaping and editing that occurs around it that is indicative of attitudes to memory as will be made manifest in other official memory practices. Lynn Meskell argues that the integration of private memory into a public forum may offer a methodology for integrating singular recollection into the dominant narrative. Meskell suggests that the mechanisms of collective recollection such as truth commissions, which counter the formalised production of memory and disallow a singular narrative of public memory, allow individuals to disrupt cycles of traumatic repetition and in so doing have the potential to disturb the dominant narrative of the nation state.46

The establishment and enactment of the TRC brings to the fore notions of individual testimony and oral history as significant markers of the past. Heidi Grunebaum and Steve Robins write that the Human Rights Violations hearings of the TRC are,

\[\ldots [C]onstructed \text{ of a matrix of ‘shared memory’ of personal sacrifice, heroism and national redemption. The testimonial moment is a multifaceted one. It challenges, in its very structure the linear and teleological emplotments towards which national narratives tend. Testimony intersects the boundaries of personal/political, and the public/private }\ldots \]
\[\text{Many of these layers of testimony coalesce in ways that allow for the production of stable collective narratives of national unity.}47\]

While aspects of the process of the TRC have been heralded as successful, and indeed it may have contributed to the prevention of retributive violence that was initially feared, it has been widely acknowledged as a flawed process of memory production. Criticisms of the Truth Commission reveal some of the difficulties of attempting to embrace a wider concept of memorialisation. Amongst the critics is Charmaine McEachern who suggests that in the name of inclusivity, accountability and remedying the past, concepts of ‘memory’ and ‘official history’ are presented in opposition. She contends that narratives of self, which have been vital in South Africa’s production of a new national identity, are post-colonial. As a result they align with Homi Bhabha’s distinction between pedagogic, official imaginings of nation and the performance in which individuals respond to these.48 In this respect, the enactment of the TRC replaced official narratives of one kind with narratives of another, the trauma of which became the basis for reconciliation in South Africa.

46 Lynn Meskell, ‘Trauma Culture – Remembering and Forgetting in the New South Africa’, in Duncan Bell (ed.), Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationships between Past and Present (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2006), p.159. It should be pointed out here that the nature of individualised accounts can also be controlled to a degree, so that only personal accounts that corroborate the official narrative might be allowed, in this way individual testimony concurs with the official accounts of the past. The TRC in South Africa is the subject of much debate and has been widely criticised in that country.


Memory and object

Additional criticisms of the TRC raise questions about the intersection of memory and object. Brandon Hamber and Richard Wilson argue that the Truth Commission’s aim was to construct a memory as a ‘unified static and collective object, not a political practice or as a struggle over the representation of the past that will be vigorously contested after their existence.” The idea that oral history may become a physical object situates the role of architecture - as representative of revised historical narratives - in a new light. How might memory as object intersect with the notion of museum as tangible memory? Can memorial space itself be considered the objectification of memory? How might oral history be articulated in concrete form? The materialisation of memory is made manifest at its most fundamental through the memorialising impulse of architecture which is charged, in this instance, with the task of acknowledging the limitations of this state of production and providing viable alternatives. However, the notion that memory becomes objectified through the process of oral articulation undermines the progressive attitude to memory practice demonstrated in South Africa. The act of making oral history manifest as object – as an entity for consumption - effectively returns memory to a singular unchanging, unchallenged narrative. The commoditisation of recollection and its consolidation into a fixed narrative is further articulated by Christopher Colvin who comments that,

... [S]tory became a commodity, something that could be literally sold outside of ... close personalized and historically grounded networks, into the impersonal networks of international academic production, development and humanitarian agencies, heritage industries and the global media.

Colvin’s point is evidenced in the very production of this thesis and highlights the extent to which private accounts of the local have become currency for the global. It is almost inevitable that the articulation of memory as occurs in South Africa, on such a grand scale, will lead to its commoditisation, especially where economic factors are at play. Commoditisation of memory and the globalisation of architectural form are discussed in Chapter Three which examines the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg. These forces impact on the development of memory space, thus it is constructed in revised ways which are detailed through this writing. What are the limitations, the obligations and the opportunities afforded by the impact of commoditisation and globalisation upon local memory production?

In conjunction with the establishment of the TRC to foreground oral testimony, modifications in the approach to the heritage sector indicate a shift in attitudes towards existing built form. In this arena, change was instituted in three primary ways: the redefinition of what constitutes heritage (especially

49 Brandon Hamber and Richard Wilson, Op cit, p.2.
the intangible concept of cultural heritage); the redistribution of heritage resources; and the empowerment of communities to become active participants in the production and maintenance of heritage narratives. This legislation marks the beginning of attempts to rebalance some of the iniquities that have been institutionalised over time. The following chapters examine a variety of produced and existing memory spaces in South Africa and discuss their shifting attitudes to the past.

**Remembering and forgetting**

Implicit in the act of recollection as a process of coming to terms with the past, is a process of forgetting, a corollary of remembering. Thus a disjunction emerges between selective remembering and forgetting, a process which has a direct impact on how we choose to construct history. Sean Field argues that the selective character of memory is an innate function of our ability to work temporally and spatially through notions of past and present. He suggests that the Nora’s notion of a ‘will to remember’ is ‘shaped by contestations over scarcity of housing, jobs and basic infrastructure . . . exacerbated by an under-funded heritage sector and competing views about what should be publically represented and for whose benefit.’ Determining whether Apartheid existed in historical isolation, or whether it was the product of a broader past is one aspect of the South African narrative under contestation. Kerry Ward and Nigel Worden discuss the suppression of ‘the history of South Africa’s marginalised and working–class people which pervaded the public history of the Apartheid era.’ They suggest that slavey was used as a means to present South African colonists in a complimentary manner, so that they could be perceived as ‘brave pioneers and bringers of civilisation’, rather than exploitative slave owners. The suppression of slavery was affected by the Apartheid state and reiterated by the slave descendants themselves to ensure distance from their slave past. This exclusionary practice is significant for asking the wider question of ‘Who is South Africa?’ It may be argued that in order to ameliorate the threat of violence, South Africa has made a deliberate choice to seek a narrative of forgiveness and inclusion and willing amnesia, and in so doing has rewritten the ‘deep’ history of South Africa. By simplifying the past, and casting Apartheid in the role as ‘bad’, its history of colonisation can be re-positioned as ‘good’, rather than acknowledging its more accurate role as the starting point for Apartheid, with the arrival of Jan Van Riebeck in 1652. The fact that the colonisation of South Africa can be considered the genesis for Apartheid South Africa is overlooked in favour of contouring a more palatable version of a unified past. Political rhetoric has initiated and sustained this approach to the past. Mandela’s ‘Free at Last’ Speech calls for the healing of old wounds and the birth of a New South Africa.

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51 Gerard Corsane, *Op cit*, p.7. Corsane is at pains to point out that this is a process that began almost a decade before the dismantling of Apartheid, one instituted by the Heritage sector itself. Refer to this article for a detailed account of the specific developments that occurred in the industry to facilitate policy change.


Lynn Meskell highlights the latent difficulty in this selective approach to constructing the past. She presents the possibility that the ‘larger edifice of forgetting will elide the specificities of a history that can still to a large degree be documented and told and in the process the ingrained effects of colonialism will be naturalised and their didactic fictions will retain their residual power’.\(^{54}\) She comments that in the desire to forge a rainbow nation, founded on tolerance and openness, it is possible to expunge an uglier and sometimes more truthful recollection of the past. In so doing South Africa runs the risk of constructing an empty narrative, one that dismisses the specifics of its past in favour of a generalised future. The cost of this version of the past (according to Meskell) is the creation of a history based in fabrication, where Jan Van Riebeck becomes the original father of South Africa, so that – ironically - indigenous constituencies celebrate their own oppression. The demonising of one specific aspect of the past allows for the rest of the past to be reconsidered in a new light.

In addition to dominant memory, which is often expressed as collective memory, marginalised or peripheral memories must also still exist. Often these personal accounts differ from the official narrative or include aspects of the past that have been allowed to recede. These ‘counter-memories’ or anti-memorials subsist in private spaces and individual minds challenging the status quo.\(^{55}\) Some contemporary memory space in South Africa is attempting to include some of the qualities of the anti-memorial, such as their fluidity and spontaneity and most significantly, their integration into daily life, to generate a less overtly official type of civic space. The Red Location Museum in Chapter Five is a particular example of this. However, the potency of memory lies in its shared commonality, which, by virtue of that commonality becomes the dominant narrative. As architecture reflects a common narrative, it becomes an embodiment of the collective recollection and in so doing assumes the status of a sanctioned memorial.

### Memory space - museums and memorials

Memorials and museums are traditionally considered distinct from one another: museums operate as receptacles for memory whereas memorials serve as symbols of historic events.\(^{56}\) Memorials are often generated from sites of significance, which are considered to have an inherent authenticity in themselves and form a natural marker of past events, serving as a bastion of recollection. Museums often become sites of significance, where their role as container of memory allows for the building to become an icon within a city, as exemplified by The Jewish Museum in Berlin or the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia. Traditionally museums, particularly those seeking to reflect history, have long attempted to relay the past in terms of a contained narrative. In many respects however, contemporary museums are becoming a form of memorial. Architectural form, in combination with the

\(^{54}\) Lynn Meskell, *Op cit*, p.159.

\(^{55}\) Sueanne Ware, *Anti-Memorials: Re-thinking the Landscape of Memory* (PhD: RMIT University, 2005), p.2.

\(^{56}\) While memorial can also include many other forms of memory practice as discussed by for the purposes of this discussion it is confined to examination of built form.
display, contributes to the production and maintenance of memory and in so doing the building becomes a meaningful site of recollection. In this way architecture and collection collude to create a museum space that serves as memorial. This development presents a complex position. While memorials are expected to operate on an emotive level, museums are expected to convey a factual account of the past. As the two combine, the boundaries between ‘objective fact’ and ‘subjective recollection’ become intertwined, so that museological display becomes more emotive in an attempt to make meaningful factual accounts of the past. In South Africa, this can be evidenced in the Hector Peterson Museum in Soweto that integrates memorial and museum in an explicit way, establishing the museum on the site where Hector Pieterson died in 1976.57 Other museums, such as The Apartheid Museum and the Red Location Museum utilise both the architecture and the experience of moving through the museum as a mechanism for generating an act of memorial.

Traditionally European museums derive from one of two museological basis. The first lays claim to a lineage of curiosity cabinets, royal galleries and expositions. The second stems from historical societies: a more recent phenomenon which focuses primarily on the city.58 This modality is based on the disjunction between the city as represented and the spatial practice of living in the city that, among other things, facilitates recollection. Museums and memorials occupy this site. While some such as the Constitutional Court seek to represent the city, becoming a totemic index of memory within the city, other such as The District Six Museum integrate into the spatial practice of living within the city.59 Henri Lefebvre’s distinctions between lived, conceived and perceived realms, or ‘spatial practice’, ‘representations of space’ and ‘representational space’ can be commandeered here to reflect the alternative realities that operate alongside one another in the production of memory as it relates to built form.60 They make clear the distinctions between the recollection that dwells within the individual and that which is constructed as part of a shared narrative. The difference between memory and history assists in characterising the latter as sanctified and authoritative, while the former is considered nebulous and prone to reshaping.

Site, city and the space of memory

Official structures of memory operate within a broader realm of the cityscape that forms a canvas upon which the past can be traced. To consider memory space without taking into account the significance of site and placement within the city does not allow for an encompassing examination of built form.

59 The District Six Museum is situated in a Methodist mission in Cape Town and is widely regarded as a ‘museum intent on reassembling, and asserting, its public memory.’ See Ingrid de Kok’s ‘Cracked heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition’ in Sarah Nuttall and Carl Coetzee (eds.), Negotiating the Past: the Making of Memory in South Africa (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.63.
60 Henri Lefebvre, Op cit, p.145.
Site, space and architecture can wordlessly convey the realities of a regime. As Nick Sheppard and Noeleen Murray write,

> We view cities as sites of memory and desire (and also fear and forgetting); as contested spaces given to plays of power and privilege, identity and difference; as palimpsests of historical experience, in which underlying strata disconcertingly erupt into those above; and as lived spaces in the everyday performance of urban life.\(^{61}\)

Official totems of the past, sanctioned structures that convey a specific narrative operate within the context of the city, where placement, siting and production all contribute to the significance or power of their narrative. The relationship of these totems to the city and the city’s relationship to the past are vital in determining the nature of their narrative and in acknowledging the state of memory that they produce. Thus a brief examination of the relationship between memory and the city assists in locating the specific dialogue around officially-sanctioned memory space and the city itself.

Lewis Mumford identifies the city as simultaneously a site of endurance and transformation. He presents the urbenscape as a palimpsest of meaning to be revealed and concealed according to different viewpoints.\(^{62}\) Mumford argues that the city operates as a repository for human recollection, a physical manifestation of the past. The role that physical form plays in recollection contributes to the emotive environment of the city and which assists in generating the unique identity of each one. Local and national identity are largely constructed and maintained through the built form of the city environment that generates a specificity of ‘place’ based on the relationship between physical form and the narratives that exist around the events that occurred there. Eric Sandweiss suggests that the definitions of self and statehood are not random but are the result of a human compulsion to add a level of explicit meaning through the construction of sites of unchanging memory to the fluidity of the city.\(^{63}\) In this respect the human desire to memorialise aspects of the city occurs as a means of preserving the past. The city may operate as a living repository for human experience, and yet as a living entity it is susceptible to change. Consequently the need to exercise the memorialising impulse of architecture emerges within that environment, to generate unchanging markers in the landscape of time – a visual timeline - which assist in perpetuating long-held recollections of past experiences. This desire to protect aspects of the city from the inevitable destruction of time parallels the role of the museum, namely to operate as repository for cultural objects held steady in a constantly shifting context.\(^{64}\)

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\(^{64}\) *Ibid.*
As discussed previously, ownership and control of memory have a great deal of impact on the ability to construct narratives and manipulate perceptions of the past. This in turn determines how events are framed and recalled, that has power to shape the state of contemporary environments. The selective nature of recollection is highlighted through physical form, which assumes the import of honest reflection of the past, even though it is constructed in the same manner as dominant narratives and historical precedents. Robert Bevan argues that content is not innate in form, but arises when forms are placed in societal and historical contexts. In this way, the impression of fixity inherent in the nature of built form allows for collective identities to be forged and traditions invented; architecture assumes a role as built record. In fact it is the very role of ‘place’ as a repository for collective memory which allows for ‘space’ to acquire significance in the first place. (Museums can be considered sanctioned examples of this). The context in which memory space sits can be vital in determining its import, a context that lends specificity to the environment and differentiates it from any other. In part this is due to the potency of sites of trauma, which are taken as veritable proof that events took place (and are unique to that site), and in part it is due to the role that memory plays in the construction of identity. Site most fundamentally differentiates spatial notions of global and local. Jennifer Jordan articulates a widely held concern that the broad sweep of the global can easily erase the specificity of place of the local, an act that effectively dissolves community. She characterises notions of ‘local’ by unevenness and lack of homogeneity that allow for the specificity of place to become significant in the production of memorial architecture. The conflicting desires to operate as both a locally relevant and globally significant entity are made evident through the course of this discussion. The opposing forces of what constitutes ‘local’ as opposed to ‘global’ and the difficulties of attributing value to that notion become evident. Questions of authentic local spatial production arise in competition with the perceived value of the global. These become apparent in the discussion following.

**Site as ‘traumascape’**

As iconic structures, memorials and museums become the constructed markers of recollection within a cityscape - an officially-sanctioned sphere for the production of shared memory. They operate in tandem with sites of trauma (structures that often assume a different kind of charge or significance that seems almost inherent in the site itself), to generate another form of recollection. The potency of sites of trauma or ‘traumascapes’ marks an alternative form of memory space, one that can be less readily controlled by official forces. This legacy forms a layer of meaning that can emerge within an entire city wherein trauma was enacted, a form of latent meaning that is difficult to eradicate. How cities are read in terms of this meaning can provide insights into perceptions of the past. An examination of how remnant sites of a bygone regime, sites of trauma or even cityscapes redolent

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with historical meaning are addressed, is relevant in understanding the role that individual buildings can play in the production of revised narratives, or the revision of entrenched narratives. It also suggests ways in which attitudes to architecture and those derived from it can contribute to the production of national narratives. The task of addressing these spaces operates as both a symbolic act and a touchstone for collective memory. Robert Bevan suggests that the act of physical transformation, choosing which sites to retain, which to demolish and which to reconstruct, can also be understood as form of selective recollection.\(^{68}\) The tale of the past, as it is understood according to the physical city, can be elided, filled in, blocked off or erased according to differing attitudes to history and shifting values over what is worth remembering. This reality questions the notion that architecture exists as permanent marker, for built form is often only enduring as long as it conforms to the prevailing viewpoint. In fact, manipulation of the so-called ‘permanence’ of the city contributes to the construction and revision of authoritative narratives, for the act of eradication of physical space colludes with the notion of wilful forgetting.

In effect memory space can be considered in two primary forms, the nationally sanctioned architectures of museums and memorials and the remnant sites which in themselves act as memorials through their role as witness to an event of the past. Michael Wise describes a schism between these two states of being - between the ‘concrete confrontation’ of sites where events took place and new memorials, which are created icons of the past. He posits an authentic/inauthentic dialectic between these representatives of the past, out of which revised images of national identity emerge.\(^{69}\) The question of authenticity in memory practice is a contentious one. In terms of museology, concepts of authenticity are bound up in notions of the ‘original’, which is discussed later in this writing. In terms of architectural form, ideas of authenticity play a pivotal role in the establishment of local and national identity. Memory space often slides into the inauthentic realm in the contexts of entertainment and tourism, spheres that regularly encroach on the historical world. The extent to which inauthentic memory space may still effectively facilitate historical meaning is discussed in Chapter Three. Similarly the authentic/inauthentic dialectic is central to the success and failure of emergent memory space, in terms of the creation of a localised, relevant aesthetic and is discussed in depth in Chapters Four and Five.

**The context of built form in South Africa**

In order to critically analyse the spatial production in contemporary South Africa, it is useful to understand the contextual architectural form already in existence there. This explanation of some of the significant spatial developments in South Africa highlights the extent to which built form can be

\(^{68}\) Robert Bevan, *Op cit*, p.185.  
considered an exemplar of social attitudes and political developments. \(^70\) Furthermore, given the argument that Apartheid cannot be considered in isolation, but is rather a product of a history of colonisation, a brief discussion of some of the major architectural components of this history is important.

**Attitudes to indigenous architecture**

The ongoing power struggle between the Dutch-derived Afrikaners who arrived at the Cape in 1952, the British who arrived shortly afterwards and the multitude of African tribes who already inhabited the land but were readily discounted as an entity with political gravitas or spatial entitlement can be traced in the earliest manifestation of built form. Built form formed the basis for much of the sense of ownership of land in South Africa. Arguments over governorship and autonomy were made on the basis of the ‘facts on the ground’ reality of built space. Architecture, as it exists in South Africa today, cannot be separated from a colonial tradition that defines colonial settlement as the starting point from which the conventional trajectory of architectural practice can be traced. \(^71\) This in turn situates pre-existing built form as ‘vernacular’ - that is indigenous, ethnic architecture associated with tribal production and living patterns. This definition is the product of a broader colonial knowledge system based on the racial categorisation practices of Western tradition. South Africa’s vernacular architecture is often termed pre-settlement architecture. Centuries of dismissal have led to widely-held feelings of inferiority amongst black South Africans that there is little of value in this mode of spatial production, an attitude which has problematised attempts to incorporate aspects of it in contemporary building practice. \(^72\) Consequently, the predominance of white architects perpetuates this disjunction. Despite attempts to create a more locally grounded architecture, such as evidenced in The Red Location Museum, concepts of what constitutes a more authentic and appropriate built form continue to be contested. In contemporary South Africa, sites of so-called indigenous architecture are predominantly tribal villages such as PheZulu in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, which is marketed to tourists as an ‘authentic’ African experience. \(^73\)

**Cape Dutch architecture**

The colonising Dutch under the Dutch East India Company who settled the Cape after 1652 built ‘Cape Dutch Architecture’. This architectural form is characterised by whitewashed gables - an iconic

\(^{70}\) Noeleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall, Op cit, p.2

\(^{71}\) Ibid.


building type that has traditionally been recognised as the only architecture of worth in South Africa. Farms and homesteads constructed in this manner still form iconic representations of the Cape area and highlight a historical claim to the land of southern Africa. The Cape Dutch style signifies the Dutch rule of the Cape, which lasted from Jan Van Riebeck’s arrival in 1652 until around 1795. Under Apartheid it was considered the most ‘authentic’ form of architectural heritage, an attitude which complicates the continued emphasis placed on Cape Dutch architecture as a valued representative of South African past. Cape Dutch architecture represents a time of subjugation for black South Africans, while simultaneously embodying values of heritage, culture and refinement for Afrikaner South Africans. In fact many of the original Cape Dutch homesteads along the wine region of the Southern Cape are based on a silent history of slavery, a historical narrative largely absent from their popular identity. In international terms, the white gabled forms of the Cape are widely recognised as iconic South African forms, an identity often synonymous with touristic notions of South Africa.

**Colonisation**

The impact of the British occupation and colonisation has also left a shadow on the urbanscape of South Africa. It follows a pattern of spatial production not unlike that experienced in other colonial outposts around the world: the imposition of the cartographic grid on the cityscape, the construction of parks, botanical gardens and buildings and the erection of monuments and memorials to significant figures such as Queen Victoria. Architectural form was grand and imposing, alluding to a classical tradition of antiquity and mastery of the natural environment. In many respects this mode of production forms the basis for the emergence of the rudimentary city as it exists in South Africa, particularly in the Cape, and many of the significant icons of the city are resultant from the attitudes to spatial production at this time.

**Heritage and nationalistic form**

This method of building practice began to change after the Union of South Africa (established in 1910), saw the development of newly-forged productions of nationalistic architectural narratives. At this time, there was an emergence of interest in notions of ‘heritage’ under the particular guidance of Jan Smuts. This preoccupation was crystallised in the form of the ‘Declaration of Monuments’ by the newly established Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historic Monuments, Relics and Antiques. This legislation employed selective heritage practice in the realm of nation building and

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74 Noeleen Murray and Nick Shepherd, ‘Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City,’ Noeleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall (eds.), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post Apartheid City* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p.3.
75 For an examination of heritage, experience and Cape Dutch Architecture refer to Martin Hall and Pia Bombarella, ‘Paths of Nostalgia and Desire through Heritage destinations at the Cape of Good Hope’, Noeleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall (eds.) *Op cit*.
78 Ibid.
nationalism in an official way. The basis for a tradition of utilising architectural form as a mechanism for laying claim to a constructed historical past resulted from this act. This period saw the production of monumental architectures that were used in the establishment of Afrikaner claims of empowerment, leadership and divine right, as exemplified by the Voortrekker Memorial discussed in the following chapter.

Apartheid architecture

The Apartheid period of spatial production is characterised by the inclusion of the visual aesthetics of international modernism to highlight the modernity of the Apartheid state. As Noeleen Murray suggests, a variety of international styles and variations on modernism were emulated in order to assert nationalist spatial identity. Modernism became a means through which Apartheid could distinguish itself from the imperial styles of the colonising British. The extent to which spatial tropes were employed to make material the reality of Apartheid was intense and far-reaching. Spatial separation and enforcement were two of the primary methods utilised in the production of Apartheid cities. Legislation such as the Group Areas Act (1950) ensured that the white minority maintained control over spatial production and inhabitation and ownership of land. Through the determination of areas of white space that included cities, farms, beaches and mountains and the forced removal of black areas (such as District Six and Fordsburg), to create and maintain spatial separation, Apartheid operated through spatially-conceived law enforcement. Among other things, this led to the emergence of the township, the ‘other’ space, which exists outside the lines of the city. Spaces that facilitated resistance or racial co-existence were destroyed in an attempt to remain true to the vision of different areas for differing racial groups.

Jennifer Robinson contends that the Apartheid city was characterised by division, with different qualities and meaning for different kinds of people who inhabited it, depending on their status, race and position. She suggests that memory in the Apartheid city was formed by the interactions that existed between sites, the crossing between one form of space and the next. While her assertions may in part be true, the liminal spaces that assist personal memory are constructed around the communal spaces that form a different kind of official iconic space. It is the combination of these spatial constructs that marks the entirety of memory within the city for this repository of collective consciousness that demands attention as the nature of the narrative shifts. These residual architectures of memory are one kind of built form that requires addressing in the recent desire to reshape collective memory as reflected in South African cities. Unlike the more nebulous aspects of personal recollection these existing monuments, as significant sites in the landscape, are both obvious centres for collective memory and as a result contested sites. The complexity of addressing existing

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sites of Apartheid forms the basis for Chapters Two and Four of this thesis, each suggesting differing solutions for approaching existing memory.

The post Apartheid city

The final, contemporary trope is that of the post Apartheid city, one that is struggling to reconcile the spatial divisions of the past with the ideologically-conceived notions of the all-inclusive ‘Rainbow Nation’. The historically-constructed cityscape is attempting to resituate itself both nationally and internationally, to take its place in the global landscape of tourist destinations while seeking to define itself as a new, multicultural place of inclusion. The difficulties inherent in redefining built form, the questions around the production of memory and the latent significance of sites of trauma all contribute to the issues addressed here. Examining the specific production of differing modes of memory space, this thesis seeks to better understand the role that official productions of memory space may play in a society undergoing radical change, growth and redefinition.

In summary, it becomes clear that memorials and museums cannot be considered alone but are the result of spatial, historical, economic, social and political forces which all contribute to their production. In the same manner that memory does not exist in isolation and is prompted by a madeleine à la Marcel Proust or an image, token or visit to a site of the past, memory space and the memory it conjures up, are the products of the society and environment from whence they derive. In order to understand memory space more fully, it is necessary to appreciate the context that led to its production. Site plays a very significant role in the creation and maintenance of memory space: in the form of a ‘traumascape’ which witnessed the past or the establishment of a museum as a site-symbolic repository of memory. As a result museums and memorials are becoming intertwined, so that museums begin to operate as memorials and vice versa. Memory space becomes a visceral, emotive experience attempting to ground itself in the local while still appealing to the global. Contemporary memory practice in South Africa is seeking to identify a new form of memory language, one that suitably reflects an African oral tradition and makes meaningful a civic form that was traditionally alienating and exclusionary. It is attempting to acknowledge the presence of memory in daily life while simultaneously providing a version of the past that is palatable to a diverse audience. Furthermore, it is attempting to come to terms with sites of the past, both existing memorials and structures that facilitated Apartheid so that the city and the country may grow beyond the spatial confines of its Apartheid past.
2. TOPPLING TOTEMS: The Voortrekker Monument

Edifices of Apartheid are being dismantled, papers are shredded, signs painted over, departments renamed. American collectors are buying the old ‘whites only’ sign that South Africans now repudiate. Those intent on promoting reconciliation at all costs see those who wish to preserve the history of the past as spoilers at best, revenge merchants at worst. But for the project of reconciliation to succeed, individuals and the nation require the physical evidence of our suffering and complicity to be displayed as part of a new pattern.  

A new government’s attitude to its past can be significant in determining that country’s approach for the future. Erika Apfelbaum elucidates, ‘[T]he development of state politics of memory is vital because it establishes social and political frameworks which determine how individuals may emerge from devastating atrocities.’ Personal healing also contributes significantly to national healing, which assists in the construction of revised positions of national identity. The establishment of a new identity for South Africa, one that in many respects is in exact opposition to that created by the previous government (among other qualities, inclusionary and diverse) is at the centre of a number of the decisions around the act of memorialising, and contributes to perceptions and values placed in significant architectures of the regime.  

The significance of national identity cannot be overstated in terms of its genesis for decisions made historically and in its pivotal role in the policy making of a new government. Judith Butler asks (primarily within the context of post 9/11 America) ‘[W]hat might be made of grief besides a state of war?’ and discusses how, in a desire to maintain a degree in invulnerability, certain forms of grief become nationally sanctioned and amplified, while other losses become unthinkable and ungrievable. The determination of what may be recalled and what forgotten is particularly pertinent in South Africa, which, while seeking commonality between those privileged by Apartheid and those persecuted by it, must also reconstruct the long-held narratives of the past. The determination of ‘[W]ho counts as human? Whose lives count as lives?’ are charged questions in the context of South Africa, where racial hierarchies have previously established an order of ‘value’. The hierarchy of victims also contributes to questions over which narratives of the past are valued, which retained and which disregarded. Official narratives, as they are promulgated into the national psyche, are often made manifest through the production of architectures that effectively institutionalise the

86 Ibid, p.20.
past. These remnants of an old regime exist as part of the South African landscape, and are central to discussions and debates about how to deal with the past.\textsuperscript{87} The notion that the primary gestures of the state may have a filter-down effect on individual personal accounts of the past is one that will be examined throughout the course of this thesis. How this manifests itself, and what the spatial implications may be, is worthy of considerable discussion and analysis. This chapter begins with an examination of how memory space can be created in an official way, revealing the extent to which a memorial can emerge as a construct according to a specific political ideology. It identifies the separation between personal, private memory (that may exist at other levels within an urban environment) and public memory as exemplified by a memorial. In so doing it reveals the extent to which such public memory can be delineated as an artificial production. It then goes on to discuss how meaning may be inscribed upon built form so that it becomes ‘memory space’, which in turn operates as social space, and how those meanings are maintained over time. Finally it explores the extent to which such memory becomes an intrinsic part of the civic space or whether it can be refashioned and redirected to convey new meanings.

**Private memorial**

Apartheid, both as an entity and a strategy, insinuated its way into the urban fabric of every city in South Africa; segregation and classification according to race are engraved upon the South African landscape in numerous ways. The Group Areas Act of 1950 ensured the physical separation of communities by assigning racial groups to different residential and urban areas of the cities, the results of which are still evident today. The impact on the South African landscape remains profound, as even the smallest town is cleft in two, on one side the ‘healthy’ tree-lined, lawned, affluent previously white area and on the other, the ‘shrivelled twin’, the black township, a complex grid of dirt roads packed with tiny shack’s and houses.\textsuperscript{88} While this separation is no longer maintained legally, the flow-down effect of lack of education, opportunities and the continuing financial disparity between blacks and whites perpetuate these divisions to a large extent.\textsuperscript{89} As a result, the residual effects of Apartheid are indentured to the urban environment so that even after its dissolution the divisions that defined who belonged where can be easily read in the city. The urban environment operates as a form of personal informal memorial. The spatial impact of segregation has left a legacy that exists at the very centre of urban South Africa. Martin Hall discusses Henri Lefebvre’s notion of ‘spatial practice’. Lefebvre suggests that places are given substance by their materiality, which allows for a multiplicity of meaning according to a particular action. Hall posits that Cape Town operates according to a language of monumentalisation that ‘sought to essentialise colonial domination by evoking an endless


repetition of monuments or ideas - a continual call on memory. Through the private acts of human existence, individuals reiterate definitions from the past on a daily basis. By extension, the embedded architectures of Apartheid, which constitute domestic space and patterns of existence, operate at a private level. In this respect, the city operates according to Mumford’s notion of the city as palimpsest filled with physical markers that expose the past in the present. This legacy is ill-defined and partially situated in the scope of personal recollection. As a result, the private rituals of Apartheid are still enacted by much of the population through the continued realities of daily life that confine people to their predetermined positions. Lynn Meskell argues that, ‘The residues of the past are often monumentalised and inescapable in daily life. Individually the past is memory – collectively it is history.’ Repositioning ‘memory space’ as it co-exists with domestic space can only occur very gradually when the basic details of daily life begin to shift. Iain Low comments: ‘The greatest legacy of the Apartheid era is its spatiality. Whereas it is comparatively easy to amend and change legislation, space has a particular kind of permanence that is impervious to change.’ These physical and spatial relationships, and the extent to which they are connected with the past, operate on a personal level and as a result are difficult to address in terms of a grand narrative. Consequently, official ‘memory spaces’ have become the focal point for addressing architectures of the past, a clear mechanism through which change can be made evident to the population. While shifts in meaning will occur personally and spontaneously over time, official approaches to memory can be more readily evaluated and form the basis for this study. It seeks to understand the ramifications of the inclusion of deliberately symbolic icons of the past into a changing geo-political landscape.

Memorials in an African landscape

In addition to the physical demarcation of difference that occurred spatially in Apartheid South Africa, the less easily identifiable separation of expectation and cultural production was also resultant. The constant separation and differentiation of communities according to race, which operated not only physically but socially and culturally, proffered a different set of expectations for cultural production between blacks and whites, manifest in numerous ways across modes of social production. Robert Kriger elucidates: ‘The duality of culture in South Africa arose as a result of one of the premises of Apartheid, i.e. that the various racial groups were so inherently different that co-existence or even close proximity would inevitably lead to conflict.’ The result was a pattern of cultural evaluation (also witnessed in other colonial countries) wherein European artistic forms, such as ballet, opera and 

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classical music, were sanctioned as cultured and worthwhile and were encouraged and financed by taxpayers for a singularly white audience, while the cultural traditions and aesthetic practices of the majority were dismissed as inferior. In this climate of cultural disjunction, memorials were constructed with the deliberate intention of relating only to a specific proportion of the population. Ironically, the marginalisation of the mainstream facilitated the flourishing of cultural innovation and practice centred around a culture of political resistance, the primary proponents of which went on to form the basis for the National Arts Coalition around 1994. Most significantly, this disjunction highlights the aesthetic separation that occurred in the production of architecture intended for a ‘cultured’ white audience and the deliberate exclusion and alienation inherent in such an approach.

Built form became a physical embodiment of these attitudes, so that a racist value system became an innate part of architectural form. Consequently this discussion begins with the examination of a seminal and iconic building of Apartheid South Africa, one which marked the genesis of Afrikaner Nationalism and in so doing formed the basis of Apartheid South Africa's national identity. The role and meaning of the Voortrekker Monument - initially conceived and produced as a political construct - has become contentious and contested over time. It is perceived as a symbol of Afrikaner attitudes in the post Apartheid country and can be examined as a yardstick for shifting attitudes, anxieties and national narratives. Can a monument that originates as a construct of a different past be realigned to convey new rehabilitated social meaning? The Voortrekker Monument has become an iconic memorial within South Africa, one carefully situated to ensure maximum significance and impact on the landscape of Pretoria (Figure. 1). As a symbol of Afrikaner Nationalism, it has become central to discussions on how to reconfigure icons of the past in South Africa. Is it possible to divest such an icon of its Afrikaner Nationalist associations, to reframe the way in which it is perceived and to shift its meaning in the eyes of the disenfranchised population?

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid. p. 316
98 The overt production and enactment that occurred around the creation of the Voortrekker Monument will be discussed later in this chapter.
100 Ibid.
In a political climate clamouring for swift and radical change, the decision to retain the Voortrekker Monument (along with other primary buildings and bastions of Afrikaner entitlement) appears to distinguish the South African government from many other policy makers in countries of regime change. The dilemma is one common to many countries – commemoration versus forgetting. Michael Wise (among others) articulates the difficulties of approaching memorial practice in post-World War Two Germany - a landscape littered with sites of historical significance - and reveals the complex politicking at play, which results in the selection of certain sites and retention of certain architectures over others. Neil Leach asks, ‘[H]ow is a nation to deal with the architectural fabric that bears witness to a former repressive regime?’ As the narratives represented no longer have currency in the revised history, do the memorials continue to have meaning and if so, how might they be dealt with? Can memory implicit in built meaning be modified over time? Eradication of reminders of the past more commonly forms the basis of policy towards ‘disgraced’ monuments. The dismantling of Soviet era sculptures and monuments and the eradication of symbols of older regimes more commonly identifies approaches to addressing the past. The swift transformation around Eastern Europe has been termed the ‘Berlin wall syndrome’ by Neil Leach, a title for the removal of almost all traces of the Soviet era around Berlin and the commoditisation of the remnants for touristic purposes. In Budapest, the Soviet era monuments have been gathered together in a museum called Szobor Park – a popular tourist destination. It has been established as a monument to monuments of the past, situated in the outskirts of the city - a tacit comment on the place of that past in the future of Hungary.

The process of transformation in South Africa can be distinguished from that in Eastern Europe, according to Georgi Verbeeck, due to a differing political organisation. South Africa, Verbeeck claims, was a form of ethnic oligarchy, which allowed for the maintenance of the basic forms of a democratic constitutional state. The removal of Apartheid has merely revealed the inequalities remaining from centuries of colonialism. The ‘tabula rasa’ approach as evidenced in places such as Hungary would be impossible in South Africa because of the extent to which the past still impacts the country, an impact that would not be eradicated through the destruction of monuments. Consequently, South Africa is attempting to address the now out-dated memorials, without simply removing them. Instead it is seeking to assimilate them into the contemporary narrative. Debate over the viability of this approach,
the complexity of attempting to re-characterise the innate meaning of monuments, and the difficulty of accommodating a diverse audience is born out through discussion of the Voortrekker Monument, which stands as seminal object of Afrikaner nationalism and entitlement.

The Voortrekker Monument

The Voortrekker Monument is the product of the desire of the Afrikaner population to construct a physical manifestation of their entitlement to the land of South Africa, intended as verification of their supremacy both as a race and a spiritual people aligned with God.\textsuperscript{109} This impulse, the desire to ‘generate political legitimisation through the symbolic possession of urban spaces’, has been consistent in the Western world from antiquity onwards.\textsuperscript{110} According to Sigfried Giedion, such constructs display an ‘eternal need of people to create symbols for their activities and for their fate or destiny, for their religious beliefs and for their social convictions’.\textsuperscript{111} The Voortrekker Monument conforms to just such as assertion. Great care was taken with its design, placement and execution to ensure that it assumed its intended significance. Each aspect of the memorial, its site, structure, materiality and form, was infused with a deliberate significance to highlight Afrikaner ascendancy over Southern Africa (Figure. 2).

Monumental Narratives

The Voortrekker Monument was built in the late 1930s and foreshadows a style popular among other buildings constructed during the Apartheid era.\textsuperscript{112} The Monument was constructed to commemorate the Great Trek: a historical event whereby Afrikaner pioneers left the Cape of Good Hope to establish a new settlement in the area of the former Transvaal (now Gauteng). The Trek was intended as an act of resistance against British Colonialism, and as a result, the monument is considered anti-British as well as anti-African.\textsuperscript{113} Attempts to refashion the memorial’s meaning are made doubly complex by its relationship to the colonising forces of the British whilst representing the colonising force of the

\textsuperscript{109} Annie E. Coombes, Op cit, p.28.


Afrikaners. The narrative of stoicism and bravery, which characterises the Afrikaner self-perception, is highlighted here in the tale of the Battle of Blood River. Herein, the Boers, heavily outnumbered by Zulu warriors, defeated their opponents in a triumphant and bloody victory. This tale forms the basis for official notions of Afrikaner identity. It has become, through the Voortrekker Monument, a physical narrative of the past, a form of sacred totem, which delineates Afrikaner rights to supremacy. As the architect Gerard Moerdyk wrote, 'The Monument stands as a symbol of the Afrikaners’ lawful ownership of this country.'

The construction of the Monument itself took place following a physical re-enactment of the Great Trek, a four-month venture across South Africa by a group of men in traditional ox wagons. Beginning on 16 December 1938 with the placement of the foundation stone, the re-enactment of the Trek was undertaken by twelve costumed Voortrekker families on its 100-year anniversary. It culminated in ‘a river of fire’ – torches carried by young Afrikaner scouts to create a performance of elemental right, out of which was born the physical manifestation of that entitlement through the establishment of the physical memorial. Huge crowds greeted the wagons, which were met by costumed greeting committees in most towns. The mass spectacle which was orchestrated around the site of the Voortrekker monument was, as Coombes explains, a ‘calculated attempt to invent a coherent Afrikaner identity where none actually existed, borrowing from the language of theatre so successfully deployed by the Nationalist Socialists in Germany and epitomised by the Nazi rallies at the Nuremburg stadium.’ By means of a physical linking between events of the past (The Great Trek), the physical construction of the memorial and its sites on the hillside of Pretoria, the Afrikaners constructed a form of memory space produced entirely out of theatricality (Figure. 3). The linkage of built form to memory

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facilitates a form of memory practice that imbues a site with significance in the collective memory where none previously existed.

Symbolism and built form

The form of this memorial situates itself in a tradition of disdainful European memorial practice in Africa that disregards indigenous memorial practices in favour of an imported visual language. Gerard Moerdyk, the architect, was very conscious of the symbolic potential of its form and size and sought to align the Voortrekker Monument with other great monuments: the Taj Mahal, and the Egyptian pyramids. He did so in order to situate both his own work and the Afrikaner race alongside the great civilising forces in the world. The deliberate connection between the Voortrekker Monument and famous monuments of the past reveals the conscious way that Moerdyk considered the spatial potential of the monument. The triadic relationship between form, site and international context expresses a Heideggerian attitude to the relationship between dwelling and architecture. Heidegger draws an explicit connection between the placement of buildings, their relationship to the earth, and their status as architectural constructs. He utilises the example of Greek temples to demonstrate the significant connection between site and built form, implying that the architecture was almost produced from the ground itself. This state of being forms the basis for the nationalistic arguments that follow (and for which Heidegger has been greatly criticised). He presents a notion of identity rooted in the soil, the very essence of which facilitated Afrikaner modes of constructing national belonging. The assertion that occupation of land is the basis for ownership - a notion upon which colonialism was based - continues to be highly problematic. Jane Jacobs articulates the complexity of such an assertion in a contemporary context, building upon Edward Said’s notion of ‘geography that struggles’. She says,

These spatial struggles are not simply about control of territory articulated through the clear binaries of colonialisitic constructs. They are formed out of the cohabitation of variously empowered people and the meanings they ascribed to localities and places. They are constituted from the way in which the global and the local always already inhabit one another. They are the products of the disparate and contradictory geographies of identification produced under modernity. These struggles produce promiscuous geographies of dwelling in place in which the categories of Self and Other, here and there, past and present constantly solicit one another.

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As an expression of the civilising force of Afrikaner mastery, the monument is laden with symbolism (Figure. 4, 5, & 6). The basic form of the memorial is rectangular so that the significance placed on the materials and sculptural elements becomes apparent. The scale of the building is deliberately large and imposing, presenting an authoritative evocation of the past. The height and the qualities of light of the interior are reminiscent of a grand church, an invocation that delineates the relationship between the Voortrekkers and God (Figure. 5) Moerdyk included a commentary and explanation of the meaning and symbolism manifest in the monument in the Official Guide of 1949, to ensure that the memorial’s message was clear. In it he explains that the granite of the exterior walls was invoked to signify the great age and immensity of the African continent, highlighted by the zigzag stonework band that outlines the structure.\textsuperscript{120} The zigzag is an indigenous symbol of fertility and water, which Moerdyk appropriated to symbolise the specialised relationship between the Voortrekkers and God, who had protected them in the wilderness of Africa. In addition, the bass-relief wildebeest symbolise the wilderness of Africa which the tenacious Voortrekkers must resist.\textsuperscript{121} The dark weightiness of the exterior gives way to lightness of the interior, created in part by the dappled light, in part by a light marble frieze and in part by the soaring ceiling. The interior, termed the ‘hall of heroes’, is a domed space around which the marble frieze is situated. This frieze (constructed of Italian Quercetta marble known for its durability), details the story of the Voortrekkers from their departure from the Cape in 1835 to the establishment of the Transvaal from the British with the signing of the Sand River Convention in 1852. Included in the narrative are formative events of that time according to Afrikaner mythology such as the Battle of Blood River and the murder of Piet Retief.\textsuperscript{122} It depicts the Afrikaners as brave, virtuous, moral and restrained while the Zulu savages are shown as treacherous and animalistic. This is a narrative reinforced by the pious,\textsuperscript{120} Gerard Moerdyk, \textit{Op cit}, p.47. \textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid.} \textsuperscript{122} Heinie Heydenrych & Albie Suriegers, \textit{Discover Pretoria} (Pretoria: JL Van Scaik Publishers, 1999), p. 59.
stoic sculptural forms on the exterior.\textsuperscript{123} To highlight the divine sanctioning of the Afrikaner position, an oculus has been placed in the ceiling so that at noon on the 16\textsuperscript{th} of December - the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River - a ray of light illuminates the space, highlighting a cenotaph (symbolic of the final resting place of Piet Retief and the other Voortrekkers who died during the Great Trek) inscribed with the words ‘Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika’ (We for thee South Africa) (Figure. 7). Ironically, the desire to convey the cosmological order of the universe, which reveals the divine right of the Afrikaner nation has been undermined by an idiosyncratic shift in planetary alignment, which means the ray of light no longer fulfills its intended function.\textsuperscript{124}

![Figure 7 Cutaway axonometric showing, external approach to monument and internal Hall of Heroes with cenotaph below lit by oculus](image)

Clearly in every respect this monument is intended as a symbol and embodiment of Afrikaner values and consequently has assumed an identity that has become synonymous with Apartheid itself. In this

\textsuperscript{123} This depiction of muscled Africans reflects a universally racist discourse as Moerdyk comments, “[N]atives are always represented as worthy opponents, very well developed as far as their physical characteristics are concerned.” in David Bunn, \textit{Op cit.} p.105. For more discussion on the bodily representation in the Voortrekker Monument, see: Alta Steenkamp, ‘Apartheid to Democracy: representation and politics in the Voortrekker Monument and the Red Location Museum’, \textit{arq: Architectural Research Quarterly}, Vol.10, No.3-4, 2006 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp249-254.

\textsuperscript{124} Annie E Coombes, \textit{Op cit.} p.28.
respect, the memory space and the land upon which it is situated assume value for the Afrikaner community. Jennifer Jordan articulates how much our notion of the specificity of place is bound up with ‘an individual’s rootedness in locale and the dependence of their memory on the particularities of the physical and cultural environment’. She argues that it is this specificity of place that is vital for the continuance of community, which is eroded through the dismantling of such places (or by extension by the removal of iconic buildings that characterise such spaces).  

Places gain significance and maintain a strong hold on individuals and groups by acting as repositories of collective memory. The destruction or removal of such sites constitutes the eradication of that identity, an act that is potentially distressing to any community witnessing radical change. The Voortrekker Monument continues to have meaning for the Afrikaner community despite the dismantling of Apartheid. In fact, in the decade following Apartheid’s demise, it has served repeatedly as a meeting point for white resistance groups, providing a physical manifestation of their political position. It became the meeting ground for those who wished to contest the dissolution of Apartheid, and in many respects become a symbol of the stoic rigidity that formed the basis of that position. In 1990, the Voortrekker Monument still had power to galvanise the forces of Afrikaner Nationalism and was the site of a rally for sixty five thousand people, in support of the Conservative Party’s resistance to the imminent political change. Again in 1993, prior to the election, it served as a site of resistance for a rally of a hundred thousand people. As if to further illustrate the central role that the Monument played in the positioning of Afrikaner political machinations, the maintenance and management of the Monument was taken over in 1993 by a privately-owned company - the FAK - comprising the main cultural organisations for the promotion and preservation of Afrikaner culture. They perceived its continued availability as a contemporary monument to be significant for the recognition of the Afrikaner position as a legitimate component of the South Africa historical narrative.

Afrikaner memorial practice

David Bunn situates the form of this memorial in a well-established context of memorial production for Afrikaner South Africa. He posits that the height and verticality of the monument is characteristic of Afrikaner monumental practice and signifies, unlike the British monumental tradition of meditative wandering, a goal to be reached or an obstacle overcome. Bunn argues that the memorial impulse exemplified by the Afrikaner monumental tradition is manifest as one of marking and inscription, a form of territorial declaration of ownership gained through personal physical domination of land. He says, ‘This attachment to marking and breaching, and to monuments as a sign of the vertical descent

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126 A point not unnoticed by the ANC government. They have continued a deliberate policy of inclusion made evident by ex-President Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance speeches.
127 Annie E. Coombes, Op cit, p.32.
129 David Bunn, Op cit, p.103.
of ‘The Word’ to earth was a central ideological element in earlier Afrikaner nationalism. The verticality evidenced in the sheer size of the Voortrekker Monument situates it in context with many other memorials of its era – ‘rigid upright forms which collect and focus power vertically’. This culminates in what Bunn calls the ‘benedictory principle’ – ‘lig van bo (light from above): benediction descending in a stream of light which is the Word made visible, forging a reciprocal relationship between the racialised national subjects and the Divinity’. Thus the monument keys into a language of memorialisation already familiar to its intended audience. The invocation of divine right is declared through spatial tropes that build upon a cultural tradition of association. In this way, the Voortrekker Monument propagates narratives of ownership through the suggestion of spatial sanctification.

### Spatiality and power

Where ‘traumascapes’ or sites of historical events stand as witness to acts of the past, the Voortrekker Monument implies a significant relationship between event and site which does not exist. Instead, the memorial plays on assumed associations between historic event and site to fabricate a relationship. In this manner historical fact lends import to a site selected for its visual impact and ability to convey a hierarchical message of governance and ownership. In this instance, since site did not have any historical significance, meaning was attributed to it through the creation of the memorial and the production of the narrative that accompanied it. The site was selected atop the highest hill in the city of Pretoria - a traditional seat of conservatism. The memorial was situated on the site to perpetuate a series of long-held notions about the spatial interaction between individual and memorial. In addition, its placement, orientation and aesthetic were all carefully considered to ensure maximum effect as a recognisable form in the landscape. Thomas Markus examines the social, cultural and economic forces that are made evident through physical and spatial power. These are expressed spatially in such a universal, ubiquitous manner that they are seamlessly integrated into daily life. The Voortrekker Monument displays some of the tropes of civic arrangement, as articulated by Markus, in the following ways. First: it is situated at the peak of a hill distinct from areas of urban construction. As a result it is physically differentiated, its significance

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130 Ibid.
131 Ibid, p.104.
heightened by its separation. Second: approach to the monument itself is made through layers of built form, which increase in scale. Unlike many other memorials, the Voortrekker Monument itself can be inhabited, so that both the approach to and exploration of the site and building constitute an experience of memorialisation. The memorial is encircled by a low wall made up of a protective laager of wagons, reached following a long drive up the hillside. After traversing the wall, the visitor climbs a grand staircase up to the structure, the scale of which highlights the insignificance of the visitor relative to the grand permanence of the memorial itself. Third: the monument is placed at the centre of an enclosure, a signal of its importance. Furthermore, it is situated along the axis against the Union Buildings – the seat of British legislative authority in Pretoria - a deliberate physical manifestation of Afrikaner opposition to British control of South Africa. On an urban level such a gesture recalls a long tradition of ‘capping off’ monumental space, as exemplified by the US Capitol at the top of the Mall in Washington DC.

Nationalism and the production of meaning

Meaning and more significantly value that is attributed to sites of significance have been transferred to the Voortrekker Monument despite the fact that no event of historical significance originally occurred there. It becomes a place through which a particular version of the past is created; an articulation made real by the physicality of the structure, the narrative it reiterates and the human enactments that occur there. This meaning is maintained over time through constant inhabitation of the site and its role as a meeting place for memorial rituals and political rallies. However the historical narrative told by the Voortrekker Monument appears to have little place in the revised past of the new South Africa. Estelle Alma Mare suggests that ‘[A]lthough . . . memorials, as architectural structures, may have some crude or naïve exterior symbolic value, they cannot be seen as an artistic genre or specifically as a functional architecture, even though they may sometimes have an interior function as a museum or even a place of worship.’ Instead she proffers the argument that the propagandistic intent of the forms renders them part of the political genre, which makes it futile to discuss them as art or architecture. Her position does not acknowledge that the architectural presence of the memorial politicises it in the first place. Nor does it recognise that the act of creating such an architectural form was itself highly political, just as the act of visiting the space continues to be so. The narrative is exclusionary, racist and one-sided and delineates Afrikaner Nationalism - an ideology of superiority and an entitlement to land that formed the basis for Apartheid. How then might the meaning deliberately and overtly inscribed into such a memory space be reattributed? The memorial has become more than a brick and mortar manifestation of Afrikaner identity, it has become the theatre in which Afrikaner nationalism has been enacted, from its conception to the present day.

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133 A laager is a traditional definitive position utilised by the Boer families. Arranged in a circular fashion, ox-drawn wagons could protect the women and children in the centre while maintaining a comprehensive outward focus.
134 Lisa Findley, Op cit, p.10
performative aspects of the memorial have imbued the site and memory space with a degree of significance usually attributed to sites that have witnessed events of the past. Instead, this site has garnered meaning entirely through the fabricated production of events, intentionally conceived to reiterate the meaning attributed to the memorial. Since the symbolism inherent in the structure so clear, is it possible to re-evaluate the context in which the memorial is understood?

Contested meanings

Robert Musil’s famous claim of 1927 that ‘there is nothing so invisible in the world as a monument’ is readily contested in the Voortrekker Monument. Here, rather than becoming meaningless as the regime that conceived of the monument crumbles, the retention of the memorial and the constant dialogue over its meaning ensure that it remains significant within the national psyche. Nevertheless, it is worth examining Musil’s argument to ascertain whether ultimately the memorial may lose its potency over time. Musil’s position is based on three primary points: one, that familiarity breeds banality; two, that competition with media advertising undermines potency of monuments; and three, that the disjunction between everyday settings and heroic narratives renders the monuments ridiculous. He argues that the function of monuments, to facilitate the cohesion of social groups through the construction of collective memory, has remained relatively unchanged over time even through the messages have differed immensely. Musil firmly situates the monumental impulse of architecture within a European tradition. He aligns the mythic and human icons of sepulchre art from the Middle Ages, with decorative sculpture of the Renaissance and the Baroque, and in turn with nineteenth-century national memorials and war memorials of the twentieth century. In a South African context his argument is undermined for, arguably, the assertion of the European tradition presents a continuance of colonialist notions of what constitutes memorial. Perhaps one of the most problematic aspects of the attempts to use the Voortrekker Memorial as an emblem of a common history stems from the fact that the memorial is grounded in a very specific European tradition, one which by its very nature denies commonality. David Bunn suggests that the naturalising of monuments amidst the landscape is made difficult in South Africa, because of their inability to convey collective meaning. This is due to their ‘reluctance to imagine the idea of citizenship outside the boundaries of race.’ His position, that monuments struggle to be seen when they rely on the memorial practices of a minority group, adds weight to the argument that it is only through the re-characterisation of the memorial - attempting to situate it in a more common place - that the continued significance of the memorial is ensured.

Returning to the broader questions of the invisibility of monuments, Andreas Huyssen proffers a fascinating evaluation of Christo’s ‘Wrapped Reichstag’ as a means of examining how monuments

136 Robert Musil as quoted in Peter Carrier, Op cit, p.15.
137 Ibid, p.17.
138 David Bunn, Op cit, p.93.
gain meaning and visibility within a society. The Reichstag, as the seat of German government had become both contentious in a post-Nazi world and invisible within a post-Soviet era. Christo physically covered the entire building in plastic so that it was shrouded in the most literal and figurative way. The physical wrapping of the Reichstag rendered it invisible so that, paradoxically, through the very act of veiling, it regained it visibility. While some monuments do, like abandoned graveyards, become less and less meaningful (especially as time passes), others are incorporated into rituals of remembrance that repeatedly draw them back into the collective psyche. In some respects the debate around the Voortrekker Monument serves to veil it, so that it can be re-imagined as a figment of its former self. Perhaps one of the questions to examine here is whether the lack of visibility of a monument truly renders it mute - as Musil implies - or whether the incorporation of the memorial into the collective consciousness allows the memorial to operate in a different way. The question of whether, in order to function successfully as memory space, a memorial is required to sit apart from society, or whether in so doing it loses its potency, is arguable. Both the Constitutional Court examined in Chapter 4 and the Red Museum in Chapter 5 present examples of memory space that incorporate daily life and the ritual of use into the framework of the memorial itself.

Peter Carrier points out that our failure to see memorials stems from more than the argument posited by Musil. He argues that the monumental genre has remained unchanged over time while ‘habits of human perception and communication have altered dramatically’. The reason for this, he suggests, is that a chasm has formed between nationally-sanctioned narratives and their form and mode of commemoration and individual experience. Carrier argues that monuments need to be understood and interpreted historically, politically and socially in order to retain contemporary currency – as they are an ‘expression of the changing means of symbolic communication about the past that is exposed to political and social forces.’ The task of revised interpretations of the monument in a shifting contemporary context is made difficult in current times. What becomes of the meaning of the memorial if it is left insitu, is it significant for individual recollection? What are the ramifications of revising the narrative according to renewed collective memory?

In fact, it is the desire to reinterpret the Voortrekker Monument, to reframe it according to altered social and political forces that renders it so dangerous. According to Lynn Meskell, such a repositioning potentially negates the ‘real’ history articulated by the monument. Although the narrative told by the Voortrekker Monument presents a biased, monocular vision of the past, this vision was a true reflection of the narratives of Apartheid. To resituate this in a revised history of South Africa elides the historical artefact that the monument presents. More significantly for Meskell, the mode with which

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140 Peter Carrier, Op cit, p.17.

141 Ibid.

narrative is reconfigured is fundamentally problematic and is worthy of examination in greater depth. She says,

The Voortrekker monument is a marker of systemic violence and a material signifier of events that sedimented the policies of institutionalised racism... The monument’s immense materiality still exerts social and political energy ostensibly doing the work of perpetuating the colonial fantasy of superiority and suppression.143

The Rainbow Nation

The decision to revise the interpretations of the monument appears to have stemmed largely from Nelson Mandela’s conception of the Rainbow Nation.144 In many respects this policy is an inversion of the racial dissections that formed the basis for the divisive nature of Apartheid: the separating out of community and distinguishing people according to distinctions of colour that manifest themselves in culture, language and tradition. Benedict Anderson articulates the vital need for shared history in order to create an ‘imagined community,’ for it is this shared identity that allows disparate individuals and groups to regard themselves as a collective with shared past, present and future.145 For the wider Afrikaner community, the retention of this monument has been seen as an act of goodwill and an indication of the inclusionary nature and intention of the new regime, in accordance with notions of the evolution of the Rainbow Nation. As Nelson Mandela commented, ‘[T]here is white in every rainbow’.146 Yet it is one idea to accept the argument that every divergent portion of the population is entitled to be represented within the grand narrative and quite another for the subjugating, biased and historically associative position (as exemplified by the monument), to be readily incorporated into the new national position. This forms the basis for many of the arguments over how to (and whether to) include the memorial into the revised National narrative. In order to understand the complexity of this contestation, one must appreciate what the memorial has come to mean, as well as examining alternatives for its retention and redefinition.

Attempting to reframe perceptions of the Voortrekker Monument reveals the extent of the role of memorials in the politicisation of memory. This has been the subject of much analysis and examination as many countries seek to come to terms with their past and modes of expression of that past. Perhaps the largest area of study has been undertaken around Germany as addresses post-Nazi, and post-Soviet era history. James E. Young comments, ‘[O]fficial agencies are in a position to shape memory explicitly as they see fit, memory that best serves the National interest’.147 However,

144 Ibid, p.163.
they are not in a position to control how that meaning may shift over time. Traditional notions of memorials are bound up with the physical permanence of the site as a form of guarantee of permanent memory so that the ravages of time would have little effect on the fundamental role of monument as witness. Young breaks down traditional distinctions between Memorials (typically considered as sites of mourning), and Monuments (typically understood as celebratory markers of triumph), by offering the notion that duality marks many historical markers of events that were both tragic and heroic. While this duality can be seen from an Afrikaner perspective within the Voortrekker monument, the opportunities for inclusion that such dualities provide cannot be easily accommodated here. In fact, it is precisely the search for duality in terms of interpretation that is so problematic in the case of the Voortrekker Monument. It serves to characterise the Voortrekkers as both heroic and tragic (the cenotaph as a case in point) yet within the traditional narrative, there is little room to consider the Zulus and their substantive losses as anything other than a triumphant victory for the Afrikaners. Attempts to draw a broader narrative and to claim a common sense of triumph and loss are made difficult due to decades of inculcated narratives, which clearly delineate a specific interpretation of the past, its victors and losers. Jo Louw, a photojournalist renowned for his photos of the aftermath of Martin Luther King’s assignation, describes his response to an 1992 visit to the memorial – ‘Its immense box-like granite mass imparts the feeling of a fortress – defensive, mute and immovable. For the politically aware black person, even to approach the thing requires some profound self examination.’ In fact, other African journalists who visit the memorial comment on the continued sense of disjunction that they feel while visiting the site, a sense of dislocation that is not easily reconstituted through official determinations that the meaning has changed. Alta Steenkamp suggests that the design of the monument demands a ritual of veneration and reverence. She contends that in moving through the space, the visitors’ gaze is directed upward to the dome and then downward to the altar/cenotaph. Thus all visitors enact a form of benediction while visiting the space, regardless of whether such emotions accompany their experience. Her argument is based on the assumption that bodily inhabitation alone is sufficient to enact recollection. While a visceral experience generated by a site may be powerful, is this enough to constitute meaningful memory space? Surely not, for if this were so, then meaning could be foisted onto any visitor regardless of their political or emotional connection to an event. Such a suggestion assumes a degree of power inherent in built

148 Ibid, p.5.
149 Jo Louw quoted in Annie E. Coombes, Op cit, p.35.
150 Annie E. Coombes, Op cit, p.35
151 Alta Steenkamp, Op cit, p.251.
form. The extent to which architectural environments may construct meaning for a visitor is discussed at length in the following chapter.

There is little argument that this Monument, although intended as a testimony of the divine right of the Afrikaner people and technically detailing an event that predates Apartheid, has become synonymous with Apartheid itself, as has the Afrikaner Nation. In many respects, the colonial position that laid the foundation for much of the racially determined operatives that occurred historically in the South Africa’s past, have been disregarded as Apartheid is characterised as a time-bound entity occurring in conjunction with the Nationalist rise to power. In fact some of the initial laws that formed the basis for Apartheid were passed before this occurred. Yet the propaganda that led to the formation of the Monument’s identity was so potent that the meaning associated with it has, to some degree, superseded the monument itself.

The argument to retain the monument is based on the premise that its function has no relevance in contemporary South Africa. This is rejected on the grounds that retention of the narrative may be considered tacit condoning of the version of history it tells. However, Leach posits that retention of the monument renders it an ‘impotent stump’, a once virile emblem of Afrikanerdom now redundant within the culture of the new South Africa. He suggests that, rather than representing a still valid perspective; the memorial serves as an important reminder of what once was.\(^\text{152}\) This position is fundamentally flawed as long as members of the Afrikaner community retain a claim on the historical narrative represented by the Monument so that it cannot simply be relegated to the past. Furthermore, as long as the building itself remains potent as a site of alienation in the minds of the general population of South Africa, it continues to represent a set of attitudes that while politically outdated, still exist within the country. However, this potency has been undermined in contemporary South Africa - the narrative within its walls is now contested, the 16\(^{th}\) of December has become Freedom Day, and the exclusionary perspective of the frieze is no longer the primary history of the nation, nor the dominant ideology.

Another alternative to reducing the meaning of the monument has been to claim the broad narratives as general ones, defining notions of stoicism and bravery as collective concepts to which all South Africans might relate. Another has been to attempt to separate the narrative of the Great Trek from Apartheid itself, by embracing the Boer pioneers as South African pioneers. Meskell especially cautions against this last mode of interpretation arguing that it denies the colonialist history from whence Apartheid came. In so doing it implies that Apartheid is a time-bound entity with a clear beginning and an end, rather than existing over an amorphous period, a time which finds its roots in a

past long before the Nationalist Government came to power in 1948 - its legacy still evident in contemporary South Africa.\footnote{Lynn Meskell, ‘Trauma Culture – Remembering and forgetting in the New South Africa’, Op cit, p.163.}

Annie E. Coombes argues that the memorial has assumed a kind of ‘universal’ meaning within South Africa, one that is understood by everyone regardless of whether they agree or disagree with the meaning implicit in the memorial itself. She argues that the narrative of the Great Trek,

\begin{quote}
[W]as the imposed narrative of the Nation state - the only legitimate history available at any level of education - and to the extent that Afrikaans was the imposed language at all levels of intercourse, the Voortrekker Monument attained a certain monstrous legibility – inescapable to those who never visited the site.\footnote{Annie E. Coombes, Op cit, p 25}
\end{quote}

Coombes suggests that as an immutable presence and a physical reality, the familiarity of the monument and its iconic status renders it significant to all South Africans. While this position is suited to the Rainbow Nation rubric, it assumes that identification with built form occurs through familiarity regardless of the meaning innate in the form itself. Such an argument denies the subjective, affecting component of memory space and renders the meaning implicit in the monument mute.

In fact, the assumption that the monument has a broad significance for all people of South Africa, that it serves as a shared reminder of the past regardless of race or legibility of meaning for the individual, is a primary argument for the memorial’s retention. However this desire seems to be driven largely by political expediency rather than a true acknowledgment of the divisive meaning inherent in the memory space itself. Alta Steenkamp agrees that the Voortrekker Monument is a physical embodiment of the spatiality of Apartheid, a ‘social space provid[ing] a physical reality in which restrictions, limitations, divisions and separations of the bodies were enacted.’\footnote{Alta Steenkamp, Op cit, p.249.} She suggests that through its conception, construction by an entirely white crew and figurative narrative, it is indelibly marked with the ‘civilising’ force of mid-twentieth century Afrikanerdom.

The extent to which the politicisation of memorials is imbedded into the physical architecture proffers or limits the possibility of change in meaning and interpretation of politicised space. Leach asks whether architectural form can be inherently political through his examination of Nazi architecture. He claims that context, social ground and function and usage also contribute significantly to the political authority of architectural production, postulating that stylistic language alone does not characterise architecture as inherently political.\footnote{Neil Leach, ‘Erasing the Traces: The “denazification” of post revolutionary Berlin and Bucharest’, Op cit, p.83.} Can meaning be undone through revised use and a shift in social context? Leach goes on to argue that by extension of this logic, architecture is essentially inert, merely a vehicle for the projection for political context, dependant on a memory of what a political form
is supposed to mean. He suggests that a revision of the memory can result in a revision of the political associations of the structure. While stylistic language alone may not characterise architecture, the deliberate inclusion of specific symbols, materials and language which links the memorial to a meta-narrative entrenched in the spatial language of Pretoria makes eradication of such meaning difficult to achieve.\(^{157}\) His argument for the reattribution of meaning is problematic in South Africa. For one, it does not allow for the weight of historical associations also bound up with the style and mode of construction inherent in the physical form of the architectural space, nor does it address the economic imbalance that most likely played a factor in the construction of the space itself. But most significantly, it does not accommodate the possibility that the existing narrative is not available for re-evaluation. The place of this memory, while contested and uncomfortable is not yet ready to be relegated to the past. Some members of the community that constructed it, still fundamentally believe in the version of the past it elucidates, and lay a claim to their entitlement to that position within the spectrum of the Rainbow Nation. This highlights the difficulty of seeking to reattribute meaning in a society that is attempting to validate all positions of the past. Contradictions and contestations of the past are an inevitable outcome of this position.

**Freedom Park**

The contemporary solution to the potency of this monument has been the creation of a counter monument, which occupies the landscape opposite the memorial. This monument, recently completed, has been termed Freedom Park. Freedom Park is a heritage precinct that includes an interactive museum, a garden of remembrance and a memorial. It is intended to tell an African perspective of the past and it,

[W]ill strive to accommodate all of the country's unfolding experiences and symbols to tell one coherent story of the struggle of humanity for freedom in South Africa - the struggle for survival, land and resources and how they shaped the social, economic, political, cultural and historical landscape of the country. The park will address gaps, distortions and biases to provide new perspectives on South Africa's heritage, challenging traditional narratives through a re-interpretation of the country’s existing heritage sites.\(^{158}\)

Despite accolades of "a remarkable monument that tells the tale of South Africa's diverse heritage in a visual and interactive way,"\(^{159}\) the park, has been met with strong opposition from a wide range of groups, including The Society for the Protection of Animals, Church leaders and Afrikaners who feel as if they are being marginalised. Walter Serote, former deputy minister of Arts and Culture comments on the significance of the precinct. He says:

159 Bathandwa Mbola, 'South Africa's Freedom Park', [http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/park-230908.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/park-230908.htm)
The African voice has been silenced and trampled upon. For much of the history that Europeans wrote, they said Africans were not human. We have to accept as part of our history that we were a colonised people. There is nowhere in the world where colonialism did not destroy what it found when it arrived. On top of that, we had the Apartheid system. There’s a very deep desire in the nation for Freedom Park. I hear that in the churches and other places. People pray about how they want Freedom Park because it will reaffirm that they are human beings.\textsuperscript{160}

In contrast to this Mare argues that ‘colonial rule in South Africa alienated many of its citizens, but postcolonial commemoration, as in the case of Freedom Park, leaves many with the feeling of no longer being at home in their own country.’\textsuperscript{161} She considers the construction of Freedom Park a signal that the ANC have appropriated for themselves the very trait that they oppose, Afrikaner domination in the form of a fortress that still draws more visitors than any other monument or museum in South Africa.\textsuperscript{162}

\textbf{Summary}

It becomes evident that each community exerts the memorialising impulse of architecture, and does so from their own perspective. Despite attempts at inclusion, meaning becomes inscribed according to the persistent collective memory of the time, which is endorsed or contested by personal recollection. The power of such symbols in society cannot be overstated as mechanisms for creating community and articulating legitimacy and as physical manifestations of the events of the past. It is this permanence that makes memorials appealing in their incontestability, but which also makes addressing their meaning complex in shifting contexts. The Voortrekker Monument is a case in point. It stands as a legible articulation of an Afrikaner perspective, and was deliberately constructed to make that position immutable. Through the performative aspects surrounding its construction, the building and its site have assumed the significance usually afforded sites of trauma that have witnessed acts of the past. And yet despite its emergence as a fabrication, the monument still presents a narrative that is difficult to contest. Although it is easily recognised as racist and out-dated, the desire for an inclusionary approach to the past and perhaps the potency of the memorial as an iconic form has resulted in an attempt to re-read of the memorial. Such a reframing is rife with pitfalls, for the construction of one artificial memory merely makes way for the rephrasing of an artificial telling history and it is this particular form of dishonesty that the new South Africa is attempting to overcome.

\textsuperscript{160} http://www.carnegie.org/reporter/08/southafrica/index2.html.
\textsuperscript{161} Estelle Alma Mare, \textit{Op cit}, p.45.
\textsuperscript{162} \textit{Ibid}, p.44.
3. EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE: The Realities of Apartheid

Whereas museums in Apartheid South Africa were spaces where black people were represented only in ‘ethnographic collections and exhibits’, in post Apartheid South Africa they have presented the possibility of changes in the domain of visualising a new, more inclusive society.\textsuperscript{163}

The previous chapter reveals the extent to which post Apartheid South Africa has acknowledged the seminal role of memory in the construction of national identity. Museums and memorials, as physical manifestations of sanctioned versions of the past, have assumed an even greater significance as articulators of official attitudes in contemporary South Africa. They are charged with the responsibility of revising existing narratives and re-characterising both content and institution in the national psyche. Consequently, in addition to attempts to redefine existing museums and to revise existing collections, a plethora of new museums have emerged. Museology in South Africa is ensnared between national and regional forces, local and private impulses and the imperatives of globalisation.\textsuperscript{164} As a result, the landscape of museum heritage comprises established national museums, such as MuseumAfrica, newly emerging community museums, such as the District Six Museum in Cape Town, privately funded museums such as the Apartheid Museum and museums of historical importance such as the Robben Island Museum. While each of these highlights the breadth of change in South Africa’s approach to memory making, this exploration is confined to the production of new architectures, such as the Apartheid Museum.

This chapter presents an examination of the Apartheid Museum on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Modelled on the methodology used in the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, the Apartheid Museum seeks to situate the Apartheid narrative in a global sphere. The museum generates an immersive environment that artfully conveys the past in a visceral manner. This form of experiential environment, one that integrates the actual with the simulated, propels the Apartheid narrative into the realm of the hyperreal. The emergence of this mode of museology and spatial production can be traced to the touristic impulses that operate upon memory production. This chapter investigates the mechanisms used to create such an environment and discusses the difficulties of conveying an


accurate account of the past due to the integration of the authentic with the simulacrum. In so doing it outlines the difficulty of conveying a local narrative to a global audience.

The museum tradition in South Africa

The role of the museum as codifier of cultural production has assumed particular significance in the emerging debate over construction of different versions of the past. Traditional museums in South Africa conform to the anachronistic neo-colonial and imperialist archetype. As a product of colonialism, museums in South Africa originated from the settler elite, reflecting the social Darwinism that placed indigenous people on a lower level of the social chain. Typical of this Eurocentric museum typology is the production of a didactic, authoritative viewpoint presented without contestation. In fact, the fundamental notion of museum stems from a European concept with no traditional equivalent in Africa. Its manifestation in South Africa has traditionally represented blacks as primitive in a timeless present: ‘static, dark mysterious and passive’. Rooksana Omar (the first non-white president of the South African Museums’ Association) posits that this paradigm is no longer viable, as its narrative of superiority and dominance has no place in a postcolonial, diverse, multi-voiced world. Although this modality has been widely dismissed, institutionalised aspects of it are still visible in places, such as the Voortrekker Monument, and in many existing museums, for example the South African Museum, which have been slow to change. This reluctance to disrupt the status quo has not gone unnoticed, with commentators such as Hudson warning; '[U]nless South African museums make serious attempts to balance their portrayal of the country’s history they will remain monuments to white supremacy fossilised in a biased past and utterly irrelevant.'

In place of the existing modes of conveying an authoritative past, a new museological model is still emerging in South Africa. The museum and heritage community has been challenged to create spaces that ‘allow for a truthful unflinching examination of the past and creative, participatory approach to the future.’ Omar claims that such a model should push the boundaries of what constitutes a cultural institution and repository of knowledge. She calls on this type of museum to undergo several changes, which form a useful basis for an examination of emerging memory space. She suggests that museums should become relevant in a dynamic situation of democratisation and diversity, to operate as a platform for debate rather than to assume a didactic role. She also asserts

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167 Janet Hall, Op cit, p.175.
170 Hudson as quoted in Janet Hall, Op cit, p.176.
that museums should assist in the state’s agenda of becoming a place for producing and representing collective memory and the creation of national identity.\footnote{Rooksana Omar, \textit{Op cit.}} Omar seeks a museum made meaningful for both the local and international audiences. She calls for the museum to ‘provide the means by which the experience gained may reflect a visitor’s own sense of self within the museum’s exhibit as well as a connection to the outside world.’\footnote{Ibid.} The new museum in South Africa should provide an opportunity for locals to seek authentication of their own observations and experiences in living memory.\footnote{Janet Hall, \textit{Op cit}, p.180.} Omar also demands that foreign visitors feel part of the engagement with reality of this event rather than remaining bystanders. Finally, she argues for the demystifying of formal notions of object and artefacts through an experiential approach that acknowledges different world-views and experiences. Omar’s comments succinctly summarise the limits of a more traditional approach to memory making, and describe a ‘wish-list’ for contemporary memory space.

The impulse for official memorialising, as exemplified by museums, stems from First World values of preserving the past, maintaining continuity and defining national identity. The assumption that these ideals are held within Africa is arguably the continued imposition of post-colonial values in a different society. As Janet Hall questions:

\begin{quote}
How are we to reconcile these differences without falling straight into the thorns of the dilemma where on the one hand we in museums with our Eurocentric upbringing see it as our responsibility to act as conservators and protectors of an endangered and evolving culture in South Africa, and yet on the other hand run the risk of being accused of patronisation and paternalism?
\end{quote}

Hall elucidates one of the primary difficulties of memorial production in South Africa. In seeking to redress balance and to facilitate even-handedness, museums and memorials run the risk of appearing over-conciliatory or replacing one singular perspective with another. After decades of a particular form of memory practice, it becomes difficult to generate a new and more culturally- or locally-appropriate perspective.

It is out of this debate, (or perhaps in spite of it) that the Apartheid Museum of Johannesburg has emerged. Initially regarded as the definitive institution on Apartheid due to its existence as the first museum to Apartheid in South Africa, it circumvents many of the challenges laid down by Omar and instead situates itself firmly in an international context, seeking to highlight the ability of South Africa to produce world-class institutions. Based in style on James Ingo Freed’s Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, which established a prototype for how architecture might be used to create metaphoric spaces of oppression, the Apartheid museum utilises architecture to act in conjunction with
content to portray a definitive version of the past. This type of museum, termed ‘experiential’ memory space, conveys a sense of the past through subtle spatial manipulation. The factual narrative is reiterated through a form of visceral bodily experience. It does so in alignment with Andreas Huyssen’s argument that the role of the museum needs to shift from its traditional position as purveyor of inarguable truth to that of disseminating knowledge through its place in a world of spectacle and mass entertainment.\textsuperscript{175}

The use of technology has thrust the notion of museum into question as the real, the authentic and the original become simultaneously valued and abandoned amidst the plethora of the unreal, the hyper-real and the mass produced. Why museums have evolved to create these kinds of spaces, what they offer and where they detract or limit readings of the past form the basis for the examination in this chapter. This emotive environment, while an effective tool in the audience’s edification, presents a problematic version of the past that confines history to a clear narrative. In seeking to relay the past in a meaningful, contemporary and evocative manner, the Apartheid Museum runs the risk of presenting a reductive vision of the past, which generalises the history of South Africa by articulating it through an architecture aimed at a more international audience and undermines the very diversity it seeks to reflect. In a South African context where the narrative itself is still being contested and the mode of display still being negotiated, the Apartheid Museum is distinguished from the local by seeking to align itself with this international exhibition type.

In many respects the relationship between global and local highlights the way in which the past is readily transformed into a consumable commodity, available for bartering and shaped according to the politics of its creators. In order to be situated within an international context - both in terms of audience appeal and international recognition - the Apartheid Museum seeks to align itself with similar styles of museums around the world (Figure. 11). Arguably it does so regardless of the level of appropriateness of this style to the South African context. While the role of the museum serves in part to create a forum for memorialisation and mourning, there is also a desire to contain recollection through the assignation of the past to a confined entity. Consequently, it can be assigned cultural meaning and

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{museum_exterior.jpg}
\caption{Clean, contemporary lines of museum exterior}
\end{figure}

location through memorialisation and then dismissed so as not to trouble the realities of a contemporary world and its meaning systems. In the context of South Africa, however, the act of memorialising is not so readily confined to the past, but rather assists in the therapeutic action of coming to terms with recent history and creating a shared identity.

**Experiential architecture**

The Apartheid Museum is a form of ‘experiential’ architecture, designed according to a didactic linear narrative. Mashabane Rose Architects designed the building and the curation was a multi-disciplinary collaborative effort. Much of the definitive structure, style and organisational principles of the museum are based on the modality utilised in the United States Holocaust Museum, which iconically established this method of reflecting history. The Holocaust Museum has been hailed as a very successful and evocative museum. It conveys the narrative of the holocaust through a combination of displays and simulations that transport the visitor to Europe during the Second World War. Physical space, light and dark and materiality are all utilised to convey an emotive retelling of the events of the past (Figure.12). The catalogue to the exhibition explains, ‘[Visitors] do not only register isolated facts, they also search for meaning. They walk through the galleries as if walking through a three-dimensionally presented oral history whose meaning transcends the original historical limitations of time and space.’ The design carefully integrates the architecture of the Washington Mall, with an interpretation of built form reminiscent of aspects of Polish concentration camps. The building is constructed of red bricks arranged in the form of towers reminiscent of the barracks at Auschwitz. Visitors embark upon a historical journey that begins in the elevator wherein they each assume the identity of a real historical person affected by the Holocaust. Experiencing the displays involves moving between more traditional museological exhibits and emotionally charged ones that recreate aspects of the past. These include moving through a cattle cart, walking into a barracks from Auschwitz (containing original bunks from Majdanek), and

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177 University of Witwatersrand Professor Phillip Bonner was consultant on the historical aspects of the museum’s display. Bonnard argues that the museum attempts to confront the past directly affecting visitors emotionally while educating them on the past. See: Philip Bonner, ‘History teaching and the Apartheid Museum’, in Shamil Jeppie (ed.), *Toward New Histories for South Africa – On the Place of the Past in Our Present* (Cape Town: Juta Gariep Publishers, 2004).
moving past a replica of the cemetery wall of Krakow.\textsuperscript{180} The explicit thematic narrative, one of traversing from darkness into light, culminates in the Hall of Remembrance – lit by a hexagonal oculus – intended as a space for contemplation wherein an eternal flame burns for those who perished in the Holocaust.

The proponents of the museum highlight its educative possibilities as an institution that has the capacity to change or develop visitors ‘mentally, emotionally or morally’.\textsuperscript{181} They stress the similarities between the plot of the controlled narrative of the museum and that of novels, plays or motion pictures. Such assertions are particularly problematic in the production of revised narratives in South Africa, primarily because they become exactly that – productions. The Apartheid regime utilised the fabrication of historical narratives to further their political aims, so that history was constructed with a deliberate bias. The Voortrekker Monument details the ease with which this was achieved. Thus in a post Apartheid context, the suggestion that historical narratives can be aligned with fiction veers toward a dishonest account of the past. If we consider a museum as a material expression of the past and its monumentalism a form of cultural production of history, we must ask how that history is moderated. How does the architecture contribute to the construction of a specific narrative? A museum is not interpreted in the same manner as a novel, film or play; it is expected to embody an ‘authentic’ past. While it is widely agreed that museums in South Africa need to assume an educative role, and the experiential mode of museology is considered a methodology for edifying the visitor, the extent to which that story is a construct is troubling in a climate seeking to distance itself from the overt fabrication associated with its former government.\textsuperscript{182} However, as will become clear through the course of this chapter, the fantastical elements of the museum, its close relationship with Gold Reef City theme park and the simulatory effects of its displays all borrow in fact from a world of fantasy, unreality and make-believe.

The European museological model was based on private collections that were only later co-opted or gifted to the state for the benefit of the public. The United States museological tradition differs from the European one and emerged in the mid-nineteenth century when private charitable donations afforded the benefactor a significant tax break. Museology in the US emerged out of an idealistic background fostered by philanthropy and a desire for the betterment of humanity.\textsuperscript{183} This model has more applicability in South Africa, where the primary aim of museums in the post-Apartheid world is to facilitate commonality. However alongside the lofty ideals exemplified by museology in the United States were opportunities for freak shows and spectacles, which easily accompanied the performative

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
aspect of museum culture.\textsuperscript{184} Although our association with museums is readily that of repositories for cultural knowledge and artefacts, the spectacle aspect of display was developed in tandem with that exemplary aim. Thus the contemporary emergence of the theatrical in museums originates from a long history of displaying the peculiar and unusual.\textsuperscript{185}

The experiential approach to museum design is partially based on the realisation that the object-based museology is no longer effective in stimulating interest in the past.\textsuperscript{186} The more traditional modes of display are failing to maintain the interest and attention of a young, technology-oriented population. Consequently museums have been developing new approaches to the construction of museum space and the mode of display in order to immerse visitors in a sense of history by simulating historical narratives. Theatrical display, the semiotics of design and spectacle are replacing the original mandate of museums to ‘teach by showing’.\textsuperscript{187} This approach acknowledges the need for museums to compete with the entertainment industry for commercial success but treads a fine line between simulation and entertainment, authenticity and theatricality (Figure. 13). Hilde Hein comments,

\begin{quote}
Objects have been reconstituted as sites of experience. Paradoxically, the inherent subjectivity of experience weakens the museum’s authority over presentation. Museum’s dedication to the ‘real thing’, the authentic object acquires new and politicised significance wherein objects cease to be taken as ontological givens and become simply occasions for privatised experience or constellations of assigned meaning.\textsuperscript{188}
\end{quote}

The elusive nature of experience, which reverberates as a timeless private recollection, is, in many respects in complete opposition to the static permanence that characterises traditional museums. This immutable, authoritative nature of traditional museology is often considered problematic. However, so potentially is the inability of contemporary experiential museums to control the message or sense of the past absorbed by the visitor due to the emotive nature of the display. As a result, rather than using


\textsuperscript{185}For further discussion on this see: Susan Stewart, On longing: narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{186}Hilde S. Hein, Op cit, p.8.

\textsuperscript{187}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{188}Ibid, p.5.
the experiential model as an instigator of dialogue, it is tightly controlled in an attempt to ensure that a specific meaning is conveyed to the audience. Consequently, the message has a form of legitimacy as fact and not imagination. Arguably, this manner of conveying the past may have more resonance in a country like South Africa, where museums have long been institutions of alienation and marginalisation for much of the population. As a space that conveys the past viscerally, an experiential museum such as the Apartheid Museum may bridge the gap between the traditional Eurocentric mode of confinement and display and the African method of oral history. In many respects this oral tradition traces the line between historicising and story telling. Hayden White examines the relationship between the writing of history and the writing of literature. He argues that rather than being oppositional, as they are so often understood, they are fundamentally the same process. He states ‘[F]acts do not speak for themselves, the historian speaks for them, on their behalf and fashions fragments of the past.’ He argues that facts are collated into a pattern and assume meaning through their relationship to one another. The story emerges from the relationships between these facts so that they gain meaning.\textsuperscript{189} The presentation of facts within a museum surely operates similarly. How objects are shown, what is included and what omitted, in what order, all contribute to our understanding of events of the past and to our ability to construct them into a coherent narrative. Is this any different then to simulated environments that present a collection of factual interpretations of the past? The collection of factual truths are arranged to convey an overall picture of the past.

The production of the Apartheid Museum

The Apartheid Museum is the brainchild of Abe and Solly Krok, entrepreneurial brothers who wished to take advantage of legal revisions that allowed for the establishment of casinos and gambling in a country previously constrained by conservative values that denied such activities. As if to highlight the dubious origins of the museum, the brothers made their fortune during Apartheid by selling toxic skin lightening cream to black women.\textsuperscript{190} The Kroks wished to develop a casino within an existing theme park and pseudo-mining town on the outskirts of Johannesburg - Gold Reef City, a successful and popular tourist attraction. In order to gain

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{landscape.png}
\caption{Landscaping: museum in context}
\end{figure}

approval for the casino’s construction from the City of Johannesburg, the brothers had to produce a ‘social development’ project. After considering a variety of options, the idea of a museum was identified as a means to increase tourism, stimulate the economy and create employment.\(^{191}\) It is positioned in open field, on a seven-hectare site which consists of natural recreated veld and indigenous bush habitat containing a lake and paths, and on the edge of a car park, adjacent to the rollercoaster and other rides that make up Gold Reef City theme park and casino.\(^{192}\) The juxtaposition of this sombre museum and the frivolous theme park are the result of economic forces that gave rise to the museum’s incarnation. Their relationship highlights the contradictions and complexities of situating memory within a collective conscience and reflects the economic absurdities that may give rise to the construction of national narratives. Thus, it becomes evident that the decision to create the Apartheid Museum was motivated by principles other than a desire to recall a regime of the past. A sceptic may say that the museum was merely an expedient way for the Krok brothers to gain their ultimate aim of establishing a casino at Gold Reef City. This proposition reveals questions about the politics inherent in the construction of memory space – does questionable sponsorship taint the nature of the memory itself?

![Figure 15 – Apartheid Museum, interior](http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/apartmuseum.htm)

As a museum, the Apartheid Museum assumes status as a nationally-sanctioned version of the past, even though the forces behind it were motivated by other political and financial goals. The expectation that the museum as receptacle of a grand narrative is somehow pure or unbiased is radically challenged by the revelations of the circumstances around the museum’s construction, even though circumstances such as these (i.e. private funding) are not in themselves unusual. That such a self-

\(^{191}\) Ibid.
\(^{192}\) http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/apartmuseum.htm
aggrandising force can determine the style, format, shape, budget or execution of the museum throws into question the shaping of the narrative itself. Patricia Davidson suggests that curators ‘determine criteria of significance, define cultural hierarchies and shape historical consciousness’. Is the museum, as the display case in which such a narrative is conveyed, also the receptacle of such forces? The context in which this museum was formed surely contributes to its style of production and the audience that it is seeking to accommodate, and can be considered a similar expression of curatorial control. Legitimacy is automatically afforded to ‘official’ narratives, often with little awareness or analysis of the perspective from which the narrative derives. One extraordinary example of this is the Terrorhaus in Budapest, a moving museum that highlights the cruel behaviours of the Nazi and Soviet powers in Hungary. Evocative and powerful, this museum traces the past in a linear narrative way, using objects and emotive environments to simulate aspects of the past. It is only upon learning that the museum was sanctioned by the current government in Hungary in an attempt to discredit the socialists still active in the opposition, that the viewer begins to critically assess the information on display, particularly the manipulative mode of conveying that information.

**Narrative and simulation in the Apartheid Museum**

![Figure 16 – Entry to museum, showing ramp with figures behind the 'pillars of the constitution'.](image)

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194 [http://www.terrorhaza.hu/](http://www.terrorhaza.hu/)
The Apartheid Museum employs this experiential mode of conveying historical narratives to great effect. The external form of the building and the landscaping that surround it all contribute to its narrative of stark brutality. The architectural aesthetic is modern and sophisticated in style, although the palette of materials is carefully chosen to highlight specific messages about the nature of the information contained within the walls. The intention, much like the Holocaust museum, is to create an environment that wordlessly conveys a sense of the nature of the past, a form of stimulatory experience that imparts to the visitor a bodily sense of discomfort and brutality irrevocably associated with the events detailed in the displays themselves. In this respect, it is not considered enough merely to describe the events of the past, but to simulate aspects of them within the physical environment. While powerful and effective, this method of conveying the past raises a new series of concerns around the creation and ‘production’ of sanctioned narratives. The means with which we understand and interpret the information conveyed by the museum is arguably less critical, as we absorb the physicalised messages unconsciously, aware only of being moved by the experience and saddened by the events of the past.

The experience of visiting the Apartheid Museum is strictly controlled so that the progression through history is articulated as a singular powerful narrative. The architecture is utilised to convey a literal story of South Africa’s policy of segregation and discrimination. Entry to the museum occurs along a ramp dotted with full size figures of ordinary people, some of which are fitted with mirrors so that the visitor glimpses themselves as part of the community either as perpetrators or victims of the regime (Figure. 16). At the point of entry into the building itself, visitors are assigned identities as ‘whites’ or ‘non-whites’ and are directed accordingly along separated paths (Figure. 17). These are constructed of concrete, steel mesh and enlarged photographs of passbooks so that visitors experience the different treatment of blacks and whites under Apartheid. The arbitrary assignation of identities highlighting the randomness of the application of the laws of the past is made ‘real’ through the physical experience of visiting the museum. In this manner, the architecture begins to simulate of the realities of Apartheid.

Figure 17 - Entry to Apartheid Museum

http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/apartmuseum.htm
Throughout the museum, the visitor is guided along a seamlessly linear, evocative journey that emotionally resonates due to the controlled lighting, sound and enveloping displays which detail facts of the Apartheid regime. Lindsay Bremmer describes the experience of being in the museum:

*Its enveloping windowless wall (stonepacked with steel cages) and the . . . lift shaft resembling a prison watchtower, make obvious connections to incarceration . . . [After] descending into the museum again, one feels ‘claustrophobic panic’. The gratuitous ascent and descent this involves invokes a sense of manipulation and control, of being distanced from the world [. . .] and entering a secret, restricted realm where everything is unknown and unpredictable. The frosted glass and aluminium reception desk and the electronic newsflash that face one on entry add to this feeling of alienation. They do not welcome. They are harsh, cold, mechanical and impersonal. The building’s interior [. . .] is dungeon like. Natural lighting is [. . .] often located in positions that make it impossible to see out. The passage of time is obscured. Its acoustics similarly deadened. Audio material is transmitted through overhead speakers that one has to stand directly beneath to hear [. . .] The museum’s exhibits are fixed to the walls on purposefully crude steel brackets or contained within steel cages [. . .] They make one feel that they are unknown, hidden, impending knowledges within them; one enters with anxiety. Senses of alienation, dehumanisation, restriction and control prevail.*

Hard clean lines and a palette of concrete, barbed wire and mesh indicate the lovelessness of a regime, unbending in its brutality. Architect Jeremy Rose refers to it as an, "[A]ustere prison aesthetic . . . that kind of inhuman space." The narrative is spelt out in literal architectural terms, which make their message explicit. This is exemplified in the 18m tall ‘pillars of the constitution’, which form the entry to the complex, each with one of the seven principles of the constitution written upon them (Figure. 18). In addition, lighting is used provocatively to reflect metaphorically the message inherent in the narrative. Lighting within the spaces gradually increases as the narrative moves towards the realm of the new South Africa with the somewhat heavy-handed implication that the country has moved out of the darkness into the light. Sound effects, lighting and projections all contribute to the

*Figure 18 – Pillars of the Constitution*

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impact of the narrative, so that one feels victimised, disoriented and uncomfortable within the display (Figure 19).

The museum details the establishment of Apartheid in chronological terms, beginning with the Gold Rush and ending with the emancipation of Mandela in 1993. Dodging the criticisms levelled at the historicising of the Voortrekker Monument for example, namely the dissociation of Apartheid with colonialism, the Apartheid Museum takes care to situate the roots of Apartheid very firmly in that colonial context. In spite of such attempts, the narrative ends with the implication that Apartheid is over - confined to the past - a projection that raises new concerns about the ramifications of compartmentalising Apartheid so effectively. By insinuation, the museum implies that Apartheid can be relegated to the past, to be displayed as a relic of a bygone era, rather than conceding that it still exists in South Africa in many forms.

Historically, the authoritative nature of display has been innate in traditional museum typology. Such inarguable truths foster an expectation that factual truth is delineated through the presentation of original objects and artefacts, proof of a world outside of the world in which we live. This position is made complex in South Africa where Apartheid as an event of the past still exists in the present and cannot be accurately confined to a museological display case. In the construction of an authoritative narrative, the museum negates the presence of alternative readings of the past, or excludes components of that past so that the telling of the Apartheid story becomes a selective one. The authoritative narrative has led to questions about the content displayed in the museum – what has been included and what excluded. Such criticism includes discontent over the level of influence attributed to the ANC in the struggle against Apartheid, and arguments over the diminished role attributed to other resistance groups. In addition there has been criticism that the white resistance, especially that of Helen Suzman has also been underplayed. Georgi Verbeeck highlights the anxiety around the summary replacing of one imposed ideology by another. There emerges a fear that ‘a new type of dogmatism is arising,

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198 Hilde S. Hein, *Op cit*, p.69
whereby the current political majority is pushing their historical vision forward. Lynn Meskell comments (with respect to museums) that,

[T]hese sites enshrine sanctioned memory, they are cultural edifices that sediment certain visions of the past, and serve as an anchor for specific memory practices. Their resilient materiality serves as an anchor to both remember and forget, juxtaposing the dual process of inclusion and exclusion.

While this is, in many respects the nature of museology, the limits of this practice are highlighted in an environment such as South Africa, where all South Africans have a vested and personal sense of what the narrative was, is and how it should be told. Rather than acknowledging that the legacy of Apartheid cannot be confined to a singular narrative, this museum suggests that the past and the present are separate entities - articulating the specifics of the past in a generic and exclusionary manner. Similarly, Tim Cole comments of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC,

Whenever the present gets its hands on the past, the motivation is one, which is as much present-centred, as it is past centred. For all the claims to ‘past’ authenticity that filling museums with ‘authentic’ items – box-cars, suitcases, hair and bones makes, the heritage industry does not recover an authentic past, but creates something new out of the past.

The commoditisation of the past, its transformation into a readily understood entity ensures that the Apartheid Museum appeals to an international touristic audience. They are able to absorb the message of the museum untainted by their own experience of the events detailed therein. For these visitors, the power of the narrative can operate purely in its own terms, so that the appropriate responses of horror, disapproval, sadness and finally redemption can be experienced (Figure.20). It is to these visitors

Figure 20 - Artefact and experience

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199 Georgi Verbeeck, Op cit, p.222.
that the museum is primarily directed. The museum seeks to appeal to the international tourist market and to situate itself amongst other international museums, attaining a level of visual sophistication appropriate to a museum of that calibre. As a result it incorporates visual tropes suitable for such an audience rather than seeking to reflect a more indigenous language. By suggesting that Apartheid can be understood in a linear way, the museum positions itself as a Western icon, failing to embody the African perspectives that it claims to celebrate. As a result, many black visitors find the museum melodramatic.\(^{202}\)

**Local versus global: the international tourist**

Visiting the museum is a radically-different experience for international visitors than it is for locals. Where locals are seeking some reflection of their personal recollections of the past, international tourists are seeking explanation and understanding of the world that was. According to John Urry, the ‘Touristic Gaze’ is defined in opposition to social experience and consciousness and often occurs in the realm of the extraordinary. Inherent in Urry’s vision of the touristic gaze is the binary opposition between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary.\(^{203}\) This opposition characterises the innate complexity of addressing both a local and international audience. The Red Location Museum, discussed in Chapter Five, seeks to marry the everyday and the extraordinary. In contrast, the Apartheid Museum retains its focus on conveying the past through extraordinary means, an approach that necessitates a separation of past from present in order to distinguish it from the everyday.

This desire to confine Apartheid to the past, to understand it as a time-bound entity that can be encapsulated by a couple of hours at the museum highlights the difference between a local experience and a touristic one, one based on a lived reality, the other on a simulated précis. Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett goes further to suggest that in pandering to a network of international tourism, notions of local belonging and national identity are undermined. She says, ‘[W]orld heritage weakens the link between citizenship and nationality [. . . ] in order to strengthen the bonds between emerging cosmopolitan citizens and an emerging global polity.’\(^ {204}\) In choosing to represent Apartheid with an internationalised aesthetic, the museum does not assume a particular South African voice. Nor does it reflect a mode of historicisation born out of a local context. Thus while the narrative represented has the potential to engender notions of nationalism and a shared past, the manner with which it is conveyed arguably does not.

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In contrast, Georgi Verbeek suggests that the Apartheid Museum operates as part of a re-education policy about the injustices of the past for all citizens, and that it cannot simply be relegated to a closed chapter of the past due to the confrontational nature of its display.\textsuperscript{205} But this suggestion is no less troubling for it implies that the inherent didacticism is meaningful to a population wherein each member maintains their own recollection of the past. Despite the altruistic notion of demanding public responsibility, it simplifies the assumptions made by such a perspective, returning South African museology to the generic role of museum as authoritative teacher. If the museum is indeed a ‘mirror to the new nation’ as Verbeek claims, one may only infer that the nation has not changed very much - a singular perspective dominates the display, aimed at accommodating and conforming to external ideals of what constitutes true memory space, and how the past ought to be codified.

John Frow describes touristic space as ‘divided into displayed authentic space and an accessory (but often overlaid) meta-space where the business of tourism is conducted’.\textsuperscript{206} In many respects, this describes the conflation of spaces found in the Apartheid Museum. Experiential space collapses the boundaries between the ‘actual’ and the ‘imaginary’ so that the whole environment becomes simultaneously real and artificial. Umberto Eco describes this environment as a kind of hyper-reality, one that is more real than reality itself. Eco used the example of the Museum of the City of New York exemplifying the integration of reconstruction and archaeological finds that result in a seamless blurring of fiction and reality; where the original and the copy become fused. Eco argues that such places are designed to want the visitor to feel the atmosphere and plunge into the past, without becoming a historian. They do not present the absolute fake that is evidenced in theme parks (such as the adjacent Gold Reef City) but a form of super real, more real than reality itself.\textsuperscript{207} Marc Augé examines similar environments in his seminal work \textit{Non-places}. He characterises place as determined by localisation of culture in time and space: ‘relational, historical and concerned with identity’ whereas

\textsuperscript{205} Georgi Verbeek, Op cit, p.219.
non-places contain such places which have been disconnected from reality and transformed into spectacle which exists in a distinct and contained time frame of the past.\textsuperscript{208} Ironically, where Eco distinguished the museum environment from the theme park, it seems that in Augé’s terms the creation of one informs the other. Visitors expect to be entertained and readily immerse themselves in ‘other world’ environments (Figure. 21). As a result, museums, seeking to compete with other tourist sites, are forced to convey the past in such a way that it sparkles, horrifies and delights much like the simulated touristic spaces of theme parks, cyberspaces and online gaming worlds.

‘Authentic’ reality and fantasy

The power of the museum operates through its ability to simulate reality, conveying a sense of the past through visceral spatial control. The creation of a simulation or version of reality, termed the simulacrum, is a notion that has long been examined philosophically. Beginning with Plato’s copy of a copy, a simulacrum is defined by its distance from the original. Contemporary examinations of the notion of the simulacrum centre begin with Walter Benjamin, whose \textit{Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction} (1935) suggests that the ‘aura’ of an original is beyond reproduction. This challenges the object’s authority as historical artefact, highlighting the difficulty of integrating ‘real’ objects from the past is constructed environments.\textsuperscript{209} Jean Baudrillard’s essay \textit{Simulacra and Simulations} (1981) identifies three primary modes of simulation: first, the play of ‘illusions and phantasms’; second, an ‘ideological order’ or false representations; and third, the ‘hyperreal’. In this latter condition, the simulation does not emerge from an original, but is rather a product of its own entity – a self-referential production where the real becomes indefinitely reproducible. Baudrillard considers this to be a reflection of moral loss or emptiness of meaning in the world.\textsuperscript{210} Using this mode of simulation, Baudrillard established an ever-decreasing cycle, wherein simulation requires reality in order to restrain it. Martin Hall articulates the difficulty in integrating notions of the experiential with memory practice. He says,

\begin{quote}
Caught up in Baudrillard’s vortex, where the third order (\textit{the hyperreal}) simulations generate the mass production of commodities, which in turn fuel the consumer led demand for innovative simulation, how can entrepreneurs of the experience economy anchor their themed environments in ways that will make them memorable?\textsuperscript{211} (\textit{Italics added})
\end{quote}

Giles Deleuze counters this position by attributing value to the play of difference and repetition that occurs in the world, citing the very iterative process of mimicry as meaningful in its own right. He disregards the Platonian ontology, which prizes the original, describing instead the original as a copy itself, with each version distinct from the one before.212

The implications of these opposing notions of simulacrum for the creation of memory space are significant for a society where memory space was largely created out of fabrication and bias. The Apartheid Museum answers Baudrillard’s anxieties through the integration of the factual with the emotive and the actual with the simulation. However, although the museum presents its content as ‘real’ in effect it has incorporated a combination of real artefacts and simulated environments. The history it conveys is now largely uncontested, yet its mode of communication falsely mimics a specific reality that never existed. A Deleuzian approach would allow the representational environment value in its own right, a position obviously endorsed by the creators of the museum. However, rather than seeking to recreate a specific place or event, the museum generalises the past by simulating merely the emotions associated with Apartheid.

While factual accounts are included in the display, the visitor’s ability to distinguish between artefact as evidence and simulation as environment is undermined. The museum generates a sense of discomfort – attempting to recreate experiences of Apartheid, such as the dual entrances, which conveys a general sense of its brutal pervasiveness - without recreating a specific historical event. For example, a large yellow and blue police armoured vehicle, nicknamed a “casspir”, is presented, in which you can sit and watch footage taken from inside the vehicle driving through the townships. Arguably, then the boundary between what is actual i.e. ‘original’ and what is fake becomes difficult to determine. Do the objects themselves have enough meaning to render the whole experience real? The casspir is an actual artefact, and the footage real footage, but the experience, complete with sound effects, is contrived. The integration of artefact and representation is further complicated by the use of other objects – fakes - to convey suggestions about events of that time. For example, one display includes a series of nooses hanging from a ceiling, which (with chilling effectiveness) highlights

212 Deleuze as discussed by John Frow, *Op cit*, p.69.
the fate of those who opposed the regime (Figure. 22). The power of the display notwithstanding, the nooses, themselves are merely simulacra, which are never intended to be the real thing, but are rather designed to suggest an alternate reality. In this respect, while the original and the facsimile operate side by side, they do so with the intention of remaining distinct from one another. The overall effect however is a blurring of that which is real and that suggestive, so that the power or aura of one is transmitted to the other. Does this undermine the value or power of the display or render the history it tells any less true? Perhaps not, yet it does allow for a subtle sliding between ‘truth’ and ‘representation’ that is open to interpretation without a clear understanding of what may be taken from visiting the space itself.

Touristic journeys and the ‘authentic’ experience

For an international visitor, the museum is perceived as part of a broader experience in a touristic journey. Thus it is understood according to a wider narrative of ‘authentic’ touristic experience. John Frow outlines three primary arguments around notions of authentic and inauthentic as it pertains to tourism.213 The first is the accusation of tourism as inauthentic activity; the second operates in opposition to this, valuing tourism as itself a quest for the authentic experience of the world. These two can be examined in relation to one another. The latter definition revolves around Goffman’s notion of ‘front’, that is the face of the country presented to the public and the ‘back’ (concealed and therefore considered more authentic) side of the culture or place. Ironically, as Dean MacCannell points out, the quest for the ‘back’ may lead to a ‘front’ face presented as ‘back’ to assuage the touristic desire for ‘real’ experience.214 Within South Africa, these notions need be considered in relation to the danger associated with the country both in terms of wild animals and colonial notions of savage locals, as well as an ugly heritage of abuse and violence. Leslie Witz suggests that in general, tourist activity appeals to concepts of the colonial experience that makes the wild, exotic and dangerous accessible. He comments that the romanticised version of Africa, predicated in colonial modernity is distinctly at odds with the aims of the museum in South Africa, attempting to discard such colonial histories.215

Many tourists are content with the pseudo-authentic experience, such as one recreated in the museum that titillates, pushing them to the edge of comfort but within the safe confines of a controlled environment.216 In this respect, the touristic experience is one of modern sublime, wherein the visitor brushes against the reality of the past (or a simulacrum of that reality) safe to feel horrified, but glad that ‘beauty’ has been restored by the magnanimity of Mandela and the ANC. The ‘authentic’ tourist experience exists in multiple dimensions within South Africa. It occurs in the form of township tours, which take visitors on an ‘authentic’ experience of life in the townships, Game Park visits and sites

213 Ibid, p.72.
such as Robben Island Museum where visitors may retrace the footsteps of Mandela and others incarcerated in the infamous prison.\textsuperscript{217} Frow articulates that the notion of ‘authentic’ is a modern manifestation of the ‘Other’ defined by absence of design or of self-awareness, which he posits must exist outside the circuit of commodity relations and exchange values.\textsuperscript{218} By extension, the museum’s narrative as the ‘authentic/Other’ becomes distinct from the tourist’s personal experience. Tim Cole discusses the creation of ‘other’ in the Holocaust Museum of Washington DC. He comments that the distinction between self/visitor and perpetrator is vital to the satisfactory experience of visiting the museum. In the Holocaust context, the perpetrators are characterised as un-American, and the American role is that of liberator, a distinction that ‘serves to confirm our knowledge of their ‘Otherness’.\textsuperscript{219} In a local context, the intention of the museum is to facilitate togetherness and solidarity and to generate commonality, which seems to be undermined by such distinctions. In an international context, it serves to separate tourist from local, so that the former may appreciate Apartheid without experiencing any culpability for it.

Gold Reef City and the hyperreal

Gold Reef City, which sits adjacent to the museum, presents an alternate form of reality, one that distinguishes itself from any desire to deal with notions of national identity, historical accuracy and political relevance. This presents an example of ‘staged authenticity’ that seeks to create an experience of reality so stimulating that it overtakes the pleasures any actual reality could provide.\textsuperscript{220} Hilde Hein elucidates:

\begin{quote}
The constructed reality of the theme park imposes itself on and overtakes the conventional understanding of reality. Its brilliant imagery and the totality of its controlling effect eventually numb sensitivity and restrict reflective capacity [. . .] By contrast, the past or distant ‘real thing’ looks pale and lacks immediacy.\textsuperscript{221}
\end{quote}

Gold Reef City is intended to represent a frontier gold mining town at the turn of the last century complete with leisure and entertainment delights. Significantly, a Crown Mines shaft - a remnant from the mining facilities that occupied the site prior to the creation of the theme park - is central to the layout of the park itself. This forms a conspicuous landmark, as Martin Murray writes ‘[O]ne of the last remaining totems to authenticity, a physical reminder of something truly original about the site itself.’\textsuperscript{222}


\textsuperscript{218} John Frow, \textit{Op cit}, p.72.


\textsuperscript{220} Dean MacCannell, \textit{Op cit}, p.98.

\textsuperscript{221} Hilde S. Hein, \textit{Op cit}, p.81.

The casino and theme park are rife with representations and replicas of historical buildings. The ornate lobby that forms the entrance is based on the Carlton Hotel (1906), which leads to a circular hub based in the Joubert Park Kiosk (1906). Replicas of eleven major historic buildings complete with heritage authority bronze plagues form the precinct’s perimeter. As Martin Hall writes, ‘This is a sanitised past – a city without exploitation, racism or violence’ wiped clean of its residual memory. In this manner, the overall production of Gold Reef City attracts visitors by virtue of the following strategies as described by Martin Murray: ‘exclusion and error, deliberate vagueness and ambiguity, conflation of past and present and modification to accommodate the whims of taste and fashion, or the pressures of the market place.’ Ironically, these strategies are not so far removed from aspects of the Apartheid Museum. While the Apartheid Museum does not operate at the same heightened level of theatricality of Gold Reef City, their physical and economic relationship ensures a symbiosis not easily disconnected. The Apartheid Museum sits as a paler version of the dizzying construction of the ‘life world of others’ that operates next door. Distinctions between the sanitised heritage exemplified in Gold Reef City ‘which has more in common with invention fantasy and mythmaking than with historical accuracy and truth’ and the ‘reality’ presented by the Apartheid Museum become difficult to determine, especially when they operate using similar tropes. These include the integration of ‘authentic’ artefacts within recreated worlds and operate through the immersive effects of controlled architectural environments. The level of accuracy between the two, while radically different, is not readily apparent to an international visitor seeking a glimpse of the ‘other’ world of South Africa. It is this lure of the other world, conveyed within the safe confines of tourism that makes both the museum and the theme park so appealing and entertaining. And surely it is the ability to entertain that allows the museum to transmute from reality to fantasy.

The third position outlined by Frow examines the specificity of the object or experience itself. The desire to declare the unspoilt authenticity of the object taints it through the mediative process of naming and claiming. Within the museum context, objects are given this honorific status as authentic, which denies the reflexive possibilities of the inauthentic space that contains them. Clearly this relationship is one posed by the Apartheid museum, where objects of the past and those that represent events of the past reside side by side in simulatory environments. Deleuze’s notion that everything is in fact simulacra comes to the fore here, where the original artefact, the copy and signifier are all attributed with the same significance in the creation of the historic environment. It is this blurring that establishes the entire presentation as actual and authoritative, despite the fact that some of the displays are intended to convey actual events, while others are intended merely to evoke a sense of events.

225 Martin Murray, Op cit p.240
226 Ibid.
Summary

In summary, the Apartheid Museum is a beautifully-designed, highly-considered museum that confronts the past directly. It clearly delineates the realities of Apartheid and ensures that no visitors leave the museum unaffected by the events depicted there. However, it does so at a cost. In choosing to utilise a narrative strategy, the museum is confined to a very specific, singular reading of the past, one that is constructed into the very walls of the museum. The clean modern lines and the refined aesthetic of the architecture and interior display are recognisable to an international museum-going audience so that the history of Apartheid is conveyed in understandable terms. Technology is utilised in a way that is familiar, sophisticated and urbane, ironically displaying the horrors of Apartheid within the safe confines of a sanitised and refined context.

Through the use of an international architectural language, one that is refined, contemporary and encompassing, the history of South Africa assumes a different meaning. The Apartheid narrative has been transformed and repackaged into a global history. This propels it away from its origins as a uniquely African event or experience and generalises it. The mode of conveying historical fact becomes fluid and encompassing, but the experience itself is tightly controlled and linear. This approach to history making cannot be anything but exclusionary and convey the past from a particular perspective. Rather than facilitating the multiple perspectives of a Rainbow Nation, this controls the narrative and delivers the ‘singular truth’ of the official post-Apartheid narrative. Furthermore, the construction of a museum becomes a mechanism for dealing with, or being seen to deal with the past. Thus the memorialising impulse allows for assuaging guilt without requiring real processing of the events. While it attempts, along the lines of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, to create an encounter between the visitor and a ‘moral imperative to learn from the past’, the intertwined relationship between the Apartheid Museum and Gold Reef City Theme Park and Casino belittles such a message and highlights the fantastical architectural devices used in its construction.

In her analysis of the workings of the Truth and Reconciliation committee, Beth S. Lyons discusses the importance of articulating the details of the past in order to claim ownership of it.227 The act of identifying what happened to whom, when and why is significant in allowing people to come to terms with the past. Contrarily then, this museum generalises the past, reducing the specificity of both the events and the act of Apartheid itself to a universal ‘bad act’. The empowerment inherent in laying claim to a unique past – specifically South African - is radically undermined by its re-situation in an international context. Where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission succeeded was in its personalisation of Apartheid, its desire to articulate the specifics of the past and to dismantle the sense of Apartheid as a faceless regime. However in order to construct its narrative for a tourist

audience, one with an expectation of readily-accessible entertainment and polished presentation, the past becomes generalised. That is not to say that there is not a place for a didactic museum such is this, for the tourist market is very important for the South African economy and the story of Apartheid is an important one to tell; merely that the solution used here is to apply the technological approach of the United States Holocaust Museum in an attempt to compete internationally, rather than using the successful mechanisms of the design and applying them in a uniquely African way.

I return to Musil’s notion of the invisible monument, one that exists on the outskirts of the city, containing a distasteful narrative which, along with the fantastical past of Gold Reef City, can be avoided with ease. Contained and confined, the Apartheid of this museum is relegated to the past, as the museum itself declares, ‘Racial discrimination is now where it belongs, in the museum.’

http://www.apartheidmuseum.org/
4. PRESERVATION & RECONSTRUCTION: The Constitutional Court

As well as being a temporal phenomenon, traumatic memory is envisaged as folding into space in a way that leaves manifest traces: not simply marks that tell a story of the past, but indications of a lived present, of a mode of inhabiting both place and memory.\(^{229}\)

Nevertheless it is clear that evidence of the rupture [. . .] is not to be found in [. . .] new signs [. . .] The body which lives or survives as the transcript of the metamorphosis is still that which testifies to the break.\(^{230}\)

The Apartheid Museum presents an example of memory space that exists on the outskirts of the city. It operates as an enclosed world, on a site selected for its economic viability rather than for any historical or social import. However, the landscape of South Africa is littered with sites redolent of the past which raise complex concerns over their reappropriation. It is often not as simple as merely eradicating or erasing these places (and the buildings upon them), because of the discomfort of their associations with the previous regime. Some, such as the Voortrekker Monument, have been retained; many have, as a matter of course, continued to be utilised as pragmatism demands, but what of significant sites – those which have become synonymous with crimes of the state? How might we create architecture that is suitably cognisant of the past but not confined by it? This chapter presents a case study of the retention and reconfiguration of a significant symbol of colonialism and Apartheid, an iconic structure in the Johannesburg landscape. The handling of both site and architecture have resulted in a reconstitution of a third kind of space – neither existing memorial, nor new structure but a hybrid, comprising both - one born into the new political era.

Living within an environment that reflects the past, one filled with buildings that have witnessed acts of trauma, presents difficulties. As Iain Low writes, ‘If we understand spaces as the physical manipulation of a set of power relations, it follows that if power changes we might anticipate a concomitant restructuring in space.’\(^{231}\) It is often deemed inappropriate to retain and reuse the buildings without acknowledging the past to which they bear witness. Conversely, it is both unrealistic and arguably dishonest to simply eradicate such sites and replace them with new buildings, effectively denying the past made manifest by the built form. One solution evidenced in South Africa is the transformation of such sites into new physical entities, to create a model of hybridised architecture that straddles both the past and the present. This physical form presents a new kind of memory space, one that is grounded in two realities: retention of the past and its incorporation into the future. The architectural possibilities that emerge from this mode of spatial production are noteworthy: they offer a mechanism

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for acknowledging the significance of the past and its relationship to the physical form that stands as testimony to that past, while simultaneously suggesting a mode for deconsecrating that space and allowing a form of resolution to occur through spatial reconstitution. The result is a type of memorial space that emerges from the cannibalisation of the existing architecture into the creation of a new spatial entity. This physical consumption of the built form assumes a symbolic role as well as a physical one. It effectively slides the architecture from its hierarchical position as separate, discrete and confined to the past into a form of ‘living’ space operating in the present. This chapter explores some of the questions around this mode of spatial production and asks: What are the successes and limitations of this method of creating space? What are the spatial implications of undergoing such a symbolic and physical transformation? Are memories rewritten or overwritten by new spaces such as these?

From incarceration to emancipation

The precinct of Constitution Hill in Johannesburg presents an example of this act of cannibalisation and re-consumption of sites of trauma. This is a site which has notoriety in the history of South Africa - dating from well before Apartheid - as well as a significant visual place in the landscape of the city. The Constitutional Court is a mechanism for controlling the exercise of power by all government and public agencies and protects the fundamental human rights of all South Africans. It serves as both the symbolic and the functional head of the new judicial system in South Africa. The act of consumption and rebirth of the site also stands as a very powerful indicator of attitudes to the past. Rather than eradication or dismissal, the past becomes the very foundations of the present and the future. The intention is not to remain hostage to the past, nor to dismiss it, but to recognise its necessity as an entity in the present. The court is an embodiment of this. Nelson Mandela described its role as

[A] beacon of light, a symbol of hope and celebration. Transforming a notorious icon of repression into its opposite, it will ease the memories of suffering inflicted in the dark corners, cells and corridors of the Old Fort Prison. Rising from the ashes of that ghastly era, it will shine forth as a pledge for all time that South Africa will never return to that abyss.\[233\]

By placing the court at the centre of this past, the judges who formed the panel of representatives of the Court are making a clear statement about the significance of the past in the production of the future. Their desire is not to elide the past, notions are nor to quash it, but to use it as the basis for the creation of the present and the future. The existing site is in part retained, in part corrupted and in part dissolved to allow for the presence of a new physical space, one that more readily reflects the

\[232\] www.jda.org.za/constitutionhill/concourt.stm
\[233\] wwwconstitutionalcourt.org.za/text/court/about.html#quotes
aspirations for the future of South Africa. This act is deliberately symbolic. It allows the physical space to become a metaphor for the political transformation that is taking place, so that in a form of ironic inversion, the site of incarceration becomes a place of emancipation.

The Old Fort and Number Four

The Old Fort (as it is known) is readily identified from around the city due to its topographical position and location in Johannesburg, and the heavy architecture of its ramparts. The prison, known as Number 4, was contained within the walls of the fort - the two together becoming synonymous with the reality of the Apartheid regime (Figure 23). The site has observed some of the worst brutalities of Apartheid: the incarceration that occurred within its walls revealed some of the most perverse inequalities of the system. While the building itself cannot be considered culpable in the enactment of the cruelties of Apartheid, it has certainly witnessed acts and facilitated their performance through its very existence as a site of incarceration. In this respect, the building and precinct represent a bygone era, and act as witness and testimony to events of the past. Arguably, eradication of such a site undermines the palpable reality of the events that occurred there while retention has the potential to constrain the city in a state of stasis.

The implicit recognition that architecture, in the mode of memory space and spatial form, can serve a communicative function has been evidenced in the deliberate construction of the Voortrekker Monument as a bastion of entitlement, and the Apartheid Museum as a didactic narrative. The Constitutional Court differentiates itself through the conscious and overt use of built form as a model for attitudes to the past, and as a reflection of aspirations for the future. As a result all aspects of the design, including treatment of the existing site, are imbued with significance.

Built form as witness

The significance of sites of trauma cannot be overstated. The act of visiting the building or even the empty site where terrible atrocities were committed or where greatness was achieved forms the basis

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234 It was also used by the Johannesburg City Council as a means of urban renewal. Refer to Number Four: The Making of Constitution Hill (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2006).
for much tourism. This is partly due to a tacit acknowledgement that visiting sites of the past can make the events more real, or signal an emotional connection – respect, admiration or disgust for what occurred there. It counters accusations of inauthenticity so often levelled at the touristic experience. Both site and architectural remains can operate as significant markers of the events witnessed. Reverence for site extends through time and across many cultures, as people continue to value built form and space because of the events that occurred within them decades or even centuries before. Where such sites can be retained as a memorial, such as Auschwitz or Stonehenge the latent charge inherent in the form contributes to its significance as historical artefact, which aids its marketability and touristic appeal, not to mention its value as a site of mourning. However, if it is deemed necessary or desirable to reuse the site, questions emerge about how to address both the structure and by association the meaning, already attributed to that site. The physical form assumes a significance and identity, which cannot be readily extricated from the site. In the same way that homes which have seen murders are frequently demolished, sites of trauma can be considered tainted and cannot be inhabited without first acknowledging the trauma and addressing it in some way.

This notion is not unusual, nor is it unique to a South African context. Part of the act of memorial is the acknowledgment of the specificity of sites where acts have taken place, which prompts the desire to mark that place and return to it as part of the mourning ritual. By contrast there exists (largely amongst Western societies) a desire to eradicate sites of terrible trauma, especially where there is no relationship between those who inhabit the site and those who experienced the trauma there. Latent charge is felt to be intrinsic in the space, as if the built form embodies the acts that occurred there. This charge is related to the assumed authenticity of the site, which, as Jordan argues, involves a ‘proximity to historical events that reaches into the present with political, pedagogical and material effects.’ This position presumes that the qualities of the local (as embodied by sites of the past) are powerful tools for serving the memorial aims of warning, atonement and mourning. To stand in the place where something happened is the act of making real that which may readily become unreal. The innate sacredness of space ensures that it is both powerful as a generator of memory and symbolic as a site of ritual mourning and recollection. A site of trauma can meaningfully communicate the reality of the past and in so doing can connect us to others and to history. Harriet F. Senie discusses the extent to which we believe that the ground we walk on holds the context of its history, effectively presenting direct access to what occurred there. She argues that this forms the basis for spontaneous memorials

237 There are also cultures where this is not the case, such as Bali, Indonesia. See: Maria Tumarkin, Traumascapes: The Fate and Power of Places Transformed by Tragedy, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p.13.
which occur at sites of trauma, offering an immediate release for mourners and a sense of connection to the event.\textsuperscript{241} Recognition of the immediacy implicit in sites of trauma and their role as memorials compounds the trauma of reinhabiting such locations.

Historically, it has long been recognised that sites of significant events are valued for their innate charge or frisson. Meaning is readily attributed to such sites as the desire to recall and demarcate the past is made manifest through their physicality. Abbé Gregoiré in 1789 post Revolutionary France articulated the possibility that such meaning may not be fixed over time, but is subject to change. He characterised the attacks by the citizens on the royal tombs at the Cathedral of St Denis as vandalism, stating that the monuments of the past belonged to the citizens as their national and cultural heritage, an identification they did not readily make. This shift in ownership allowed the monuments to adjust their cultural value so that they ceased to represent only the existing oppressive structures of power. He argued that time and history would determine their significance.\textsuperscript{242} This notion, that physical form becomes divested of its provocative meaning through a shift in ownership, goes some way to explain why inflammatory markers such as the Voortrekker monument can be left intact. However, in the instance of sites such as the Old Fort and Number Four, the building represents more than just the previous regime. It also embodies the suffering of many people who were kept within its walls. Consequently revisions of the site are required to achieve two quite disparate aims. On the one hand, the site is expected to remain as a memorial, and to exemplify the hallowed status of a place that has witnessed trauma, and on the other hand, it is expected to signal change - to emerge as a symbolic incarnation of the ideals and actions of the new South Africa.

A history of Constitution Hill

The site of the Old Fort has grown and adapted over time and comprises several components, each of which reflect a different period in South African history. Beginning in 1893, a high security prison was built along the Braamfontein ridge in Johannesburg. A few years later from 1896-1899, Paul Kruger constructed ramparts (known as the Old Fort) around it to give the prison military capacity in an attempt to protect the ZAR (Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek) from the threat of


British Invasion, and to also maintain order over the miners that were inundating the village below in search of gold. The ramparts and formidable entrance, which with its giant steel door formed the formal entrance to the complex, have remained in situ above the city. From its position atop the hill, the Fort became a significant landmark in Johannesburg.

The name ‘Number Four’ became prevalent following the South African War, when the Old Fort was converted into a jail. ‘Number Four’ referred to the brutal section of the jail where black inmates were kept. The jail complex consisted of three prisons: the Fort, for white inmates, Section Four and Section Five for black inmates (built in 1902), and the Women’s Prison (completed in 1909) (Figure 24). The prison was the site where numerous political prisoners, including Gandhi and Nelson Mandela were detained, and became the breeding ground for numerous prison gangs to establish themselves despite the brutality of the treatment they received. The prison was closed in 1983 and the site left abandoned until it was selected for the new court in 1997. The site was derelict, and the area of the inner city in a state of decay. Despite this, it was thought that its symbolic value and visual significance would garner more meaning for the court as a representative of South Africa’s transition. The department for public works makes this evident in the brief:

[The Hill] stand wedged between the vibrant African city which central Johannesburg has become and the historic division of a poor black city . . . towards Soweto and the rich, white suburbs to the North. We are at the very centre of South Africa’s major metropolis. The Old Fort is on the highest point of the Witwatersrand watershed: the rain that falls in the area flows to the Atlantic and the Indian oceans down the northern and southern sides of this ridge. The constitutional court will stand at the confluence of these human and natural environments.

This emphasis on site reflects the Heideggerian notion of dwelling as intimately bound up with connection to the soil. The building itself is considered to be bound up with the land - grounded in the earth – in order to exist meaningfully in the phenomenological sense and to contribute to concepts of national identity that emerge from this relationship. Ironically, it is this very connection that was established and emphasised by the Afrikaners in the construction of the Voortrekker Monument, fixity between land and architecture that highlighted the connection and resultant ownership between people and land. The functional architecture, its ramparts and forbidding walls, speak of exclusion while its location in the city offers a vantage point for surveillance and examination. Such a building

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\[The\ Women's\ Prison\ has\ also\ been\ transformed\ into\ a\ museum\ on\ the\ Constitution\ Hill\ Precinct.\ Designed\ by\ Kate\ Otten\ Architects,\ it\ employs\ a\ strategy\ similar\ to\ the\ Constitutional\ Court\ –\ reusing\ the\ old\ jail\ to\ generate\ a\ new\ museum.\ Refer\ Digest\ of\ South\ African\ Architecture\ 2005/2006,\ p.228.\]

\[Segal,\ Lauren.\ Number\ Four:\ The\ Making\ of\ Constitution\ Hill\ (Penguin\ Books:\ Johannesburg,\ 2006),\ p.101.\]

\[Dept\ of\ Public\ Works,\ Competition\ for\ a\ new\ constitutional\ court\ of\ South\ Africa\ (Pretoria:\ Dept\ of\ Public\ Works,\ 1997),\ quoted\ in\ Schalk\ Le\ Roux\ and\ Devilliers\ Du\ Toit,\ 'Centre\ court: South\ Africa's\ Constitutional\ Court\ is\ the\ highest\ judicial\ body\ in\ the\ land.\ A\ young\ practice\ won\ the\ competition\ to\ build\ an\ icon\ for\ the\ free\ republic',\ The\ Architectural\ Review,\ November,\ 2004.\]

\[Martin\ Heidegger, Basic\ Writings\ (San\ Francisco:\ Harper\ Collins\ Publishers,\ 1993).\]
has the potential to reiterate already entrenched power relationships or to retain a level of alienation currently exerted by the existing architecture. Inherent in the challenge for the architects of the court, was the need to dismantle the authoritative nature of the space and to create an architecture that is inclusive and egalitarian.

Site, power and eradication of the past

The Old Fort belongs to a hierarchical regime that clearly distinguishes itself spatially as both ‘public’, and ‘powerful’ (Figure 25). It is defined by its previous identity as prison and site of abuse of power. Michel Foucault’s argument, that architecture may become an ‘apparatus of creating and sustaining a power relationship’ is exemplified here.\(^{247}\) The fort and the prison embody ‘heterotopias of deviation’, otherworldly spaces intended for those who cannot behave according to societal norms. In generating a museum, the site become a ‘heterotopia of time’, propelling the old buildings into a state of timelessness – unchanging relative to the world around them.\(^{248}\) However the act of transforming the site into a revised space disrupts the enclosed state of heterotopia. The precinct serves as simultaneously timeless and contemporary. It inverts the voyeuristic surveillance of Foucault’s prison in favour of a democratic space of openness and equality. It integrates timelessness of the museum with a constantly modifying contemporariness based on the daily activities of the Constitutional Court. The challenge in addressing this site is to acknowledge its potency while creating a new physical space that counters the power inherent in the historic associations with the past. Thus the court, the highest body in the country, is housed in a space for all people, one that physically denotes openness and transparency emerging from one of enclosure and restraint. In generating this precinct, the architects sought to retain the sacred while dismantling some of the barriers between traditional notions of museum space and ‘active space’. (‘Active space’ denotes space wherein daily activities take place, space that is utilised, as opposed to that which is retained for a meditative function). The architects sought to create a ‘living memorial’ - one which simultaneously cherishes the memory and potency

\(^{247}\) It is worth noting that Foucault does go on to qualify this argument at a later stage, by saying that architectural form cannot in itself resolve social problems, rather it can be used as a mechanism for expressing existing behaviours of everyday life. Refer Neil Leach, ‘Architecture or Revolution?’; in Neil Leach (ed.), *Architecture and Revolution: Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p.121.

integral to the site and yet remodel it into a space that has meaning in the present. In so doing Constitution Hill becomes a new entity.

The difficulty within any act of purging or de-sacratification the site is one obliquely discussed by Michel Foucault. He contends that inherent in the modern state of being is our inability to effect a practical de-sacratification of space. He argues that contemporary life is governed by a set of inviolably-permanent oppositions defined by such dichotomies as ‘private space and public space, between family space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All of these are nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred. Through the act of cannibalisation of the site - its disembowelling and reconstitution - the sacredness of the space is transmuted. The trauma inherent in the original becomes desanctified while the newly emergent court assumes a fission of its own as triumphant consumer. This integration of the sacred with the every day is partially achieved through the disintegration of the formal, the disruption and consumption of existing structures and the inversion of traditional hierarchies.

The site becomes both a private space and a public one simultaneously cultural and useful. This conflation of Foucault’s binaries assists in transforming the ‘sacred’ from site of trauma to site of sanctification.

Neil Leach examines the purported value of purging sites of trauma, questioning the possibility of eradicating the ‘evil’ in the building without necessitating its destruction. He terms this the ‘Bucharest syndrome’, which denotes the reappropriation and reuse of buildings from a previous regime, citing the palace of the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu as the most well-known example. The palace has now become known as ‘The People’s House’ and has been reappropriated as the House of Parliament and a conference centre at the heart of Bucharest. This example distinguishes itself by the fact that the intact building has been completely repatriated for new usage and is not serving as a memorial or museum but as a site of active inhabitation. The fact of its re-usage raises questions around the readily-ascribed meaning to physical space, meaning which can be altered (according to Leach) by repression of memory. He suggests that through the severing of associations, or the denial of the existence of memory that the role of the Palace can be reassigned in the minds of the Romanian people.

Leach argues that the ability to repress a sense of the past is based on Freudian notions of ‘screen’ memories, which supplant the traumatic original memory with one more readily aligned with the

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249 Brownwyn Law-Viljon (ed.), *Light on a Hill, Building the Constitutional Court* (Johannesburg: David Krut, 2006).
individual vision of the present and the future. He contends that this process allows the Romanian population to adjust not only the meaning that they attribute to the space but also their relationship to it. It is this process that permits the reconfiguring of the Palace into an ‘authentic’ Romanian production. Thus the palace is no longer the symbol of a decadent dictator, but instead a showcase of the talent, wealth and productivity of the Romanian people - it was originally constructed by local artisans. It is this shift in both identity and meaning that contributes to corresponding revisions of national identity, an act of redefinition that is vital for the recovery of the society.\textsuperscript{254} In some respects this argument may be applied to the Voortrekker Monument (as discussed in Chapter Two), which is undergoing a process of reconfiguration in the minds of the population in order to allow its inclusion in revised perceptions of National identity. Certainly the re-inhabitation of sites of trauma may allow for a purging of some of the memories associated with that place. Indeed if such a process did not occur it would be particularly difficult to reinstall those spaces. The symbolic revision of ownership and a corresponding transmission of power that occurs through the physical act of spatial consumption are significant components of this act of repatriation. This too may contribute to an ability to redesignate trauma buildings.

The decision to situate the court on a site of trauma serves to highlight the new government’s intention to distinguish itself from the actions of the old regime. The Constitutional Court operates as a transformative totem - a physical manifestation of the shift of power. Through the retention of existing structures and their transformation into receptacles of the past, the ‘buildings themselves become part of the process of telling more complete histories, of giving voice to the silenced, of reconciling victims and victimisers . . .’\textsuperscript{255} The court becomes a physical embodiment of the act of taking ownership of the past. By taking possession of the Old Fort, the government displays its ability to incorporate the past into the present and future, a gesture deemed necessary to aid reconciliation and healing. However the Constitutional court does not simply create a museum nor reinhabit an existing site. Ownership is conferred through the physical act of dismantling and recreating, rather than merely through inhabitation. Huyssen writes of the disappearance of temporal boundaries between past and present.\textsuperscript{256} This relationship is exemplified by the Constitutional Court, wherein built form is deliberately situated between these two states of being. What are the limitations and what are the opportunities afforded by inhabiting this nexus?

**The competition**

The Court was established in 1994, but in 1997 the cabinet establishment an international competition to generate a design for the new building. The brief was to ‘create a building rooted in the South African Landscape, physically and culturally without overemphasising the symbols of any section of

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid, p.88.
\textsuperscript{255} Lisa Findley, *Op cit*, p.239.
the South African population, or making a pastiche of them all.\textsuperscript{257} It was partly composed by the Justices of the Court and called for an ‘acknowledgement of local human needs and social values; a relationship to physical and cultural or historical landscapes; response to climate and weathering; excellence with limited means and technology employed to make best use of immediate labour resources.’\textsuperscript{258} An ambitious tasklist demanding that the architects address some of the most seminal aspects of creating built form in a climate hitherto exclusionary in its expectations of civic space!

Over 185 formal entries were received from all around the world, culminating in the selection of a South African entry by the international panel of judges. The two firms Urban Solutions and omm Design Workshop formed a partnership but the programme was divided between them into the old prison museum/memorial and the new museum court institution.\textsuperscript{259} The judges considered that the winning entry had the potential to ‘express a new architecture which is rooted in the South African landscape, both physically and culturally.’\textsuperscript{260} This desire for a ‘new’ architecture, one grounded in South Africa, highlights the expectations placed on built form as a vehicle for expressing the revised political context. In many respects this is a hugely problematic demand, for the search for an authentic South African aesthetic runs the risk of patronising the indigenous architecture while rejecting all modes of historically-built form as ‘un-South African’. The question of how to create memory space cognisant of the aesthetic determinants of the past is a complex one, especially when the brief demands a revised approach to built form.

\textsuperscript{257} www.constitutionalcourt.org.za  
\textsuperscript{258} Schalk Le Roux and Devilliers Du Toit, \textit{Op cit.}  

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{constitution_hill_precinct_retained_awaiting_trial_block_circulation_routes_amongst_new_construction.jpg}
\caption{Constitution Hill Precinct. Retained Awaiting Trial Block circulation routes amongst new construction}
\end{figure}
Addressing the past – the democratisation of space

The approach to this site of the past has been threefold: first, in recognising the significance of certain sites of trauma, building such as Number Four have been retained and transformed into a museum that highlights life in the prison. The displays in the museum are largely based around placement of objects, photographs and voice recordings within the existing building, to convey the realities of life in the prison. This museum circumvents many of the criticisms of inauthenticity levelled at the Apartheid Museum, primarily due to role of museum as traumascape, which ensures the displays an incontestable authenticity.

In addition, iconic aspects of the space such as the ramparts of the Fort have been kept so that the whole precinct retains a sense of whence it has come (Figure 26). This is partially based on the realisation that the site itself forms part of the scar tissue of the urban past, a wound that cannot be eradicated but must instead be acknowledged as central to the past. Second, parts of the precinct have been largely destroyed, most notably the Awaiting Trial Block, an act that allows for the erasure of aspects of the past that are considered less significant. This process is vital in an urbanscape where every building is a potential reminder of the atrocities of the past, the retention of which could result in the atrophying of the city. It is also a display of power, control and ownership - the building that facilitated poor treatment of its inmates can be relegated to the past and dismissed. This act of destruction, which readily occurs in places that have witnessed regime change, exemplifies the physical transition of power at its most basic, a symbolic act that is powerful in its evocation.261 The third component of dealing with the site occurs in the building of the new amongst the old.

Utilising the Old: Consuming the fort

In addressing the existing site, the architects positioned the Court on the place of the Awaiting Trial Block so that it sits amongst the old buildings that witnessed some of the worst abuses of Apartheid. The bricks of the old block were utilised in the construction of the Court building - in a literal and physical sense the new judicial system arises from the remnants of the old (Figure 28). As testimony to the past, four of the old circulation routes of the existing awaiting-trial block were retained, which stand as icons on the Johannesburg skyline.

The plan is not derived from any formal spatial considerations, nor is it derived from any pre-existing conditions. The structure is not a coherent composition. It unfolds and shifts in response to the uniqueness of the specific events of the site, which are not accidental but history specific.

The court opens onto Constitution Square, which is the open-air component of the precinct. The Great African Steps extend from the square alongside the court, occupying the liminal space between the openness of the Court space and the impenetrable walls of Number four. The steps, built from recycled bricks of the demolished Awaiting Trial block, mark the intermediate space between the glass frontage of the new court building and the external stonewall of the prison creating a visual and physical link between the two spaces, an architectural device that inhabits the past and the future.

In an inversion of the notion that architectural form can be tainted by acts that occurred within its wall, the bricks themselves have been cleansed or transformed by virtue of the process of consumption that they have undergone (Figure 29). The act of repatriating, retaining and converting the site assists in negating the potency of the architecture, effectively harnessing it so that the space becomes transformed into an emblem of

Figure 28 –New building emerges from the existing

Figure 29 - Court interior, showing new wall constructed from recycled bricks

263 Ibid.
the new political regime. The result is a kind of hybrid architecture - reflecting the past and embodying the future. The incorporation of bricks from the demolished buildings into the new court marks a significant act of consumption and rebirth. The court does not merely sit on the scar of trauma: it is constructed out of it. This act of cannibalisation most directly assists in the creation of a relationship between old and new, but also implies a corporeal and temporal relationship with the site. This is manifest through the creation of a space that facilitates physical activity, rather than the provision of a space of contemplation that typically characterises memorial space. Alexander Tzonis describes this in architectural terms, “[W]alls, transparencies, openings, steps, changes of level are support for actions and events to occur within this complex.” These form the liminal spaces which seamlessly integrate old and new, so that experience of the site results in fused experience of past and present (Figure 30).

The deliberate informality of the court space and the transparency applied to the creation of the museum components of the precinct are an expression of the primary curatorial principle – public ownership. The notion of spatial ownership of civic space has been expressed through the provision of vehicles for the physical demarcation of the site. The establishment of a wall termed ‘We The People Wall’ allows for individual marking on the site and generates an individual connection with the space. Every year on Human Rights Day, handwritten messages from visitors to the Hill are engraved in copper and added to the wall. The connection between graffiti and ownership implies a form of corporeal inhabitation of the site and serves as a physical connection between the past and the present. The retained towers of the awaiting trial block are already replete with graffiti from prisoners. The continued act of marking the site in a personal way allows visitors to re-enact a form of defiance performed by inhabitants of the site in the past. In addition, attempts are made to expose the

Figure 30 – Open, lightness and informality of Court building

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components of exhibition-making process as well, so that individual responses can be recorded as part of the process of coming to terms with the past.\textsuperscript{267} This physical relationship presents a model for handling both memory its physical manifestation. Alta Steenkamp asks, ‘How is the question of space already inscribed into question of racial discrimination and democratic ideals?’\textsuperscript{268} Steenkamp suggests, following from Beatriz Colomina that ‘[T]he relationship between space and body is the product of a complex system of representation(s) that define and/or negate presumptions and allow and/or disallow presence as bodies are turned into sites of privilege or subjugation, advantage or suppression.’\textsuperscript{269} She asks how the spatiality of democracy differs from the spatiality of discrimination. The Constitutional Court disrupts existing representations of discrimination through the deconsecration of the physical coherence of the existing site. In rupturing the buildings, brick by brick and reconstituting them into a form characterised by space and light, the court shifts representations of discrimination into the realm of the democratic. The human scale inherent in the act of consumption is achieved through the recycling of small components of the original building, such as the bricks. This actualises the sought-after relationship between individuals and the institution, implying that every component brick is significant in telling the tale of the nation’s past.

**New construction: designing the court building**

The composition of the building and precinct seeks to facilitate an architecture that suggests openness

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\textsuperscript{267} www.sitesofconscience.org/index.php/sites/constitution-hill

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid

\textsuperscript{269} Alta Steenkamp, *Op cit*, p.250.
and inclusivity as a counter to the dark inaccessibility that previously characterised the site. Deliberately departing from the more traditional language of a civic institution, the Court emphasises warmth and informality. In the instance of the Constitutional Court, the architects integrated African notions of justice as a generative form for a contemporary aesthetic. The design centres around the Court Building, the aesthetic of which is based on the African judicial concept of community justice beneath a tree. This level of reinterpretation extends beyond the merely visual, to examining the more fundamental cultural mechanisms that give rise to modes of inhabiting space. The idea of justice beneath a tree exemplifies the commonality and openness and suggests a democratising spatiality which aligns itself with the revised ideological perspective expressed in the creation of the new court (Figure 31). The architects’ interpretation of this concept is manifest in pure architectural terms, through the use of an unconventionally informal palette of materials: timber slats, perforated concrete ceiling and multicoloured mosaic patterning to generate an evocative environment that primarily operates through the effects of light.270 The end result is a space that speaks of grace and transparency, significant in a society blighted by silence, dismissal and disappearance. ‘The architecture possesses an African grandeur, dignity and great scale resulting from the building of grand voids, rather than evocative grand solids; not grand form but grand space.’271 The architects describe the slightly billowing form of the Foyer exterior; ‘As a free-standing plane, it contributes to the looseness of the enclosure of the Foyer as a space somewhere between an internal room and an external veranda; an enclosure and a clearing; an empty and an unoccupied volume; a clearly defined space and limited, edgeless, ethereal one (Figure 32).’272

However, as a response to Apartheid, the message is clear. By subverting the original intentions of colonial architecture and incorporating the Fort and Prison into the court which stands as a bastion of freedom and equality, the new precinct presents an ironic post colonial solution. Indeed hybridity, by its very nature is a definitive characteristic of post-colonialism. This presents a form of counter-monument as determined by James E. Young. Writing in regard to Holocaust memorials, Young suggests that counter-monuments emerge to contrast the formulaic and


Figure 22 – Undulating front wall to Constitutional Court
inaccessible monuments presented regularly as an authoritative take on the past.\textsuperscript{273} He discusses the transformation of memorials ‘from heroic, self-aggrandising figurative icons of the late Nineteenth Century that celebrated national ideals and triumphs to the anti-heroic, often ironic and self-effacing conceptual installations that mark the national ambivalence and uncertainty of the late-Twentieth Century post-modernism.’\textsuperscript{274} The Constitutional Court, an officially sanctioned architecture, primarily presents recollection through the act of inhabitation rather than the through the static traditional modes of representation. While the museum component is undeniably present in the precinct, and as such, parts of the complex operate as pure memory markers, the primary mode of recollection is its operation through the daily functioning of the court itself. Rather than wrestling with its identity as public memorial space, the Fort and Prison are transformed into a functioning building, re-formed into a new physical entity that redefines the nature of the memorial. This situates the act of recollection in the present, so that it becomes a positive act of repatriation rather than merely an opportunity to rehash the past. In this respect the Constitutional Court can be constructed to operate as a counter monument, anti-heroic, conceptual and accessible.

Sueanne Ware suggests that anti-monuments are characterised by fluidity and impermanence.\textsuperscript{275} This characteristic is suggested by the Constitutional Court in numerous ways. In a literal and physical way the dismantling of the existing structure and its itemisation into individual components highlight the impermanence of built form, even that which purports to be permanent. In an actual sense, the functionality of the precinct operates on notions of motion and movement.\textsuperscript{276} The result is a physical interaction between individual and site, which mimics the fluidity of anti-memorial relationships. However, Alexander Tzonis suggests that the relationship between movement and built form, while present, is not sufficiently developed in the court. He argues that the slanting columns and representational mosaics are simplistic and static, proffering instead the concept of emphasising a sense of movement through the building, which he posits might offer a more powerful, less didactic architectural solution. He credits this strategy of ‘walk[ing] through memory’ to James Ingo Freed’s Holocaust Museum in Washington DC.\textsuperscript{277} Tzonis’ comments highlight the difficulty in seeking to create a built form that resurrects the past, for the slip from authentic to hyper-real, as discussed in the example of the Apartheid Museum, is one readily and inadvertently achieved.

The inclusion of an ‘indigenous’ or locally-generated concept of justice raises questions about cultural appropriation in new spatial production. Albie Sachs argues that the building is successful in avoiding reliance on literal interpretations of ‘African’ aesthetics or traditional building styles, rather incorporating ‘semi-conscious’ evocations of African design, texture and landscaping, which is realised

\textsuperscript{275} Sueanne Ware, Anti-Memorials: Re-thinking the Landscape of Memory (PhD: RMIT University, 2005), p.15.
\textsuperscript{276} Alexander Tzonis, Op cit, p. 216.
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid.
through the integration of cutting edge technology and the more traditional skills of craftspeople.\textsuperscript{278} Whether the tree concept can be dismissed as tokenism is harder to determine, yet the building has been heralded as successful in creating an open space, one totally divergent from civic form previously created in South Africa. In this manner, the Constitutional Court is utilised as a mechanism for signalling regime change, a form of allegorical spatial production that seeks to resituate civic institutions in the minds of the broader public previously alienated and disenfranchised by such architectures. The court applies a more inclusive architectural language, and it is this inclusivity that is touted as more authentic. The architectural palette can be seen as an act of validation for African cultures that have been previously marginalised, while simultaneously is a necessary physical embodiment of the potential for social change. However, traversing the line between creating an aesthetic that deliberately challenges the old mode of built form, and resisting the impulse for cliché and architectural mythologising is a task not readily achieved. Frederic Jameson contends that a building can only operate as a history lesson if the public retain their sense of memory. Thus if the architectural meaning functions purely in allegorical terms, once the memory fades and the existential and social context is forgotten, the associations will be lost.\textsuperscript{279}

In this case study, architecture is employed as a means of resituating the past and re-characterising it in the present. This approach goes some way to answer Jameson’s contentions and to moderate Theodor Adorno’s problematic notion that ‘working through the past means working through memories in a psychological sense in order to turn the page then wipe out the memory’.\textsuperscript{280} In contradiction to Adorno’s point, the court has been built as a mechanism to ensure that the past can never be forgotten. Rather, it is an integral part of the present. In the desire to ensure that we are not able to forget, the court becomes a physical manifestation of the past in the present, a concrete confirmation that Adorno’s level of resolution will never be achieved. Adorno’s point, that the final aspect of working through the past is letting go, is not possible here, where the future and the past are permanently bound together. Ironically, the result is a form of stasis, where the court of the present and future is always turning backward to recall the past, bound to a permanent state of civic recollection. The transformative act of the court’s production that allows reconciliation and begins a process of resolution simultaneously concretises the brutalities of the past in the emergent future.

**Local architecture: a new approach**

This search for a more ‘authentic’ architecture, one more appropriate to the revised order of post-Apartheid South Africa dominates much of the debate around spatial production in South Africa.\textsuperscript{281} The notion of authenticity as it relates to regionalism is widely characterised as mythic in

\textsuperscript{281} Refer Sabine Marschall and Brian Kearney, *Op cit*, for a succinct history of the major discussions around this notion.
contemporary thinking. Both Theodor Adorno and Jean Baudrillard criticise this mode of production as deceptive, arguing that a position seeking to identify the real as authoritative is more readily aligned with the hyper-real of Disneyland than with any true reality. In this respect calls for regional identity can be considered as ‘mythic products of a post-modern age.’  

As Neil Leach points out, “In this context we might ask, for example whether, the concrete tower block does not itself now constitute an ‘authentic’ architecture for many Central and European cities, and whether attempts to revive vernacular forms are not themselves ‘inauthentic’ attempts to reconstructs a mythology of the past.”

The notion that attempts to determine an ‘authentic’ vernacular are readily aligned with an indigenous vision of identity rather than embracing the reality of existing vernacular are manifest in a postcolonial setting. By extension, Leach suggests a difficulty in accepting the real and everyday as an adequate reflection of nationalistic iconography. The implication is that the romanticised version of vernacular is often considered a more fitting vision of the past. The challenge in the construction of revised memory space is to generate an architectural form that reflects both the everyday and the culturally-constructed version of the past in order to generate a built form that suitably articulates a contemporary notion of the past.

**Literal interpretations: museum as memorial**

One of the criticisms levelled at this mode of production is the tendency to resort to literal interpretations of the past, and to utilise architecture as a mechanism for explicit metaphors that assist in the process of recollection. In fact, these modes of constructing memorials have become part of the language of memorialisation: a form of architectural currency amongst the architectural creators of memory space. Daniel Libeskind’s proposal for the World Trade Centre operates literally and figuratively in this manner. Libeskind declares that the role of every building is to ‘tell a story’ where great buildings tell ‘the story of the human soul’. His design seeks to create a building capable of ‘speaking from its stones.’ This translates into a literal interpretation of the spatial qualities of grief. His winning design for the Freedom Tower to memorialise the victims of 9/11 consisted of a 1,776 feet high glass shard. The height of the tower is significant in celebrating the year of the Declaration of Independence and the shape reflects the arm of the Statue of Liberty across the water. The design was termed ‘Life’s Victorious Skyline’ (although it has been radically redesigned since it was selected as the winning entry for the memorial).

David Simpson is critical of the obviousness in this mode of memorial production. He argues that the doublets are almost soporific in their hallmark predictability, while serving an overt political role as

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283 Ibid.
reinforcer of the language of war that characterised the months after 9/11. While he counters that all architecture is politicised simply through its creation at a particular time and place (for the specificity of site ensures that meaning is ascribed to even the most abstract physical form), this does not detract from the pervasiveness of this mode of constructing memory. For Simpson the deliberateness of the message, and the literalness of the mode of production equate to a ‘projection of agreed meaning, from a society that really does endorse and tolerate a narrowly-limited series of significations and values under the sign of pluralism.’

While such accusations are aimed at the specific instance of the Freedom Tower they could potentially apply to a newly emergent society of pluralism, such as South Africa. What are the limits of the production of space as articulated by the Constitutional Court? Is it too literal? Is there a less obvious way to address the conventions of commemorative architecture?

Huyssen suggests that, ‘[T]he problem here is not the imaginative ability or inability of artists, architects, and designers, but rather the objective problems of representing and memorialising traumatic events in built space, especially if that space is a death zone in living memory.’

Significantly, the site of the court was chosen especially for its latent power as ‘death zone,’ a place that witnessed and has become synonymous with trauma and injustice. This demands an architectural response, in keeping with the politics that have given rise to the project and respectful of the memory in the site. Does this inhibit the architecture produced here? Does it mean that the architecture will never to able to move beyond the definitive aspects of the past? The court, as museum and ‘active’ space still operates as a form of memorial to the past. Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial is widely-heralded as accepting the constraints and expectations of what constitutes memorial and yet moving beyond them to critically assess how recollection is manipulated. Playing on traditional notions of tombstone and the fixity of memorial space, Lin places the names of the dead underground, arrayed in a semi-reflective surface that incorporates the viewer amongst the dead through their own reflection.

This gesture implies alternately loss and complicity, but utilises architecture in a manner that is less explicit than the deliberate metaphors employed in the construction of buildings weighty with their own self-consciousness. The goals of Lin’s memorial are not very different from those of the Constitutional Court, seeking to create commonality and to ‘create a unity between the nation’s past and its present.’ However, her approach is one of visual minimalism that facilitates meditation as opposed to didacticism. The Vietnam Memorial invites the visitor to encounter the space of grief and memory and suggests culpability through the reflective surface of the memorial wall. Similarly, the brief of the Constitutional Court included the added directive to discover a unique aesthetic that itself reflects commonality without considering the limits and implications of such a request.

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287 Ibid, p.65.
289 David Simpson, Op cit, p.76.
290 Maya Lin, quoted in David Simpson, Op cit, p.77.
Summary

The Constitutional Court is a highly significant building in the new South Africa. It represents the intentions of the new government and signals a new approach to civic space and to the population through its revised aesthetic. Most significantly, it proffers a mode of addressing sites of trauma and creating a form of memory space that is simultaneously cognisant of the past, while presenting a memorial that is active in the present. The Court presents a contemporary version of the past. It seeks to reflect a uniquely South African voice in a manner that will reconfigure traditional notions of civic architecture, making meaningful that which has traditionally been alienating and exclusionary. Through a hybridising approach to the Court precinct, the architects acknowledge the import of a historically and culturally significant site by retaining certain aspects while transforming it to bring a new, sophisticated and open architectural language into play. The building, assumes a symbolic significance and moves beyond the purely allegorical to become meaningful through the ownership achieved by everyday inhabitation. In so doing, memory practice is enacted through the machinations of the court, as well as through the museum that reflects the brutality of the past. Architecturally the building brings together the forbidding heterotopic vision of the fort and prison and dismantles it, into an open transparent egalitarian space of the present. In his 2007/2008 editorial for the South African Digest, Iain Low comments that ‘[N]ew spatial configurations, that are both reflective of democratic principles and contest previous translations of power in space have yet to find a critical place in our everyday discourse.’\textsuperscript{291} His comments make clear that the Constitutional Court achieves what few have yet managed in post Apartheid South Africa, the creation of meaningful space, suitable for a distinctly South African population.

5. COMMUNITY CONCEPTS: The Red Location Museum

A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realised its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language, on space . . .

Twilight, that moment before the day fades into evening and then darkness, foreshadows the night of forgetting, yet it seems to slow time itself, an in-between state in which the last light of day may still play out its ultimate marvels. It is memory’s privileged time.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Constitutional Court operates at a national level, emerging from the contested landscape as a signifier of a growth from the past, yet it remains a symbolic and distinct civic institution. It operates on a grand scale to deal with meta-narratives without room to reflect the personal recollections of a single community or to acknowledge the unique position of any individual. The Red Location Museum, recently constructed in New Brighton on the South East Coast of South Africa, presents a contrasting approach. As Catherine Slessor notes, this museum has been heralded as a hugely significant building for South Africa, one which begins to proffer a distinctly South African mode of memory space, without resorting to condescension or cliche. The Red Location Museum disrupts the traditional notions of containment as they operate within a museum context. Discarding the very concept of presenting the past in a framed and linear manner, the building acknowledges the nebulous relationship of the past to the present and celebrates it. Situating the building within the heart of the community, the architects propel the concept of ‘museum’ away from the inaccessible and unfamiliar Western notion of inarguable truth and reposition it as the centre of a living present. The architects drew upon Andreas Huyssen’s notion of ‘twilight’ as a strong basis for their architectural production. Huyssen articulated ‘twilight’ as the interpretation that occurs between experiencing an event an remembering it. The museum becomes a representation of this time – where memory is a contemporary act dependant on a new, inaccessible past.

This chapter discusses this new architectural modality that is emerging in South Africa. It is a form of anti-hierarchical spatial production based on notions of history and memory operating within the community. The result is the production of civic architectural spaces that operate on ideas of architecture from within, grounded in the local and generated by the specifics of a particular site, a

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particular people and reflecting a particular component of South African history. This consultative approach is not in and of itself unique, and had been used in the production of other institutions around the world that reflect indigenous cultures such as the Uluru-Kata Cultural Centre in Central Australia. However, in South Africa, this revised approach to the creation of memory space operates in broader terms too. It extends to reconsidered attitudes to materiality, to the articulation and organisation of space and to the redistribution of skills and labour. The effect is to produce an architectural form that emerges from a distinct community and as a result may engender connections between built form and the community it serves. This mode of production is based on notions of memory as a form of active production, wherein placing the memory space within the context of everyday activity renders the past an integral part of the present. The character of this memory, and its success as a mechanism for reconciliation, are partially reliant on the physical form of the memory space and the extent to which it inspires expectations of the future.

Context of the Red Location

The Red Location was the centre of the labour movement in South Africa. It was a force that had great impact on the resistance movement. Always a very impoverished area, the Red Location was created (like other townships) on the outskirts of white settlements, in this instance the industrial town of Port Elizabeth on the South East Coast of South Africa. The area’s first township, Red Location earned its name from the settlement’s corrugated iron barracks that rusted to a deep red over time. The barracks were originally built as a concentration camp during the Boer War, and were moved into the area of Port Elizabeth following the end of the war in 1902 to house British soldiers. Black families took up the barracks as a place to live after the soldiers vacated them. The Red Location and New Brighton (the surrounding area) became a significant site for the resistance movement during Apartheid, and produced and housed many significant cultural and political leaders. In fact, the Red Location is considered to be the place where the ‘first’ act of defiance took place: a black resident walked through a ‘whites only’ entrance to the railway, and consequently the site has become heralded as significant in resistance to Apartheid. The impetus to build the museum came from ‘Rory’, a white civic rights activist who had promised an ANC colleague dying of cancer that he would build a museum to record their role in the resistance movement. The township is wedged between factories, a giant power plant and the tracks of a busy railway line and has few of the amenities afforded to a ‘proper’ town, such as comfortable housing and functioning infrastructure with businesses and a civic centre. The desire to create the museum was part of a broader project that was intended to revitalise the town centre, both culturally and economically. The museum was

295 For a close examination of the Uluru-Kata Cultural Centre see Lisa Findley, Op cit.
297 Catherine Slessor, Op cit, p.42
originally conceived as part of a town centre precinct that would generate new housing, a library, art centre, gallery, market hall and conference centre. It was envisaged that such a project would preserve the Red Location while attracting tourists to the isolated and impoverished area.\(^ {300}\) Thus from the outset, the museum was considered to be part of a renewed central precinct within the city, one which positioned the past at the centre of renewal for the future.\(^ {301}\) A national design competition was held in 1988 for the precinct, which was won by Jo Noero and Heinrich Wolfff.\(^ {302}\)

In seeking to impact the present and affect attitudes to the future, Noero and Wolfff explored how civic memory space and representations of the past might be made significant to a population unfamiliar with traditional memory space. The architects’ agenda in the creation of this museum was specific. First, they sought to create a civic space relevant and accessible to a population that has long been excluded from such forms. This began a process of re-characterising concepts of what determines ‘civic’ space, and how a more relevant architectural form may be determined. Heinrich Wolfff comments that a factory represents a more public place in most people’s experience than a museum.\(^ {303}\) Second, they began to re-evaluate the relationship between individuals and civic space, seeking to reform typical expectations of public and private space, and the personal relationships between individuals and civic form. This was partly executed through attempts at community involvement as a means to generate a sense of local ownership. In this respect, the museum is centred around the significance of the local, which has impacted on the visual aesthetic, scale, siting and economy that has been part of its construction (Figure 33). Third, they reconsidered the traditional museological approach to memory and began to resituate it in more contemporary terms. The museum relies little on Eurocentric modes of memory production and attempts to become more grounded in a specifically-African attitude to preserving and articulating memory.\(^ {304}\) It attempts to redefine the act of constructing memory in an authoritative way and repositions the role of museum physically and socially within the society it serves.

The architects’ approach to this site is significant in that it presents a different position on Apartheid from that exemplified in other Apartheid museums. Its specificity has led to the creation of a museum precinct that is unique in many respects. The Red Location Museum appears to present a radical new

\(^ {301}\) Ibid.
\(^ {302}\) Catherine Slessor, Op cit, p.42.
approach to the manifestation of memory, which will become apparent through the course of this discussion. Its methodology is aligned with the Constitutional Court’s acknowledgment of the central role that the past still plays in the present. However, where the Constitutional Court undertook a transformative process, the Red Location Museum re-characterises the past, primarily identifying a triumphant position of celebration rather than a space of mourning

**Victims and heroes**

The design of the Red Location Museum has shown cognisance of Rooksana Omar’s challenges to the museum community, as detailed in Chapter Three. Amongst other ideals, it seeks to address the past at a local and even a personal level. In many respects the museum answers a call to resituate South African history in a labour-oriented context that acknowledges the hitherto marginalised township communities. Unlike the more traditional Apartheid museums, this does not characterise black people as victims, but rather as instigators of change, highlighting the role of struggle as a successful mechanism for change. In so doing, the museum identifies the extent to which memory space can shape attitudes to the past, and the extent to which it affects the community that it serves. This is demonstrated by the United States Holocaust Museum which has sought to make the Holocaust relevant to an American audience by the recharacterisation of it according to notions of American patriotism. In seeking to make it relevant to a broad population, the Holocaust is conveyed in opposition to American notions of nationalism, from the perspective of Americans as liberators. This is conveyed internally by multiple means, most specifically through the curation of the Holocaust narrative from an American perspective. Externally this is manifest in the placement of the museum adjacent to the Mall in Washington DC, next to the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institute. Despite initial attempts to challenge the monumental façade of the Mall, the museum, by virtue of its position and urbanistically harmonious aesthetic, resituates the Holocaust amongst the great monuments of American nationalism.

The architects of the Red Location Museum were aware that ‘Large permanent gestures of victory have the habit of creating bitterness when the society has moved on.’ James E. Young agrees, positing that, ‘[P]ublic memory is constructed, that understanding of events depends on memory’s construction and that there are worldly consequences in the kinds of historical understandings generated by monuments.’ In this respect, the museum does not mourn the past but rather celebrates it as a time of resistance and great community strength. In fact the museum becomes an opportunity for the invigoration of the community and the Red Location. As a physical and

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geographical focus, it acknowledges the central role that memory plays in the present but transforms this memory into a generative state. The museum attempts to facilitate community unity through the production of shared public space intended for domestic interaction, such as the theatre and market area. Consequently, the Red Location Museum becomes a vehicle for community interaction with memory at the heart of such activity. It achieves this by situating the museum, the visual embodiment of the past at the centre of the town renewal. This act is a celebration of the past – a triumphant symbol of the success of resistance. In so doing, memory is characterised differently, as a positive codifier of the past. In this manner, recollecting the past is intended to become the genesis for community growth and economic prosperity.

Creating meaningful civic space

All the examples considered previously, the Voortrekker Monument, the Apartheid Museum and the Constitutional Court reveal the complexity of attempting to generate a culturally- and spatially-relevant architecture. The path to determining what constitutes ‘relevant’ and accessible space in South Africa is a relatively fraught one. Definitions of ‘relevance’ become contested and are adjusted according to shifting political and social landscapes. The Red Location Museum has been heralded as conveying architecture ‘relevant’ for the new South Africa. Sabine Marschall highlights the convergence of numerous definitions around the notion of ‘relevant’ architecture, suggesting that they all include,

[A] rejection of universal formulas, imitation of international paragons and the uncritical embrace of stylistic or technological fashions in favour of an architectural expression that is determined by the specific and unique parameters of its place . . . an architecture that affirms Africa – its climate, its landscape, its people – rather then negating it’.  

The museum is seeking to reflect a form of cultural appropriateness, creating a space where the design is informed by the values, customs and cultural preferences of the building’s users.

Culturally appropriate architecture

Clearly, in the past, South Africa utilised the definitions of cultural relevance or appropriateness as a means to further a divisive policy of racial segregation. Intrinsic to this act of differentiation was the application of value judgements about whose culture was more relevant or appropriate, which also perpetuated colonial mythologies and facilitated the imposition of cultural norms on another society. One of the effects has been the under valuing of traditional heritage accompanied by an ingrained sense of inferiority in traditional cultural building technologies. As a result, many black South Africans

aspire to western typologies, believing that status resides in these methods of production.\textsuperscript{311} Current attempts to redress this balance are made more difficult by the potentially-divisive quality of determining a singular more ‘appropriate’ language, one that perpetuates the same iniquities but in reverse. Needless to say, any attempts to redress this balance are compromised in South Africa, where the number of black architects practising is still marginal.\textsuperscript{312} Thus, in the majority of cases, white architects are designing for black communities, which hold ‘foreign’ aspirations, cultural preferences and value systems. Even the case of the Red Location Museum, the museum was created by white architects for a black community. Although Noero Wolfff have built extensively in the townships and their ‘architecture is characterised by its quite dignity and fierce decency that consciously strives to improve the lives of its users,’\textsuperscript{313} and despite endless consultation, the museum is still an academic notion of ‘relevant’ or accessible architecture. In fact, it may be suggested that the community members, somewhat perversely, want a more traditional symbol of memorial, whose value they recognise.\textsuperscript{314} As Lisa Findley elucidates, despite attempts at integration, the civic nature of the museum instils a sense of pride in the community. The building’s scale invokes a sense of monumentality for the project, relative to the shacks around it. In so doing it brings ‘inestimable value to the citizens of Red Location.’\textsuperscript{315}

The difficulty in determining a ‘relevant’ aesthetic is heightened by a long-standing education system which operated from a distinctly European outlook. It did so without nurturing a curiosity about indigenous culture or encouraging investigations of non-European sources of knowledge. These were characterised as ‘other’; curiosities that were useful for touristic purposed but which held little value as modalities for spatial production in their own right.\textsuperscript{316} The architects from designworkshop (Constitutional Court) elucidate:

\begin{quote}
Like many architects educated through a system of historic reference, our exposure to pre-eminent public buildings and spaces offered a singular and consistent model, notwithstanding in which society across the globe, or in which historical period, any example might have originated. The model was one of authority, monumentalism or aspiration towards it, and the symbolising of material or spiritual greatness and achievement.\textsuperscript{317}
\end{quote}

Marschall and Kearney argue that ‘the development of a new architectural language based on African traditions is of utmost significance in making the architectural discipline more relevant to the majority

\begin{footnotes}
\item[311]Holm has constructed research of informal settlements that reveal that shack dwellers prefer to live in tin houses, despite their inferior performance in thermal, acoustics, privacy, safety and security, in order to visually declare that they are ‘en route to modernity.’ D Holm, in Sabine Marschall, and Brian Kearney, \textit{Opportunities for Relevance: Architecture for the new South Africa} (Epping: ABC Press, 2000), p.162.
\item[312]\textit{Ibid} p. 158.
\item[313]Catherine Slessor, \textit{Op cit}, p.42
\item[314]The Museum was awarded the Lubetkin Prize by RIBA. Jack Pringle, President of RIBA comments, ‘The prize . . . will make a real difference to the status and self confidence of the museum and it recognises and celebrates a heroic design to mark a heroic political achievement.’ Jack Pringle, ‘Architecture that Resonates’ \textit{RIBA Journal}, Vol 113. no.8. p.51.
\item[316]Sabine Marschall and Brian Kearney, \textit{Ibid}.
\end{footnotes}
of South Africa’s population, as well as visually expressing the country’s process of transformation.\textsuperscript{318} Their position, while idealistically appealing, is problematic for two primary reasons. First, in attempting to account for decades of bias in one direction, it potentially overcompensates by swinging too heavily the other way. Second, it discounts any value in the current methodology of architectural production, which while still Eurocentric to a degree, incorporates a uniquely South African viewpoint. This perspective draws from the historical reality of colonialism and Apartheid, as they existed in South Africa, a series of events that uniquely shaped the modalities of spatial production in that country. The deliberate creation of a new aesthetic, one based on African traditions is a simplification of the search for a cultural identity appropriate to contemporary times. Looking to indigenous culture to determine a visual language of the future seems short sighted at best. This is not to suggest that there is no value in traditional decorative, spatial and visual patterns, but rather to argue that contemporary space demands and is worthy of more than a single, historically-produced solution. In the same way that post-colonialism sought to highlight difference as a modality for production, this approach suggests that nothing has been learnt from the past where cultural differentiation was used as a mechanism for division. Rather, African traditions, in conjunction with representations of the past and mechanisms of the future should be collectively combined to determine a revised ‘relevant’ aesthetic for the future.

**Community and identity**

One aspect of determining the values of the building’s users is achieved through community participation. This may lead to a greater sense of ownership and connection with the space. However, definitions of community have been particularly fraught in South Africa. Historically, such classifications were utilised as a mechanism for cultural differentiation so as to highlight difference. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vlasilavic explore notions of community, asking:

> Who exactly is community in South Africa? Are there not more complex social arrangements as well as conflicting interest groups that must be accounted for? How are these different groups to make up community? Why is this ‘community’ always seen as black and never white?\textsuperscript{319}

The act of consultation is particularly meaningful in a South African context, where large proportions of the population were systematically excluded and marginalised - culturally appropriate spaces were deliberately ignored and socially appropriate narratives disregarded. Ironically, community participation is a notion that was an official component of British colonial policy, a mechanism for ‘getting communities to take responsibility for their own development.’\textsuperscript{320} The actualisation of this policy occurred when decisions were made at the top but implementation was done from the ground.

\textsuperscript{318} Sabine Marschall and Brian Kearney, \textit{Op cit.}
\textsuperscript{320} Sabine Marschall and Brian Kearney, \textit{Op cit}, p. 152.
This marginalisation was further systematised during Apartheid by the active promotion of traditional culture. The policy of Apartheid intended, paradoxically, to underline distinct cultural identities and in so doing to highlight the respective differences of each culture. As Noeleen Murray points out, under Apartheid, ‘community’ became synonymous with socially enforced understanding of racial groups. This was legitimised through the Government Department of ‘Community Development’ which implemented The Group Areas Act. This was the codification of spatial separation which resulted in forced removals and physical demarcation according to race.\textsuperscript{321} During this period, architects designing for black Africans were encouraged to produce an ‘ethnic’ design, one which could be considered a reference for the user groups’ own culture. Most often such references emerged in the form of a very superficial application of pattern, inspired by pottery, beadwork and other crafts.\textsuperscript{322} One result of such contrived cultural production was the reduction of culturally-specific work to a formulaic equation, confined to a traditionalised and simplified outsider’s vision of that culture. Another result was to ascribe certain kinds of buildings to a specific culture, so that a particular ethnic group was confined to and characterised by buildings identified as belonging only to their cultural echelon. Not only is such a process reductive in a manner that dismisses the nuances and complexities of any given cultural group, but it also utilises spatial production as a mechanism for racial segregation under the guise of authentic architectural form. Ironically too, this model for aesthetic production was reinforced with the introduction of post-modernism in South Africa in the 1980s. This move sought to use cultural differentiation as a mechanism for celebrating diversity, a gesture that effectively reinforced the social order instigated by Apartheid.\textsuperscript{323}

Making the civic relevant

As evidenced through the course of this thesis, one of the most significant results of such policies is the dissociation between black South Africans and civic building - particularly museums and memorials - which were constructed according to a Eurocentric vision of what constituted memorial iconography. As exemplified by the Voortrekker Monument, such a language was deliberately exclusionary, both spatially and in terms of the overt narrative, a powerful mechanism for implementing the racial divisions of Apartheid. One architectural response to this is an attempt to create culturally-neutral space wherein form evolves as distinct from cultural associations, such as demonstrated by the Apartheid Museum In principle this approach seems ideologically sound, but in reality it is limited by the cultural nuances and biases that accompany any aspect of design. As discussed in Chapter Three neutrality is mistaken for familiarity or internationalised aesthetics. However as Sabine Marschall articulates, this debate highlights the significant role that architecture plays in the construction of cultural identity. It signifies the need to critically examine the manner with


\textsuperscript{322} \textit{Ibid}

which the notion of ‘authenticity’ is applied to architectural space, highlighting the requirement to consider, not only the exterior, but also the fundamental typology and basic patterns of space making.\textsuperscript{324}

The tactic of the Red Location Museum has been to validate the position of the local in order to resituate notions of the civic in the minds of black South Africans. This inclusive stance, attempts to refashion traditional notions of museum memory space and the role of civic architecture in a local community. This has the potential to facilitate a more meaningful relationship between people and the civic spaces that are purported to reflect their past. The Red Location museum articulates a highly individuated perspective of the past, one situated very specifically in the Red Location context. As will be shown, this perspective is made manifest by a specific use of materials and building techniques that echo those used by the Red Location community and by the articulation of specific personal stories relevant to the unique experience of this community group. The process of valorising the personal account is modelled on a national scale by such entities as the TRC, which establish a modality for recognising the significance of the individual. The validation of the personal through the construction of built form ensures the museum’s relevance as an architectural form for the Red Location community.

M.J Roodt identifies the personalisation of the past as a mechanism of community participation wherein inclusion is based on the concept of transformation of consciousness, which leads to a process of self-actualisation and empowerment.\textsuperscript{325} The notion that community participation and consultation can lead to the creation of more meaningful and accessible public space is certainly not a radical one. In fact, it seems an obvious method of acknowledging the appropriate audience for whom the space is intended. However, this approach has limitations. Architecturally, there are often complications in transforming the ideas of the community into spatial realities, and reconciling entrenched aesthetic and spatial solutions with the shifting needs of an emergent community.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure34.png}
\caption{Saw tooth roof of museum and shacks}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid, p. 16.
Furthermore, a consultative process is inevitably much more involved and complex and will invariably leave some individuals with a sense that their needs were not being taken into consideration. This is demonstrated by the fact that the construction of the Red Location Museum was delayed by a number of years because of disagreements over funding priorities.\textsuperscript{326} Despite the notion that consultation may result in a significant sense of ownership, which is pivotal in the creation of memory space, community consultation is thus often disregarded in favour of expedient production and internationally appreciated spatial forms.\textsuperscript{327}

**The Red Location aesthetic**

One of the most significant ways in which the Red Location Museum resituates itself in terms of the community that it serves is evidenced in its siting and external articulation. The museum is placed at the centre of the Red Location in an attempt to regenerate the heart of the town and to render the museum central to that revitalisation. Jo Noero describes a ‘progressive’ rather than ‘pathological’ approach to conservation, stating: ‘It will still be a place where people work and live. The new buildings are inserted into the existing fabric and form edges and frames to the conduct of everyday life at the location.’\textsuperscript{328} This notion of integrating the new with the existing is laudable but difficult to achieve for the Red Location consists largely of shacks and poorly-constructed housing (Figure 34). Any new construction is conspicuous by virtue of its newness and solidity. In order to ensure that the

![Figure 35 – Pergola entry of telegraph poles, intended as a space for community interaction](image)


\textsuperscript{327} Ibid
\textsuperscript{328} Jo Noero, *Op cit*, p 191.
building does not become a static, over-scaled form in the centre of the local communal life, the external envelope attempts to straddle both civic and private styles. This occurs through the introduction of spatial tropes that reduce the external structure of the building to pockets of more personal space, so that it may be inhabited in numerous ways, not only in the manner traditionally expected of a museum environment. The intention is to allow for interweaving of public and private through the deconstruction of aspects of the building envelope (Figure 35).

As a prominent site of resistance, the Red Location was targeted (by police and others), during Apartheid. In response it became opaque and inward, turning away from the public realm as a means of self-preservation. Consequently, the museum attempts to disrupt this opacity through the integration of the public realm with private experience. Special care has been taken to disrupt the monolithic nature of the exterior so that the building’s external envelope becomes more personal in scale. The exterior walls of the structure blend into the surrounding environment, encouraging everyday usage of the building and its surrounds. The entry to the building is on the south side and is marked by a timber pergola, flanked by a restaurant and a shop. This entry point is constructed of telegraph poles bundled together (a method of construction typical of township environments) which allows for gatherings, trading and celebrations (Figure 35). The formal entry of the museum becomes a focal point for casual inhabitation and communal gatherings.

One effect of this is to lessen the intimidation many experience in traditional civic environments, designed to convey power and import. Through the open pergola entry and the other spaces that facilitate communal interaction, the museum speaks of community on a personal scale. The long eastern side of the museum becomes a habitable wall with seating, a children’s play area and a taxi rank (a vital means of transport for this

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329 Ibid.
community), while the western side encloses a grassy park with an outdoor cinema. Jack Lohman
explains the significance of such spaces. He says: ‘Meeting places assure us that buildings are about
people. Moreover they are not neutral or empty spaces. They are defining presence that confirms that
communities are not locked up in museum displays but have real, thriving, complex modern day
lives.’ Thus, the building’s exterior provides pockets of civic space that encourage public usage in
social and informal ways (Figure 36). The building becomes a physical manifestation of the constancy
of memory on everyday life, a reality upon which all of our everyday behaviour is based. The
architecture attempts to lay claim to the unique and individual perspectives of this site, this time and
these people. Consequently, the building seeks to operate as a museum and yet to go beyond that
role. It becomes an architecture of the everyday. Noero cites the example of the Smithsons’
Ordinariness and Light to explain their approach, wherein the architecture acts as an armature for and
backdrop to everyday life.

In terms of visual aesthetics too, the
Red Location Museum does not
exemplify the architectural language
that typifies memory space. It seeks
to remember the past by
‘reconstructing it in ways that are
both familiar and disquieting.’
The museum introduces a new visual
language which is more in keeping
with the community that it intends to
serve than with conventional notions
of a civic museum. Externally the
museum is shaped to reflect the industrial aesthetic, for the heroes of this community were Union
workers. It comprises a large
singular structure made of infill
concrete with a saw tooth roof, speaking a language of industry rather than civic nobility (Figure 37).
But this is a fitting context: under Apartheid, political debate between black and white communities
was banned, but in the factories, the labour unions (which were black) endlessly argued with white
management. Thus the labour industry marked the first spaces of ‘the struggle’ where people
could begin to address each other as equals, a measure of resistance. The saw tooth roof, as a
symbol of that debate celebrates the community from whence it came. The architects use a palette of
concrete blocks, steel and corrugated iron – (township materials often salvaged by people for use in

Figure 37 – Saw tooth roof and industrial aesthetic

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332 Ibid.
their own homes) and elegantly detail them to celebrate the ordinary. These material choices are significant; stylistically, the museum incorporates a language appropriate to its context utilising the inexpensive, readily-available and often architecturally-disregarded materials of the township in its construction. Corrugated steel, tin and concrete are used to generate a museum of its people, for its people. By integrating them into the institution, the materials are imbued with a dignity and elegance that legitimises them as a viable and meaningful architectural language. Furthermore, they assist in facilitating significant connections between the local population and the museum itself, so that rather than becoming an alien structure reminiscent of the museums of the Apartheid era, the building reflects the context of the Red Location. The architects have made certain to infuse these materials with grace and a fine level of detailing common to significant buildings of a civic nature. Thus concrete blocks, stainless steel, telegraph poles and other materials often utilised in township construction (because of the ease with which they can be procured) assume a validation of status as materials worthy of considered construction and as representatives of a communal and cultural aesthetic. As a result, the industrial quality of the museum’s exterior – the concrete brickwork and cheap materials - belies the careful consideration that has actually gone into the detailing of the building. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that the building transforms notions of the industrial into that of the civic. The concrete blocks, while a commonplace township material, are elevated through the rigour of their application, treated as if they were facing bricks (Figure 38). However, this approach is not without its own issues. The methodology of characterising certain materials appropriate for certain community groups dangerously follows attempts during Apartheid to confine specific cultural groups to a distinct aesthetic in a reductive manner. In seeking a localised context the building comes perilously close to characterising township architecture according to the materiality resulting from decades of poverty and subjugation. Be that as it may, the treatment of materiality in combination with reconsideration of how civic space may be used in personal ways contributes

Figure 258 – Public seating along exterior with pedestrian street

significantly to revised associations between the population and the people of the town.

The success of this method invites individual, personal interactions with the space, resulting in a physical connection that encourages a mental/emotional one. In so doing it portrays the narrative of the past on an individual level, making meaningful the intimate recollections and actions that each person may bring to bear on the site. Peggy Delport, a contributor to the District Six Museum, articulates the importance of creating a museum space that facilitates active memory: ‘The content of the museum is located not in what is seen but in what happens within the space. Once the museum stops being a live, generative space and becomes an object to be consumed, merely looked at and left behind untouched, its function as a living space will end.’ Delport suggests that true reconciliation must first occur at a grassroots level. This must be achieved by reaching beyond the more official commissions of enquiry that are confined to serious cases of abuses, to individual sense of hurt and harm. She suggests that museums should provide a vehicle for ‘individuals to experience a sense of recovery, return and resolve, and to move forward. For that one needs more to tap into their individual sense of identity and place.’

The economy of memory

In addition to conveying the specific narratives of the community through the museum, connections between local people and built form were facilitated during the museum’s construction. Teams of local workers were employed to construct the museum. To maximise the capacity for community revitalisation they were rotated on the job every three months, thereby learning the trade and earning money. This process allowed the act of creating the museum to become a physical embodiment of intertwining the past with the present. This corporeal and personal connection allowed the museum to facilitate a bridge between coming to terms with the past and taking ownership of it. The museum represents communal prosperity and wealth, as well the transmission of skills which hold the possibility of future employment, significant in a community blighted by poverty and a lack of education. The physical act of building the museum had positive economic ramifications, so that accordingly the act of addressing history assumes a positive, productive role in the present. Furthermore, by contributing physically to the construction of the museum, locals assumed a personal connection with it, a sense of belonging and ownership previously confined to the white population. Thus in most literal terms, the past, as embodied in the museum, reflects possibilities for the future. It proffers personal empowerment and community development previously lacking in South African memory space.

336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
Memory in this context is also employed to facilitate economy, but rather than generating an economy based on the consumption of the past, it is based on its production. Furthermore, this economy is based on the transmission of technology and skills to the community for the present. In this manner the Red Location museum allows for the act of reconciliation with the past to contribute to a more productive and prosperous present and future.

**Memory and the ‘twilight’**

The disruption of traditional notions of memory space occurs internally as well as externally. The museum presents a non-linear perspective of the past which creates new kinds of museum spaces that operate on the personal as well as the collective level and reflect both individual and shared narratives of the past. There is no processional narrative, no authoritative version of the past. Noero following from Huyssen writes, ‘We should move beyond the museum’s present role as a giver of canonical truth and cultural authority, duping its visitors as manipulated and reified cultural cattle.’

Thus, the primary space is a cavernous hall – shadowy and mysterious – filled with enormous corrugated steel boxes. The boxes are not arranged in any linear order; each one presents a different, sometimes contradictory, perspective on Apartheid. The hall is organised to encourage an exploration of the space – physically open and ideologically facilitating personal interpretation and reflection. The experience of visiting the museum is intended as one that is open ended and fluid, so that the narrative of the past can be understood in any number of ways. Lisa Findley postulates that Noero’s position here is in opposition to the linear model proposed by the Apartheid Museum. She suggests that choice and action are exemplars of spatial freedom and agency, these characteristics are deliberately employed in the museum. The museum physically honours the accomplishment of resistance through the creation of a civic space without restricted movement or control of the visitor. Findley argues that the essence of freedom is exemplified here by the spatial networks that present multiple perspectives. They occur within a democratised, undifferentiated space. This space is generated as a void, ‘a space of disquiet in which the complexities of the Apartheid world were simultaneously hidden and revealed at every turn.’ Alta Steenkamp further articulates an examination of the democratisation of space within the museum. She suggests that the Red Location operates as a meaningful vehicle for memory before it has contained any displays. She argues that the building presents a neutral container for ‘any’ and ‘every’body, due to the absence of figurative representations.

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339 Ibid, p.147
340 Similar comments were made of Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin.
The central space comprises memory boxes, giant enveloping cases that give a nod to traditional modes of display (Figure 39). Rather than glass, these boxes are clad in corrugated iron and filled with individual and personal accounts of the past. The memory boxes do not make the displays explicit; rather they contain information in a manner made private and valuable by its secrecy. They are based around the concept of the ‘memory box’—colourful, hand-painted trunks carried by migrant African labourers who would spend eleven months a year away from home. Precious possessions and tokens of home were housed in the boxes and used as a means to facilitate memory. The boxes, as artefacts of the lives of the workers, were highly prized totems of family and home. The boxes were personalised by decorations that denote diverse cultural and religious readings of life in South Africa. Their equivalent in the museum contain everyday items, voice-over stories and images and are poignant and poetic interpretations of a cultural and social icon.

The museological boxes themselves are 6m square in plan and 12m tall, poetic and impressive in scale and size. They create a deliberate sense of ‘unease and dislocation in the spatial and cultural readings of the museum.’ Each box tells a distinct story, some personal accounts supplemented with objects and images, some thematic, to lay claim to a unique and individual past. The boxes are not confined to any specific curatorial style and as a result can be constantly reinterpreted to accommodate shifting recollections. The result is a mosaic of the past, presenting differing perspectives and personal accounts of what has gone before.

The architects’ intention was to allow for the collective accounts to create a kaleidoscopic, multifarious and unique tale of Apartheid to emerge for each visitor.

Significantly, this museum does not demand stagnancy of the history it tells, nor does it expect the past to remain petrified in the minds and lives of the people it represents. Rather, it seeks to

343 Museum of Struggle, Red Location Cultural Precinct, Port Elizabeth in *Digest of South African Architecture 2005/2006*, p.012
344 Ibid.
345 Jo Noero, *Op cit*, p.191
acknowledge and celebrate the history of a diverse community. In so doing, it also facilitates the discovery of commonalities between people and their tales, allowing personal reflection and meaning to be drawn from the displays. Noero comments, 'People are asked to confront their own readings of race, class and equality in ways that will hopefully not satisfy the ghoulish need for voyeurism or the liberal instinct for absolution.' The transformation of an African social symbol of precious memory – the Memory Box – into a physical space that can be inhabited and understood on those terms assists in aligning the narrative of the past with personal recollection.

By tapping into the individual connection with the past, through the creation of multifarious perspectives, the museum elevates the personal to a civic status. In so doing it crosses the boundary between private and public, transferring personal accounts of the past into the grand narratives of Apartheid. Internally this has ramifications for the curatorial opportunities within the museum. The memory boxes allow for a personalised articulation of the past which operate episodically, much like the act of recollection. As memories themselves often emerge with no clear connection with other aspects of the past, so each box is free to display a unique and individual component of the past, a fragment which can be read in conjunction with the other displays to convey a mosaic of the past, or understood entirely on its own terms. Spatially, this is made manifest by the relationship of the memory boxes as moments within a larger, grander whole, articulating the personal within the grand narrative of the past. However, the physical expression of these boxes includes materials that are neither grand nor expensive. Through the use of the familiar such as corrugated steel, the everyday becomes a consummate part of the act of recollection. Thus the everyday, the personal and the domestic are drawn into the building at every turn, a deliberate move to express the validity of the personal and the individual in the narrative of the past. This approach seeks to make meaningful and accessible an architectural form that has traditionally been alien and impenetrable.

347 Jo Noero, Op cit, p.192
Both the Constitutional Court and the Red Location Museum utilise the notion of void as a spatial mechanism to denote openness and democracy. However, where the Constitutional Court invokes light as a means of conveying the spatiality of openness, the Red Location uses darkness. The internal space acts as a giant memory box – windowless and dusky. Lisa Findley suggests that the building ‘does not strive to affect our emotions or to construct a particular narrative. Instead, it has the abstract potential of emptiness - emptiness to be filled by imagination, experience, inhabitation and time.’ However, in its anti-hierarchical approach, its sobriety and its deliberate vagueness, the building does deliver a clear perspective on the past. It may not utilise the linear strategies of the Apartheid Museum, but it employs similarly immersive trope of the sublime. By disorienting and disconnecting the visitor and removing them from the temporal world, the memory space crafted by the Red Location Museum generates a deliberately experiential environment, one of powerful silence. In a manner similar to the Constitutional Court, it employs metaphor and an appropriation of African cultural practice as a mechanism for generating a spatial aesthetic. Where the court utilised ‘justice beneath a tree’ as a generative notion in which to ground memory space, the Red Location Museum is based on the traditional notion of the Memory Box. In so doing, both are seeking to create a locally-appropriate memory space - more authentic or culturally relevant - so that the visitor may connect with the past in an active and meaningful way.

**Belonging and context: making the civic personal**

In some respects, attempts at more relevant approach is the success of the Red Location Museum. It succeeds in incorporating a local aesthetic, one that is generated itself by traditional modes of creation and production. It is not a traditional African vocabulary in the usual sense, in that it is born out of urban spatial inhabitation and production rather than a nostalgic sense of historic appropriateness. Thus the building is relevant in that it draws directly from the contemporary visual urban environment. This is a context unique to the community of the Red Location. Thus, rather than seeking to valorise a traditional African modality (one which may no longer be relevant to an urban community), the architecture builds on the contemporary aesthetic which emerges from that cultural tradition but is arguably a modern iteration of traditional modes of spatial production.

In the creation of memory space, this is particularly significant. In order to situate memory space in the present – so that it operates as a successful mechanism for the expression of contemporary memory – the inclusion of contemporary visual cues and articulations seems singularly prescient. Their treatment, their validation as valuable modes of architectural production, can convey powerful messages about revised values in the making of civic space. Thus it seems that in order to create culturally relevant architecture, it is more useful to examine the contemporary state of being, rather than to privilege traditional modes of production in order to assuage centuries of uneven treatment and

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348 Ibid, p.150
disregard for African modes of production. Certainly an examination and inclusion of aspects of more traditional mechanisms of production can add depth and meaning to new forms emerging in South Africa, but these too should be based on validation of contemporary cultural manifestations of traditional modalities. The memory boxes, utilised in this museum to poetically and artfully remodel memory in museology, are based on much more than current articulations of a unique perspective of handling the past. This usage adds depth and relevance to a traditionally Eurocentric method of reflecting the past. The result is successful in proffering a solution to the creation of memory space that resituates traditional European icons such as a museum into a distinctly-urban South African realm. Furthermore, this presents a counterpoint to traditional modes of memory production, so that they may be re-examined. In this respect, the successes and failures of traditional museology can be understood in revised terms.

Summary

The Red Location Museum has sought to integrate civic narratives with personal recollection by spatial means. Externally, the building seeks a domestic relationship with the urbanscape around it, articulating a local viewpoint expressed on a civic scale. The largeness of the external form is broken down by articulations on the façade that encourage physical interaction with the site on a more personal scale. It is anticipated that the building’s exterior will provide a forum for daily interaction. This is facilitated by details such as the seats constructed from the exterior walls, and the open social spaces included in the design. The domestic scale of the detailing – as exemplified in the tying of the pillars that form the entrance canopy – also allows for the integration of civic and domestic.

Rather than identifying Apartheid as a contained entity to be packaged and displayed, this museum acknowledges the nebulous state of memory and celebrates its ongoing place within the society. It articulates the weightiness of the facts of the past and draws them into the present, allowing the effects of the past to manifest in the ‘twilight’ space articulated by Huyssen. In so doing, the museum allows for individual recollections and identifications of the past and facilitates unique narratives based on an oral tradition. Architecturally it also incorporates a sophisticated language creating refined modern spaces but grounded in a uniquely African identity. In this respect, technology allows for traditional materials and spaces to be reconceived in a specific modern context - post Apartheid South Africa.

By incorporating familiar building materials in the context of an unfamiliar typology and constructing a new type of museum – one which encourages personal interpretation and oral narratives – the Red Location Museum facilitates rediscovery of the nature of the museum and assists in establishing a personal connection between the local people and the museum that represents their past. It does not patronise the visitor, nor reduce the past to a formulaic experience, but rather allows for personal
reflection on the past and restores dignity to sites, materials and modes of constructing narratives that were formerly disregarded as second rate.
CONCLUSION

Whenever we are trying to recover a recollection, to call up some period in our history, we become conscious of an act of sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general, then, in a certain region of the past – a work of adjustment, something like the focussing of a camera . . . Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour, it tends to imitate perception. But it remains attached to the past by its deepest roots, as if, when once realised, it did not retain something of its original virtuality, if, being a present state, it were not also something which stands distinct from the present, we should never know it as memory.\footnote{Henri Bergson, quoted in Lisa Findley, \textit{Building Change: Architecture, Politics and Cultural Agency} (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p145.}

Memory exists in multiple forms, and architecture as a physical manifestation of memory offers a mechanism for making tangible some of the nebulous aspects of recollection. Memory space, that is officially sanctioned museums and memorials, is attempting to more adequately reflect this state. Contemporary environments that demand a more compelling version of history are challenging traditional approaches to the creation of memory space. In part, this reflects a desire for and expectation of the experiential as a primary mode of communication. In part, it stems from revised concepts of historical narratives and the construction of national identity, and in part, from the recognition that recollection and history-making do not exist as immutable entities. Thus while the search for intransience and solidity that typically accompanies memory space continues, there now exists an additional challenge for it to straddle both states – the permanent and the fluid - so that it may offer some continuity in a state of flux. In so doing, memory space may more accurately reflect the nature of recollection and address it accordingly. This investigation into museums and memorials presents an opportunity to explore how architecture assumes meaning, whether that meaning can be deliberately altered over time, and how such meaning can contribute to the production and maintenance of cultural and political norms

Post-Apartheid South Africa reveals emerging approaches to memory space due to the contemporariness of the debate about memory in that country, where the removal of Apartheid has had a direct and significant effect on many members of society. Because of a deliberately conciliatory policy for handling the past, a vested interest exists in how it is articulated, displayed, discussed and made manifest. The four case studies discussed here, the Voortrekker Monument, the Apartheid Museum, the Constitutional Court and the Red Location Museum, each reveal a differing attitude to representing the past as it is manifest through built form. Where the Voortrekker Monument highlights the difficulties of tackling existing sites of memory and seeking to resituate them in the national
psyche, the Apartheid Museum proffers a globalised account of the South African narrative. The Constitutional Court suggests a modality for reinhabiting sites of trauma in a way that integrates preservation with new construction. The Red Location Museum seeks to generate a distinctly South African type of memory space, specific to the context and community from whence it derives. While these examples do not present an exhaustive list of the approaches to memorialising by any means, they do reveal the multifarious perspectives, complexities and contradictions that emerge in the construction of memory space.

Part of the difficulty of creating revised narratives in the wake of regime change is determining the physical characteristics that embody the old regime, and how spatial production within the new regime might differentiate itself. South Africa highlights this issue because colonialism and Apartheid marginalised such a large proportion of the population – disregarding traditional modes of construction, local aesthetics and indigenous memory practice. As a result, almost all the residual memory spaces were designed with a single community in mind, detailing a single historical narrative. In a post Apartheid world, opportunities for redefining and resituating memory practice have emerged which demand a revised approach to memory practice and spatial production. This has resulted in a search for a new visual identity, one more grounded in the specificity of South Africa. Such an identity is also reliant on revised understanding of how memory operates within that society, which proffers the opportunity for reconfiguring traditional expectations of how memorials and museums may operate.

Memory space as a mechanism for the establishment of commonality has become an environment intended to facilitate reconciliation through the revelation of shared experiences, and the production of a collective position on the past. As a result, divergent recollections are encouraged, as long as they contribute to a similar understanding of the revised metanarrative of the country. The heritage industry is seeking to establish itself as a place of inclusion and equality, and to distance itself from the Apartheid government’s divisive and exclusionary approach. The results are evidenced in the various forms of memory space that have emerged in South Africa: the experiential as demonstrated in the Apartheid Museum, the socially integrated as shown in the Constitutional Court, and the community-oriented and personally-reflective, as in the Red Location Museum. Acknowledgment of the past has been considered vital in reducing the possibility of violent retribution in South Africa and has been considered key in the facilitation of reconciliation. Thus on a broader national scale, memory space has been charged with the responsibility of highlighting commonality and reflecting a ‘truer’ version of the past than previously exemplified by the Apartheid Government. This attitude is shown in the Constitutional Court, where the seat of democratic South Africa occupies a site of previous trauma and discord. In so doing, the government has delivered a clear statement on their attitude to the past and provided a modality for addressing existing trauma in the both city and the nation. Furthermore, partially motivated by political expediency and by an acknowledgement that memory can be a very powerful medium for determining attitudes to the past, the present and the future, South Africa is
attempting to place memory at the forefront of contemporary discussion. This close and considered approach to memory practice allows for insight into how memory space may operate in society in more general terms and highlights some of the new expectations that are emerging around the production and creation of such places.

The character of memory

As architecture has the capacity to shape the nature of memory, approaches to the creation of memory space are very specific. Memory is two pronged, existing both in the form of personal recollection and in (often constructed) collective memory. The personalisation of memory exerts a significant impact on individual relationships with space. Conventional memory space may disregard the individual in favour of the generic or more acceptable collective memory, presenting a definitive and exclusionary version of the past. Such approaches are challenged by contemporary memory spaces such as the Red Location Museum that attempt to validate the personal, both through the nature of the displays and the experience of visiting the museum. Collective memory is powerful as a mechanism for reconstructing historical narratives and notions of national identity that accompany them. It promulgates national identity operating as a mechanism for facilitating collective recollection. The Voortrekker Monument is a case in point. Attempts to reposition the collective memory, and thereby the monument’s meaning (entirely constructed) are notably fraught. In this regard collective memory serves as a means of creating identity, which can be manipulated for politically expedient aims. Politics may also determine who is consulted in the establishment of new memorial environments and who considered the primary victims, who the perpetrators and who the bystanders. Where the Voortrekker Monument employed figurative forms to identify the victors, the villains and the heroes, the Red Location Museum honours the past as a triumph of resistance. It does through the characterisation of the museum itself as a positive entity in the community and through the celebratory tone of the displays. Rationalisation of the roles of the past have a direct impact on how events are depicted within the space which in turn impacts on how the space is initially conceived and created.

South Africa is endeavouring to create a new aesthetic for memory space, one meaningful to the previously disenfranchised communities and in so doing to acknowledge collective memory. This aesthetic must navigate between the readily-achieved patronage of ‘indigenous’ design, the superficial interpretations of visual history that present a literal interpretation of the past and the neutrality of an internationalised contemporary visual aesthetic. The desire to create a new, distinctly South African voice is grounded in both the local and global. South Africa seeks to position itself within the international context as global entity, while refining its local identity as unique African nation. Concepts of the local are grounded in the specificity of place (site and context), culture and history. Gerhard Moerdyk, the architect of the Voortrekker Monument, incorporated overt symbolic representations of Africa, for example wildebeest and zigzag motifs, in an attempt to marry his interpretation of
international modernism with a distinct African context. Furthermore, he sought deliberate comparisons between the monument and other great monumental buildings, seeking to align the specificity of the Voortrekker Monument with the global. Contemporary South Africa is in search of a more accurate self-image reflected in the manifestation of memory space. In attempting to reflect the local, the Constitutional Court incorporates the notion of justice under a tree to assist in redefining the spatial attributes of a local architecture. This is used as a mechanism to generate a form of democratised space which denotes equality. In many respects, this articulates the antithesis of the hierarchical approach employed by Moerdyk, seeking instead to facilitate the even-handedness of the new South African government. These concepts are also incorporated by the Red Location Museum. Here memory boxes, are employed as generative design objects. The architects have assimilated traditionally African notions of memory into contemporary expressions of space. Furthermore, the deliberately nonlinear methodology of display assists in presenting another notion of democratised space, one which allows freedom of movement and validates multiple perspectives on the past.

**Personalisation of the past**

Acknowledgment of individual recollection and valorisation of personal accounts of the past contributes to the specificity of how memory space may operate in South Africa. This occurs not only in the form of validation of personal recollection of the past, but also in the facilitation of a personal connection with the events of the past through the experience of visiting the museum. Emerging museums and memorials seek to affect the visitor on a personal level, allowing an independent connection with the past. The Apartheid Museum personalises the experience of visiting the museum by assigning ‘black’ and ‘white’ identities and by simulating experiences of Apartheid. In this manner each visitor may develop a personal account of the past. While this approach succeeds in making ‘real’ a sense of the past, the experience itself is not a real experience of history, but merely a constructed version of the past. In some ways, this can result in the production of memory based on the experience of visiting the museum or memorial, rather than a recollection of the past itself. While each individual has a personal encounter with Apartheid, it is a visceral experience carefully controlled according to the prevailing narrative of the past. In this respect personal memory colludes with collective recollection to maintain the status quo. In a less didactic manner the Red Location Museum disrupts the civic nature of the museum to encourage a private interaction with the space. In grounding the memory space firmly in the local, it allows for the integration of the activities of the day to day with recollections of the past. Internally, personal ruminations are encouraged by the cavernous space of the interior, and personal accounts are enabled by the memory box mode of display. Both museums highlight a desire to make relevant a historical narrative and to facilitate a means of connection between the visitor and the past. They integrate a corporeal, immersive experience into the realm of personal experience.
All of these methodologies are based on the presupposition that architecture has the capacity to impact social change and to effect the perceptions and attitudes of people. In so doing, they reveal the extent to which built form, at the centre of debate and contestation, cannot be relegated to the past. This notion allows architecture to assume a social significance and power, which acknowledges its role as witness. Site and built form exist as ‘traumascapes’, testimony to the past. Their physical form is imbued with historical resonance, marking sites as memorials, or making them difficult to reinhabit. While the latter is tacitly acknowledged through the removal and eradication of such sites, attempts at reoccupation are potentially fraught. In this respect built form becomes a physical manifestation of the events of the past - the realities enacted in space become part of the very bricks of the structure.

The production of meaning

It becomes apparent that the meaning attributed to memory space is reliant on human experience. In fact, the case studies demonstrate that associations between built form and recollection can be developed through physical interaction which facilitates personal connection. Thus the character if the memory space has the capacity to shape the character of the memory. Memory space is deliberately conceived to instill the historical narrative with a specific meaning, one which reiterates the rubric of the Rainbow Nation. The Apartheid Museum uses space as a means to contain the narrative invoking spatial metaphors, light and dark and materiality to convey a didactic message. This linear approach to historicising is countered in the Constitutional Court which emerges triumphant – a phoenix from the ashes. The Constitutional Court presents a hybridised spatial narrative, one that irrevocably binds the present and the future to the past. It also employs a metaphoric approach, so that materiality and (in)formal structure are engaged to show difference, to distinguish the old from the new, and to reveal new as old. The spatiality of openness and light is invoked to articulate a hopeful message for the future, one embedded in the dark brutality of the retained buildings. The Red Location Museum positions the past as a generative object for the future. Spatially, it characterises the past as an entity from which the community grows strength. It contains the narrative but seeks to integrate it into the everyday through the production of community-oriented memory space. This assists to disintegrate formal articulations of the past through an assimilated museum precinct.

Furthermore meaning is attributed to architectural form through an interaction between body and space that renders it legible. The corporeal relationship between body and building makes manifest the reality of the narrative conveyed through the architecture. The physical enactments associated with the creation of memory space or generated by the act of visiting it produces meaning. This concept was utilised by the Afrikaner community to generate a memorial which denoted their entitlement - their divine right - to the land of South Africa. Through the physical enactment of a narrative, the Afrikaner community sought to instill meaning into the site, form and construction of the Voortrekker Monument. The re-enactment of the Great Trek, with its culmination at the stone stetting
of the Monument, infused its site with historical significance fabricated out of a real event - one that bore no physical relationship to the site itself. In this manner, theatrical production assists in generating value for a site of no historical import, imbedding the architectural form with meaning according to the communal desire. The community in question ensured that, as a manifestation of the their ideology, the building became synonymous with the Afrikaner nation and with what that community came to represent, namely Apartheid. The post Apartheid government has chosen to retain this memorial, (and many others) and is seeking to resituate its narrative into the revised character of the Rainbow Nation. Arguably, under the guise of creating an open metanarrative, South Africa runs the risk of rewriting history, reconfiguring aspects of the past so that they fit more comfortably with notions of reconciliation and commonality. To counter the potency of the Voortrekker Monument, they have produced Freedom Park. This present a contesting narrative that physically and ideologically opposes the monument, a tangible manifestation of the shift in attitude and governorship.

The creation of Freedom Park acknowledges long held notions of the permanence of built form as a manifestation of memory or as a vehicle for conveying specific narratives of national identity. This reality is also evidenced by sites of trauma or iconic sites of the Apartheid regime that permeate the urban landscape. Apart from physically demolishing sites, there are very few ways to expunge meaning attributed to space, especially when that meaning has been deliberately and consistently reiterated. As revealed in the discussion of the Voortrekker Monument, attempts to resituate meaning have the potential to elide aspects of the common history in favour of politically-expedient messages.

One approach to addressing this reality is demonstrated by the Constitutional Court which dismantles the existing and constructs it into a new form, effectively desanctifying the original building brick by brick. This act in itself became a production of revised meaning, a theatrical revision of existing built form. In a manner similar to the Voortrekker Monument, meaning is accorded to the structure through the corporeal act of reconstitution. The architects for the Constitutional Court did not need to reuse the bricks of the demolished Awaiting Trial Block. They did so for their symbolic and visual value. The cannibalisation of the site and its reconstruction into a space of justice is a deliberate enactment of the transmission of power. This enactment suggests that architecture can be deliberately invested with meaning through the theatricality of its production. Ownership of such aesthetics are further compromised by the propensity of white architects over black which as a result most spatial productions are produced from a white perspective despite attempts to the contrary. This is not to say that white South African architects have no entitlement to contribute to revised visual narratives, but rather that their role as (virtually) sole creators continues to lend a bias to modes of spatial production.

By association, the material palette provides a comment on the narrative told within. The use of brick and marble in the Voortrekker Monument aligns it with the international grandeur of traditionally civic buildings, implying an irrefutable permanence, value and import. The Apartheid Museum uses
concrete, wire and steel to articulate an austere, uncomfortable perspective of the past which allows the building to reflect a more contemporary style. This palette reflects a more global aesthetic of cleanliness and rectilinear forms – assisting in the internationalisation of the museum. Used in metaphoric ways, materials can situate the architecture in a local context. The Constitutional Court and Red Location Museum are deliberate in their use of materials produced by local artisans and generated by revised concepts of local context. The inclusion of ‘informal’ materials assists in a deliberate inversion of notions of the civic, so that new memory space can be reconfigured for the new South Africa. In acknowledgement of the exclusionary nature of original memory space, its dismissive approach to indigenous culture and its disregard for the individual, the Constitutional Court and Red Location Museum attempt to procure an entirely new form of memory space. In contrast, the Apartheid Museum seeks to situate the specificity of the Apartheid narrative amongst the global. It does so in recognition of the value that international tourism may bring to South Africa, while identifying a desire for external validation of the Apartheid narrative, and of South Africa’s place in the world. The Apartheid Museum’s connection with the Holocaust Museum of Washington DC aligns the horrors of Apartheid with the Holocaust, an international narrative of trauma. The globalising of Apartheid as it is conveyed in the museum occurs through the use of an international aesthetic, both in terms of the visual style of the building and in terms of the mode of historical production. This is evidenced through the experiential nature of the display which simulates the realities of Apartheid through space, light, sound, display and materials. The honesty of this narrative is disrupted in numerous ways. Through the integration of actual artefact and symbolic object and the overlapping of archive and reconstruction, the museum produces an artificial environment that conveys the history of Apartheid. While this mode of production clearly has a place in contemporary society as it articulates the brutalities of the regime in a forcefully visceral manner, the inauthenticity of the display - despite its factual basis - is potentially misleading. Furthermore, the Apartheid Museum’s positioning adjacent to the theme park Gold Reef City ensures a symbiotic relationship between that site and the museum itself. The existence of the theme park gave rise to the establishment of the museum in the first place, but in so doing slides the museum into the realm of tourist park, which potentially undermines the impartiality of the museum. Thus entering the space catapults the visitor from the local to the global and the site becomes strangely dislocated into the realm of the hyperreal.

Although apparently different in approach, the power of a visceral, emotive environment is not entirely disregarded by the other modes of generating memory space. The Red Location Museum in particular seeks to generate a memory space which invokes a sense of ‘twilight’ in literal and figurative sense. In so doing, the visitor is removed from the real world in deliberate ways. In a manner similar to the Apartheid Museum, the Red Location Museum severs the visitor from the external world by positioning them within a windowless box. As the Apartheid Museum disorients the visitor through the linear maze of the display that winds in upon itself, so the Red Location Museum presents a series of undistinguishable memory boxes within a giant open space, with no visual markers for navigation and
orientation. Just as the Apartheid Museum attempts to utilise built form to affect the visitor viscerally, so the Red Location Museum seeks to discomfort and disorient. Thus despite appearing antithetical, the two museums share many techniques to artfully convey their perception of the past to both an international and a local audience. Similarly, both museums are imbued with carefully considered detailing, highly designed display mechanisms and a deliberate approach to materiality. This correlation suggests the importance of immersive environments in the production of memory and reveals the extent to which architectural form relies on deliberately conceived spatiality to convey emotive aspects of the past. In this regard, memory space is used to generate emotion and to overwhelm the visitor so that the experience of visiting the space becomes a resonant one, redolent with emotive charge.

What becomes evident through the course of this discussion is the significant role that memory space plays in construction of the local identity and its capacity to shape contemporary notions of the past. Specificity of place colludes with unique recollection to invest the space with meaning. The case studies presented here are revealing. They suggest that architecture is a powerful tool in the construction of national narratives for space has the power to inform both individual and collective perspectives on the past. This contributes to notions of national identity which in turn can affect both individuals and communities relationship with one another. The examples of memory space discussed here reveal how spatial design and architectural form can convey policy and assist in the construction and revision of existing narratives. The complexity of the status quo is artfully expressed by Mpethi Morojele:

The cyclical nature of time and progression is now being interrupted by architecture - as permanent built form - and the ascendancy of material culture. With such a context the contemporary African personality is simultaneously emergent and residual, existing within a virtual collapse of space and time . . . The quest for an African identity through an architecture that is new and distinct is complicated by an outward-looking approach: we are advanced as the rest . . . with the exclusive need to pronounce and maintain the integrity of our distinctiveness. For, while the emergent personality is aspirational and individuated the residual is conserve-active and bound by the imperatives of social cohesion.  

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