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“talkspace

among infill and void

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to my loved ones

abstract

The following dissertation will consider the contemporary education of natural languages and explore its influences on designed space in an urban environment. The concept of weaving cultures together by using languages will be investigated in order to produce an architectural intervention of amalgamated infill and voids.

The structure of natural languages and methods of learning a new language will be used as a departure point to propose a public facility on the University of Pretoria's main campus. This facility will fit into a network of public gathering spaces proposed in the area, and will be in the form of an interactive learning and information space that will provide the users with an opportunity to engage in intercultural cross pollination in various languages. The architecture of the language learning centre will encourage individuality, freedom of thought and expression, and exposure to creative ideas.

The site was selected for its ability to enable the opportunity for social interaction and design exploration, and it is significantly located at a point where two major urban grid patterns touch each other.

The proposed design celebrates this concept of convergence in which voids between cultures are filled with understanding. The success of the proposed project will depend on the ability of the language learning centre to integrate with the urban fabric and most importantly, facilitate the education of language, communication and cultural interaction.

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prologue

"To be free is not merely
to cast off one's chains
but to live in a way that respects
and enhances the freedom of others." (1)

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela a leader

On a visit to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg in early November 2007, the author read the quotation on the wall that welcomes the visitor into the compound of the museum. A desolate space that does not really 'welcome' the visitor, but rather an emotional reflecting space, where the words of Mandela echo through the voids and among the five principles of the constitution.

Moving through the space the author questions what lies between these voids, what exists within these grey desolate spaces? Perhaps it is only the memory of the past. But with that distant memory, valuable knowledge has been gained and now the opportunity presents itself for the nation to rebuild itself and look to the future.

0.03

Still, the existence of a void between the informed and the ignorant hinders the progression of unity within the population. This void can be identified as a communication void between individuals in society: If South Africa has 11 official languages, but only 23.8% (2) of the population speaks the mostly spoken language which is isiZulu, there is by no doubt an existence of this communication void.

Perhaps the void then between ignorant and informed needs to be filled by the learning of different cultural languages. So, in order to fill these social voids, there is a universal paradigm needed to bridge the past and design the future. Only then there would be what Mr Mandela talks about – living a lifestyle, in which democracy, reconciliation, equality, diversity and responsibility are celebrated, and people have respect for one another, only then one would truly be free…

0.02

Resources: (1) Mandela,N. 2000. *Long Walk to Freedom.* p.632.
(2) Census 2001. www.statssa.gov.za

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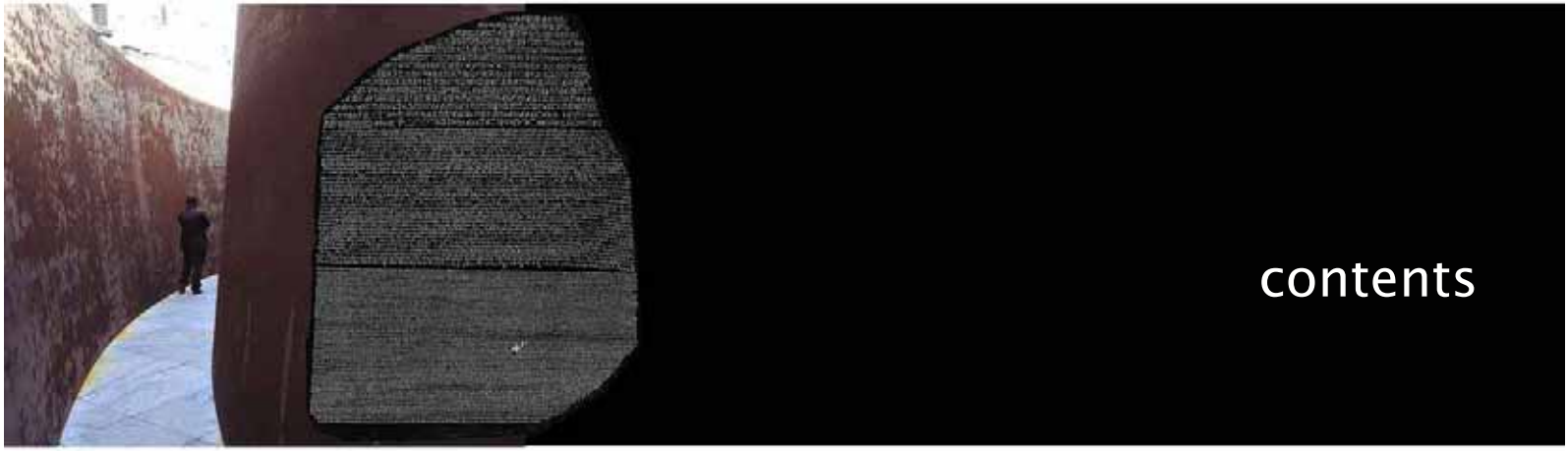

contents

00 list of illustrations

All illustrations by author unless otherwise specified.