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**Islamic Social Centre : An Islamic Architecture Based on Social-Value Expressed in the Prophetic Tradition**

Design Research Project APG5058S

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Architecture (Professional)

by

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

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## Introduction

The influential role Islam as a religion has on its architecture has not been a recent interest of mine, but as a born Muslim, it has always been an area of research I wished to explore. The content of this paper is therefore not based only on theoretical research done, but also on a personal religious belief system. As the *Quran* and *Hadith* (prophetic tradition) plays an integral role in the life of a Muslim, the architecture we inhabit is a vital element in achieving an environment conducive to the practice of an Islamic lifestyle. As it is understood that Islam is a 'way of life', the intention of my research was not aimed at the design proposal of a religious institution such as the Mosque, but rather the idea of an Islamic Social Centre. The purpose of such a centre would not only be to serve the Muslim community, but also to engage the broader Muslim and non-Muslim community in creating a platform for the exchange of knowledge under the banner of Islam.

The number of Muslims in South Africa, according to a recent survey, is approximately two million people, (MJC: 2005). Although it is not easy in a South African society, most of these Muslims adhere to a strict Islamic lifestyle. Given that leisure and recreation is a human necessity, South African Muslims are faced with a challenge. The challenge arises in the fact that current places of leisure or social activity do not cater for Muslims' needs, governed by Islamic Law. An example of this need would be the separation of the sexes in order to create an acceptable Islamic environment that would cater for religiously orientated activities. The requirement is thus for a place that would facilitate the needs of the contemporary Muslim while adhering to the conditions set out by Islamic Law.

The preceding research documents involved the study of Islam in relation to the spatial implications it has on the lifestyle of a Muslim. This document shall clarify the impact Islam has on the design of the building by explaining its architectural relevance to the design thesis. The criteria that the design of the building will be checked against is the *Quran* and *Hadith* while making sure that the two sources do not contradict, which if be the case, the *Quran* shall take precedence. While the intention is not to design a Mosque, it is important to note that a Mosque should form part of the facility I propose in the design thesis, as it is integral in creating an Islamic environment.



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## 1. The Urban Scale

Islam is a religion that requires from a Muslim not only a belief in God but also the performance of the associated religious practices. Through the practice of religious rituals such as the daily prayer, Islam has produced a system of culture that benefits both the individual and society. Although the religion does not prescribe architectural form, the daily practices and Islamic behaviour required by Muslims creates social patterns which inform the shape of not only the Muslim house but also the Muslim city. Islam promotes a close family life and moral code of conduct for Muslims. This moral code of conduct was revealed in the Quran, and was exemplified in the practices of the Prophet (pbuh) together with his companions.

A significant social implication of Islam was the fact that because the religious practices were formalised and lifestyle was structured, there was no need for formal institutions such as administrative structures that developed in European cities. The absence of civic institutions in Islamic cities meant that social harmony and human interaction needed to be increased. The set of implied rules set out by the Quran and Sunnah were understood and accepted by everyone which allowed the society to have a self-sustained steadiness. This meant that the physical appearance of the city was absent in monumental administrative buildings such as city halls or the related formal spaces, as the role of most institutional functions were played by the Mosque. Although being a major religious building, it remained integrated into the urban fabric of the city with no intention to express its authority (Bianca, 2000, p 36). The result of this form of 'planning' is the close-knit city made up of private and public courtyards which not only allows for independent functioning of buildings but also creates an urban cellular-like pattern.



Figure 1 - Aerial views of the City of Fez, Morocco

As a result of the internal control and the lack of formal institutions, most traditional Islamic cities followed a natural or organic growth pattern, which meant that resulting buildings such as houses, mosques and other public facilities combined to form a homogenous structure (Fig. 14). Buildings were not conceived as detached objects but were shaped according to social needs, responding to enclosed activities. This means individual houses functioned independently of the neighbour and the street, but at the same time contributed to the architectural make up of the city. Traditionally, the religious building of the mosque was integrated into the social life and built fabric of the city serving its civic function. However, the private home was to an extent seen as sacred, which spread itself throughout the urban fabric of the city creating a cellular-like structure. This sacredness of the Muslim house was seen as an extension of the mosque, as prayer was not only to be performed in the mosque but was also encouraged to be performed at home. The Prophet is reported to have said; *"Pray in your houses, and do not make them graveyards."* (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol.2, No.280). The houses in traditional Islamic cities were closely knit together to form internally-focussed units which protected against visual intrusion from the outside street, which resulted in the street network of the city being reduced to a minimum, serving only as connections between central markets, private realms and also the main city gates. (Bianca, 2000, p 39)

When Mawlay Idris decided to build the city of Fez in Morocco, after sketching the plan of the city and before construction got underway, he recited the following prayer:

*"O my Lord! You know that I do not intend by building this city to gain pride or to show off; nor do I intend hypocrisy, or reputation, or arrogance. But I want You to be worshipped in it, Your laws, limits and the principles of Your Qur'an and the guidance of Your Prophet to be upheld in it, as long as this world exists. Almighty, help its dwellers to do righteousness and guide them to fulfil that. Almighty, prevent them from the evil of their enemies, bestow Your bounties upon them and protect them from the sword of evil. You are able to do all things."* (Burckhardt, 1992, p 64)

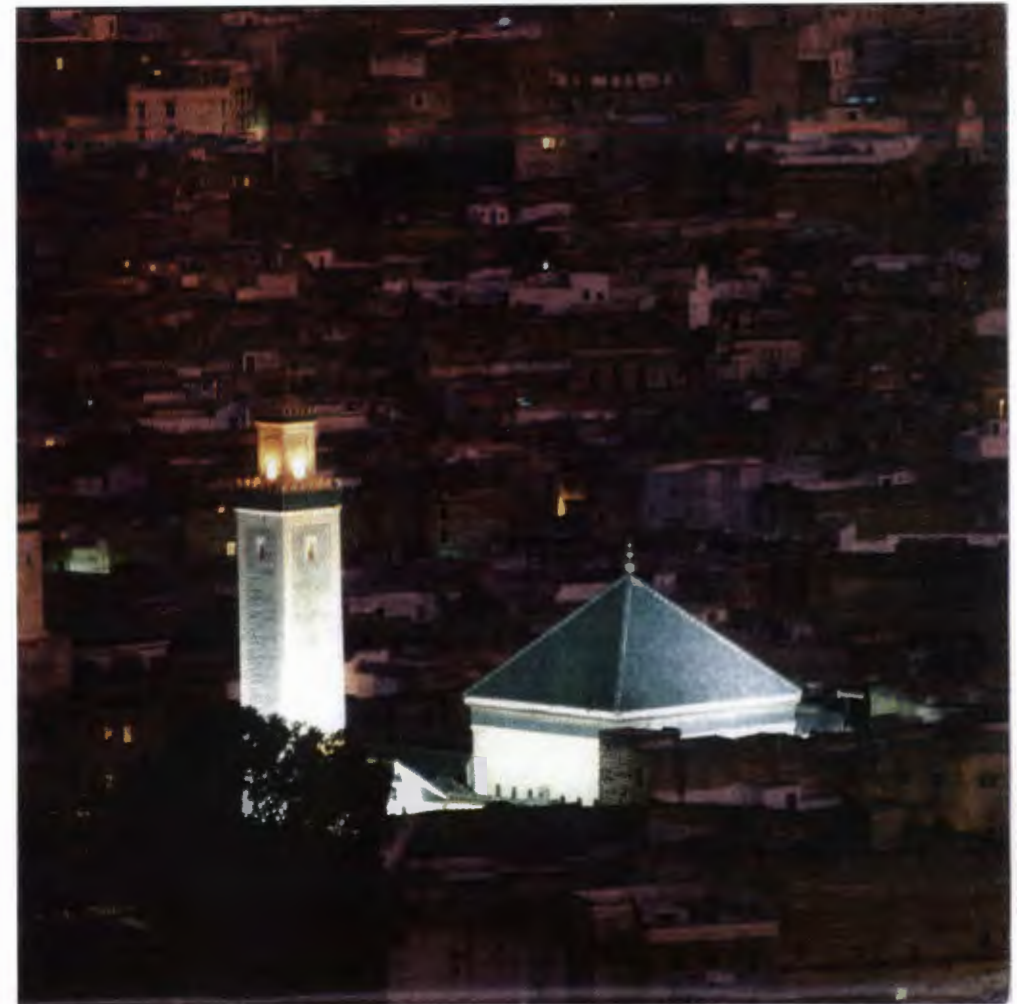


Figure 2 - Qarawiyyin Mosque and University, Fez

## 2. The Building Scale

### 2.1 Space, Gender and Privacy

The issue of privacy was always a concern in the design of the Muslim house. The house was protected from outside views, as that was seen as an intrusion into the private life of the family unit. This concern for privacy can be seen in the physical forms of the traditional Muslim house in the making of windows, the placement of doors and also the limit on heights of buildings. The Muslim house and the design of its spaces differ according to its location, but the theme of privacy remains constant. The house was seen as a sanctuary for its women, protecting them from public view and interaction with strangers, as revealed in the Quran:

*"O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet's (pbuh) houses, unless permission is given to you for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for preparation. But when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken your meal, disperse without sitting for a talk. Verily, such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet, and he is shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of (telling you) the truth. And when you ask (his wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen: that is purer for your hearts and for their hearts..."*

(Al-Quran, Al-Ahzab: Verse 53)



Figure 3 - A scene showing the narrow pedestrian streets in Makkah. The facades of the houses are screened preventing visual intrusion.

Islamic architecture with its often use of the screen or mashrabiya has given it the term 'architecture of the veil'. The veil in this sense symbolizes modesty, femininity, privacy and religion, as an extension of the headscarf worn by Muslim females. These timber screens apart from being natural ventilation tools, are used to separate males and females in certain areas, but also forms an important element in the division of 'inside and outside', 'public and private', as well as 'light and dark'. The play on light creates shadowed areas within the building which brings about a well received intimacy. More so, it shows the role women in Islam have in the preservation of the home, while men have their duties in the public realm. This separation can also be seen in sacred space such as the Mosque, whereby males occupy the front and females the rear of the mosque which essentially creates a spatial order. The Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said, *"The best of rows for men are in the front and the worst at the back; and the best of rows for women are at the back and the worst in the front"*. (Siddiqi: Vol.1, pg.279)

Although very different, both women and men alike have their respectable roles to play in society. Because the design of gendered space is not prescribed or fixed, the position of women in Islam is continuously shifting. Contemporary Mosques are questioning the dynamics of space recommended by the Prophet (pbuh) and in some cases removing the physical division between the sexes, while in other cases the split occur lengthwise allowing men and women to pray side-by-side. It is not surprising however that women are objecting to these radical adjustments as they feel it to be an intrusion to their personal and intimate space.



Figure 4 - Section and elevation of mashrabiya, Makkah.

## 2.2 The Courtyard and its Evolution

The design of the Muslim house plays an important role in the lifestyle of a Muslim. It is not only the social aspects of Muslim living that are affected by its design, but also the way the building and its inhabitants interact with nature. In traditional Islamic architecture, buildings remained connected with the outside space by an open internal courtyard, a form apparent in all forms of Islamic architecture. The need for privacy was one of the main reasons for the design of the courtyard, as it played a vital role in focussing the family's social interactions. It was essentially a flexible, multi-purpose space that served both the living and dining needs, and also functioned as an area for social activity, while maintaining privacy from the outside street.

The courtyard also emphasized the importance of the inward as opposed to the outward appearance of oneself. For this reason many buildings are enclosed with blank walls with its aesthetic beauty only being experienced internally. As with the case of Mosques, spaces function along axes (facing Makkah) different as to what is perceived from the outside.



Figure 5 - Shaded courtyard of Mamluk house in Cairo. (above)

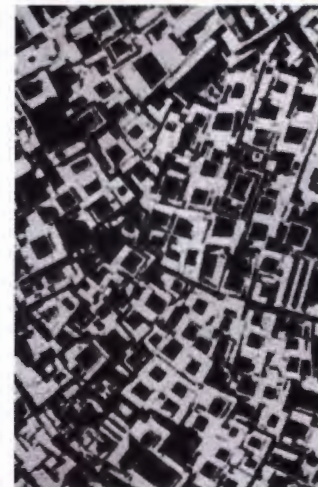


Figure 6 - Aerial view of Marrakech, Morocco showing the vast amounts of courtyards and its effect on the make up of the city. (left)

The Hadith like Islam, does not prescribe physical form for architecture, but rather brings forth the social value needed in all forms of architecture. However, the ahadith do inform social behaviour which shapes physical form. The apparent courtyard spaces found within all forms of Islamic architecture is one such space that can be attributed to the following hadith;

When Umar rebuilt and extended the Prophet's Mosque, he made a public square outside the Mosque which was known as Al-Butaiha', and he said about it: *"Whoever wishes to make a noise, or raise his voice, or recite poetry, let him go out to it."*  
 (Mubarakpuri, 2002, p 11)

In another narration, Malik said: *'Umar made a courtyard, called the Butaiha', on one side of the mosque, and said, "Whoever intends to talk loudly or recite poems or raise his voice, let him go to this courtyard."*  
 (Mishkat Al-Masabih, Vol. 4, Book 7)

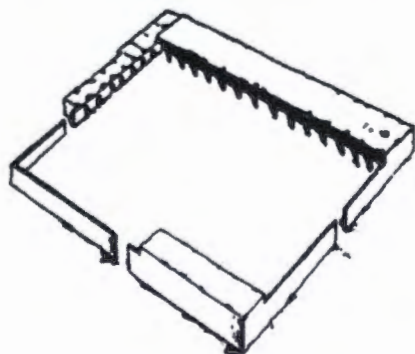
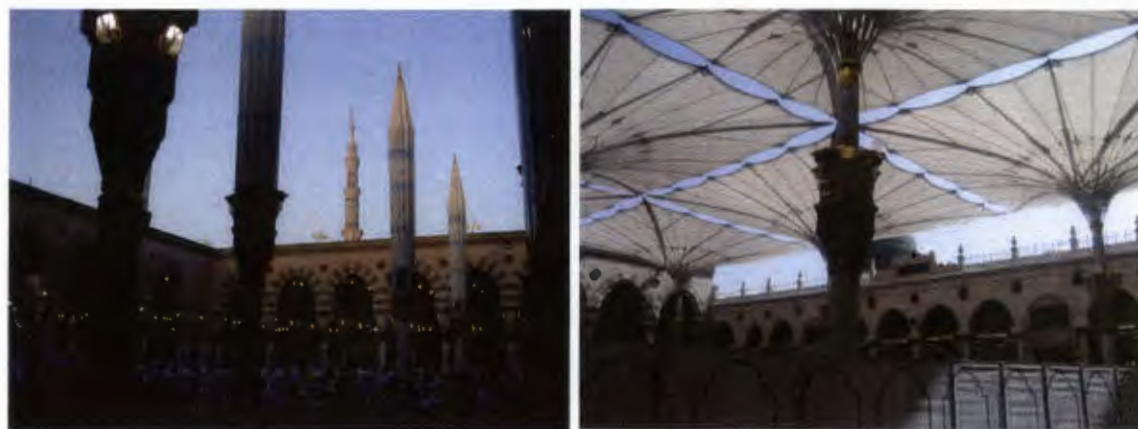


Figure 7 - Illustration of the Prophet's Mosque before renovation.

The courtyard of the Prophet's mosque was a multi-purpose space that served as an area for recreational activities as well as for special ceremonies such as weddings in the community. It provided a facility in which members of the community could interact within an enclosed environment. This single form, the courtyard, was a vital architectural element in the establishment of the mosque as the centre of the community.

In his book entitled *The Mosque as a Community Development Centre*, Mohamad Tajuddin Rasdi describes the simplicity of the Prophet's Mosque, 'It had nine small apartments on one side for his wives and three entrances into the courtyard grounds. There were two covered parts of which the smaller one was used by the Ahl-Suffa or his companions who were either homeless or those who had come to learn Islam directly from him. There is no evidence that the larger covered portion being used exclusively as a prayer space or that it was considered as a kind of sanctuary. The various religious and secular activities had occurred both in the courtyard and in the covered portion.' (Rasdi, p 12)



Figures 8 and 9 - The courtyard of the Prophet's Mosque as it exists today with its umbrella-like roof structure.

In the contemporary context, the Mosque courtyard serves many functions. Because the discussion of worldly affairs is prohibited from taking place within the sacred area of the Mosque, the courtyard serves as a transition space between the confinements of the Mosque and the outside world. It is in the courtyard area where people gather after prayers to socialise, and more importantly serves as an extension of the Mosque which caters for larger crowds on Friday prayers or less formal community gatherings. Both in the home and the Mosque, the courtyard thus serves the social function of providing an internal space with an outdoor environment yet providing an enclosed privacy.

The Mosque courtyard also serves as a transition area between the ablution area and the prayer area. Before one enters a Mosque, one has to remove the shoes and perform a spiritual and physical cleansing or ritual ablution. This ritual Muslims undertake before prayer is a command from God in which He says; *"Believers, when you get ready for prayer, then wash your faces and arms to your elbows, wipe your heads, and wash your feet to your ankles..."*.  
(Quran Ch. 5: Verse 6)

Because of this command, the design of Mosques has incorporated water systems in its architecture. These ablution areas were incorporated into the courtyard but over time have developed into a separate and distinct area as in the case with local Mosques. These ablution areas do however link themselves to the prayer area as well as the courtyard area. While water systems served the functional purpose of ablution in some Mosques, together with greenery it served a spiritual and symbolic purpose; water is seen a purifying element and together with lush gardens intend to serve as a representation of paradise. Although serving the informal purpose of social activity, these gardens were often formally planned and had strong geometry and symmetry.



Figures 10 and 11 - Covered courtyard area of Masjid-ul-Quds, Gatesville, Athlone. (above)



Figures 12 and 13 - Ablution and courtyard linked to prayer area of Masjid-ul-Quds, Gatesville.

### 2.3 Islam and the use of Visual Art In Architecture

Islamic art encompasses a variety of forms and mediums of which architecture is but one. Nevertheless, Arabic graphics and calligraphy have played a role in both symbol and aesthetic related to Islamic architecture. This visual art is distinct in the Quran's text and the shaping of its letters, which has been used as a decorative element in all forms of design. The use of strong geometry is also a distinct design element. As it is prohibited to use animate art such as animals and human forms in Islamic art, the geometries were used to symbolise a Muslim's purpose on earth and the journey to paradise.

Although the above is distinctive in many forms of 'Islamic' architecture, an important fact often overlooked is that Islam promotes the idea of humility in all forms of building. It is unfortunate when one thinks of the majestic Mosques found all over the world in cities in which Muslims live. Wealthy rulers and communities felt the need to lavishly decorate sacred space even though it went against the teachings of the Prophet (pbuh).



Figure 14 - The distinct floral motifs used as decoration both internally and externally.

### 2.4 The Arch in Islamic Architecture

Because of its structural suitability, arches were used to create openings in load-bearing walls. Being used at a time when knowledge and implementation of construction techniques were limited, the Islamic arch developed having a different aesthetic across varying regions.

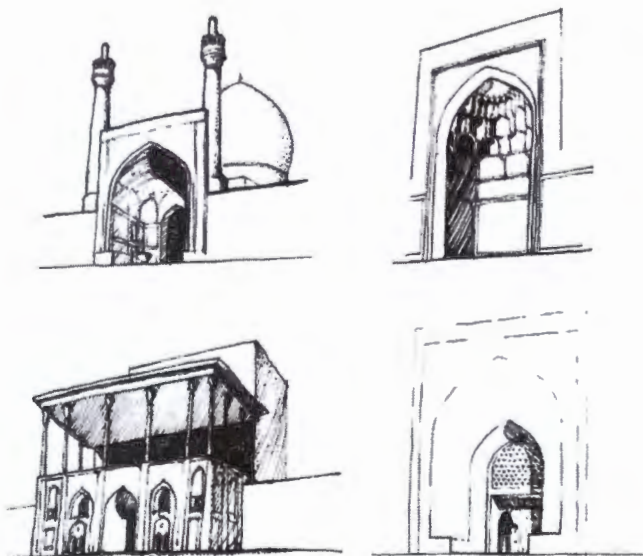
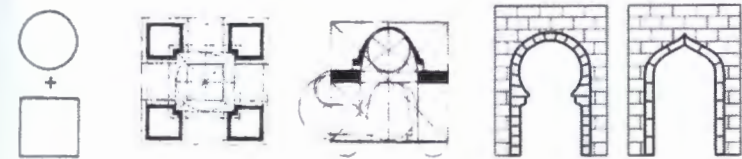


Figure 15 - Illustrating the development of the Islamic Arch.

These arches are still used today within the local context, both for its structural ability as well as for its aesthetic appeal.



Figures 16, 17 and 18 - The Castletown Road Mosque with its simple use of the Arch.



Figure 19 - The more grand use of the Arch at Masjid-ul-Quds, Gatesville.

### 3. Architectural Place-Making in Islam

The Quran serves as the primary source of guidance for Muslims. The Quran essentially preaches simplicity, humility, equity, respect and a moderate lifestyle. This, together with the practices of the Prophet (pbuh) can be used as a tool in the way buildings are designed.

*Ibn Sa'd, in his biography of the Muhammad relates a story first told by Abdallah ibn Yazid who visited Medina in 707, when the Prophet's house was still intact. There Abdallah met and spoke to the grandson of the Prophet's widows, Umm Salama. She had told her grandson that when the Prophet was away on the expedition to Duma in the year 626 she had built an addition to her apartment with a wall of burnt bricks. On his return the Prophet rebuked her, saying "Oh Umm Salama! Verily the most unprofitable thing that eateth up the wealth of a believer is building."*

(Hoag, 1989, p 10 cited in Rasdi, 2000, p 20)

*Anas bin Malik said the Apostle of Allah came out and seeing a high-domed building said: "What is it?" His companions replied to him: "It belongs to so and so, one of the Ansar." He said nothing but kept the matter in mind. When its owner came and gave him a salutation among the people he turned away from him. When he had done so several times, the man realised that anger was connected with him and the turning away was because of him. So he complained of that to his companions, saying: "I swear by Allah that I cannot understand the Apostle of Allah." They said: "He went out and saw your domed building", so the man returned to it and demolished it, levelling it to the ground. One day the Apostle of Allah came out and did not see it. He asked: "What has happened to the domed building?" They replied: "Its owner complained to us of your turning away, and when we informed him about it, he demolished it." He said: "Every building is a misfortune for its owner, except what cannot", meaning except what cannot be done without.*

(Rasdi, 2008, p 310)

The aforementioned ahadith are just a few of the many that show the need to build only out of necessity. The merits of this can be seen in many traditional Islamic cities, where a close-knit community exists and a sense of sacredness is developed.

The Prophet's words were divinely inspired which means that it is what God wanted for His people on earth. Our time spent on earth is not for material gain but rather for spiritual growth. Through these ahadith one can derive that the practice of architecture is but one of the gracious ways by which one can attain that growth, and can only be achieved through the successful management of the earth. People should not build more than what is really needed, because if not out of necessity, building activity will be harmful to the person responsible for it, as illustrated in the second hadith.

The benefit of building out of necessity not only promotes an idea of responsibility amongst designers, but also attaches importance to the sustainability of our natural environment. Because Islam promotes the idea of greeting one another with peace, so too should Islamic buildings invite people with a greeting of peace and serve as a platform for the exchange of knowledge. If the designer of Islamic architecture bares the greater purpose in mind, to serve God, then every Islamic building will be transformed into a house of God, which would illustrate the implications of the Prophet's hadith that "*the earth has been made for me a masjid (mosque) and a means of purification*". (Sahih Al Bukhari, no. 323)

4.

Birth of Prophet Muhammad  
570

**PERSIAN ARCHITECTURE**  
700-1700

Hijra- Migration to Madinah  
622

Death of Muhamad  
Abu Bakr 1st Caliph  
632



Selimiye Mosque, 1568-75, Edirne, Turkey

1220-1260  
Mongols invade Islamic lands  
1281-1324  
Uthman founds Ottoman Empire  
Moves into Europe and controls Balkans

1492  
Christians expel Muslims & Jews from Spain

**MOORISH ARCHITECTURE**  
711-1492



Alhambra, 11-1400, Grenada, Spain Great Mosque, 700-900, Cordoba, Spain

**TIMURID ARCHITECTURE**  
1410-1660

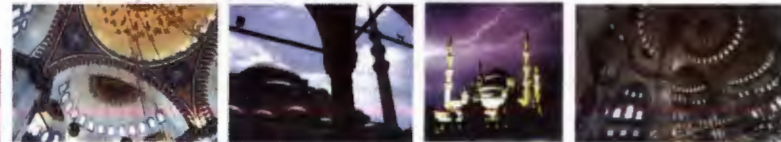
1171  
Saladin conquers Egypt  
Ayyubid dynasty  
Seizes Jerusalem from Crusades



Ulugh-beg Madrasah, 1417-1420, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

**OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE**  
1299-1876

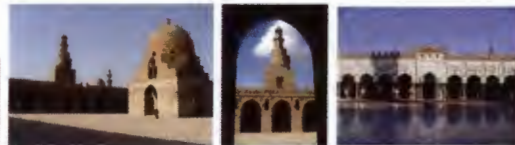
634-644  
Umar 2nd Caliph  
Muslims seize parts of Persian and Byzantine empires  
644-654  
Uthman 3rd Caliph  
Uthman murdered,  
656-661  
4th Caliph Ali



Süleymaniye Mosque, 1550-1557, Istanbul, Turkey The Blue Mosque, 1610-1617, Istanbul, Turkey

**FATIMID ARCHITECTURE**  
870-1125

661  
Ali murdered  
661-750  
Mu awhiyya claims Caliphate  
Umayyad Dynasty  
Muslims conquers Iran & North Africa  
674-679  
1st Siege of Constantinople  
692  
Dome of the Rock  
East & West Africa: ruling class reverts to Islam



Ibn Tulun Mosque, 876-879, Cairo, Egypt Al-Azhar Mosque, Cairo, Egypt

**MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE**  
1550-1674

1505  
Babur founds Mughal Dynasty in India  
1517  
Ottomans control Mecca & Madinah



Taj Mahal, 1632-1653, Agra, India Badshahi Masjid, 1671-1673, Lahore, India

**MAMLUK ARCHITECTURE**  
1250-1517

1030  
Umayyads in Cordoba defeated by Christians  
Sicily falls to the Normans  
1099  
Christian Crusaders take Jerusalem



Sultan Hassan Mosque, 1356-1362, Cairo, Egypt Mausoleum of Sultan Qaitbay, 1471-1474, Cairo, Egypt

**SINO-ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE**



Great Mosque, 685-762, Xi'an, China

**AFRO-ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE**

711  
Muslims seize Spain  
Establish capital in Cordoba  
750  
Abbasid Revolt  
New capital established in Baghdad  
750-1258  
Abbasid Caliphate  
Development of Law, Commerce, Agriculture



Great Mosque, 1300, Djenné, Mali

Mausoleum of Sultan Qaitbay, 1471-1474, Cairo, Egypt

1625  
Muslims rule Java, Indonesia  
1683  
Ottomans defeated

1858  
British rule India  
1878  
Berlin Congress recognizes  
Independence of Balkan states  
1882-1952  
British occupy Egypt  
1945-1960  
Islam spreads to  
the "West"

500 | 550 | 600 | 650 | 700 | 750 | 800 | 850 | 900 | 950 | 1000 | 1050 | 1100 | 1150 | 1200 | 1250 | 1300 | 1350 | 1400 | 1450 | 1500 | 1550 | 1600 | 1650 | 1700 | 1750 | 1800 | 1850 | 1900 | 1950 | 2000

**CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE**  
753BC-663BC

751  
Muslims face Chinese army in Central Asia  
800  
Hadith compiled  
Muslims seize Sicily  
868-905  
Tutunid Dynasty in Egypt

**ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE**  
1000-1300

1396  
Ottomans defeat Venice, Hungary & Byzantium

**BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE**  
527-1520

**GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE**  
1190-1400

**NEO-CLASSICISM**  
1750-1870

**VICTORIAN ARCHITECTURE**  
1837-1901

**MODERNISM**  
1927-1960'S  
**POST-MODERNISM**  
1980'S

## Section B - Towards Establishing a Brief

### 1. General Design Guidelines

18

## 1. General Design Guidelines

The following are general guides to which the design shall conform. These guides are based on that discussed in Section A.

- The selected site should be integrated into the built fabric of the area and should not expose itself as an isolated site.
- The designed building should see to the needs of the community.
- It should allow for users of the building to interact in spaces that conform to Islamic law.
- It should have some form of courtyard that would create links to the existing Mosque as well as ablution facilities. It should also allow for informal use over weekends or when school is not being used.
- The building should have a modest scale and should not over-power neighbouring buildings.
- The building should be aesthetically appealing and should implement some form of Islamic art in its design.
- The use of the arch shall be made in order to link with existing Mosque. The arches could also be used for colonnaded walkways around courtyard area.

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## 1. A Contemporary Form of Islamic Architecture

### 1.1 A Comparison between the *Arthur & Yvonne Ridley Art Centre* by Glenn Murcutt and *La Ciudad del Flamenco* by Herzog & de Meuron

The works of a contemporary architect that perhaps embodies the Islamic teaching of environmental sustainability is that of Glenn Murcutt. The idea of 'touching the earth lightly' that he subscribes to has enabled him to design modest, economic yet elegant buildings. The use of the linear plan in most of his designs allow for controlling thermal comfort levels within the building, making use of natural cross-breezes and movable screens without the use of air-conditioning. His buildings often float above ground to protect it from seasonal storms and insects but also to maximize ventilation.

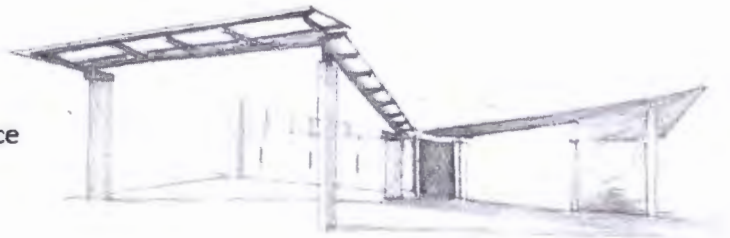


An architectural practice that perhaps prides themselves on the latest forms of technology in their design of artistic skins and 'adaptable' skins is that of Herzog and de Meuron. While many of their projects can be seen as iconic buildings, their winning proposal for La Ciudad del Flamenco or 'The City of the Flamenco' in Jerez, Spain is a contemporary way of designing that embodies the Islamic teachings of social and urban integration. The perforated outer walls makes the whole building function as a mashrabiyya, channeling breezes from the outside as well as maintaining a level of privacy at particular times of the day.

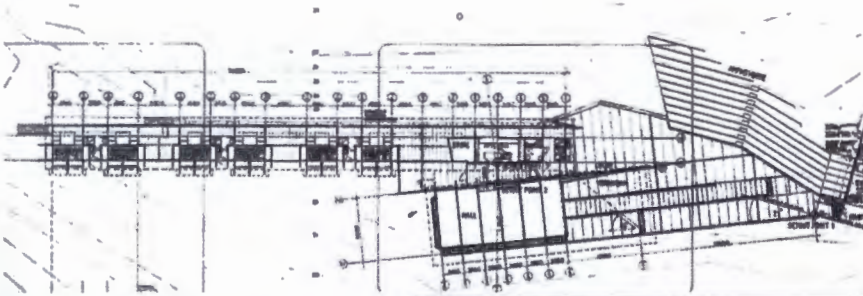


I have selected a project of each of the abovementioned architectural practices and shall analyze and compare the projects in terms of key architectural attributes namely; **space, form and order**. The projects shall also be compared in terms of its **structure, enclosure and materials**. These characteristics make the projects different from each other yet independently, potentially serve as successful forms of contemporary 'Islamic' architecture.

### 1.1.1 Space



The Arthur and Yvonne Boyd Education Centre in New South Wales, Australia, is one of Glenn Murcutt's significant achievements. The Centre provides accommodation for resident artists as well as travelling art students for several days up to a month. Given that the site was a substantial agricultural estate, the way the building dealt with its environment was seen as an important factor in the brief. As with many of his designs, this project makes use of a linear plan made up of compartmentalized space or rooms. This linearity allows for maximum exposure to the sun; provide rooms with equal views of the natural landscape but also has minimal impact on the site.



Given the different nature of its site, La Ciudad del Flamenco by Herzog and de Meuron takes on a different approach. Surrounded by built fabric in the urban city of Jerez, the building is made up of fragmented spaces in the form of a 'walled garden'. These spaces form smaller buildings that can be integrated with the existing buildings, but also allows for future incremental growth. The project is thus seen as a 'city within a city' that will serve as a performance venue for the flamenco art form which includes an art school, a research centre as well as a museum. Either sunken or extruded, the project's interior produces a strong relationship between inside and outside spaces.



### 1.1.2 Form



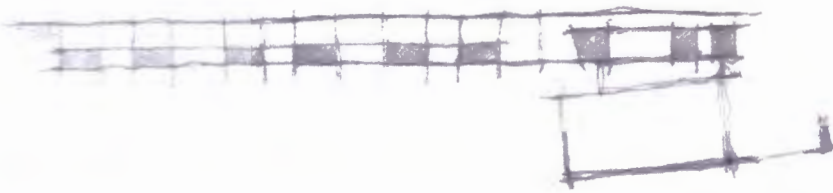
Glenn Murcutt's buildings often have a distinct horizontal form which helps the building to achieve its modesty within its natural setting. The Education Centre takes on this horizontal form which sits on a paved platform and together with its slender roof achieves a floating effect. The apparent blade-like projections on the buildings façade help break the strong horizontality but also serve a functional purpose. The blades help sunlight to enter the bedrooms, help to catch breezes, frame views and control privacy.



As opposed to the Education Centre, the art centre in Jerez has a solid form and grounded scale, so grounded that the auditorium and some performance space actually occur in underground rooms. The site of the project is an existing void within the traditional area of the city. The solid form thus wishes to fill this void and restore life to what was historically a bustling plaza. Although the volume of the building appears solid in the day, the perforated walls allow passers-by to have glimpses of the goings on at night.



### 1.1.3 Order

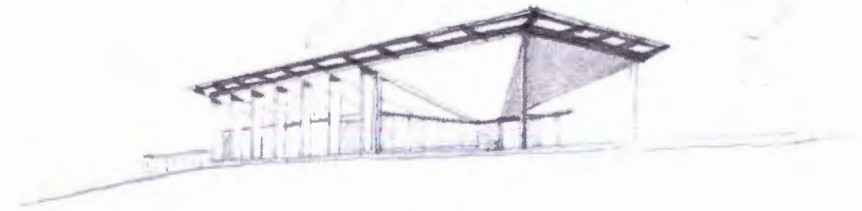


The Education Centre has a clear order that is set up by its linear plan, horizontal form and structure of its material palette. Like the space and form of the building is an outcome of its function, so too is the rational order with which Murcutt designs. Glenn Murcutt confirms the importance of the environment in his sparing use of natural materials which results in architecture ordered with its environment.



La Ciudad del Flamenco looks to take on a different approach; that of incremental growth. The small fragmented buildings and the notion of growth over time suggests that it wishes to tell a story of the history of Flamenco in that part of the city and what has yet to come. Herzog and de Meuron also try to illustrate the strong links Jerez has with historic Andalusia, which was once the capital of Islam. Through their reinterpretation of visual Islamic culture, they can provide the necessary bridges needed to unite Islamic and Western-European culture.

### 1.1.4 Structure



The structure of the Centre as with many of Murcutt's works seem simple at first glance, upon further inspection the resolution of joints and details prove to be complex. Although the Education Centre makes use of off-form concrete as its primary structure, the project also uses composite structural members of steel and timber. While the steel roof structure has the perceived tendency to float, the concrete columns in a sense pegs the building down. These columns also set up a vertical rhythm with the trees in contrast to the dominant horizontal plane of the building and landscape. Steel members of the roof structure works in tension while the timber members performs in compression.



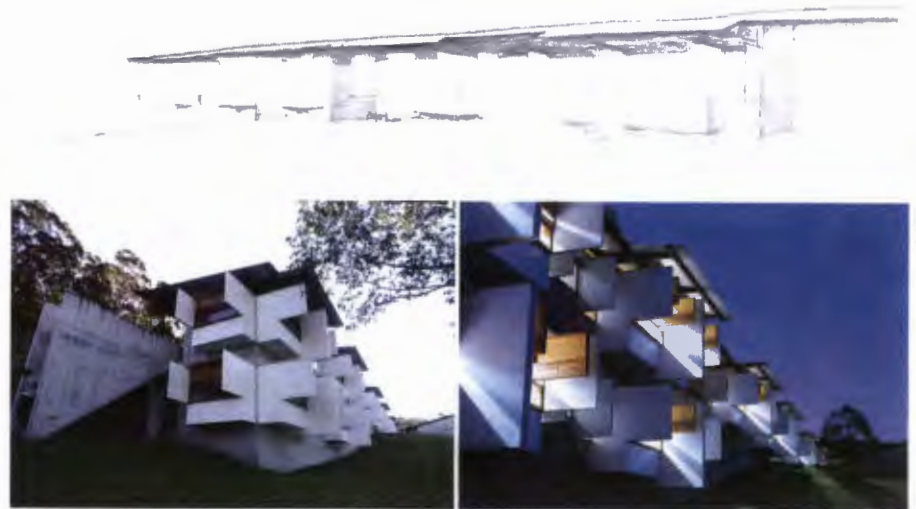
Having an entirely different character, La Ciudad del Flamenco has a uniform structure made from in-situ poured concrete and local stone. Unlike the floating nature of Murcutt's buildings, Herzog and de Meuron's project makes use of the earth as habitable space by digging underground, cementing the project into the urban landscape.

### 1.1.6 Enclosure

The enclosure of the site is an imposing concrete wall, so thick that it becomes habitable in itself. These inhabitable spaces within the wall interiorly feed into the dance and auditorium space below while on the exterior create textured surfaces that interact with the passer-by.



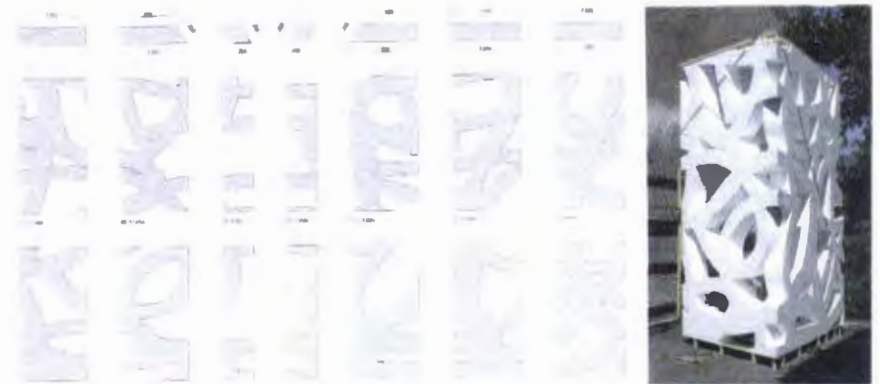
The enclosure of the Education Centre is less imposing and more functional which serves as the primary form of sun control. Made up of off-form concrete and timber screens, the blade-like projections on the exterior of the building not only help sunlight to enter the bedrooms but also direct breezes, frame views and control privacy.



### 1.1.6 Materials

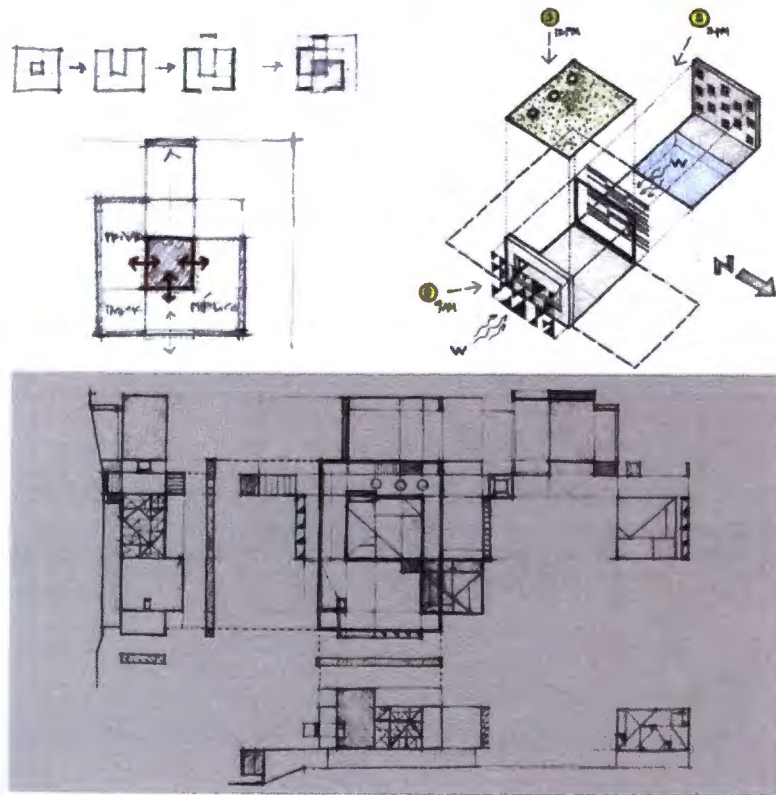
Like with all Murcutt's projects, the Education Centre exploits each material it uses to its maximum ability. As there is an inclination to stick to certain materials, a thorough exploration is done to push the construction technology of materials to the extreme. The characteristic that perhaps defines the work of Glenn Murcutt is the sparing use of natural materials in his projects. While using concrete and a range of timbers from floor to wall, the roof is made up of composite steel and timber beams and purlins onto which corrugated iron sheets are fixed.

The materials used in La Ciudad del Flamenco are condensed to traditional stone and concrete that characterizes the historic city. It could be said that Herzog and de Meuron has so too made maximum use of concrete, using it not only for its structural ability but also to limit visual protrusion in the design of perforated concrete walls. These perforations; either sunken or extruded, are inspired by the visual form of Arabic ornamentation and Gypsy tradition. The resulting texture is that of a weathered surface which relates to the old city.



### 1.2 San Pablo House by URBANA

This contemporary form of architecture makes use of the Islamic courtyard and the Iwan as its concept. An Iwan is essentially a square closed off on three sides and open on the fourth, which traditionally contains a water feature, in this case being a swimming pool.



The facade of the house features modern masharabiyas or screens which not only allows for visual privacy but also assists in natural ventilation with the aid of cross-breezes. Together with timber brise soleils, it helps in diffusing the entry of direct sunlight at certain periods of the day.



Spatially, the larger volumes house the 'public' areas such as the living, dining and kitchen areas, while smaller enclosed volumes house the private areas such as the bedrooms.

### 1.3 Reinterpreting the Mashrabiya/Screen



San Pablo House, URBANA



Casa Delpin, FUSTER + Partners



New Delhi Restaurant, Morphogenesis

## Section D - Context Study

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1. Location of the Site

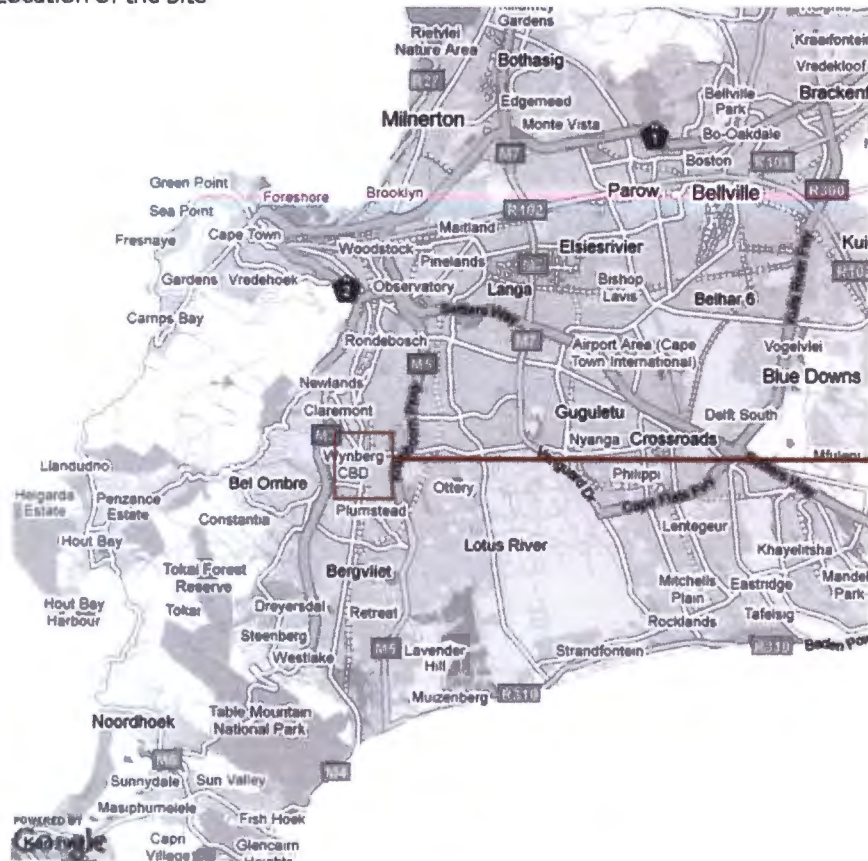
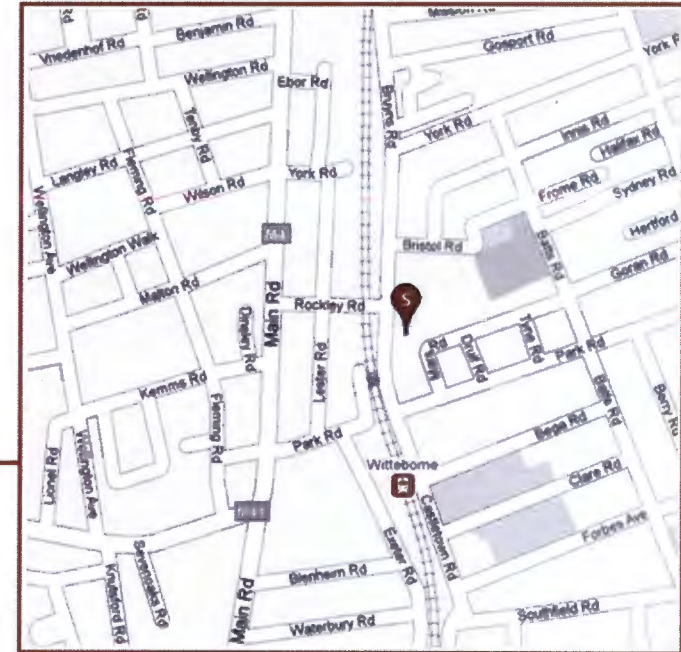


Figure - Location of Wynberg within Cape Metropolitan Area



Location of Site within Wynberg Region

Located 25 kilometres South-East of the Cape Town city centre, Wynberg lies central to the 'Southern Suburbs' of Cape Town.

## 2. The Site and Its Social Context

The form of the traditional Islamic city came about because of religious principles and beliefs set down in the Quran and Sunnah. The behavioural and social patterns of Muslims lead to a physical form not only for their individual homes but also for the physical appearance of their city.

It is based on this form of urban 'planning' that led me to the selected site in the Muslim community of Wynberg. The reason for the strong Muslim population in Wynberg has much to do with the Group Areas Act, which resulted in much of the 'Malay' and some 'indian' families relocating, most of whom were of the Muslim faith. Since then, the Muslim community of Wynberg has grown strong, establishing mosques, schools, madrassas as well as the only Muslim old-age home in Cape Town. The selected site locates itself within a close-knit community made up of Islamic 'pulses' in the form of the abovementioned institutions. Within the past five years however, the hub of Islamic activity has grown from a particular part of this community in the form of the Darun Na'im Islamic institute which is a tertiary level Islamic school. The institute currently operates from the Castletown Road Mosque, which since its establishment, has outgrown its premises.

Apart from apartheid having its obvious negative affects, it could be said that it had a positive affect on Muslim communities. Because Islam was 'contained' in certain communities only, it helped to reinforce and strengthen the religion. The result of this 'containment' is the fact that almost every community has a Mosque or some form of Muslim school. As opposed to other countries with a Muslim minority, the achievements of South African Muslims are significant.



### 3. Site Dynamic

The site locates itself within a dynamic urban fabric, mainly consisting of residential units. It sits within the built fabric and does not expose itself as an isolated site. The strong pedestrian activity within the area lends itself to an exploration of traditional forms of planning, in which the issue of privacy remains a concern for 'modern' Muslims. Changing times calls for shifts in priority, but not at the expense of religious beliefs. This means that traditional spatial forms such as the internalized courtyard and elements such as privacy screens need to be reinterpreted in a manner befitting contemporary needs, transforming space into new organization.

The site sits adjacent to the railway line. This line runs from Simons Town Station through the South Peninsula all the way to Cape Town Station. Although being a spatial constraint, the train offers easy commuting for students and users of the site. The sites location adjacent to railway line can also provide exposure for the Islamic Social Centre to commuters which could assist in the propagation of the religion.

Approach from Wittebome Station to Mosque



Street Elevation of Neighbouring Residence

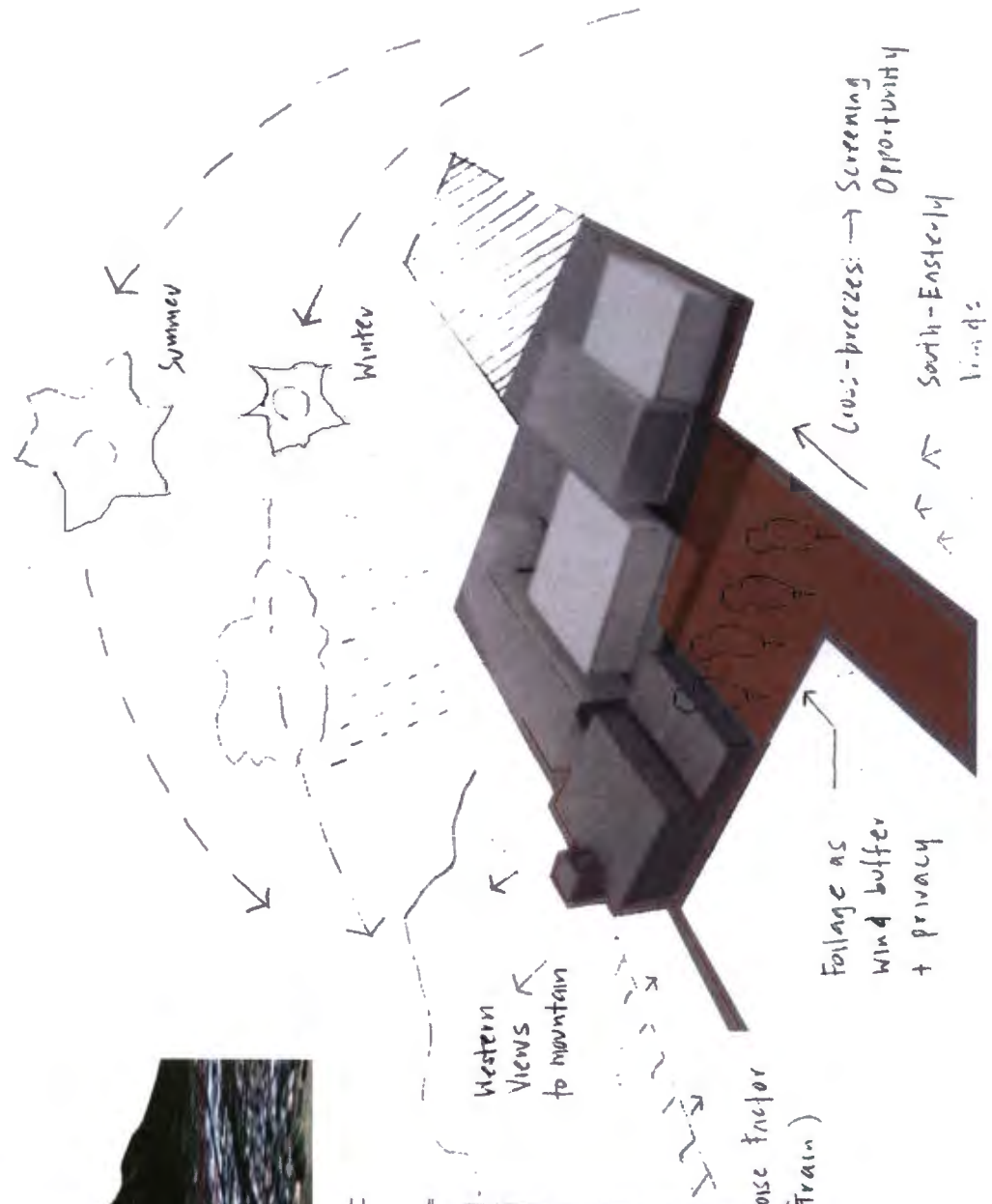


#### 4. Darun Na'im Institute and Mosque (Castletown Road)

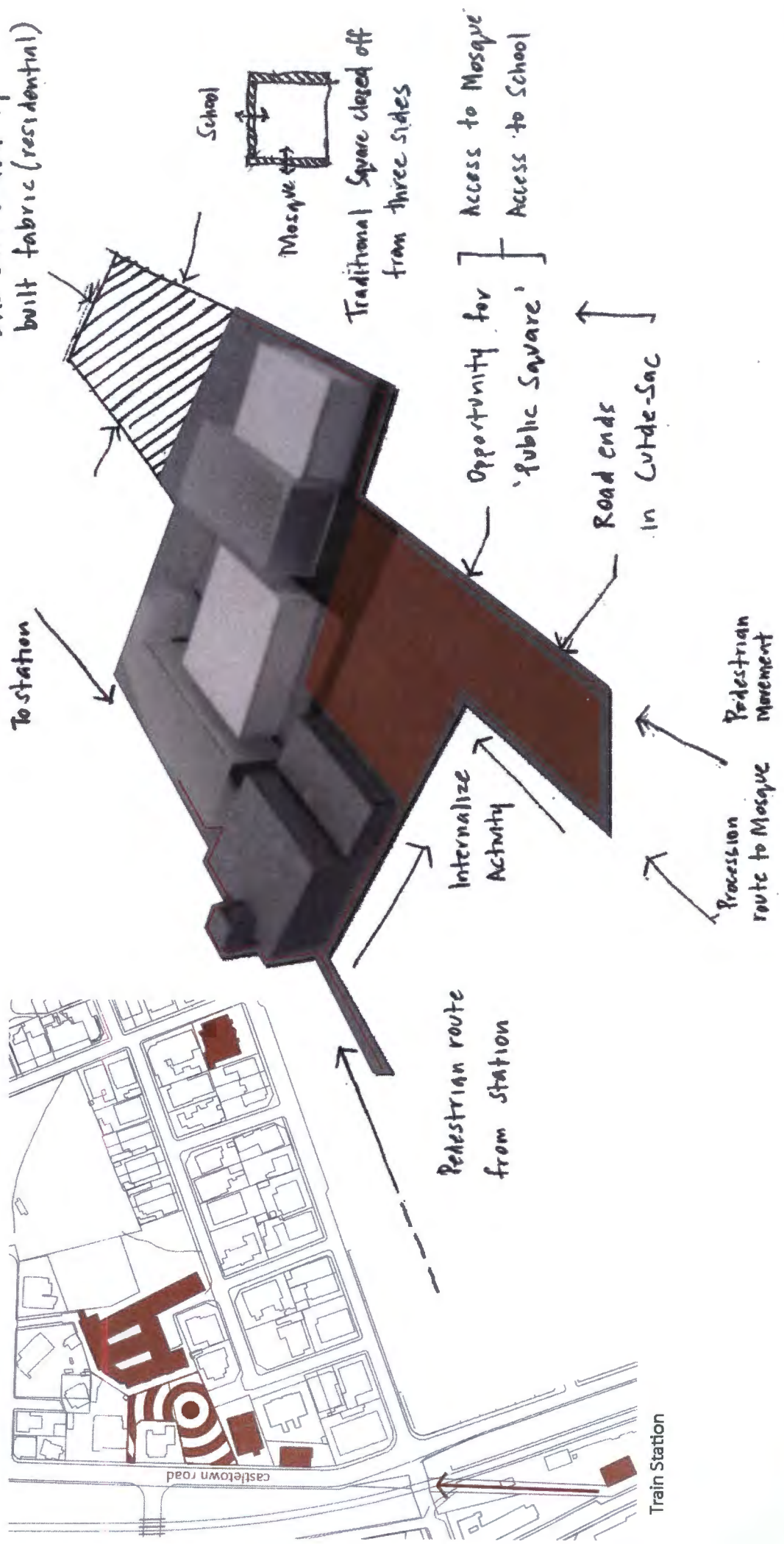
The growth of this institute can be attributed to the current local and international condition in which there has been a 'revival of the Islamic spirit'. This revival is driven by a youth culture in which social values wish to be exchanged and religious beliefs strengthened. The institute currently appeals to only certain individuals but with a restructuring of its programme, can appeal to the broader Cape Town community. It is through the design thesis that I shall explore an architectural programme for this institute so as to create facilities for an Islamic lifestyle and thus architecture that gives an identity to Muslims in Cape Town. This identity lies not only in the architectural form but rather in the relationships it creates with its users and surrounding built environment, much like the Mosque in the traditional Islamic city.



### 5. Site Climate



### 6. Site Opportunity



## Section E - Design Development

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### 1. Design Concept



arabic calligraphy  
square kufic font



magnification



abstraction  
- Muhammad



reflection



rotation



super-imposition

inside-outside  
connection  
with courtyards  
creating links

visual layering in  
the form of  
screens for  
privacy

enclosed activity at  
an urban scale in  
creating a public  
courtyard

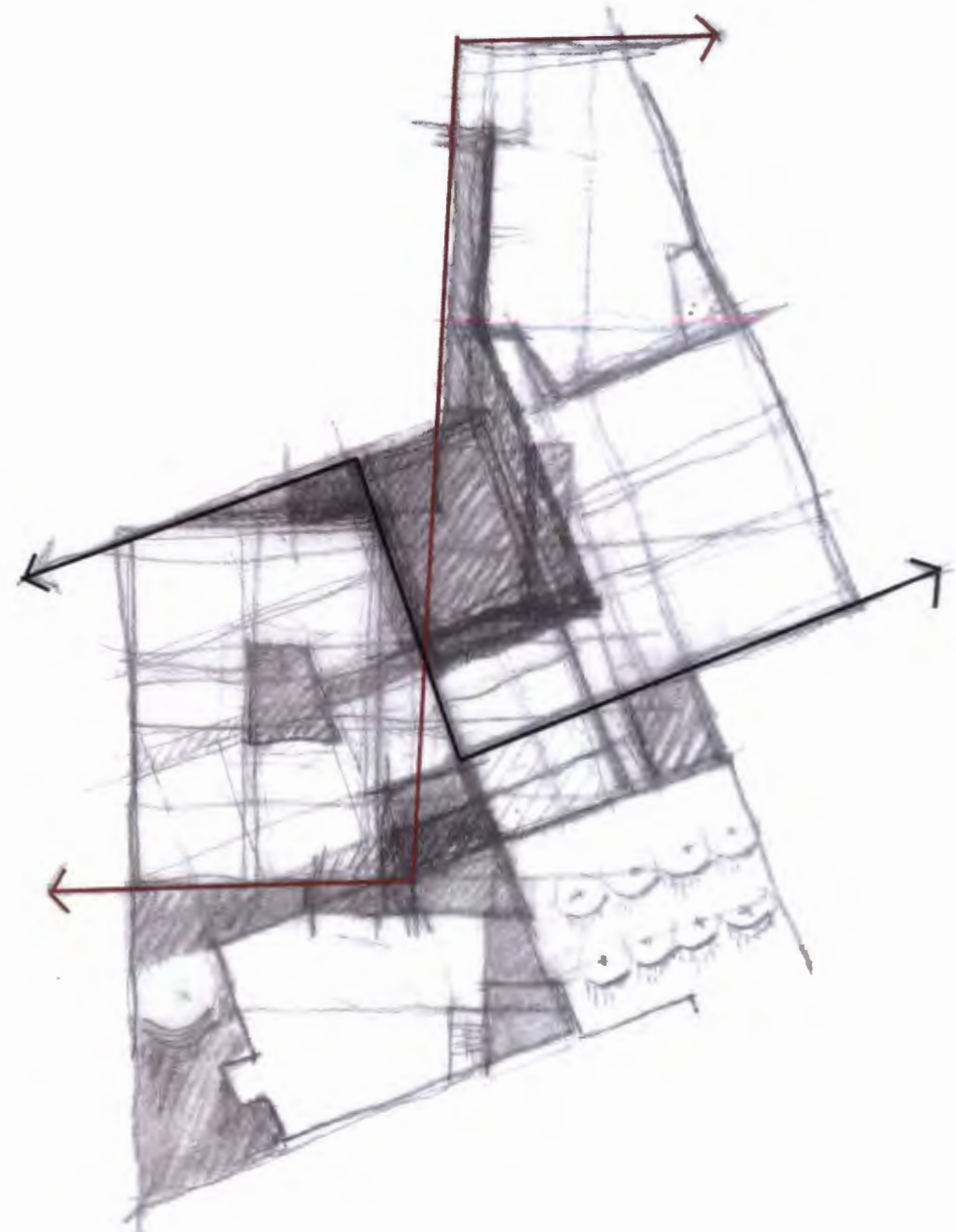
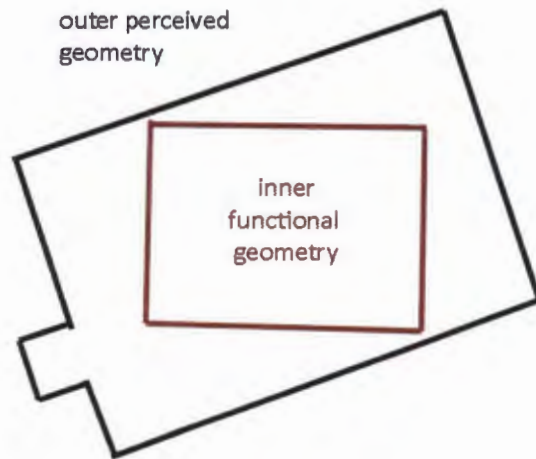
internalized space in  
the form of 'pockets'  
within circulation

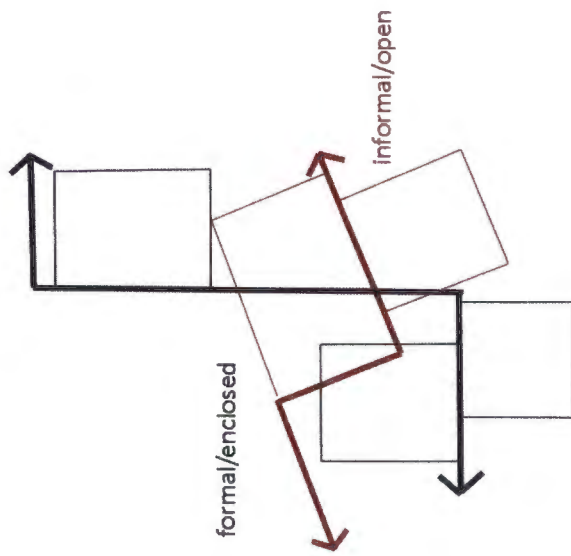
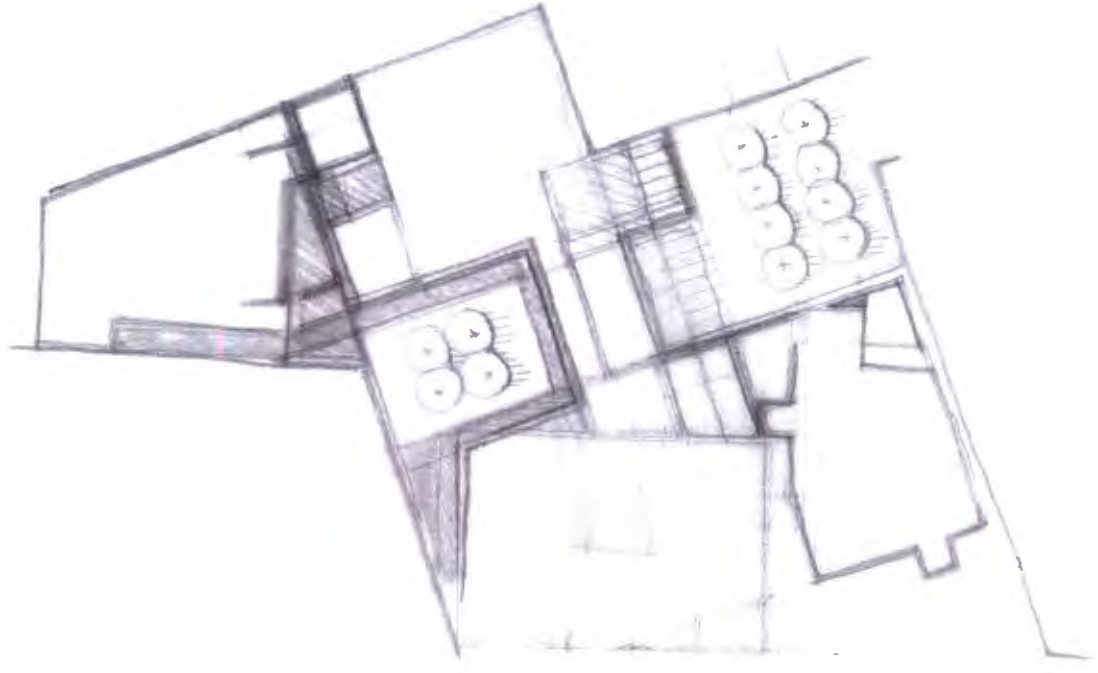
## 2. Geometry, Rythym and Repetition

Since these three elements are key design features of Islamic architecture, it shall be used as constant themes throughout the building's design.

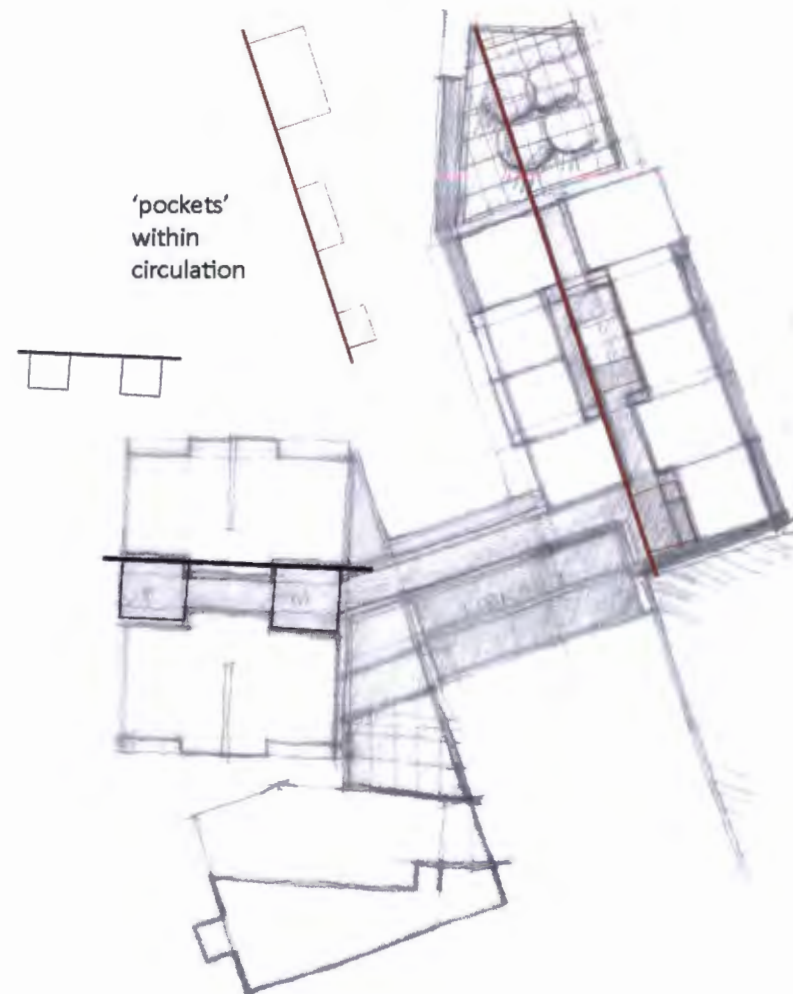
### 2.1 Geometry

In keeping with the street grid, the existing Mosque's geometry differs to the way it functions (towards Makkah). These geometries shall be expressed in the design of the school building.

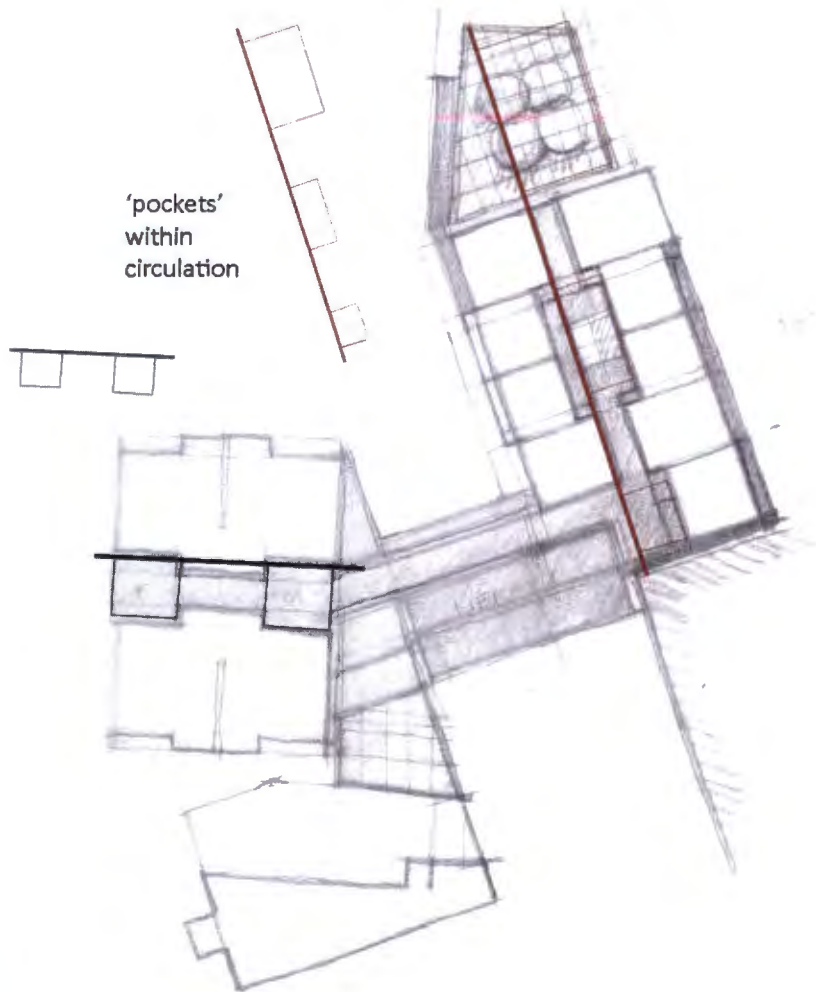




## 2.2 Rythm



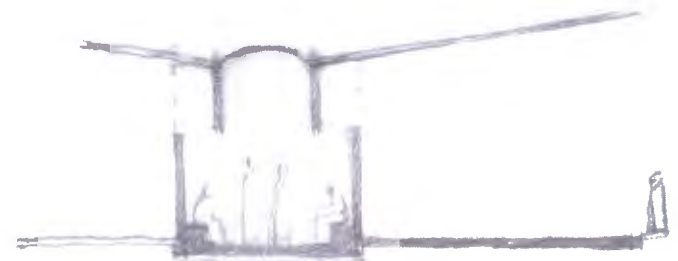
### Pocket Spaces within Circulation



'pocket' spaces encourage social interaction

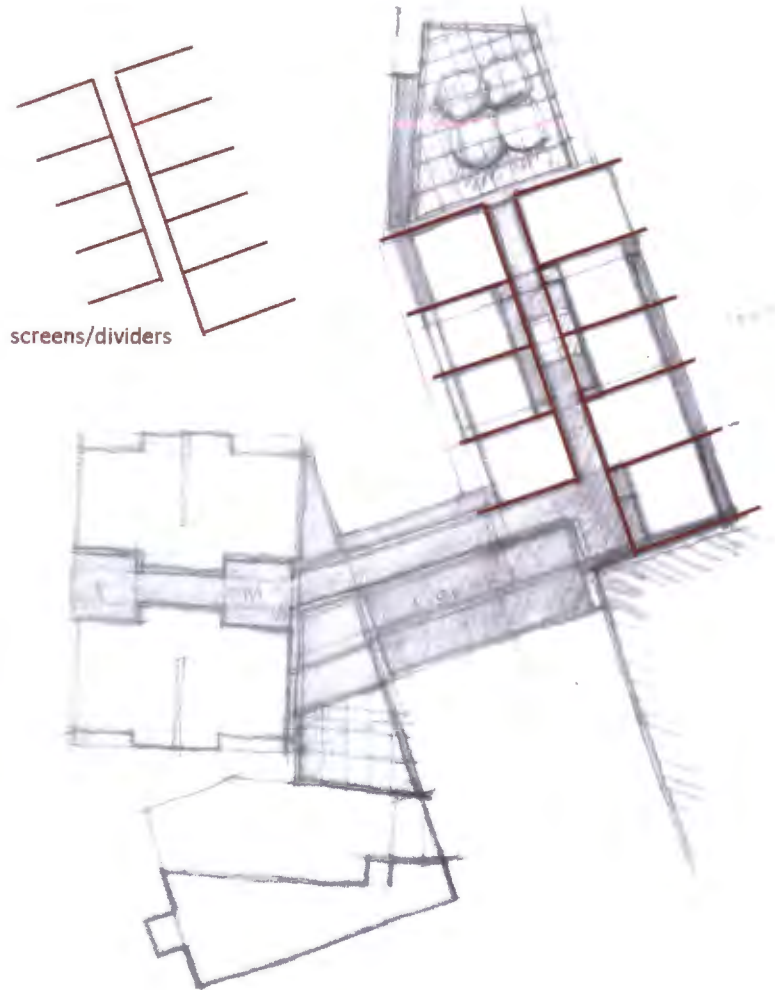


the 'pockets' allow private areas within circulation



light quality within the 'pocket' creates an intimate setting

### 2.3 Repetition



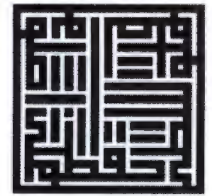
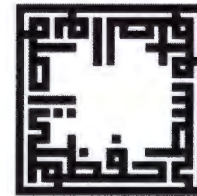
### Screen Development

## حفظوا على الصلوات والصلوة الوسطى

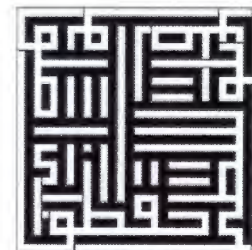
Guard strictly (five obligatory) *As-Salawat* (the prayers) especially the middle *Salat*  
Al- Quran; Al- Baqarah V. 238

## حفظوا على ا صلوات الوسطى

### Square Kufic Calligraphy



### Privacy Screen



### 3. Implementing Design Guidelines

- The selected site should be integrated into the built fabric of the area and should not expose itself as an isolated site.
- The designed building should see to the needs of the community.
- It should allow for users of the building to interact in spaces that conform to Islamic law.
- It should have some form of courtyard that would create links to the existing Mosque as well as ablution facilities. It should also allow for informal use over weekends or when school is not being used.
- The building should have a modest scale and should not over-power neighbouring buildings.
- The building should be aesthetically appealing and should implement some form of Islamic art in its design.
- The use of the arch shall be made in order to link with existing Mosque. The arches could also be used for collonaded walkways around courtyard area.



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