

(DIS)JOINING (DIS)JUNCTURE

University of Cape Town

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requirements for the degree
Master of Architecture (Professional)

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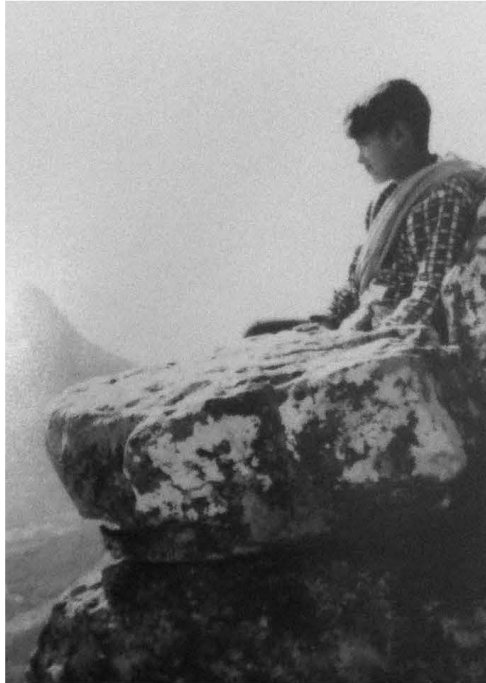
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Figure 1.



Figure. 2.



(Author's own, taken at District Six Museum)

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Figure. 3

INTRODUCTION

This project began with an encounter with a place, an ambivalent place of disjunction between a mountain and a wasteland in the city.

The subsequent uncovering of untold stories, traces of memory, about that place, reveal a site laden with a history of a deep connection between a people and their natural surroundings. Ensuing events of disjunction and displacement has indented into it layers, which has left it a severed site of strange contradictions.

This paper explores the fragmented nature of the memory of a place; that it cannot simply be recreated, and in fact should not be. Rather, the dissertation research looks at ways in which art and architecture are manipulated to disrupt the way think we perceive a place and reframe our presumptions, such that latent layers of an existing place can be awakened and brought into presence in a new way.

The project departs from the position that the disjunctions of a place can in fact be the site of shifting perceptions and unexpected connection, as is asserted by Stuart Hall in “Maps of Emergency: Fault Lines and Tectonic Plates”¹

Of course, fault lines... are also productive. Those escaping the vertical lines of force forge new lateral connections. New formations appear where older ones disappear beneath the sand. Borders, which divide, become sites of surreptitious crossing. Separate and inviolable worlds meet and collide. Where only the pure, the orthodox, were valorised, a new universe of vernaculars and creole forms comes into existence.

This particular design process was one of actively harnessing all the layers of the site, past and present, strange and ordinary, connections and disjunctions, to bring about a new, shifted experience of the place.

¹Hall, Stuart. 1999. “Maps Of Emergency: Fault Lines And Tectonic Plates”. In *Fault Lines : Contemporary African Art And Shifting Landscapes*, 1st ed., London: Institute of International Visual Arts.





LANDING

Attempting to walk the Valley Section¹, a journey was taken from campus, up and along the front of Devil's Peak. Eventually, a row of houses could be seen outlining the beginning of urban encroachment onto the mountain. Nearing the foot of the mountain, treading carefully down a steep pathway etched in some lawn, an empty stream runs between the grass at the back of the houses and the wild fynbos of the mountain.² The sound of speeding cars increased and suddenly the section line was disrupted. Cars sped by mercilessly on a major motorway leaving only a small window for safe crossing.

On the other side there was nothing. Dead grass and remnants of some old streets, and yet ahead was a view of the city meeting the ocean, and behind was the presence of the mountain, constant and magnificent. How striking, this chaotic space of in-between held by the mountain and the ocean.

1 Geddes, Patrick. 1925. "The Valley Plan of Civilization". The Survey. An initial collective studio inquiry of a section line through Cape Town, from Devils Peak to the harbour, references Patrick Geddes' "Valley Section".

2 Girot, Christophe. 1999. "Four Trace Concepts in Landscape Architecture". In *Recovering Landscape: Essays In Contemporary Landscape Theory*, 1st ed., 61. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. It was in this paper that Girot said, "Landing is the first act of site acknowledgement and it marks the beginning of the odyssey of the project".



Figure 4.

UNTOLD STORY

An article in the Weekend Argus, 2016, read, “Go tell it on the Mountain.”¹ The article is about a largely untold history of Table Mountain: that of its relationship with the people removed from the place across the road, District Six. The lives of these people, of District Six, were deeply intertwined with the mountain.

The mountain was the multiple playgrounds of children who ran through the thickets of overgrown pine trees picking up cones, where lovers met on dates, teenagers swam in the quarries, while others took study breaks or went in search of spiritual healing. Some made businesses collecting pine nuts and turning them into sweet treats or ‘tammeletjies’. A small mountain club taught a group of youths the ropes of climbing. They climbed and wondered every nook of the mountain, leaving little undiscovered. The mountain was freedom in a not so free society.

Its view always the central backdrop to the street, Table Mountain was the constant presence, while the foot of Devil’s Peak was the gateway.

¹ Khan, Farieda. 2016. "Go Tell It On The Mountain". *The Weekend Argus*.



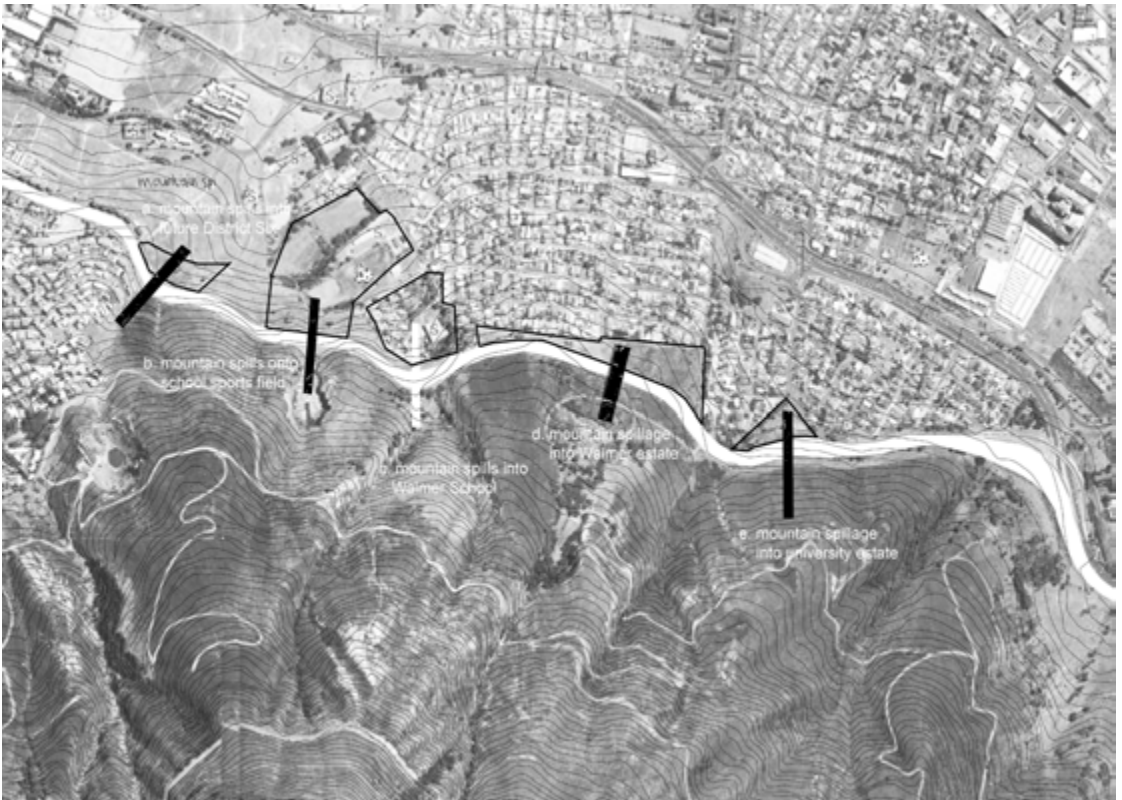
DISJUNCTION | Motorway

In 1900, Sir Nicolas Fredrick de Waal administers the construction of a scenic road along the mountain, connecting the Southern Suburbs to Cape Town.¹ The road was built and the mountain was cut from the rest of the city. In the beginning this was a largely unmade road with few cars. While drivers-by enjoyed the viewshed, the residents at the foot of the mountain simply dashed across the road to explore the depths of the mountain, regardless of the presence of the road.

De Waal drive today is wild and abundant with speeding cars along its sharp curves, and with no real way of crossing on foot from one side to the other. Highway infrastructure has long been seen as a spatial evil of the modern city. They overtake cities, cutting them up and creating isolated, often unusable spaces. Roger Trancik² calls it, “the no-man’s land at the edges of freeways that nobody cares about maintaining, much less using.” Existing spaces then have no clear relationship to each other. The imprint of De Waal Drive into the landscape has detached the city from the mountain.

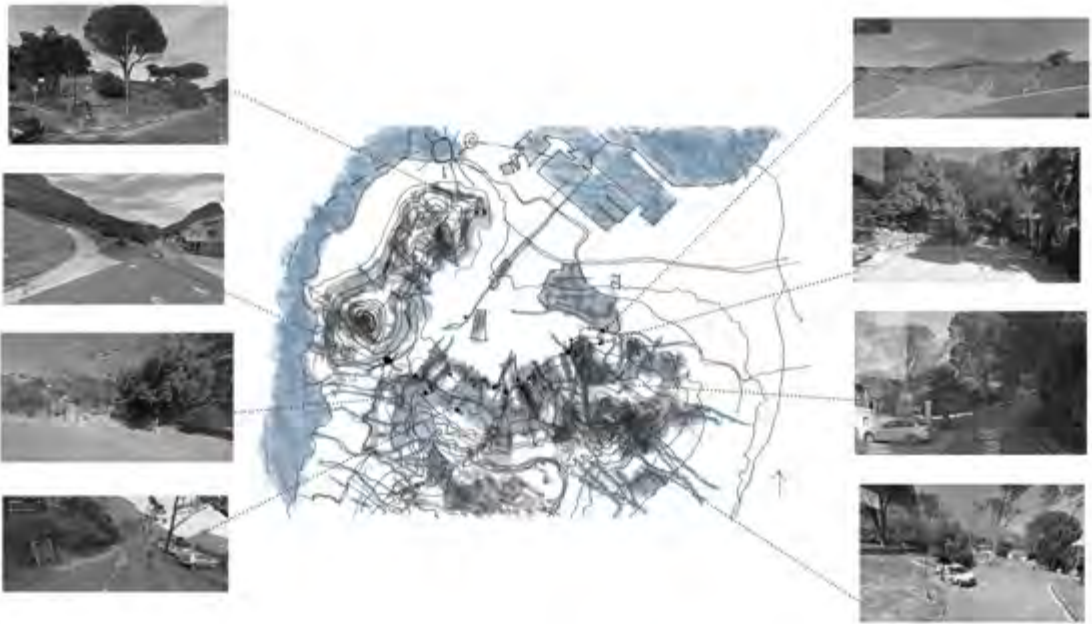
1 "History". 2016. *Chapmanspeakdrive.Co.Za*. <http://www.chapmanspeakdrive.co.za/the-drive/history.html>.

2 Trancik, Roger. 1986. *Finding Lost Space*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 3.



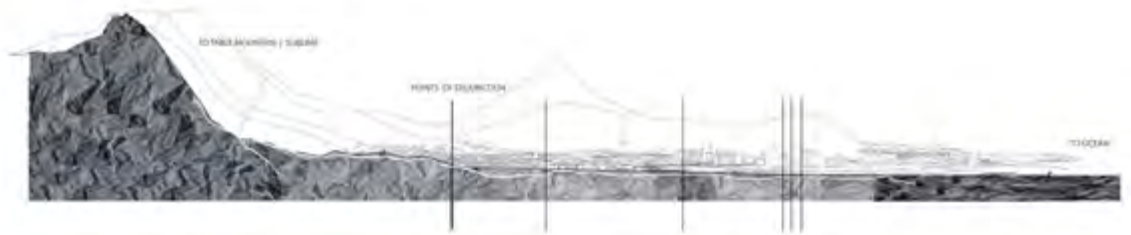
Initial mapping of disjunction along De Waal Drive

One of the greatest consequences of this cut has been the problem of general access to the mountain. An initial mapping of the disjunction between the city and the mountain, as enacted by De Waal Drive, looked at points where the mountain seemed to almost leak into the city through open green zones, yet the inherent continuation is disrupted by the imposition of the motorway. Each of these points are variations of this problem of disjunction, where the clues to the making of architecture are different, each requiring a different approach, which can be arrived at through understanding the specific nuances of each area. One of the points highlighted is where the mountain is cut from a school sports field, one from an open field at the edge of Walmer Estate, and another in University Estate. These areas hold deep strata of connection with the mountain, but it is the one where the mountain bleeds the most into the city, the one reaching into District six that has become of interest in this project.



Existing points of entry into the mountain

It seems strange that the majestic presence of the mountain, so immediate, is simply not that easy to access. There is really only one formal public point of entry to the mountain, at the intersection of Kloof Nek and Tafelberg Road. Then there are the cul de sacs up against the mountain in the residential areas of Vredehoek and Oranjezicht, but these are almost semi-private and not known to many. Certainly these cul de sacs were not accessible to District Six residents as non-whites in white areas – although the carefree among District Six residents found and used these easy and thrilling exits from the mountain.



Points of disjunction

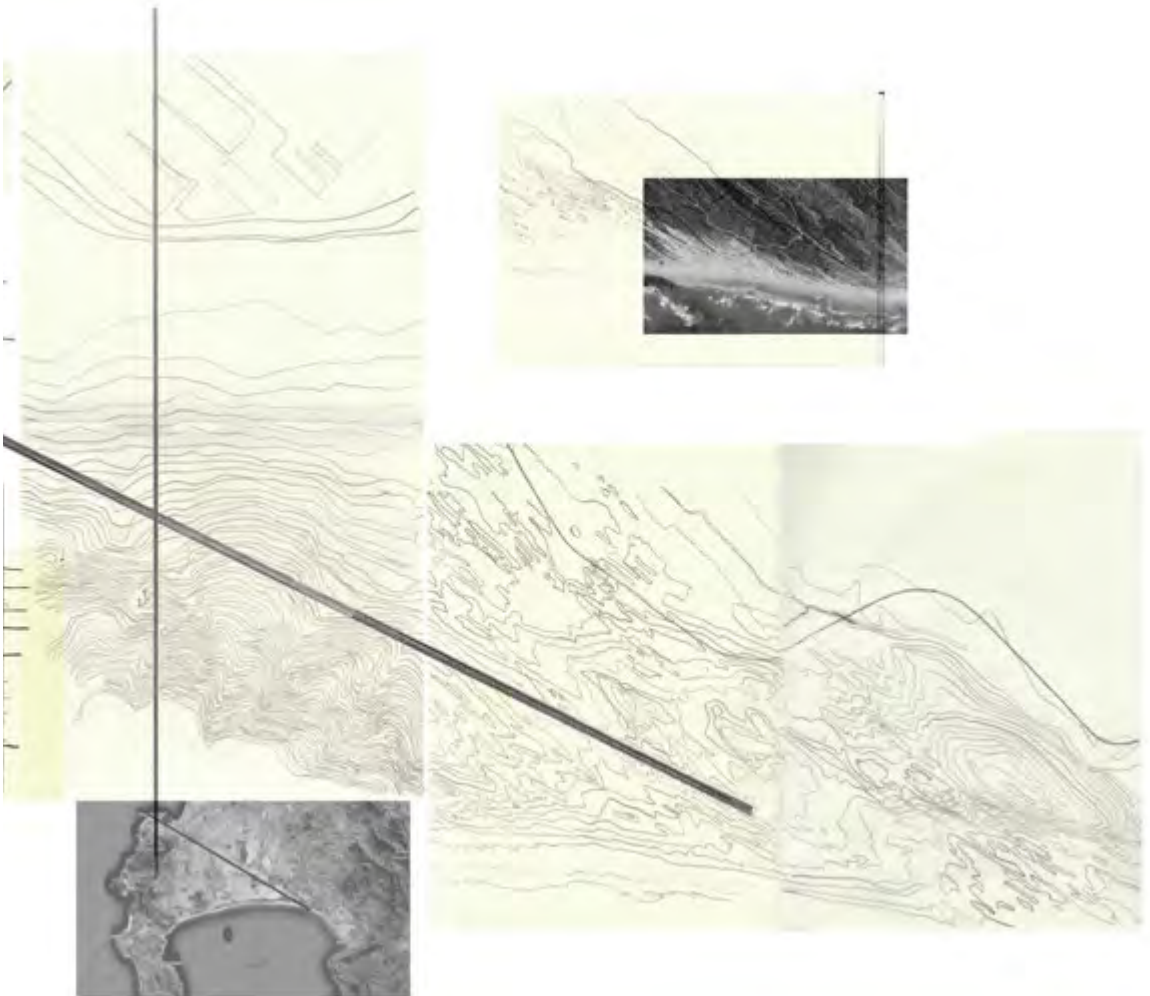
An inquiry into the Valley Section that runs through the site, reveals the repeated occurrences of motorway imposed disjunction, dislodging the mountain from successive parts of the landscape and from the ocean. And yet, the motorway is still part of the strata of the site and should be embraced along with all the other intricacies of the site in a way that allows the motorists' history to exist alongside that of the mountaineers.



Figure 5.

DISJUNCTION | Displacement

Suddenly there was rupture, chaos, disjunction. The inhabitants of District Six were uprooted and displaced, their physical and psychological connections with the mountain were severed. While the memories of the residents have by now changed, and gained some fiction, the events and the connection to the mountain that was once there remains deeply intrinsic in the strata of the land. For those most dependant on the mountain, a deep sadness ensued. The places they were moved to, were flat and isolated, nothing but dust.



Experimenting with geological grain from Cape Town to Macassar



Image of camping on the mountain: Author's own, taken at District Six Museum

For many, this narrative continues. Not just for those displaced from District Six, but all those displaced throughout the apartheid era as well as their offspring. This, however, did not stop those forcibly removed from finding natural respite. Disjunction has in many ways been undone. The journey to the mountain and the ocean is continued.

In search of nature, some continued an annual journey to areas like Macassar, along the False Bay Coast, which was far greener and naturally diverse than the sandy lowlands. Here, they enjoyed, and still do, a weekend of camping at the place where the first Muslims arrived at the Cape. Others went in search of spiritual renewal by visiting the holy sites, *keramats*.

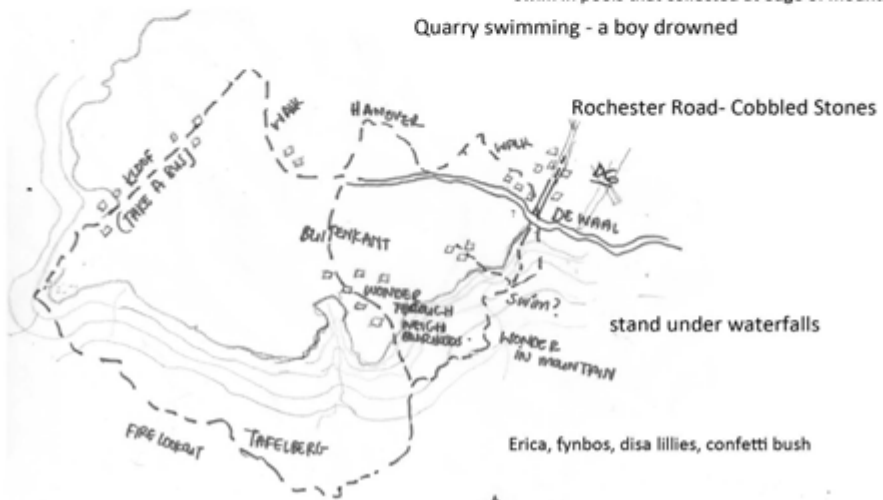
These activities, camping and visiting *keramats*, are similar to what would have taken place at Devil's Peak. It seems that the memory of one place could coexist simultaneously in another place. An experiment at the outset of this project looked at the geological grain of Cape Town, specifically at the site of this project and at Macassar, and found the grain to be a constant diagonal across the landscape, all the way from Macassar to Sea Point. It can be argued that the landscape holds within itself a matrix of all the underlying connections between places.

The Cape Province Mountain Club continues to pursue a rich life in relation to the mountain. They continued their mountaineering expeditions, exploring the depths of Table Mountain throughout their displacement.

Weekends - freedom on the mountain! -
no apartheid there

swim in pools that collected at edge of mountain

Quarry swimming - a boy drowned



Sleepover on mountain

Sour figs

run across the road to study
on the mountain

Quarry - its dangerous!

You could'nt go from District Six to Devil's Peak
and move to Table Mountain - fall

Yes, you could cross over, it was fine!

The mountain was overgrown

Mr. ...Lived in a cave for a while



THE NATURE OF A STORY

These stories are however, really just a collection of memories. Memories are not perfect stores of events, permanently held in the brain for retrieval whenever one desires¹. Instead, the story is told and retold, the memory evolves, until the line between truth and fiction is blurred.

Memories of a place cannot be recreated. In effect, the more exact the historical facts we are overwhelmed with, the less we understand the nature of our experience of a place². There is danger in attempting to stamp history into stone. It ruins the evolution of memory, limits the possibilities of new experiences of the place, and the dynamism inherent in it.

after we consign our childhood to print, it is hard to remember it in any other way³

Thus, this project does not seek to simply recreate memories of the past. This is not to say that memory has no place in the creation of architecture. Memory is inherent in the complex strata of the site. It is not simply figments of the human imagination. It includes all the intricacies and nuances of site, all social, natural, historical layers and processes sedimented over time, the ebbs and flow of nature and the impression of man's manipulation thereof.

Understanding processes and changes over time are integral to effecting new ones, however we must realise that the past is not something entirely separate from modernity. There is no "decisive break or rupture"⁴ between modernity and the past. Past and modernity are in fact contingent, past gradually evolving into present, always coexisting, tugging back and forth. This is reiterated by Descombes, "Landscape is never finished or completed, like a can of preserves; it is an accumulation of events and stories, a continuously unfolding inheritance."⁵ The understanding of this straddling between past and future is key in our shift away from historical recreations. The aim is toward an architecture that is not only simultaneously vernacular and modern, bearing, "the markings of time,"⁶ but is able to adjust with change while being catalysts of further possibility. Gilane Tawadros calls it, "the ambivalent space where tradition and modernity, past histories and future possibilities are mapped out."⁷

From an ideological perspective, on shifting ideas about architecture and art, Rosalind Krauss notes that new art or sculpture exists as the result of a gradual evolution of forms of old.⁸ According to Krauss, this evolution elicits a change in perspective, where we are able to perceive a current form as being different from past forms, by virtue of them "simultaneously being seen...as the same."⁹ The old allows us to understand the new and vice versa.

1 Lowenthal, David. 1985. *The Past Is A Foreign Country*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, 323.

4 Tawadros, Gilane. 1999. "The Revolution Stripped Bare". In *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art And Shifting Landscapes*, 1st ed., 13-15. London: Institute of International Visual Arts.

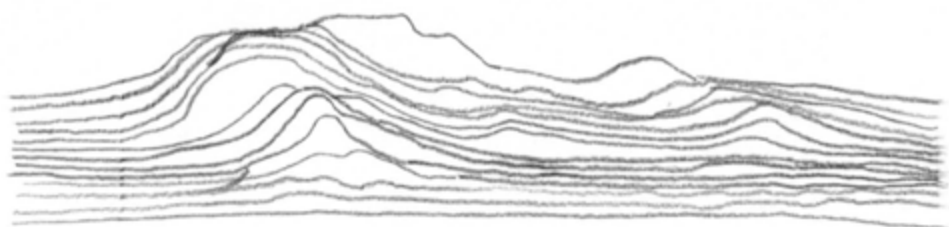
5 Descombes, Georges. 1999. "Shifting Sites: The Swiss Way". In *Recovering Landscape: Essays In Contemporary Landscape Architecture*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

6 Ibid.

7 Tawadros, Gilane. 1999. "The Revolution Stripped Bare".

8 Krauss, Rosalind. 1979. "Sculpture In The Expanded Field". *October* 8: 30. doi:10.2307/778224.

9 Ibid.



DISCOURSE

Moments of disjunction such as the displacement of an entire group of people, or even the rupture imposed by the presence of a highway, can in fact create new connections and consequently, new perspectives. This notion is described by Gilane Tawadros, who uses the metaphor of shifting fault lines, specifically in terms of the physical displacement of groups of people, to explore the effects of colonialism on Modern Africa.¹ Although the rupture at the fault lines causes disruptions and fragmentation, and as Stuart Hall puts it, “they *displace* and *replace*...the homed become...the homeless”², it simultaneously sets up a reaction of cross-connections. People, places, experiences, landscape and city, old and new, African and Western, must inevitably cross paths, effecting the emergence of new creation. This idea that fault lines can in fact have prolific after effects is recognised by Hall,

Of course, fault lines ... are also *productive*. Those escaping the vertical lines of force forge new lateral connections. New formations appear where older ones disappear beneath the sand. Borders, which divide, become sites of surreptitious crossing. Separate and inviolable worlds meet and collide. Where only the pure, the orthodox, were valorised, a new universe of vernaculars and creole forms comes into existence³

Through the formation of these new connections a new perceptual vision is derived where

Everything becomes what Edward Said calls ‘contrapuntal,’ where we begin to see different realities simultaneous to each other, so that, ‘habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment.’⁴

This refers to the connection between physical place and mental place, where human imagination and mental perspective of a place are part of the existence of that place in the continuum of time, such that new places and places of past can simultaneously coexist.

Thus, the shift toward a more dynamic architecture should, in transforming physical elements of a place, shift mental constructs about that place too. Mental constructs are disrupted when the artist or architect creates a perspectival shift by bringing something new to the fore. The intention is to rupture what we think we know about a place and reframe the presumed, to elicit invention, new emotions and new possibilities

1Tawadros, Gilane. 1999. “The Revolution Stripped Bare”.

2 Hall, Stuart. 1999. “Maps Of Emergency: Fault Lines And Tectonic Plates”. In *Fault Lines : Contemporary African Art And Shifting Landscapes*, 1st ed., London: Institute of International Visual Arts.

3 Ibid..

4 Ibid.

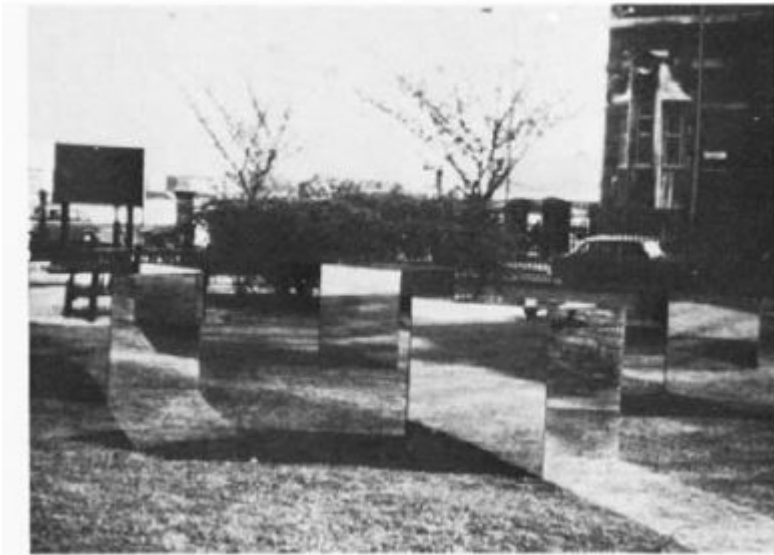


Figure 6.

For example, in Robert Morris' "Mirrored Boxes" (1965), the landscape was seen from a new perspective simply by bringing it into presence through the reflection of the trees and surrounds, aided by the mirrored boxes.¹ When our perception is shifted we begin to see something we have seen before in a new light, and we can also see new things that were hidden before. Wolfgang Iser's concept of the anaesthetic is included in Annemarie Bucher's essay to qualify this idea, "We do not see, because we are blind, but rather we see, because we are blind to most."² As Bucher notes, "To see is to make visible."³ The idea is that if our perception is being focussed on a certain thing, we are simultaneously not focusing on something else that is contingent upon the understanding of the thing that we do see.

These ideas of the indentation left in a landscape or sculpture and the notion of the perspectival focus is explored in the work of sculptor, Roy Adzak as a formal strategy of making. Adzak explores the idea of impressions left in surfaces, as sculptural works, which he calls negative forms, otherwise known as an intaglio.⁴ In some of his early experimentation with this phenomenon, he found that the impressions of a piece of pottery into soil appeared as the whole object rather than as if it was absent. He called the appearance of a convex object where the impression was an optical illusion of a positive form, or a cameo. Adzak references David Brewster who suggests that what we see or do not see is a consequence of perspectival shifts occurring in our minds through our knowledge or lack of knowledge about the object and the light that hits it and the resultant shadow.⁵

¹ Krauss, Rosalind. 1979. "Sculpture In The Expanded Field"

² Bucher, Annemarie Bucher. 2013. "Landscape Theories In Transition: Shifting Realities And Multiperspective Perception". In *Topology Landscript 3*, 1st ed. Berlin: JOVIS Verlag.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Adzak, Roy. 1971. "Sculpture With Intaglio Or Negative Forms". *Leonardo* 4 (3): 205. doi:10.2307/1572292.

⁶ Ibid.



Figure 7.

Edward Burtynsky's photographic series, "Manufactured Landscapes" has been referred to as "an agreeable horror,"¹ which is precisely the kind of effect elicited by the large scale photographs of landscapes around the globe that have been altered through man's industrial processes, that of "shipyards, quarries, recycling plants, and factories,"² The sheer scale of the photographs and the detail of grain and colour provoke a sense of awe of spaces that are in some sense quite devastating.³ Burtynsky has managed to employ a complete shift from the pictorial depictions of landscapes of past, to the sublime of a different nature, something more contested.

These photographs elicit a strange duality between the experience of pleasure while one's eye is being focused toward the 'visual scars' that man/industry has indented on the natural landscape.⁴ Perhaps in the moment of perplexity we are forced to focus on the dilemma of the image at hand which we otherwise would not see. Moreover, in showing us the 'indentation' or the disruption, we are forced to think about the harmony that might have been there. All the images that we usually see of natural landscapes are the complete and the harmonious, but we cannot understand the harmonious if we do not understand the disruption that exists.

1 Ptak, Laurel. 2006. "Edward Burtynsky: Manufactured Landscapes".
Aperture.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.



EXPERIMENTS

A series of visual experiments were carried out in an effort to see what perspectival shifts could be elicited through the enactment of disjunction, displacement, inversion. These were an initial attempt to harness the site and to bring certain connections/disconnections to the fore, in a way that would inform design development. It was an act of drawing connections and then inverting them.

Experiment one explores the removal and displacement of District Six and the natural line of connection from Table Mountain to the Ocean. The area of interest was cut from a 2015 map and placed alongside it. This was one of the first instances of trying to understand the nature of the disjunction at the site and the poignant effect of embodying the word Disjunction. Through this a different perception of the point of interest arises than if it were simply perceived the way it is. The idea was inspired by the artist Sol Lewitt, who cut geometric shapes out of maps as an exploration of rewriting the map, by dislocating it.¹

¹ "Tearing, Cutting And Folding: Early Map Works By Sol Lewitt...". SOCKS. N.p., 2016. Web. 3 Nov. 2016.



Experiment Two embodies the act of cutting and stitching a map of the area of interest along the lines of disjunction, which highlights the nature of isolated spaces arising from the existence of De Waal Drive. In the bottom set it was clear that when a cut is made a mark is left, and when it is consequently stitched another mark is left. From this it was understood that architectural intervention is merely a mark left on top of layers of other marks in a landscape.



Experiment Three explores an inversion of the site, which in the first image allows the District Six side to be impressed onto the mountain side and vice versa. This emphasises that the existing disjunction between the two has removed the inherent need for an interconnection. The second image looks at an inversion of earth and sky, which lifts the earth up and brings it into presence in a new way.



Figure 8.



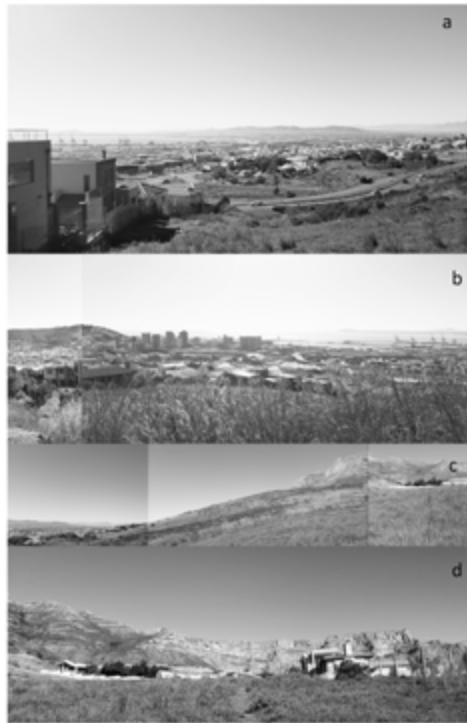
Experiment Four uses the existing remnants of an old District Six street and transposes it onto the site, across the highway onto the mountain. This brought the inherent connection between mountain and District Six into existence in a new way. The street pointing in the direction of the mountain has become a sort of trope in this project that is not recreated, but which is a layer of the site that has been retrieved.



SITE

The chosen site of disjunction covers an area of Devil's Peak that marks the beginning of city encroachment onto the mountain, by the gated housing community, Devil's Peak Estate. The site includes the respective section of De Waal Drive and the part of District Six that is bound by Christiaan Street. The only current residents on the immediate District Six side are those living in the Christiaan Street flats. As a project acknowledging the rupture through time, it envisions itself in the context of a growing future District Six community.

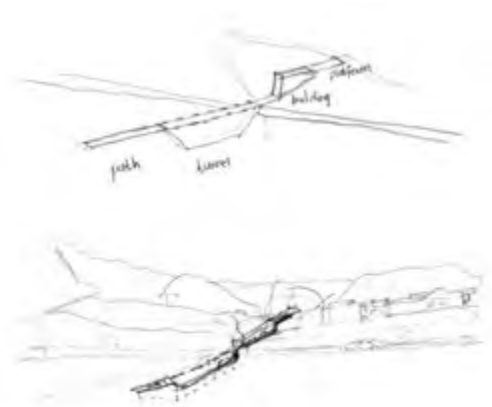
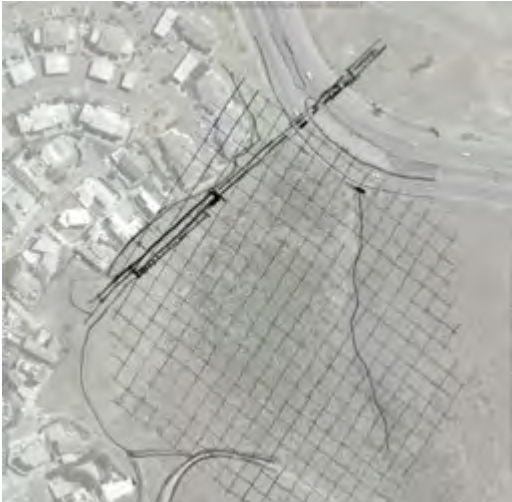
Devil's Peak Estate residents regularly access the mountain from a path that starts further up away from the site and wraps around Devil's Peak. From this path there is a smaller more unmade path that meanders along the edge of the fence of the estate. Here, the evidence of a mountain tamed is visible by the presence of lawn on the site, which is paralleled by a much steeper natural fynbos section of the mountain. There are two streams running from the mountain straddling the hilly fynbos area and running toward a culvert under De Waal Drive.



This is a site of collisions, of contradictions. Where a secluded residential estate meets an untamed mountain, a noisy speeding highway, streams gushing forth toward a scarred wasteland. The dramatic effect of the site is emphasised by gusts of forceful southerly and north western winds. To the North is a vast view of the city lined by the ocean, and toward the South the most magnificent view of Table Mountain meeting Devil's Peak. On the West end the city view is held by Lions Head and Signal Hill. To the East, the steep slopes of Devils Peak dominates the view line.

All this complexity should be harnessed through the uncovering of the design such that all the layers can exist simultaneously within the continuum of time. Through a process of deep uncovering of the detailed processes of a specific place, the design can gradually come into being. Georges Descombes, aptly describes this approach through his design of the Swiss Way: "my aim was to make present and sensible the ever-changing net of paths, routes, traces, and possibilities --- to make manifest the sheer complexity of the territory and to avoid the desperate reduction and negation of experience that plagues contemporary planning techniques."¹

¹Descombes, Georges. 1999. "Shifting Sites: The Swiss Way".



DRAWING A LINE

The design experiments explored earlier, started to take schematic shape in the first renditions of the design.

An initial response to the scheme was to draw a line toward Table Mountain, connecting the disjointed parts of the site, to disturb the purpose of the existing disjunction and bring it and the mountain to presence in a new, positive way.

A second sketch explored this element as something that would explore various relationships to ground: a path on top of the ground, a tunnel dug under, a stair emerging, half in half out of a building nestled in ground, and a viewing platform above the ground. This was the beginnings of shifting ideas about how we see or use the ground.



Physically manifested, this line was seen as an exploration of circulation from the one side, of Future District Six, and up the steep slope of the bottom of devils peak, which would end in some form of viewing platform where the visitor would finally be plunged into the space of the mountain. It was envisioned as a crossing that would also be a new gateway into the mountain, an alternative to the Tafelberg Road intersection.

Further development saw the incision more as a single object that began to play with the idea of the duality of abrupt disjunction and gentle connection to the mountain. This version saw the project as a single object or stairwell that made spaces for a developing program, with moments of pause along the way for views.

PROGRAM

An initial attempt to formally program the scheme in addition to the existing idea of a circulatory crossing to the mountain resulted in several options that manifested from responding to certain criteria, namely

- That the scheme is not a recreation of District Six, but allows the inherent memories to exist in the present, in a new and unsuspecting way.
- The program responds to both city making and nature.
- The scheme becomes the site of surreptitious crossing – literally a crossing to the mountain and figuratively the crossing and exchange of different people. This is a response to the existing disjunction between people in Cape Town partly due to forced removals, such that a shared space is created for the Devil's Peak Estate residents, Future District Six residents and all those wanting an alternative route and place in the mountain.

One of the initial options experimented with was a scheme designed around camping. This was a response to the camping on the mountain that would occur regularly on weekends and over Easter by residents. The interest in this proposal was the novelty of a campsite in the city that would disrupt ideas about what a campsite is. It would also provide an ideal shared experience and a new space for camping that was more accessible and not as out of reach as most campsites.

Secondly, a space was explored for the mountain club, previously of District Six, to reinstate the gateway into the mountain. It would provide a meeting space for hikers as well as guided tours. They would also be active in engaging the youth of the area in mountaineering.



However, these ideas were too closely linked to the pre-existing District Six and did not explore the possibilities of the area as it currently exists. They seemed almost additive to the purpose of the scheme. In the spirit of discovery, the scheme then developed without a program until eventually it arose naturally. Instead of attempting to attach programs to the primary element, the stairway and tunnel, the program developed from this element, responding to the specifics of each zone along the length of the scheme.

In addition to the stairway passage to the mountain, the scheme marks out three main additional spaces responding to each zone of the site.

On the District Six side, the scheme provides a public pool above the entrance stair. The pool exists as a casual public swimming pool for residents of the area and also provides a welcomed swim to hikers on their way down from the mountain. The pool makes use of the existing spring water on the site, providing a purposeful culmination point.

On the mountain side, the stairway breaks for a moment and a meeting platform bleeds out into the fynbos on the left. This is doubled as the stage to an outdoor amphitheatre space which is created out of the natural dip in the landscape toward the wall. This amphitheatre space also grew out of the fact that there was a large blank wall that could be used as a screen. The space could be monitored by the mountain club, who could continue their guided tours and expeditions into the mountain from this meeting point.

As the stairway ascends higher above ground level toward the viewing platform, the underside of its surface becomes the roof to an auxiliary auditorium, allowing for the space to be active on very cold, windy or rainy days. It could serve as a space where learning about the mountain and its multi-layered history is shared with visitors.

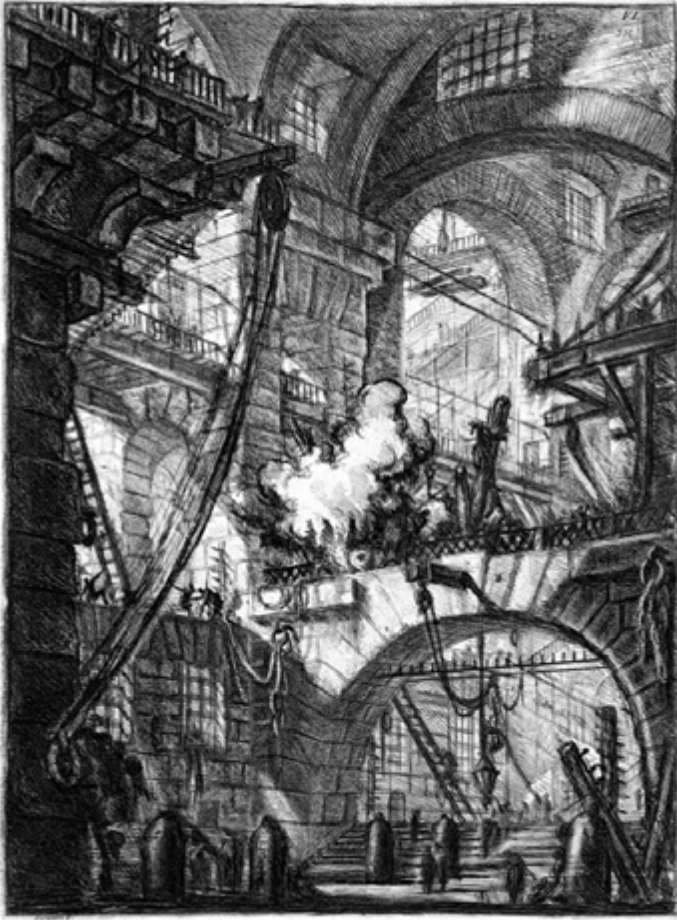


Figure 9.

PIRANESIAN DISRUPTION

Piranesi's "The Imaginary Prisons", or "Le Carceri d'Invenzione", are a series of etchings depicting fantastical architectural scenes of impossible compositions of labyrinthine stairs, beams, machines and walkways.¹ Aptly named *the prisons*, the images are particularly disconcerting, with the heavy contrast of dark and light, the presence of ropes and chains, yet there seem to be no prisoners. Rather, Piranesi's etchings set up a world of contradiction, a dream world of labyrinths whose imagery is suggestive of real world Roman and Gothic Style monuments rather than prisons.² For Manfredo Tafuri³, this implies a comment on the nature of Roman Monuments as prison-like institutions, which highlights the power of disjunctive devices in making political or societal statements.

Tafuri sees Piranesi's "Carceri" as a disruption of the traditionally defined limits of architecture.⁴ Infinite stairs, strange oval openings on top of walls, beams that never quite seem to join, invoke a sense of chaos and disturbance of the order and structure of the referenced Roman Architecture. However, his work used precise mathematics and referred to the order of such, "highly structured historical precedents."⁵

Somewhat revolutionary, the "Carceri" were derived from the artist's own creative power rather than mere recreations of current monuments as was common in other capriccio or architectural fantasy works. This illuminates the value of not recreating but using and manipulating the existing in the creation of the new.

Much of the success of the disruption in this series is that it persuades or rather forces the viewer of the artwork to attempt, through arduous mental work, to reconstruct the deconstructions and "reconnect the fragments of a puzzle that proves to be, in the end, unsolvable."⁶ And just when they think they have found their way, there is an unexpected disjunction where one would have assumed a direction.

¹ Hendricks, Carol. 2016. "The Imaginary Prisons Of Piranesi". Blog. *Arthistoryblogger*. <http://arthistoryblogger.blogspot.co.za/2011/08/imaginary-prisons-of-piranesi.html>.

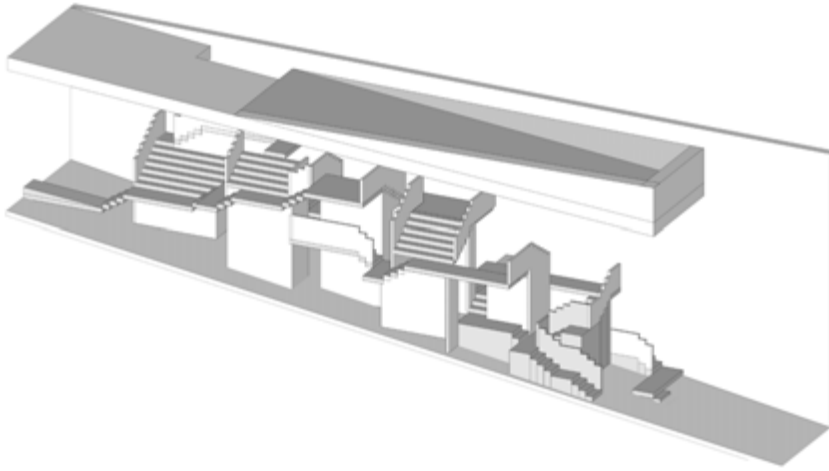
² Ibid.

³ Tafuri, Manfredo. 1987. *The Sphere And The Labyrinth*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.



District Six side labyrinth 3d development

LABYRINTH

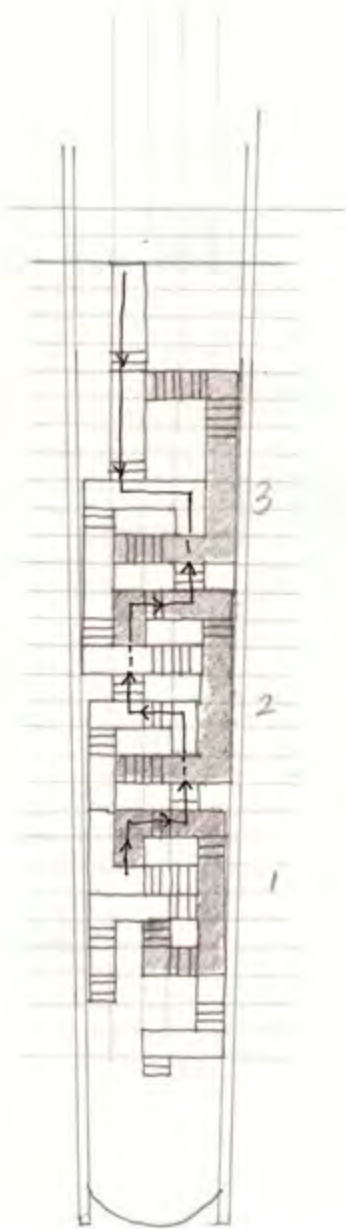
Much of the primary circulation and build form on the mountain and city side of the site forms a labyrinth-like structure with varied conditions along its length. This labyrinth becomes the literal lifting of the strata of land into presence.

The labyrinth begins on the city side of the scheme. There is a gentle ramp up and then suddenly the visitor is presented with two stairway options which appear to evolve into one. The city side labyrinth is tighter and more linear, with a certain constriction to it. This labyrinth culminates in two main destinations, one being the pool above the labyrinth, the other, the tunnel beneath the highway.

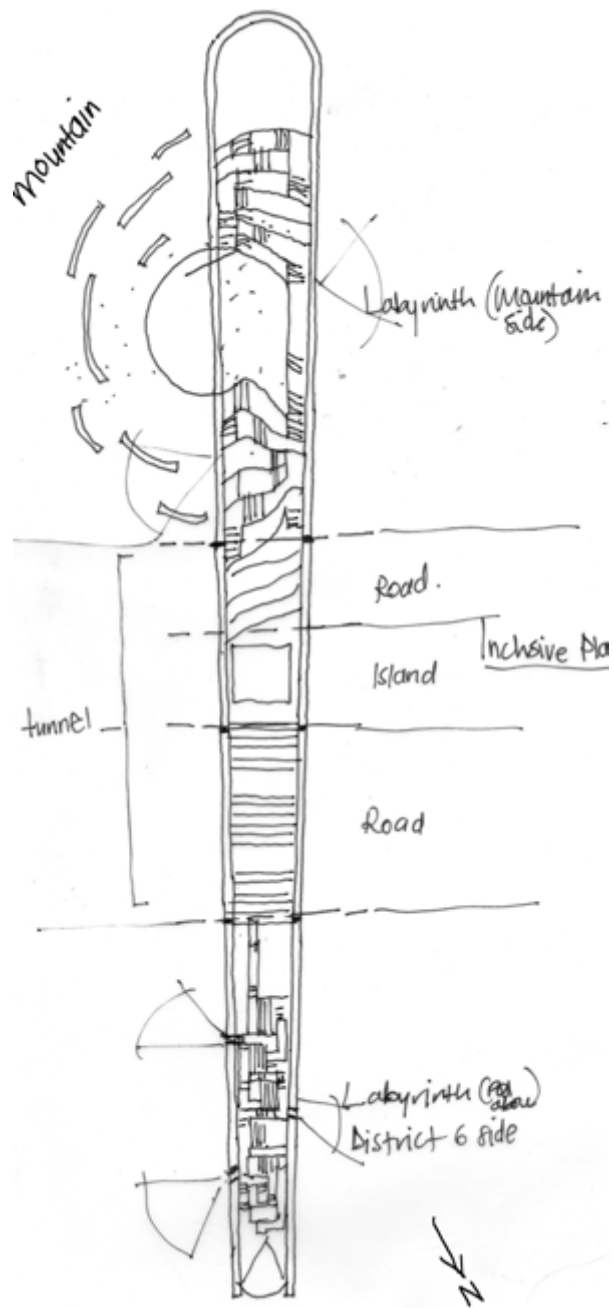
Rather than separating the labyrinthine circulation from building, such as change rooms, the scheme exists more as an organism where the formal programmatic elements find themselves derivative of the labyrinth. Spaces for change rooms, toilets and a maintenance area are created where part of the stairway thickens and its balustrade walls are extruded downward. These spaces are reached at entrances between the woven stairs.

While it seems a daunting task to navigate through the chaos of what appears to be many possible routes, the labyrinth is actually based on simple, calculated logic which, as mentioned involves two intertwined routes, one leading to the pool, the other to the tunnel. The intertwining of these thus always provides two directional options at any point along the journey. The labyrinth is developed on a grid with vertical lines toward the mountain and cross lines generally following the contours that result in squares, starting at the size of 1000mm stair width and increasing gradually with each section of stair and platform. There are six interlocking sections in the first labyrinth. At the entrance to the tunnel, the labyrinth stair ends abruptly.

The visitor is then scooped up from out of the tunnel and the labyrinth continues again. Although still contained by the wall, the labyrinth gradually becomes looser and the organic form of the contours begin to inform its shape. A similar organising logic to this labyrinth continues except that the grid has widened and the cross lines are taken from the contours.



Working plan of the labyrinth on the District Six side



A composite plan of all levels and sections: mountain side, District Six Side and tunnel in between.

The labyrinth here gradually allows the mountain to bleed into it, allowing plants and earth to fill between the loosened sets of stair and platform. The labyrinth itself seeps into the landscape beside it creating a gathering platform that also becomes the stage to a small amphitheatre with simple seating etched into the landscape. An additional indoor auditorium space sits partly underground, its ceiling the underside of the labyrinth where it heads to the viewing deck. This space is either accessed through the labyrinth where a section of it moves down and creates the seating to the auditorium, or through a strange passage which in an almost Kafka-esque moment takes one straight to the stage area of the auditorium!

The rest of the labyrinth meanders up above grade, culminating at a viewing platform. Here the vastness of the mountain overtakes, and yet one has still not reached the mountain but is floating in its presence.

The design of a labyrinthine organism both harnesses and comments on the strangeness of the site. What could be stranger than this vast wasteland that continues to exist in the middle of the city, at the edge of a mountain? Or that the mountain is lined by a gated suburban neighbourhood, and in the middle of everything is a raging highway.

A labyrinth allows for a disruption of what we think we know about a place through the employment of several contradictions, by being chaotic while simultaneously being ordered, appearing imposing yet also subtle, simultaneously constricting as it is freeing. The site is once again brought to life, new views and experiences brought into presence through altering the focus of the existing. For a visitor, their presumptions are reframed, through engaging in the mental work of getting from A to B.

The labyrinth exists as comment on its surroundings. The loose, organic form of the labyrinth as it meanders through the mountain is contrasted with the organised seclusion of the suburban Devils Peak Estate, while strangely the labyrinth is also ordered and measured. It straddles the tamed terrain of the grass and the wild fynbos on the other side.

Furthermore, a labyrinth disrupts the painful fragility with which people deal with a place of such iconic historical memory. The journey is constantly made and unmade, framed and reframed, the memory of it never to be solidified, but to remain alive in its fluidity.

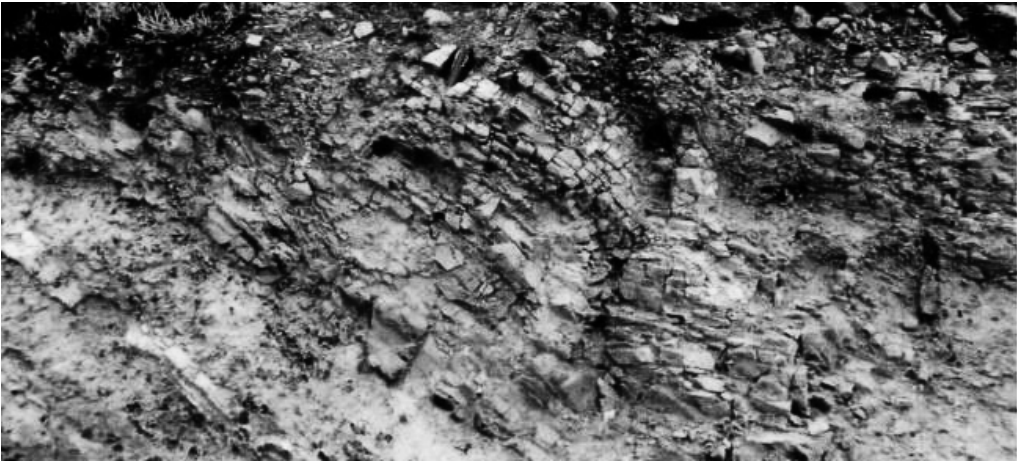


Figure 10.

Rock

The labyrinth is conceived as a literal manifestation of the strata of the earth lifted into presence. It seems almost mandatory then to use the excavated material of the site to allow this new element to come into being.

The site consists largely of a shale bedrock, on both mountain and District Six sides. Shale is a sedimentary rock that tends to weather easily due to fine joints and minerals.¹ These fine mineral particles are broken down by oxygen and acids carried in the streams. It appears as fine shards of rock layered on top of each other. Due to easy weathering, exposed shale is hard to find. On the mountain side of the site, the shale below is covered by runoff carried by the streams during heavy rains. On the District Six side, there is an approximately 1m deep layer of rubble of demolished houses, before the natural shale is uncovered.²

Concrete

Building an intricate labyrinth directly of stacked shale shards would prove problematic, given their fragility and weathering. Using the shale as a concrete aggregate would allow for a stronger structure and allow the shale to exist in a new way, contrary to its fragmented nature. The quality of the shale in the area will have to be tested by cement experts before approved for use in concrete. However, it is not unusual for shale to be used in concrete and often reduces costs as a lightweight concrete.³ The aggregate will gradually change size along the length of the labyrinth, starting out as fine particles on the District Six side and becoming larger chunks of shale as it reaches the mountain side.

1 Compton, John S. 2004. *The Rocks And Mountains Of Cape Town*. Cape Town: Juta and Company..

2 Ibid.

3 "Lightweight Precast / Prestressed Concrete". 2016. *Utelite Corporation*. <http://utelite.net/Structural-lightweight-concrete>.



INVERSION

The scheme employs a second disjunctive device, that of inversion.

Firstly, the entire stitch across the landscape exists as a giant, personified inversion of itself, so that the District Six side is the inversion of the mountain side. The pool on the city side hovers above the labyrinth/earth. On the mountain side, the auditorium sits below the labyrinth, which is lifted above ground, and the experience is inverted. It is as if the mountain side of the scheme has become the imprint of the other side.

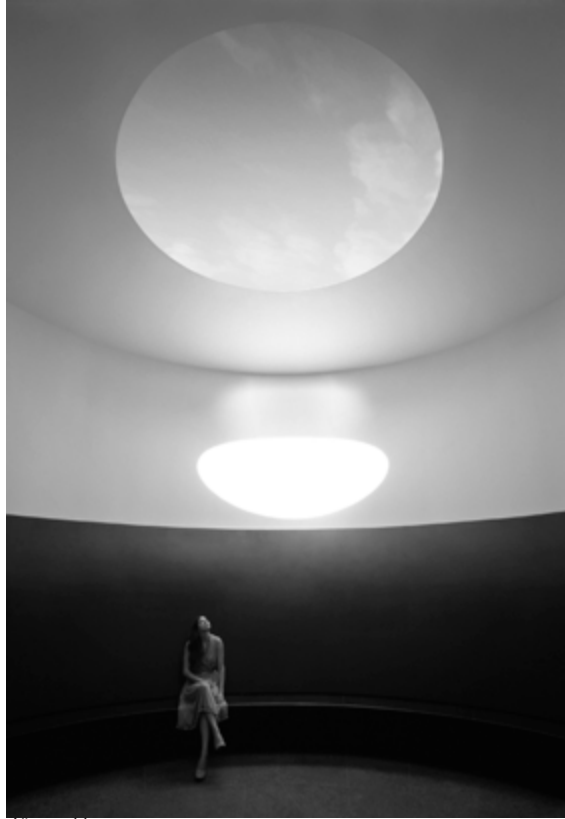


Figure 11.

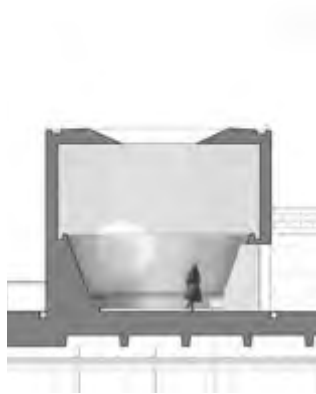


Figure 12.

TUNNEL

Suddenly the labyrinth comes to an abrupt pause. Slow paced, ordinary steps follow through the tunnel. Below the exact moment of disjunction of the site, a different kind of space is brought forth.

The tunnel disrupts the notion of highway by inverting the experience and providing a space of silence and reflection below the noise and chaos of speeding cars. And yet simultaneously contradicting this inversion is the regularity of the steps, reflecting the ordinariness of the road above.

At the centre of this tunnel is a shower of light beaming from a massive opening cut out of the island in the road above. The floor dips down for a moment and looking up, all that can be seen is sky. A moment of pause and reflection is imposed rather than a scurry to get to the other side.

Creating a tunnel instead of a bridge or a pedestrian crossing arises out of the position to work with all the strata of the land that has come to add to the narrative of the place, such that the experience of the mountaineer and motorist can exist simultaneously. It also allows for the interesting inversion of what the highway means, to occur below the ground.

The challenge in creating this cut out space is in having the view line undisturbed by the sight of passing cars and trucks above. The opening would have to protrude above on the island in the road, creating a kind of light shaft. This protrusion also becomes a notifying beacon at the fulcrum of this project, which can be seen by those driving to or past the site.

The artist James Turrell explores a similar type of space in his, Skyspace, "The Colour Inside." It provides the unique experience of an indoor space completely open to the sky, which required that all horizontal surfaces be treated as roofing to protect against moisture.¹ (See Figures 11 and 12)

¹ "The Color Inside / Overland Partners + James Turrell Skyspace" 28 Oct 2014. ArchDaily. Accessed Nov 2016. <<http://www.archdaily.com/560974/the-color-inside-overland-partners-james-turrell-skyspace/>>



Figure 13.

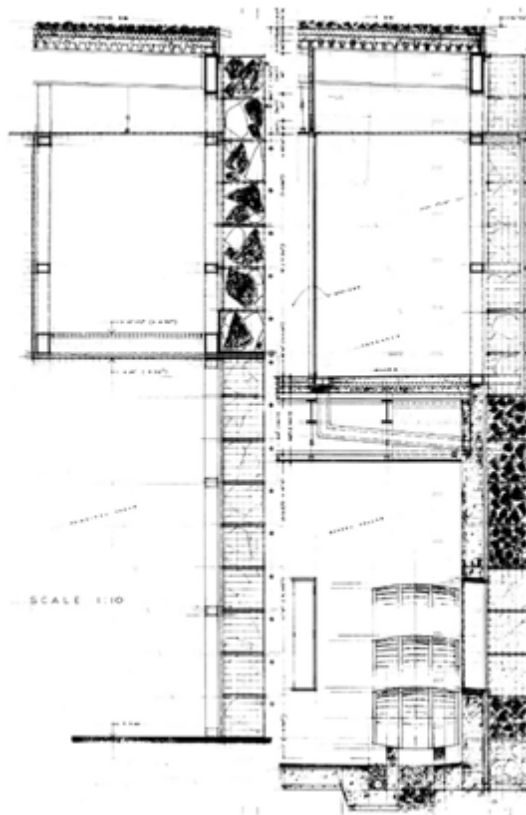


Figure 14.

WALL

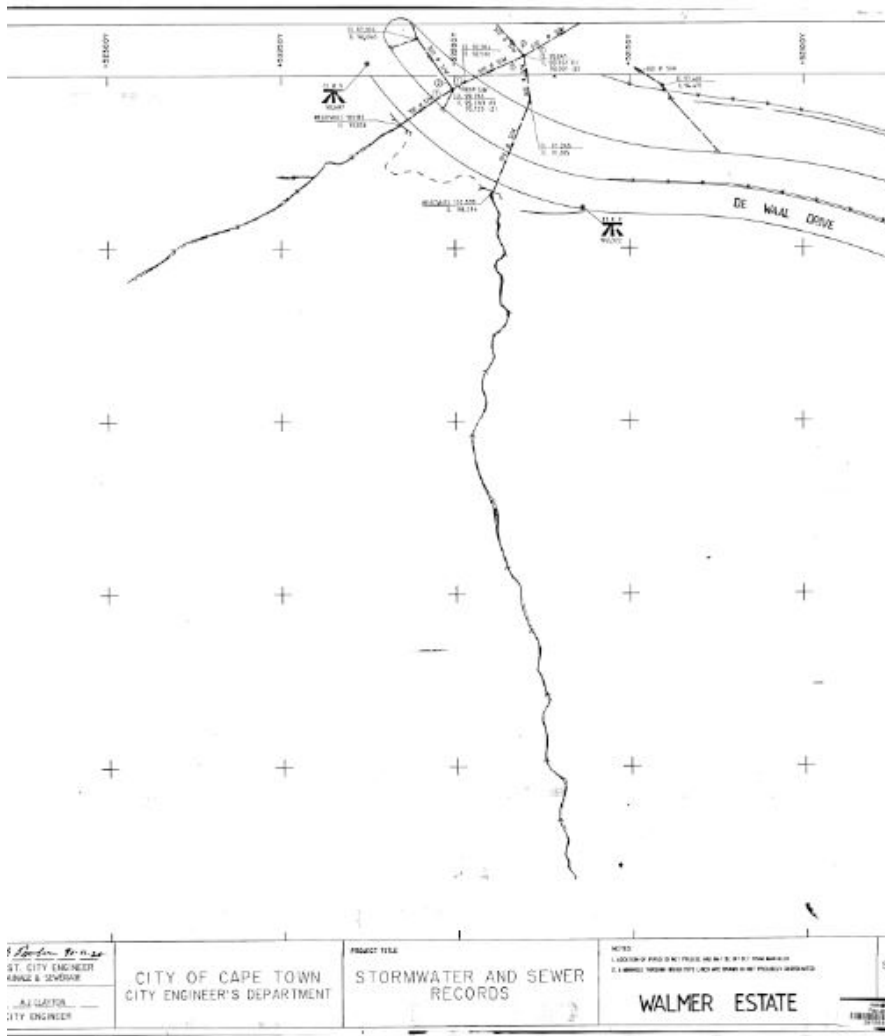
Two massive walls line the length of the intervention in the landscape. Heavy and imposing, these walls are placed to create a dialogue of constraint and freedom with the criss-crossing labyrinth between. It adds a constant sense of direction to the meandering labyrinth, bringing the strong link to the mountain into presence after it had been lying latent for so long. It is also what allows this scheme to make a definitive mark in the landscape, asserting a strange otherness to nature while still allowing nature to overtake. The project as a whole can be read as a boundary or a comment on the encroachment of city onto mountain, and yet the wall is often punctured allowing for views, paths and the mountain to permeate through.

The ‘constricting’ wall will ironically itself be ‘caged’ through the employment of a gabion wall structure, filled with material found on site. Individual 1m by 1m steel gabion cage will be filled in strata of what is found. The 1m of rubble on the District Six side will have to be sorted to source useful pieces of brick, stone and concrete. In order to be structurally sound enough for the up to 7m high walls, the gabion cages will need to be engineered with a thickened steel edging. Gabion walls also allow for further connection with the mountain, as it allows air, insects and plants to pass through the gaps.

This sets up a strange inversion of material awareness. The massive structural walls are made of loose, stacked pieces of material, while labyrinth/earth is made of a solid, singular material, whereas one would assume the opposite.

Hertzog and de Meuron have explored the Gabion wall with an inner steel supporting structure in their Domus Winery project.¹ (See figures 13 and 14).

¹ Fairs, Marcus. 2007. “Dominus Winery By Herzog & De Meuron”. *Dezeen*. <http://www.dezeen.com/2007/09/09/dominus-winery-by-herzog-de-meuron/>.



(Groundwater plan: Cape Town City Council)



image of the culvert on site

WATER

The mountain was abundant in providing water. Women washed clothes in the streams and some say they raced paper boats as children. Young people swam wherever water collected at the end of a stream. Water ran its natural course, and then there was the flood, and the water was diverted into a culvert beneath the motorway.

The intervention sits at the edge of the stream closest to Devil's Peak Estate. The idea is to allow the water to continue to flow along its natural path, on grade, a constant narrative alongside the intervention. In the tunnel, ground level is the level of the road above the pedestrian, so the water will run in a channel, the trickling sound contributing to the contemplative nature of the space. This water will then be retrieved, becoming part of a culmination pool, some trickling down a channel to the entrance.

This project aims to lift the water into use again by collecting it in a pool above the labyrinth on the District Six side, literally bringing it into presence. The pool exists as a strangely memorial-like feature, yet is an ordinary everyday swimming pool open to the public. From the pool, the most spectacular view of the city touching the ocean is visible, the mini Valley Section, from mountain to ocean, is complete.



MAGNIFICENT ENTRY

In front are two magnificent, imposing walls marking the entry of the gateway to the mountain. Water drips from a pool above that is wedged between the two walls. The space is almost poignant in its presence and yet the sound of children splashing and screaming is heard above.

Ahead are two entrances to a strangely intertwined staircase. Inside the labyrinth, it is tight and quite dark. It twists and turns, up and down, releasing every so often to pause at a view through a slit in the constricting wall. There is a moment of being lost and yet the destination can be clearly seen ahead.

Silence

Suddenly the narrow chaos of the labyrinth subsides into the ordered openness of tunnel. Ahead is a sharp light. Everything is quiet, except that the trickling flow of water is heard above. The floor dips down and the sharp light reveals a massive hole in the ceiling. All that can be seen through the hole is the sky.

Mountain

Emerging from the tunnel, the labyrinth begins again, but this time it is freer, more organic. Again the labyrinth meanders, shifting positions and views, although still directed at the mountain. And then there is a pause, everything is flattened into a platform that leaks out into the fynbos.

For a moment you are walking down a narrow passage and suddenly you find yourself at the front of an auditorium where school children are being shown a video on the history of mountain!

The labyrinth becomes wider and more generous. Plants begin to permeate. The mountain begins to overtake. Finally all is culminated into a space completely catapulted into the mountain. Behind, the entire journey up to this point is visible.

CONCLUSION

In the beginning, this was a place with a rich connection between a people and a landscape. Their journey to the mountain was one of freedom and respite. A series of disruptions left the place in an odd disjuncture.

This project explores how architecture can celebrate all the existing layers of the place, the odd and ordinary, the connections and disjunctions and bring them into existence in a way that shifts our perspective of what we think we know about that place.

The design proposal harnesses the contradictions of the site to present a series of new encounters along a journey between nature and the city.

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IMAGES

Fig 1. Aerial image 1960s: National Geo-spatial Information

Fig 2. Aerial image 2015: Cape Town City Council

Figure 3: Taken from the Western Cape Archives and Records Service

Figure 4. Taken from the Weekend Argus

Figure 5. Taken from UCT Digital Collections

Figure 6. Robert Morris' Untitled (mirrored boxes), 1965

Figure 7. Edward Burtynsky, Oil Fields #13, Taft, California, 2002.

Figure 8. Taken from <http://www.districtsix.co.za/Content/Exhibitions/Interact/Multimedia/People/index.php>

Figure 9. Taken from www.italianways.com/piranesis-imaginary-prisons

Figure 10: From Compton, John S. 2004. *The Rocks And Mountains Of Cape Town*. Cape Town: Juta and Company. [adapted]

Figure 11: Taken from

Figure 12: Section of James Turrel's "The Colour Inside"

Figure 13: Taken from: [66.media.tumblr.com/fe2e7ae9fe6d2bccb14660f55f5e7239/tumblr\)ggmf1Eox11qzlcoro3_r1_500.jpg](http://66.media.tumblr.com/fe2e7ae9fe6d2bccb14660f55f5e7239/tumblr)ggmf1Eox11qzlcoro3_r1_500.jpg)

Figure 14: Taken from: <http://www.archidiap.com/opera/dominus->

