

## Popular? Neo-colonial representations of heritage<sup>1</sup>

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*“It is in Disney that the worlds of architecture and entertainment, which have been moving closer together for years, have achieved their most powerful intersection yet – becoming so intimately entwined that it is sometimes impossible to tell any longer which is which.”*  
(Brown, cited in Ellin, 1998)<sup>2</sup>

As an architect in today’s built environment one is increasingly defined as a purveyor of some populist notion of ‘style’. One could almost expect to hear a question such as “Would you prefer a Tuscan, a Victorian, a Cape Cod or a Modern?” asked as if the process of design can be boiled down to a menu-option from a fast-food emporium. Sadly, it seems that originality is now no longer a requirement for acceptable practice in the homogenised hyper-real environment. The bulk of architectural form, as practiced in commercial terms, is prescribed by popularism. What is popular seems no longer to be the traditional processes of design and discovery, but rather the appropriation of images from other places and times, removing them from their generating context and the ensuing creation of an a-contextual and a-historical landscape. Pattern and homogeneity in built and urban form have often been mooted as desirable by architectural critics, like the much admired ‘coherence’ of medieval towns.<sup>3</sup> However, this type of consistent shadow-chasing seems to have led to another type of coherent pattern – the replication of image and the acceptance of muralistic architecture as the desired postmodern ‘style’.

If the Modernist manifesto states: “Form follows function”, Postmodernism might state: “Form does not follow function”. Yet the contrariness of Postmodernism does not necessarily extend to the nonsensical. Perhaps the current environment might rather declare: “Form follows Finance” or “Form follows Fiction”.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that in today’s environment profit is King – whether in the need to produce faster and cheaper or in the need to find methods to cut costs. One of the reasons for the persistent strength of the trend of image-appropriation in the current practice of architecture may be that it is cheaper. Why spend money on design skill, when one can simply appropriate images from the past and re-apply them in the present – regardless of their original context?

Some of the best examples of this type of image transfer are the popular palaces of entertainment called casinos that we possess in South Africa. Montecasino, Johannesburg, faithfully modelled on the hill-top towns of Tuscany. GrandWest Casino, Cape Town, faithfully modelled on significant but demolished buildings and areas of central Cape Town.<sup>5</sup> It is at this point the fundamental difference between these two buildings appears. MonteCasino takes its scrubbed-clean context or ‘theme’ from a real, but distant place. GrandWest Casino draws on the past of Cape Town, and exclusively an erased past at that, for its ‘theme’. What is the meaning of this choice? Although more than likely a semi-subconscious choice on the part of the themers, can popular architecture ever completely divorce itself from the subtext of its choice of image?

## Heritage and illusion

It is considered to be a logical assumption that architecture occupies its place in human experience through communication. Yet one might be tempted to enquire whether there is a communication beyond the literal. In the case of GrandWest Casino it could be questioned whether it communicates only in the present, or also, because of its choice of image, in the past. Henri Lefebvre in “The Production of Space” asks whether, although spaces contain messages, they can be reduced to messages.<sup>6</sup> This is left as an open question. One can further enquire as to whether messages in terms of a building are conveyed as meanings and if so how?

The theme-park or entertainment world, such as GrandWest, can be considered to be the ultimate “hyper-real”<sup>7</sup> environment. As, for example, in Disney World, these themed environments have only one aim, and that is to function as a part of a large, commercial entity. In the South African context, as particularly in the case of GrandWest, this type of money motivation could be conceivably described as one that indirectly buttresses neo-colonial relationships.

AlSaiyad states that motivation is the hinge of the “dominance equation”<sup>8</sup> at all levels. It is important to investigate the “manifestations of motivations in symbols, to analyse how symbols symbolise, how they function to mediate meanings.”<sup>7</sup> In terms of colonialism,<sup>9</sup> it is important to recognise that these motivations were simultaneously self-seeking and beneficent. The exploitation of nations and their resources was couched in a language of being necessary, to dominate, to assist.<sup>7</sup> In linguistic terms it would, therefore, follow that the motivations of neo-colonial enterprises would indeed be the same. It could be hypothesised that the requirements of the granting of the GrandWest Casino licence are an example of this; namely, the requirement for 30 percent black empowerment, in the shares of the company and in the construction, and the trade-off scheme with the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

Post-colonial studies recognise these shifts and moves beyond the nation-state to explore the “palimpsestic transnationalisms”<sup>10</sup> left in the wake of colonialism and its corollaries of hegemony and the dominance of one group over another. In so doing it is important to recognise the equation of Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge that states “Cultural Capital = Power”.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the process of neo-colonialism derives power from economic sources, the acquisition of cultural capital can only be passed from one controlling group to another. The stuff of this cultural capital has been further defined as heritage: “The nature and shaping of heritage is intimately related to the exercise of power, heritage being part of the process of defining criteria of social inclusion and by extension, social exclusion”.<sup>12</sup>

Heritage by its nature is one that is place-bound; heritage in the most accurate sense of the word being used to describe physical objects but also the *Zeitgeist* thereof. It is impossible to separate power and heritage on even the most fundamental level<sup>13</sup> and therefore, in the interpretation of heritage and its (re)creation, we by default accept the political implications of such actions. As Graham, Ashworth and Turnbridge note: “Dominant ideologies create specific place identities, which reinforce support for particular state structures and related political ideologies.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet it is important to recognise that although this relationship is direct, it is not necessarily fixed. This is especially important in the recreation of heritage (such as at GrandWest) – accuracy is somewhat negotiable where the source material no longer exists. The meaning of these objects in

reality begins to become subservient to the image of them presented in the fantasy. In this way, perception can be changed by a convincing image – rewriting history and regenerating cultural capital. As such: “Heritage is about the political and economic structures of the present using the past as a resource, but as that present becomes markedly more diverse and heterogeneous heritage itself becomes ever more complex and malleable, not so much in its physical extent as in the conflicting meanings which are piled upon it”.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, the alteration of heritage in this way cannot be guaranteed. Any messages intended on one level will undoubtedly be interpreted differently on another. In terms of method, heritage can only be altered by changing what is represented not what is meant, as meaning and form are inextricably linked.<sup>16</sup> The work of Shohat and Stam specifically describes this phenomenon as succumbing to the “burden of representation.”<sup>17</sup> On one level representation is mimesis but on another it is the “act of contextualised interlocution between socially situated producers and receivers”.<sup>18</sup>

In artistic terms mimesis = esthetic. Derived from the word ‘esthetic’ are the words: ‘ethnos’ (people, culture) and ‘ethos’ (character, moral). Therefore, the creation of art is also the delegation of a voice, and the representation of a people. If one considers the cultural diversity of South Africa, representation in terms of heritage will become self-contradictory as multiple meanings and interpretations will undoubtedly arise.

At GrandWest Casino, the creation of heritage is not only the attachment of meaning to specific structures, but also an ‘artistic’ re-creation of the past. One must begin to question what happens when art re-creates life. Is it not possible then, that the shadow begins to stand in front of the person, as it were. In this case, the result of which is surely the shadow of a shadow; allowing the realm of imagination, opinion and collective memory (however warped by the representation) to emerge.<sup>19</sup>

Like history, memory is inherently revisionist. (Samuel cited in Graham, 2000)<sup>20</sup>

Memory, by its very nature, is a social construct, and being that, is intimately connected to the present. Where the meaning of a heritage object is changed, so memory is also revised. As memory is linked to place, so place is linked to identity. Wherein changing one, the other is also changed.

These mythical worlds become literal. (Graham, 2000)<sup>21</sup>

Interjections of the responsibility for these actions aside, one might return to considering motivation. Why change the past by recreating it. Insecurities of the present can often be allayed by history, by creating a sense of sequence and termination and thereby, creating and connecting to a sense of nostalgia.<sup>22</sup>

Enlarged or diminished, embellished or purified, lengthened or abbreviated, the past becomes more and more a foreign country, yet also increasingly tinged with present colours.

(Lowenthal, 1985)<sup>23</sup>

Can the choice of image or 'fiction' be proven to have a direct, mimetic, relationship between the object of representation and the resultant communication? Furthermore, can that relationship be shown to correlate directly with the historical relationships that the original object was produced from?

### **Heritage and power**

By the specific choice of historic buildings that are no longer extant, but still in living memory the designers of GrandWest have created an illusion of an historical continuity in order to give legitimacy to a new, invasive and ultimately commercial entity.<sup>24</sup> The very fact that these buildings no longer exist allows the nature of memory, which is essentially revisionist, to create a sense of nostalgia within strictly controlled parameters.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, when one closely examines the true past of these buildings (the objects of representation) one discovers a story far from the idea (I) of 'family entertainment'. It will be shown however that the choice of these images, by their colonial history, paints a picture whose power structure and hierarchies draw a parallel with the structural manifestations of the casino.

Recognition of the relics of the past as heritage almost invariably began at the instigation of a social elite and commonly designated the grand and spectacular, including the buildings and artifacts most closely identified with that self-same elite. In terms of legitimation, such heritage could be interpreted as one means of perpetuating elitist control and power.

(Graham, 2000)<sup>26</sup>

The imagery and visual devices employed in the casino are but a distraction from the true nature of the space. In fact, the specific choice of historic images that are no longer in existence reinforces this visual fantasy. This in turn creates a space that is as far removed from the present as possible and creates an environment, along with other specific devices, that is propitious for the act of gaming and is conducive to retaining people in a sense of unreal limbo for as long as possible. Secondly this fantastic world camouflages the issues of security and fear, which dominate the entire actual physical structure of the casino.

The combination of these factors creates a specific power structure and hierarchy that is in accordance with the theory of "Otherness".<sup>27</sup> This presents itself through the attitudes, walls and structures which exist in the casino, the casino site and the running of the business toward the patrons, staff and the community in which it finds itself placed.

Exoticism solipsises its object for the exoticist's pleasure, using the colonised 'other' as an erotic fiction in order to re-enchant the world.

(Shohat & Stam, 1994)<sup>28</sup>

### **Image and imagination**

Although it is accurate to say that today's architectural language is undoubtedly post modern, it is more accurate to describe some forms of architecture as post modern. Increasingly, the categorisation of commercial architecture as post modern has become an unstated fact. Post

modernism's preoccupation with image and décor has led to an increasingly muralistic style, adopted by the commercial realm after demonstrable success in Disney and other 'themed' environments.<sup>29</sup>

### **Image and memory**

Often these 'themed' environments are historicist in nature, claiming to not only represent a certain place in time and space; but to actually become that place, as in GrandWest. These buildings move beyond the realm of art and artistic discourse,<sup>30</sup> into a revised version of past, using collective memory as a device to assist in such. Pastiche, in the decorative sense, often does not arouse a sense of collective memory, in that the object is selectively contextual.<sup>31</sup> But, in the case of GrandWest a context is selected, in this way a collection of historically unrelated buildings form a self-referential whole, and within such a structure, an excuse for a play 'environment'.

The pretense of historicism or preservation- of referring to a certain original – is superseded by an attempt to produce an encompassing environment which transcends its sources of inspiration. Much of our postmodern landscape has thus been described as hyper-real.

(Ellin, 1998)<sup>32</sup>

It can be contended that the continued popularity of hyper-real historicism, is a form of self-imaging through nostalgia<sup>33</sup> – nostalgia for certain ideals that are held to have value and are also, unattainable. These values are equated and expressed through memory, so that an aesthetic of an historic (or historicist) nature is held to have value not because it is not real, but because it is no longer real. The historicist environment represents a choice to return to a more manageable past, an era of diminished danger and societal pressures.<sup>34</sup> The false complexity of form evident in these edifices is a device to hide reality, to hide the need to turn inward. This manifests itself in the creation of an external space internally – a false, mediated and selected version of public life. (see plans, Figures 4,7)

In turn, this is reinforced by the creation of new 'old' buildings in order to create a sense of tradition and heritage. The message is that there is a continuity and linearity in time and space terminating in this present. This is also linked to the practicality that pre-modern building types and forms do not correspond to contemporary needs.<sup>35</sup> Acting in conjunction with this, the pastiche of post modernism, the turning inward and the necessity of disguise form the 'image' of the hyper-real environment.

The past is always altered for motives that reflect present needs. We reshape our heritage to make it attractive in modern terms, we seek to make it part of ourselves, and ourselves part of it, we conform it to our self images and aspirations. Rendered grand or homely, magnificent or tarnished, history is continually altered in our private interests.

(Lowenthal, 1985)<sup>36</sup>

### Image selection

However portrayed, the choice of material to create image is always intended to capture the imagination and engage the collective memory. In the case of GrandWest Casino the material has been harvested from the past of Cape Town, but removed some kilometres away to an area where land values are low. Because of the low socio-economic standing of the surrounding community, objections to such a palace of entertainment were few. Coupled with precedent for show and spectacle on the land,<sup>37</sup> this seeming incongruence between area and edifice was brushed aside to the extent that GrandWest becomes a bastion of civility in a conveniently ignored sea of poverty. This type of gentrification is reflected in the choice of material used for the theming. Firstly, material associated with the Imperial conquest of the Cape, portrayed as grand and magnificent – The Grand Hotel, The Alhambra, The Standard Bank, The General Post Office and the Central Station. Secondly, material linked to the earlier colonial periods (Holland, France) and material considered to have ‘ethnic’ value rendered as homely and ‘quaint’; The Cape Village (Groot Constantia slave quarters) and The District (District Six). (See maps of Cape Town, Figures 1–3.)

These relics of the past all share a common fate – consigned to demolition within living memory. Yet, the rendering of each of the Imperial buildings is considered a-scaled yet accurate in detail.<sup>38</sup> The parts of the casino with ‘codename’ designations (The District) are rendered in a homely and internalised fashion, portraying an image of authentic ‘ethnicity’. (See interior plan, Figure 7.)

All ‘heritage’ can be considered as a perpetuation of elitism,<sup>39</sup> and in the creation of these Disney-type environments, such as GrandWest, the spirit of gentrification. The choice of monumental buildings conveys a sense of status, military power and political force. Yet, beneath signifiers of power, collective will is claimed.<sup>40</sup> This movement beyond time and into the realm of commemoration consigns the status of these buildings to oblivion and memory.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, by their physical recreation, they attempt to remove their symbolic value, and thus expunge the enormous quantity of negative history associated with these spaces.<sup>42</sup>

### Image structure

Distasteful as these representations may be, there must be a quantifiable factor that has made this casino so attractive as to become the top-earning casino in the Western Cape.<sup>43</sup> A recent study concludes that the top factors that attract people to a casino are: “The pleasure of playing games. The pleasure of being intoxicated with fear and hope. The pleasure of escape”.<sup>44</sup> It would not be unreasonable to speculate that the connection between the hyper-real visual environment and the casino is escapism. This allows the mind to dismiss the nature of the image and rather focus on entertainment and pleasure, making acceptable otherwise insensitive images.

Not only does the casino typology make the symbolism of these images acceptable, but also dictates the structuring of the whole, in order to facilitate the greatest deviation from natural time as possible to keep players playing and money being made and spent. Some of these principles are:

1. The environment is completely inward focused – there are no windows/daylight in the gaming and shopping areas.

2. The planning of the casino is designed in a route that allows no deviation, terminating in each instance in the casino floor.
3. The route is lined with shops and other commercial venues.
4. Day and night-time are simulated within a hermetically sealed 'shed'.

It is clear how the choice of historical material reinforces these principles, creating a condition ideal for the playing out of these factors. The 'outdoor' environments become convincingly so with all the trappings of the external including vegetation (Replandscape). The indoor environments are so beguiling that the passage of time is ignored, one player was observed to remain seated at the same slot machine for more than two hours.<sup>45</sup>

Part of the creation of such an escapist environment is the need to reinforce its a-historicism by not allowing the intrusion of the contemporary onto the spaces of the 'past'. It was the creation of service spaces, tunnels and elevated accesses that needed to be planned first in order to allow the running of the fantasy to proceed smoothly.<sup>45</sup> The second exercise was to ruthlessly eliminate all evidence of these spaces from the fantasy realm, so that the message is never interrupted or disturbed. This principle, first created in Disney World allows the environment to become completely convincing and thus reinforce the function of commerciality.<sup>46</sup> Hence, in GrandWest, the actual physical structure is "a series of large sheds on platforms"<sup>46</sup> and the 'buildings' are steel framed with cladding layers to create the historical backdrop.

Essentially, the technique used to create this escapist realm in the casino is bi-fold: Firstly, the selection of the material and secondly, the joining of the material into a cohesive whole. This is in reality the incorporation of a cinematographic<sup>47</sup> process inasmuch as the casino is a sequence of events, the unfolding of a narrative and the creation of an "accelerated sequence" of unrelated elements.<sup>48</sup>

### Case studies

Ultimately, creating a sense of attraction to GrandWest lies in its function, yet this role is also finding a device of attraction through the source material of the 'image'. This relies on the projection of a shared past – something that is difficult to find in the history of South Africa. Yet, the casino's success proves that this has not deterred its patrons. Clearly there is some success in this realm despite the choice of patently colonial imagery. It has often been pointed out that colonialism is not dead, that it lives on under the guise of Eurocentrism. This type discourse and ingrained popular thought has systematically degraded the value of traditional cultures according to arbitrary criteria, and subsequently these memes have been reinforced by mass-market culture which is really a mediated version of Eurocentrism through the historical colonisation of United States and its subsequent global market dominance.<sup>49</sup> Thus, through this process, although one might not value a traditional past, the group self- image is also degraded and hence recourse to a colonial, or provided, identity is inevitable. Similarly in an attempt to find a cohesive material to extrapolate image material one is forced to look toward heritage generated entirely from a colonial past. Thus, in District Six one could propose that the valued cohesion in the built fabric<sup>50</sup> was created by the continual marginalisation of firstly, the poor and secondly, people of colour. Forced into small slivers of land, this cohesion is but an expression of a "localized identity"<sup>51</sup> derived from ghetto-type conditions.

- *The Grand Hotel*<sup>52</sup>

The Grand Hotel of Cape Town was originally situated on Strand Street on the current site where Woolworths sits today. In terms of architectural period it can be characterised as late colonial (1840-1920). This period of colonialism was known as Imperialism<sup>53</sup> and was characterised by the aggressive search for new markets and resources. Architecturally, the availability of pattern books and the predominance of industrialisation, created a morphology of standardisation influenced by the dominant mother country.<sup>54</sup>

Strand Street, was originally the “Beach Road” of Cape Town<sup>55</sup> and although never the centre of town, an important location. One can observe the reality of this Imperial conformity if one compares the Cape Town Grand Hotel with the Grand Hotel on the beach road in Eastbourne, UK. (see Figure 1)

- *The District*

Imagination is the model from which reality is created. (Chung, 2001)<sup>56</sup>

District Six has been popularly imagined as an area of dynamic ethnicity, yet a visit to the District Six Museum in central Cape Town shows the “mundane banality”<sup>57</sup> of the group areas removals. Many of the people directly affected by the removals, have since passed away and the reality of District Six now exists in memory through storytelling, photographs and published works. Of the physicality of District Six, it is well documented that it was a place of the poor, where absentee landlords owned entire streets. Much of the housing stock was dilapidated and sanitary conditions were appalling.<sup>58</sup> These are the physical facts of District Six, yet this type of statement is likely to create a negative reaction. To the wealthy District Six was a place of entertainment,<sup>59</sup> yet the people that lived there did so out of necessity. This type of statement is not meant to condone their actions of Apartheid, quite the converse, it is a human right to live where one chooses. Yet this does not deny the fact that District Six had always been and still is a political football. (see Figure 3)

District Six carries the marks of intolerance and injustice. (Cape Times, 1982)<sup>60</sup>

Even where the image and portrayal of the place is continually reinterpreted to suit the need of the “story-teller”,<sup>61</sup> as in the District Six Museum, government propaganda pamphlets of the 1980s and GrandWest Casino, one must not forget that any representation is a interlocution by a socially situated producer and receiver, each with their own set of ideas and social framework. In other words:

A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.

(Nietzsche in Said, 2003)<sup>62</sup>

### The other and the unwanted

Up until this point, this paper has examined the structure and physicality of GrandWest Casino and how that relates to the images that have been chosen as its façade. It has become clear that these images have historically, several clear associations - it has also been examined as to how these associations are marginalised by the entertainment environment. To continue, it is important to examine the messages that are prevalent in the casino and whether these reinforce the images of heritage in the past or in the present.

In the discussion of image, there is clear evidence presented of images being harvested from the colonial past of South Africa, indeed there is even evidence of commemoration of these edifices. Linguistically, the word 'colonial' derives from the Latin verb *colo*, which in the English Language, also shares etymology with the words culture and cult (religion). Thus from the same root we derive practices which include occupying the earth, cultivating the earth, the affirmation of origins and the transmission of inherited values.

In the case of GrandWest Casino and with heritage in general, it is clear that rendering the past through heritage, new or historical, legitimates and affirms it. Similarly, present attitudes are validated by their resemblance to previous ones.<sup>63</sup> Thus, in the past, where indigenous groups were marginalised, as it was not in the Imperial interest to give them validity, so this attitude is perpetuated in commercial architecture. What is a better yard-stick of value in a society based on a free-market economy, than perceived value to generate income? This statement should not be perceived as the advocacy of some type of 'Africanised' architecture, as these types of buildings are simply another example of the practice of exoticising notions. Yet in the same way that pre-modern cultures are exoticised, it is clear that we exoticise our own past.<sup>64</sup> This leads to the further projection of the idea of an exoticised 'other', this could be vague – a projection of ourselves into the past, or direct – the exclusion of those deemed unwanted or dangerous.

Devices of Exclusion:

- *Walls*

Encircling GrandWest Casino there is a small steel palisade fence. Hardly a huge security measure for the biggest money-making casino in the Western Cape. Logically, there must be other devices ensuring the security of all that money – so why have it? Does this object not stand incongruous to the majesty of the facades, to the splendour and the occasion of the over-scaled *porte-cochere*. Perhaps this item betrays, in a small sense, the insecurity typical of the pseudo-public environment – that there is always an unwanted, an undesirable.<sup>65</sup>

The basic function of a wall has been defined as to “exclude the unwanted”,<sup>66</sup> essentially a protectionist measure. Yet at GrandWest Casino there is not much in the way of boundary wall such as the 20 foot high wall that encircles Disney World.<sup>67</sup> However, even this small gesture betrays evidence that GrandWest is not a place of public access, but a place where it is necessary to indicate that only some are welcome.

- *Defensible space*

GrandWest is an island of luxury in a sea of poverty, it is almost easy to shut one's eyes on the way there and arrive in this fantastic place, untouched by time, crime and filth. That is, if one has a car (and R10 for parking). There is a suggestion of openness at GrandWest that is, in fact,

carefully exclusive. Following this there is a definite sense of being admitted, through layers of defence and security, the sense that one is being scrutinised carefully for acceptability, for the ability to consume. This is perhaps perceptible in the way that certain groups seem to form inside the parking area, drinking in their cars, offering drugs and so on. The area of parking is so vast that it is difficult to control behaviour within it, but this is unnecessary – it also acts as a holding cell for undesirables – a glacis to the edifice in the centre. (see Figure 5)

- *Segregation*

One of the corollaries of colonialism is the expropriation of territory and the destruction of indigenous identity.<sup>68</sup> Both of these factors can be seen at GrandWest Casino. Firstly in the choice of its images, such as District Six – but what a peculiar irony that the area that the people of District Six were moved to (the Cape Flats) should become the location of its recreation. Even the name of the area ‘Goodwood’ has been named after a place in England (the site of a famous race-track of the same name). This same type of colonial process resulted in the formation of Cape Town as a segregated city, exacerbated by Apartheid.<sup>69</sup> The resulting structure has resulted in enclaves separated not only by socio-economics but also by race.<sup>70</sup> This morphology of city is reflected micro-cosmically in the hyper-real environment. It could also be postulated that the legacy of the apartheid city has allowed the natural settlement of these types of environment as a continuation of a space making ‘tradition’. Inside the casino there is a clear differentiation of economic ability and thus, in the South African context, race. It was observed that the area of ‘The District’ was almost exclusively patronised by white and Indian customers (a cruel irony), whilst coloured and black peoples patronised the ‘Cape Village’. It was also observed that the former patronised the gambling tables and higher stakes slots, whilst the latter patronised the cheaper slots and other entertainment areas.

Similarly this type of message is reinforced through the double-edged sword of consumerism. Whilst ease of access was quoted as the largest factor contributing to problem gambling in South Africa according to a national study.<sup>71</sup> The MVG (a loyalty scheme, designed to monitor problem gambling activity) guests are designated preferential parking, in front of the entrance to the casino floor.

### **Security, insecurity and fear**

In neo-colonial discourse certain behaviours seen to be typical are said to be an example of ‘the mark of the plural’. This is one quality that is considered to define who is considered, part of the ‘other’.<sup>72</sup> In a colonial situation those in power are given a legitimate identity, whilst those of the ‘other’ are directed and controlled almost as one unit. Any who defy such rational organisation are considered ‘dangerous’ or subversive. Thus paraphrasing Said, in order to best serve the Imperial interest a certain distance is necessary between us and them.<sup>73</sup>

*Historicism can also be interpreted as and expression of nostalgia for an authoritarian past.*

*(Graham, 2000)<sup>74</sup>*

In Cape Town where spaces can in turn be defined as belonging to us and them, one can witness mass panic when gang violence from the Cape Flats is seen to spill over into the safe spaces of (white) consumerism and tourism. This elicits a militarian response of stepped up security,

stricter controls and restrictions that often succumb to systematic racial profiling.<sup>75</sup> This type of response is neither effective nor logical; rather it is driven by a fear that, with its overt signs of defence often produces an aggressive response in kind.<sup>76</sup> These types of repressive spaces are strewn with ostensible signs of dynamic public life, of an easy, relaxed bonhomie. This type of action has not been without precedent in Cape Town – Jan van Riebeeck planted an almond hedge to protect Cape Town from “marauders” from the hinterland.<sup>77</sup>

In the defence of Cape Town, occupying forces created some of the structures considered to be of great national importance and pride today – The Castle and Grand Parade, the Noon Gun.<sup>78</sup> These defensive lines, whilst physical in nature can be directly related to the structures in place that, whilst not designated as defensive, perform that function at GrandWest Casino (see Figures 5,6). This is symptomatic of the creation of a pseudo-public space, of the conversion of the city from a public arena to a private one.<sup>79</sup>

Walls and boundaries, be they in the form of multi-million Rand surveillance equipment, or a simple hedge, create certain sets of relationships,<sup>80</sup> said to “at once create and seek to defend against the impact of division”,<sup>81</sup> and are an instrument of control. At GrandWest Casino it is thought that there are over 100 security cameras, extending outside of the complex until the first highway intersection. These technology-walls are major factors in the design of the casino; ceiling heights were completely determined by the visual “sweep” of these devices.<sup>82</sup>

The type of wall created by the pseudo-public space can be said to be a symptom of exclusion. It might be pertinent to question whether Cape Town, in its history, has truly ever had a democratic space, or merely repressed spaces camouflaged in the garb of equality? The commercial, hyper-real space has often metonymically been referred to as a prison. Yet at GrandWest Casino the ‘control room’ of the casino and security system, positioned above the gaming floor, can be clearly likened to the layout of the Panopticon prison designed by Jeremy Bentham. This format has been successfully used in malls and other such commercial realms for many years,<sup>83</sup> yet in GrandWest one would be hard-pressed to locate it in its ‘bird-hide’ of a Spanish Galleon. From this control space behaviour is closely examined from the exteriors of the casino to the interiors. Climate, the odds on slot machines and the security booms can all be controlled from this hidden point – a truly Orwellian experience.

However, one is not permitted complete oblivion from security at the casino, a huge uniformed<sup>84</sup> presence is available to control access and police activity. In fact the non-consumer is immediately reported to ‘control’ and subsequently followed and assessed as a threat (as the author experienced). Part of the design of the casino directs people on such a strictly controlled route, that it is obvious on observation that there are people walking it mindlessly with no destination or purpose. This behaviourist severity ultimately wears one down, succumbing to either shopping, gambling or eating – in short fulfilling one’s ‘other’ purpose.

## Conclusion

What happens when a new work of art is created is that something happens simultaneously to all the works that preceded it.

(Baird, 1968)<sup>85</sup>

Prior research has proven that the Disney World phenomenon of 'Main Street USA' began a trend for heritage preservation and revivalism in small American towns. Such a contribution to the field of architectural conservation, can only be considered commendable.<sup>86</sup> However, the counter-balance to this trend was that; in the words of Vincent Scully "real Main Streets tart themselves up to look like the fake ones".<sup>87</sup> In the case of GrandWest Casino, further research could study this phenomenon in the Cape context. Most would agree that any public awareness raised to the cause of conservation would be a positive aspect of this type of detailed revivalism. All heritage, however, by its commodified nature, is as much an object of today as it is of the past. This, in the South African context, can only exacerbate the spatial inequalities and indeed buttress the social inequalities of the colonial/apartheid city-grid. Racism, and today's ruthless wealth-based elitism, is an ally and partial product of colonialism and its brutal friend apartheid. Part of the legacy of both colonialism and racism is that ethnic affiliations and identities have split under the pressures of a racist society and thus, in the Cape particularly, it has been observed that the adoption of a type of trend-based, palimpsestic cultural identity is prevalent – especially in poor areas, the influence of American gansta culture is enormous, and indeed becomes the sole method of judging social standing and commercial value. Colonialism and its allies were never disinterested on a cultural level, in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o colonialism destroyed: "The people's belief in their names, in their language, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" and, furthermore, "they (the people) see their past as a waste land of non-achievement".<sup>88</sup>

It has been noted that the Cape's city grid through time is palimpsestic in nature.<sup>89</sup> In a similar light the Cape's 'culture' can also be seen throughout the past as palimpsestic – the adoption, or the prescription, of outside identities: Dutch, English, apartheid, gangsta. It is no wonder that the hyper-real environment has settled so seamlessly, and even desirably, into this cultural and physical landscape. Many of the qualities of the hyper-real environment have been identified as similar to those of colonialism and more specifically, Imperialism. Furthermore, if one accepts that large commercial entities are neo-colonial in nature, the manifestation of colonial ideas and spatial structures, in at least one case being proven, would be a reasonable conclusion.

Edifices such as GrandWest Casino, have acquired an acceptability and validity, in South Africa. Their recreation of the past is neither publicly questioned (no records of such questioning exist in Newspaper letters and articles) nor objected to, yet the type of mural architecture of Venturi et al is considered by critics to be a "rather feeble"<sup>90</sup> method of reviving the feelings of the past. If one accepts this as a theorem, one might extrapolate that solely the use of image or mural is not enough to provide meaning, and this must be reinforced through structure – in so doing the two must support one another. In the case of GrandWest it has been proven that the physical structure, that is commercial in nature, is historically similar to the Imperial structure. It has been further proven that the 'image' chosen to be re-created, as a theme, is entirely Imperial in nature. Neither this image or the space needs predominate, each reinforce one another, creating within the Eurocentric meme, a natural and therefore unobjectionable new past where human relationships continue in a mode of us and them, an attitude that has often been identified as contributing to the continued racial sensitivities in South Africa.

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was completed under the supervision of the University of Cape Town's Department of Architecture.
- <sup>2</sup> N. Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 1998) p. 161.
- <sup>3</sup> G. Baird, 'La Dimension Amoureuse in Architecture' (1969), in Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, (MIT Press, 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> N. Ellin, p.134.
- <sup>5</sup> D. Woode, (ed.), 'GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World', in *Architect and Builder*, (2001) Jan/Feb, pp. 72 – 94.
- <sup>6</sup> H. Lefebvre, 'From the Production of Space' (1974), in Hays (ed.), *Architectural Theory Since 1968*, (MIT Press, 2002).
- <sup>7</sup> Term from Eco et al used in terms of M. Davis, *City of Quartz*, (First Vintage, New York, 1992).
- <sup>8</sup> N. AlSayyad, *Urbanism and the Dominance Equation – Reflections on Colonialism and National Identity*, (Avebury, Aldershot, 1992) p. 6.
- <sup>9</sup> The late colonial period of Cape Town could more accurately be described as "Imperialism" In as much as the export of raw product from the Cape to other British developing markets and the strengthening of the town's strategic and defensive position on the routes to the East were exploited.
- <sup>10</sup> E. Shohat & R. Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, (Routledge, London, 1994) p. 15.
- <sup>11</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, *A Geography of Heritage*, (Arnold, London, 2000) p. 39.
- <sup>12</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 39.
- <sup>13</sup> For further reading on the hierarchy of politics and its relationship to the city and architecture see: R. van Pelt, & C. William Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism*, (Yale University Press, London and New Haven, 1991).
- <sup>14</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 39.
- <sup>15</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 7.
- <sup>16</sup> G. Baird.
- <sup>17</sup> E. Shohat & R. Stam, p 182.
- <sup>18</sup> E. Shohat & R. Stam, p 182.
- <sup>19</sup> G. Baird.
- <sup>20</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 35.
- <sup>21</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 35.
- <sup>22</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 35.
- <sup>23</sup> D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985).
- <sup>24</sup> E. Shohat & R. Stam, p 182, p. 180.
- <sup>25</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 35.
- <sup>26</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 42.
- <sup>27</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 78.
- <sup>28</sup> E. Shohat, & R. Stam, p. 21.
- <sup>29</sup> CJ. Chung, 'Disney Space', in CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas, *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, (Taschen, Köln, 2001).
- <sup>30</sup> Art and architecture are themselves representative as they represent a discourse that is socially and historically rooted. Similarly they are also constructed entities, constructed as a representation of certain ideologies of society, historically and temporally contextual. In this way these objects can be said to be a delegation of voice.
- <sup>31</sup> N. Ellin.
- <sup>32</sup> N. Ellin, p.141.
- <sup>33</sup> In contemporary Cape Town the adoption of gansta culture and the embrace of other American symbols of mass consumerism is another form of self-imaging, one that is not exclusive from nostalgia. In fact, this plays itself out though the adoption of American malls and palaces of entertainment.
- <sup>34</sup> N. Ellin.
- <sup>35</sup> N. Ellin.
- <sup>36</sup> D. Lowenthal, p. 348.
- <sup>37</sup> GrandWest Casino is located on the site of the Goodwood Showground.
- <sup>38</sup> From an interview with Douglas Roberts, architect.
- <sup>39</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge.
- <sup>40</sup> H. Lefebvre.
- <sup>41</sup> D. Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996).

- <sup>42</sup> District Six, consisting mainly of terraced Victorian houses on the slopes of Table Mountain, was declared a White area in 1966. 60 000 people were forcibly removed from the area mainly to the Cape Flats – where GrandWest Casino is situated. From 1966-1982 the whole of District Six was demolished, declared as a slum. It has been held up as a “martyr” to the devastation caused by Apartheid. See: Bezzoli et al.
- <sup>43</sup> D. Woode.
- <sup>44</sup> P. Collins & G. Barr, *Gaming and Problem Gambling in South Africa*, (National Centre for the Study of Gambling, 2001) p. 23.
- <sup>45</sup> D. Roberts, personal interview.
- <sup>46</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas.
- <sup>47</sup> The scale of buildings at GrandWest is altered to be approximately 7/8<sup>th</sup>s of the original scale. Of buildings the ground floor is 100% scale, the first floor 90%, the second 80% and further floors 50-60% scale. This created a forced perspective in the vertical and linear – cinematographically producing a sense of continuity a “long shot”. (Chung, 2001)
- <sup>48</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas.
- <sup>49</sup> E. Shohat, & R. Stam.
- <sup>50</sup> It has been observed that in the creation of District Six i.e. “Kanaladorp” there was a shift in the standard colonial urban structure of Cape Town. (fnt. 55)
- <sup>51</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 47
- <sup>52</sup> I. Freeman, personal interview.
- <sup>53</sup> F. Todeschini, ‘Cape Town, 1650s –1940’, paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> symposium of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre, Rome, Italy, (1995).
- <sup>54</sup> F. Todeschini.
- <sup>55</sup> For further reading see: C. Pama, *Vintage Cape Town*, (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1973).
- <sup>56</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas, p 276
- <sup>57</sup> S. Robbins, ‘City Sites’, in S. Nutall & C. Michael, *Senses of Culture*, (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 2000).
- <sup>58</sup> For further reading see: M. Bezzoli, R. Marks & M. Kruger, *Texture and Memory*, (Cape Technikon, Cape Town, 1997).
- <sup>59</sup> I. Freeman, personal interview.
- <sup>60</sup> U. Lane, ‘District Six: Images or Icons’, BA (Hons), Thesis, UnPub, (UCT, 1998).
- <sup>61</sup> U. Lane.
- <sup>62</sup> E. Said, *Orientalism* (1978), (Penguin Books, London, 2003).
- <sup>63</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge.
- <sup>64</sup> Exoticisation of the past has, in South Africa, lead to the idea of multi-culturalism, yet another exoticising notion. In GrandWest Casino’s building phase 30% of the construction work was required to be black empowered. However, these black empowered construction companies worked exclusively on the back-of-house components.
- <sup>65</sup> P. Marcuse, ‘Walls of Fear, Walls of Support’, in N. Ellin (ed.), *Architecture of Fear*,<sub>2</sub> (Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1997).
- <sup>66</sup> P. Marcuse.
- <sup>67</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas.
- <sup>68</sup> E. Shohat, & R. Stam.
- <sup>69</sup> F. Todeschini.
- <sup>70</sup> South African Institute of Race Relations, *South Africa Survey 2002/03*, (Government Press, Nov 2002).
- <sup>71</sup> National Gaming Board, *Social Impact of Legalised Gambling in South Africa*, (Government Press, 2000).
- <sup>72</sup> E. Shohat, & R. Stam, p. 183
- <sup>73</sup> E. Said, p. 44.
- <sup>74</sup> B. Graham, G. Ashworth, & J. Turnbridge, p. 151.
- <sup>75</sup> S. Robbins.
- <sup>76</sup> M. Davis.
- <sup>77</sup> C. Pama.
- <sup>78</sup> A. Seeman-Ute, ‘Forts and Fortifications at the Cape Peninsula 1781-1829,’ Thesis, UnPub, (UCT, 1993).
- <sup>79</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas.
- <sup>80</sup> For an interesting comparison, see the entrance of the casino compared to Figure 8.
- <sup>81</sup> P. Marcuse.
- <sup>82</sup> D. Roberts, personal interview.

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<sup>83</sup> M. Davis.

<sup>84</sup> The design of these uniforms, to the author's mind, can only be described as purely Imperial. This is pure visual speculation see Figures 10,11.

<sup>85</sup> G. Baird, p.53.

<sup>86</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas.

<sup>87</sup> CJ. Chung, J. Inaba, & R. Koolhaas, p. 280.

<sup>88</sup> E. Shohat, & R. Stam, p 16.

<sup>89</sup> F. Todeschini.

<sup>90</sup> H. Lefebvre.