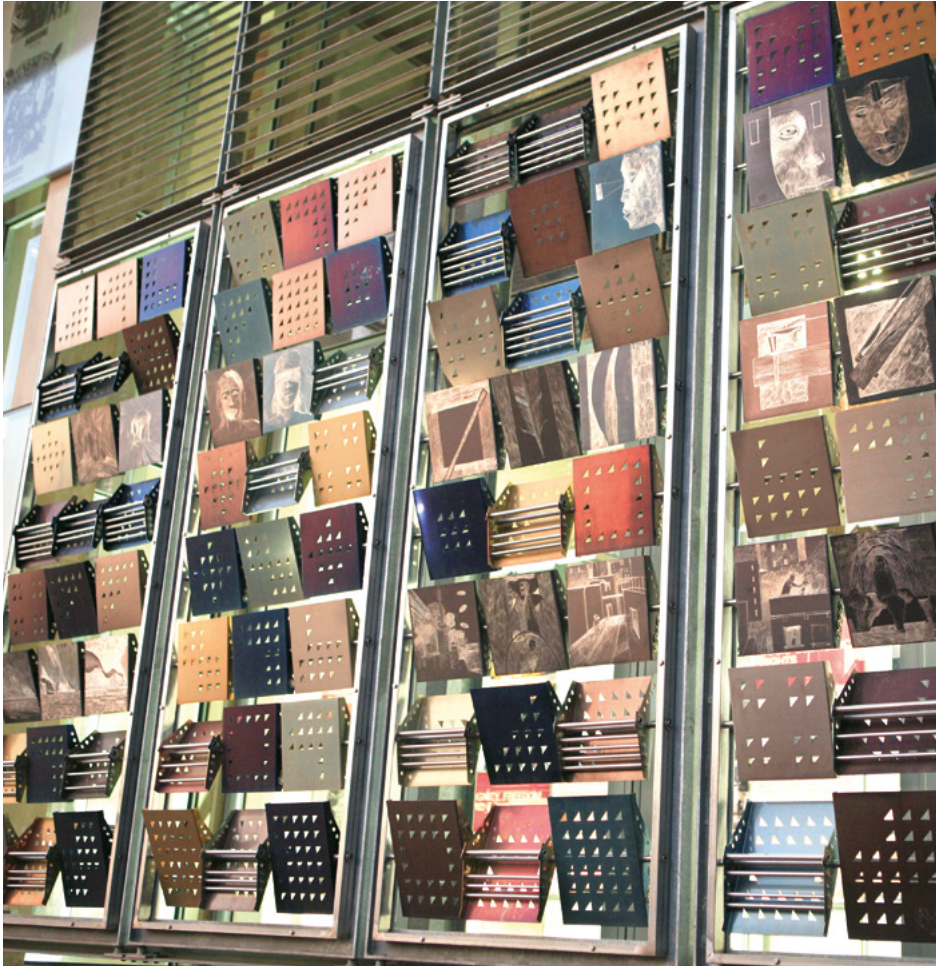


# ART & JUSTICE

A CONSTITUTIONAL COURT  
ART COLLECTION SERIES



3

LEWIS LEVIN,  
PATRICK RORKE &  
DONOVAN DYMOND

*Sun screens of the Constitutional Court*

CCAC

Constitutional Court  
Art Collection



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### *Sun screens of the Constitutional Court*

**Art & Justice: A Constitutional Court Art Collection series** is a short monograph series about artworks and artists represented in the Constitutional Court Art Collection (CCAC), housed within the Constitutional Court of South Africa.

The series also showcases the critical behind-the-scenes conservation work undertaken to document, stabilise, store and preserve artworks in the CCAC, using a combination of historic research, scientific analysis and material treatment, so that they can be exhibited to the public well into the future.

It is published by the Constitutional Court Trust, the non-profit organisation that owns the CCAC, tending to its preservation and presentation through conservation and curatorial programmes.

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# INTRODUCTION

The term “sun screens” is derived from the French term *brise soleil*, meaning sun breaker. It refers to a permanent architectural element that mitigates exposure to direct sunlight and heat, and stimulates visual interest in a building. The sun screens at the Constitutional Court of South Africa—designed by Lewis Levin, featuring artworks by Patrick Rorke resulting from public interviews, and manufactured by Donovan Dymond—are an impressive project. This publication explores how the screens came to be, and their continued relevance today.



# COLLABORATION ON ALL FRONTS

*Francois Lion-Cachet and Kay-Leigh Fisher*

"It was collaboration at every front, I suppose, that was the point of it [...] many people contributed to the making of the building," says Janina Masojada, one of the architects who worked on the Constitutional Court along with Andrew Makin and Paul Wygers.

Through this collaborative approach, the architects wanted to achieve a building where diverse people would find elements that they could relate to. By involving artists and artisans in both the design and manufacturing processes that gave rise to the Court, the building came to life without a singular author or perspective, and contains a rich collection of voices and approaches that promotes the accessibility of the Court's work, as a way of promoting constitutional values.

In an interview, Masojada adds that the relationship formed with artists and craftspeople was a way of opening up what the aesthetic language of the building was going to be.

Different sites of artistic intervention were created as part of the construction of the court building, which are known as the integrated artworks that form part of the fabric of the building itself. In addition to being works of art, these integrated artworks often serve a practical role, like these sun screens.

According to Masojada, the building was designed in a time when there was a feeling of jubilation and exuberance about the country's newfound constitutional democracy. During that period, Masojada and her colleagues were working on many participatory developmental projects, including community and sport centres, schools and clinics, in many ways focussing more on facilitation than architecture. Their approach included people from the very outset of a project to help define its meaning, and how, informed how it was going to serve the community, while the accommodation brief almost came secondary. "The primary part was that the people who the building was going to serve had a sense of empowerment to the process of building," Masojada says.

A project report from 1998 by Urban Solutions and OMM Design Workshop, the two architectural firms responsible for the design of the Constitutional Court, provides further context in which the sun screens were commissioned as a part of the larger building. In response to the initial brief<sup>1</sup> inviting proposals for the new Court's design, the architects refer to the way cities are designed either to invite human interaction or to restrict it, and how in a democratic society, civic buildings either gain their symbolic value by expressing the openness they represent, or are seen as alienating monuments.

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<sup>1</sup> The brief's formulation, as well as the judging of the applications, was prepared by a jury of eight people representing different institutions and professions: Justice Albie Sachs (Constitutional Court judge), Isaac Mogase (Number 4 ex-prisoner and mayor of Johannesburg), Thenjwwe Mtintso (Women's Jail ex-prisoner and Commission on Gender Equality chair), Herbert Prins (National Monuments Council heritage architect), Gerard Damstra (Department of Public Works architect), Willie Meyer (South African architectural profession), Charles Correa (renowned architect from India), Geoffrey Bawa (renowned architect from Sri Lanka) and Peter Davey (editor of the *Architectural Review* in the UK). A strong socially engaged element to the thinking behind the court was sought and encouraged.

“Grand dominant monuments are only needed to represent victories of war, exclusivity in the face of threat to an unpopular social system, economic or elite social power, or the unattainable – places of God or the gods,” they wrote, adding that the Constitution, and therefore the Court as physical marker (within the context of the redeveloped surrounding precinct), “have nothing in common with any of these situations”.

The architects sought to achieve symbolic potency for this preeminent building through an urban spatial system that invites human interaction, as opposed to exuding monumentality. The architects, in their report, point out the foregrounding of the visitors' experience:

“African grandeur, a sense of dignity and great scale result from the building of grand voids, not Eurocentric grand solids, not grand form but grand space, a grandeur to be physically experienced, not seen from a distance.”

From an urban design perspective, the architects sought to extend the meaning-making of the building to the site surrounding it; such a broader connection to the surrounding areas

**“African grandeur, a sense of dignity and great scale result from the building of grand voids, not Eurocentric grand solids, not grand form but grand space, a grandeur to be physically experienced, not seen from a distance.”**

- JANINA MASOJADA

of Hillbrow and Braamfontein is evinced in the Court's sun screens.

The sun screens contribute positively to the building's performance in response to ecological and climatic objectives, by filtering light and reducing the effects of Johannesburg's summer heat. Another goal of the architects was to form a link with existing South African social rituals, while inviting new associations. The geometric patterns on the sun screens, as well as the sketches drawn from the practice of oral history storytelling, achieve this.

The sun screens, furthermore, add to the visual activation found throughout the Court building of the “justice under a tree” concept, a reference to diverse communities' gathering under trees for dispute resolution and other cultural practices (see figs. 1). The shadowed patterns let through by the sun screens mimic light falling through the foliage of a tree.

“It's a sacred quality. When you filter the light through a forest and through trees, you create a feeling called the numinous,” Lewis Levin states in an interview with the CCAC team, referring to the term coined by Rudolf Otto.



Figure series 1: A woman interviewed by Rorke described how she participated in discussions under a large tree with her community. She told of an inherited ability, from her mother, to commune with otherworldly people, leading to a feeling of isolation from her peers, yet a deep spiritual connection to those less fortunate than herself. Levin relates this story to the “justice under a tree” idea of the Constitutional Court, linking it to the biblical tale of the prophetess Deborah, who sat under the tree where people would come to her for judgment, wisdom and fairness.

Masojada adds that the Court building has no single definitive image as there is no elevation that epitomises the building. The building is thus seen as a “collection” of smaller parts, including the sun screens, all speaking to each other and the broader site. Masojada refers to the Great African Steps, the walkway nestled between the prison buildings known as Number 4 (where Black men were historically detained – see figs. 2), and Number 5 (the isolation cells), on the one side, and the public exhibition gallery

of the Court, protected by the sun screens installed in front of the window panels, on the other. “[I]t was talked about as the scene between the old and the new, [...] you were walking between and within the history from apartheid to democracy,” states Masojada, adding that “the Great African Steps has been something that remains open and not closed off – [an openness] that was quite fundamental to the understanding of how the court would work.”

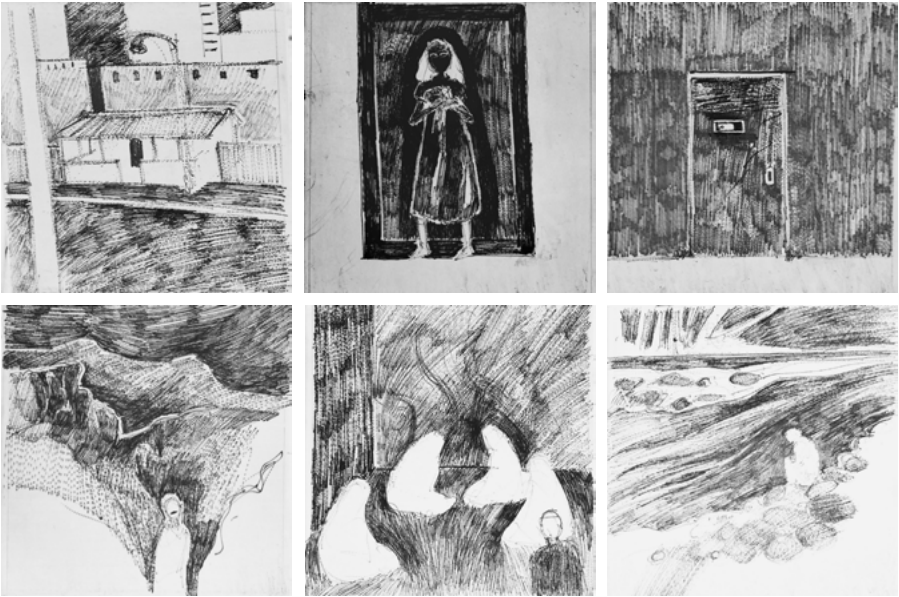


Figure series 2: A woman interviewed by Rorke grew up in the streets of Jeppestown, a suburb in Johannesburg. Her father was held in the notorious Number 4 prison. In contrast to the busy city, she found peace in the mountains where she travels to mourn the loss of her younger sister. The cold city and prison cells are contrasted with peaceful natural landscapes that contain a sense of comfort. A connection to the natural world is something that is sought by the Court's design.

From the 20 proposals submitted, Lewis Levin and Patrick Rorke's submission proposing a system of pivoting stainless steel panels was chosen for this part of the building. The public competition brief for the sun screens was to provide security for and to reduce direct sunlight coming into the public art gallery, but also to engage the viewer.

The brief stipulated that "when walking up or down the Great African Steps or the exhibition steps, the screens become one's experience of the building. This experience is of both the physical surface, and of the space on the other side." The brief states how sun screens create shadows that add an "additional layer of

meaning", like the silhouettes created by prison bars on the site historically.

Masojoda refers to the sketches on the screens, especially those with people walking across a landscape and noticing something: "It's the same as if somebody comes into the court building, they see something on the floor which is a pattern that they can connect to. I think the purpose [...] is generally that people can bring their own meaning to the place." Just as the sun screens evoke a wide range of interpretations particular to the viewer, the personal stories of those who worked on them similarly influenced the screens' design.

## A FRAMEWORK TO PLAY WITH

Lewis Levin, who grew up in Johannesburg, says that he became an architect because of Jo'burg:

“When you grow up in a machine shop, which is where components for mining equipment are made, and heavy duty earthmoving equipment, you can't help but fall in love with Johannesburg. Johannesburg is an excuse for a big, hidden city underneath; there is a labyrinth of mines and tunnels, and all sorts of things and adventures going on under the ground... the underground river that the whole city is based on.”

In our interview he speaks of a fascination with the amount of turning wheels in shafts and lifts, pistons, winches, cables, trolleys and underground trains in Jo'burg, adding that Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, considered the founder of the futurist movement, could only dream of such an underground world in Italy. Levin, who studied architecture at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Jo'burg, incorporates his background in machines and steel fabrication in most of his work.

Levin studied under Pancho Guedes, a Portuguese architect who spent most of his life in Mozambique. Guedes took up the position as head of the architecture department at Wits from 1975, the year Mozambique became independent, and taught there until 1990.

Internationally recognised for his style of African modernism, Guedes drew from local shapes, colours and motifs, and is remembered for the way he integrated painting and sculpture with architecture. Levin, who describes Guedes as an artist-architect, draws continued inspiration from how designing a building can be like making a work of art: “[Pancho's buildings] were creatures. They were *personnages* [...] They were dreams, they were monsters that could

come at you in the night. Or they could come out of dreams at night.”

Furthermore, he posits that art must be used as a laboratory for architecture, comparing the craftsmanship approach of the sun screens to that of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Levin says that the role of public building artworks shouldn't just be decorative, but be seen as integral to the building's language; this approach informed the design of the Constitutional Court, the first major state building after apartheid. Levin became aware of the design competition that went out for facades of the new court building, and set out to foreground artmaking in the production process. The design was also informed by a technological advancement that gained popularity in the 1990s: animated GIFs: “In the beginning of the 2000s computers were [...] getting going in a kind of animated way; the flat kind of DOS programming language and the flat screen of the computer was changing to a more interactive thing.”

Levin adds how images became animated on the screen as you rolled your mouse over them. “I saw [the competition for the sun screens] and I started browsing over different animated GIFs, animated kinetic objects, which for me was a direct line back to Tatlin.”

Vladimir Tatlin, a Soviet architect, painter and stage-designer, produced models of the *Monument to commemorate the Third International*, better known as Tatlin's Tower, a design for a grand monumental kinetic building that was never built. Levin, reminded of Tatlin's moving buildings by playing with GIFs, came up with the idea of a screen of animated squares, which would flip and turn, as a way to treat the Court's facade.



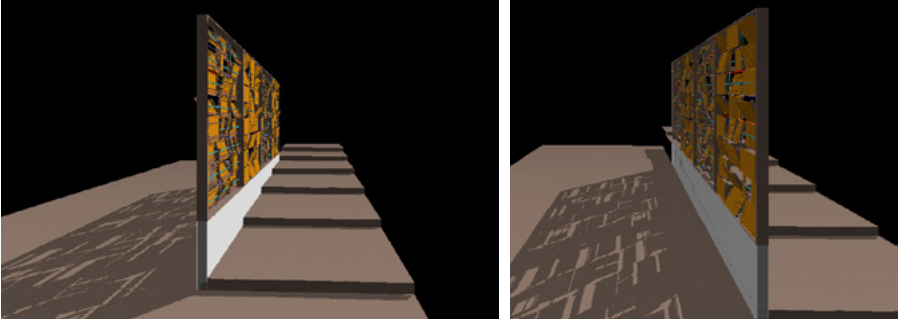


Figure series 3: Digital renders of the Court's sun screens, prepared by Levin, in the early days of this being possible with computers.

Levin was also inspired by the use of sun screens in global architecture, like the Indian palace at Fatehpur Sikri and jali screens from Rajasthan: "When you walk into the building and you're just bathed in the light of small apertures, creating this sense that you're in a forest, but the forest is made out of stone, and the stone is turned into lace." He adds that all buildings are dressed with sun screens: "the idea of perforating and breaking the inside-outside barrier, that kind of mystery of what happens when you cross over into a building, that's what sun screens are all about."

According to Levin, such screens give the shadows depth and create an interior, while he points out that stained glass windows are

other examples of sun screens, also giving examples of Indian temples with no glazing (windows), like the Taj Mahal, that make use of stone sun screens.

Levin states that the patterns on the Court's screens are derived from African fractals (citing the research of Ron Eglash in the book *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design*). He took inspiration from the pattern language that has developed on this continent, such as Kuba cloth from the Congo, as opposed to other geometries developed in the West. Levin says that the patterning makes use of simple repeatable rhythms and is based on the irreducible element of the triangle, that is playfully twisted, turned and flipped (fig. 4).



Figure 4: The varying triangular patterns on the sun screens make every panel unique.

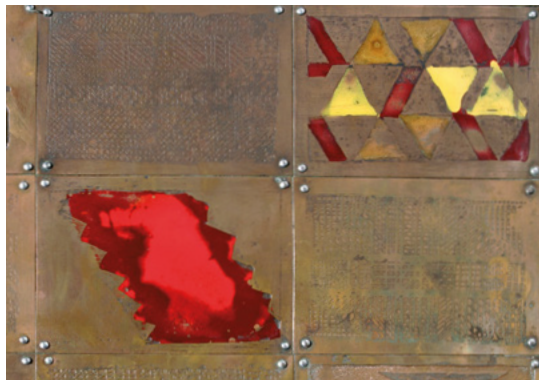


Figure 5: Triangles found on the copper plates that make up the Court chamber doors, designed by Andrew Lindsay and Mira Fassler Kamstra, based on kente cloth from Ghana and the Ivory Coast.



Figure 6: The Court's stair nosings designed by Jabu Nala are based on the patterns often found on *ukhamba* (traditional Zulu beer pots).

Masojada, in turn, relates the triangles to the patterns found on the Court's chamber doors (fig. 5), the stair nosings based on Zulu ceramic patterns (fig. 6), and the stained glass triangles incorporated into the waving concrete wall at the court's main entrance, symbolising the South African flag (fig. 7). Masojada refers to how triangular patterning is often found in traditional southern African forms of weaving and ceramics.<sup>2</sup> She adds that the varied triangle motifs weren't deliberately orchestrated, but their presence originated organically from involving a range of artists and craftspeople.

Levin also refers to French architect Jean Nouvel's design of the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, known for its iris controlled perforations that open and close depending on the time of day. Levin describes this as a complicated technological mechanism, unlike the screens at the Court which are weighted to return to a specific position after being made to swivel.

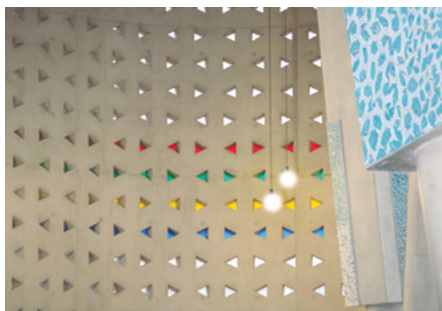


Figure 7: The triangles and colours found in the South African flag are also incorporated into the main entrance of the Constitutional Court.

Levin also worked on sun screens for Lebone II, the Royal Bafokeng college in Phokeng, in the North West province of South Africa (fig. 8).

In that context he made the sun screens articulate during different times of the day:

“Now screens also have to be intelligent, [yet] the best examples of architecture and screens are the ones that enhance the passive temperatures of the building, rather than being fancy technologies. The old technologies are just filtering spaces with objects and are much stronger than all these intelligent facades [that] date very quickly.”

The sun screens at the Court are reminiscent of an abacus that can swivel on a horizontal axis. Each plate was given an identity, through patterned permutation and sketches, as a way to break the grid.

<sup>2</sup> Also see the second monograph in the *Art & Justice* series related to the CCAC's Zulu basketry collection: [ccac.concourtrust.org.za/publications](http://ccac.concourtrust.org.za/publications).



Figure 8: The screens at the Lebone College of the Royal Bafokeng.



Figure series 9: Urban street lights and benches at the High Court in Johannesburg, designed by Levin and characteristic of his *brise soleil* style.

Levin observes: "The grid is a liberating form to start with, but it can also imprison you. So look at a city, a city is a grid but if a city only builds buildings in grids, that city is boring. New York is a grid, but it's a chaotic paradise. Paris is also a grid with everybody making their own interpretation." Levin relates this observation back to musical notation, that has a formula and irreducible structure, that can be almost infinitely modified.

Masojada also speaks to the irregular placement of the sun screens's individual panels, relating it to other elements of the Court building: "When [we] put down the stair nosings, we didn't put them in regular strips; they're put in an irregular manner because that's how light falls and things are structured." She adds: "Even in the court chamber, if you go and you see the way in which we coloured the chairs, they're not all aligned and neat and tidy with greens here, the blues there, the reds over there."



Figure 10: The screen's colour variations are accentuated by the angle at which light shines onto them.

The screens thus add to the visual language of the Court that imitates natural movement. Levin speaks about how the engraved screens are placed in groupings, alternating from three to five panel "little biographies", saying they were placed to produce a randomised, free notion of the grid.

The sun screens are not only varied in their patterning and their engraved drawings, but also in terms of their colouring. The material used, 3CR12, a low cost stainless steel developed in the mining industry in South Africa, was coloured using a now-defunct process of dipping the 3CR12 into tanks; depending on how long it was exposed for, the colours vary from gold, to orange, to a blue-ish tint. The colouring technique was abandoned in industry because specific colouring couldn't be consistently achieved, although that is precisely what Levin had wanted.

There are other notable court buildings that make use of sun screens for their functional use, but also to make a statement. The High Court of Punjab and Haryana in Chandigarh, India, designed by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier, was completed in 1957. Le Corbusier made use of a curved and over-arching *brise soleil* screen, intended not only to provide symbolic protection, but also for shelter from intense summer heat and monsoon rains. The rhythmic facade is contrasted with massive concrete pylons that are painted in bright primary colours, the same colours dotted in the screens, adding to this court's internationally recognised appearance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Also worth noting, in comparison to South Africa's Constitutional Court, are the large and colourful tapestries installed in the Chandigarh courtrooms (required for acoustical reasons), reflecting symbols of humankind, nature, Indian state emblems and symbols of law, including the scales of justice. These symbols appear in abstract, geometric patches, true to Le Corbusier's style. Also see the first monograph in the CCAC *Art & Justice* series, about Marlene Dumas' textiles. Available from [ccac.concourtrust.org.za/publications](http://ccac.concourtrust.org.za/publications).



In New Zealand, the Supreme Court building, located in Wellington, was officially opened in January 2010. Its new design, carefully linked to the restored Old High Court Building, features a decorative screen inspired by the branches of pohutukawa and rata trees, native to New Zealand, with red recycled glass inserted into the design to represent flowers. The screens, made from recycled bronze, are described as an environmental feature as it provides solar shading. The Supreme Court in Wellington can be likened to the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg insofar as trees and a connection with the natural world are inherent to the architecture, acknowledging indigenous ways of being.

Similar to the work relationship between Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret, Levin states that collaboration was key in the making of the sun screens at the Constitutional Court. "I'm not in [their] league by any chance, [but] out of the collaboration with Donovan Dymond, a lot of my work is made."

Levin describes Dymond not as a manufacturer, but as someone who gives input at the level of the idea with a solid knowledge of engineering principles. Similarly, Masojada refers to Dymond as being key to the success of the sun screens' design.

Different roles were assigned in the making of the screens, including laser cutting, colouring, and assembly of the screens, which took about three months to complete. A framework was set up by Levin in which others could contribute, isolating bands that could run as a *bande dessinée* [comic strips]. For this, Levin approached Patrick Rorke who he had first met making potting wheels for. They met again at the Metro Mall taxi rank where Levin had also built screens, in collaboration with Dymond, where Rorke was also working. This led to a discussion about how they would enter the competition to address this facade of the Court. "He would interview people on the margins of the society for whom the screens would talk," says Levin.

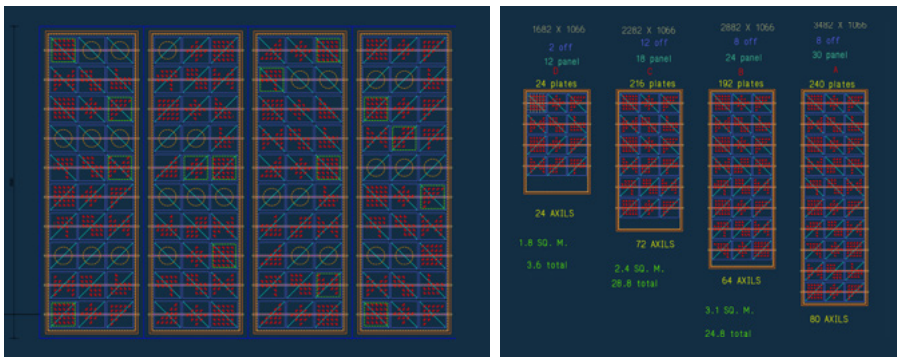


Figure series 11: These CAD drawings were used to laser cut the sun screens and the triangular motifs. The circles indicate the panels which were left blank for artwork engraving by Rorke.

# A TAPESTRY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Patrick Rorke was born in 1953 and grew up in Morija, also known as *Selibeng sa Thuto* (the Well-Spring of Learning), an important cultural and historical site in Lesotho. A self-taught artist, Rorke's painterly style is impressionist and his work is inspired by the pervasive spirituality of humanity. In 1989, Bill Ainslie invited Rorke to teach ceramics at the Alexandra Art

Centre, Johannesburg, where he taught for five years. Alexandra, a township historically designated for Black people, was central during the political upheaval in the 1980s and into the 90s. Figs. 12 and 13 show the impression this transitional period had on Rorke. He and his family stayed in Johannesburg until 2010 before moving back to Lesotho.



Figure series 12: Individuals rise, representing a nation once asleep. They gather in groups eager to have their voices heard, speaking to their freedom of movement and association. Rorke felt privileged to bear witness to the transformative transition to constitutional democracy of which the Court stands as a powerful symbol.

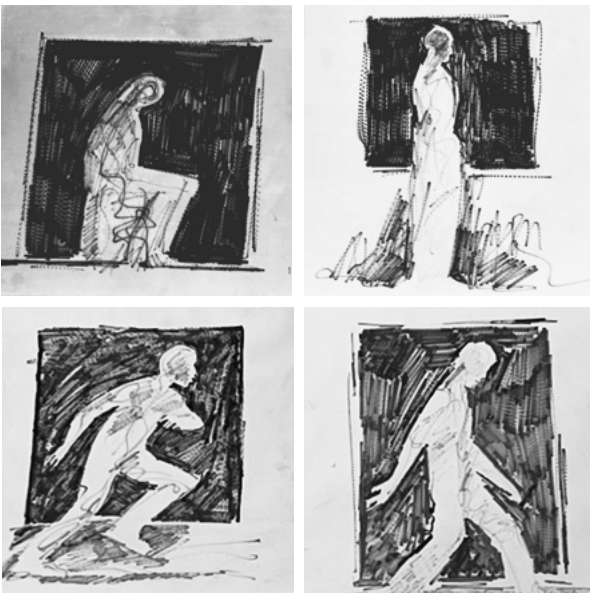


Figure series 13: Standing up from a position of rest, a person starts to run and realises that for them to go any further, they would have to slow down and walk. The artist's idea is that a slow and steady pace would lead to more progress and the ability to undertake an arduous journey.

At the time of proposing the sun screens to the Architectural Artworks Committee, Rorke had already developed the concept of gathering oral histories from people living and working around the construction site of the Constitutional Court, as well as in Lesotho. The architects encouraged Rorke and Levin in their idea to involve the public in the process. Beyond making it a collective project, the thinking was also that public ownership would deter defacement. To date, the screens have never been substantially vandalised.

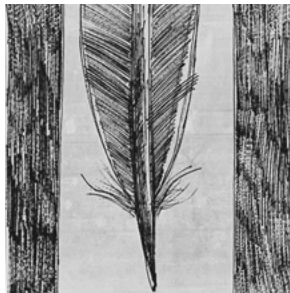
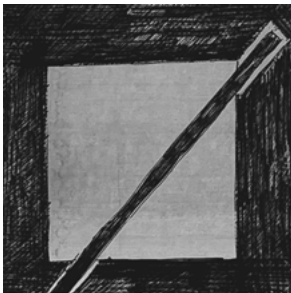
According to Levin, Rorke is good at finding stories and biographies. He recalls the image of Rorke walking around Hillbrow, a densely populated and impoverished area adjacent to the Constitutional Court, with a long beard, not looking very formal, that made him fit in:

“When people realised that he didn't want to bum some money off them they sat and spoke. What came out of those discussions was wonderful, kind of natural, he was almost just transcribing. They were the artists and he was just transcribing.”

In this sense the sun screens became a visual oral history exercise.



Figure 14: This screen depicts a story from the Book of Daniel in the Bible, influenced by Levin's interest in storytelling and what he calls "the effect of Bible stories and legends on culture, and how powerful the Bible is in African cultures, and in my culture." The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were thrown into a fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon for refusing to bow down to the king's image, is depicted. "It's an allegory, of course, of persecution and oppression and survival underneath an oppressive regime," Levin says.



Some of Rorke's first words were in Sesotho, a language he speaks fluently and regards as part of his Sotho identity (related to this, see figs. 15). "It's an ambivalent thing, because in Lesotho I'm a white face who speaks Sesotho, elsewhere as well." For him, his national identity comes before a racial categorisation. Being a Sesotho speaker, Rorke was able to engage more easily and deeply with those he met in Johannesburg while working on the screens. Sesotho is a fairly common language among the inhabitants of Johannesburg.

The final engraved panels aren't attributed by name to whose stories inspired the drawings. While the names of some of the people were recorded in the artist's notes, it was not added onto the screens themselves.

According to Rorke, a lot of the people requested to stay anonymous:

"In a sense, I think that in the process of interviewing people it became less about the individual and more about a collective sense of people. So, the individual stories or the individual unfolding of events seem to reflect, in my mind, a larger picture."

This approach may also have contributed to being more inclusive, as it didn't become a question of who is represented on the screens and who were left out. "Such kind of exclusivity, I think, doesn't really reflect in the philosophy of the Constitutional Court," says Rorke. The interviews became a visual representation of people's ideas, experiences, and feelings, including Rorke's own.

**"What came out of those discussions was wonderful, kind of natural, he was almost just transcribing. They were the artists and he was just transcribing"**

LEWIS LEVIN, COMMENTING ON PATRICK RORKE'S INTERVIEW PROCESS

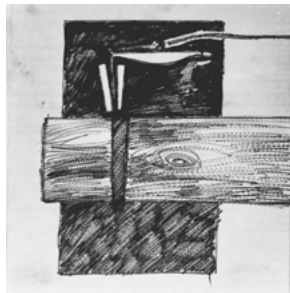
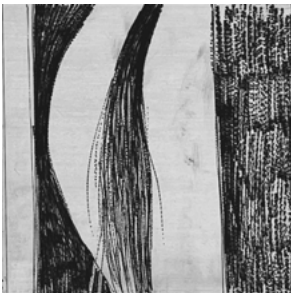


Figure series 15: A stick, feather and strand of hair from a horse's tail are used to make a *lesiba*, the national instrument of the Basotho people. The music, according to the artist, is haunting and extremely beautiful.



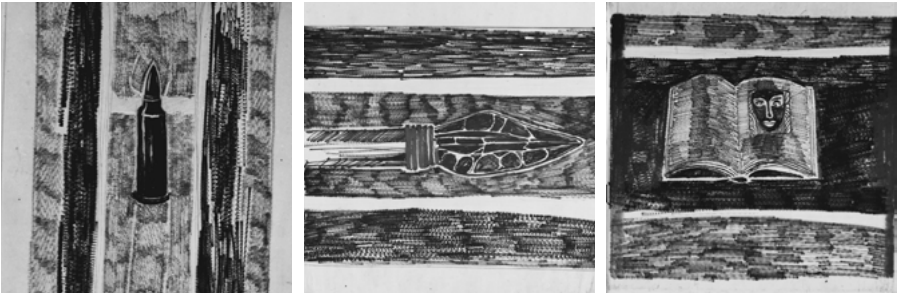


Figure series 16: The artist meditates on the effect of three objects on humanity. The bullet and spear represent a history of violence and aggression, while the book signifies knowledge and law that can be used to ward off violence.

A number of the drawings (see figs. 16–18) reflect the artist’s existential musings, informed by the environments and people he has been exposed to. From his interviews, and with some input by Levin, Rorke gained insights into the early stages of post-apartheid South Africa, leading to an inward reflection about life and being human.

Rorke describes his particular approach to artmaking as communal rather than individual. “Whether this stems from having worked in places like Alex, I’m not sure, but certainly, all along, I do perceive art as being a kind of a process that brings some sense of community.”



Figure series 17: The artist considers the weight of our actions, as an individual has to choose whether to step on others to become successful or stand in solidarity with them. “We live a life of choice and our choices define who we are,” states Rorke.



Figure series 18: The viewer is conscious of their position as they observe a disaster: a burning ship over the distant water, and they are unable to help from the shorefront. Similarly, the artist wonders if an airplane, that flies over towering buildings, might be hijacked. These two strips, according to the artist, are about staying mindful and compassionate in the face of great suffering.

He adds that his current work in Lesotho entails “doing a lot of work in the schools, in the community, working with people who don’t necessarily do art themselves. So I do think that art has a very important role to play other than just the role of the artist or the individual.”

Over a period of many months, Rorke was inspired by the people he spoke to. Images generated in the artist’s mind as he imagined the narratives. He mostly asked them about a story from their past, one from a present moment in their lives and how they felt about the new South Africa, especially the new Constitution.

Instead of transcribing or recording the stories, Rorke illustrated them as they came to mind. In his engagements with people, Rorke spoke about the changing face of the nation and his understanding of the Constitutional Court as a reflection of southern African society. The artist states that his position as an outsider allowed him to better understand how the decisions of the Court would reflect on everyone, and how it would become a visual representation of change.

***“I think one arrives at ideas communally rather than individually.”***

- PATRICK RORKE

The sun screens create a link with the broader African subcontinent, particularly Lesotho, a small country landlocked in South Africa, situated in the Maloti Mountains where Rorke grew up. Rorke refers to the series in the screens where, above the city there are big clouds, and then the rain falls down.

“My understanding, is that the Constitutional Court itself sits on a watershed. The rain falls on one side of the ConstitutionaCourt and might end up in the Indian Ocean, the other side in the Atlantic, which to me is extraordinary.”  
(see figs. 19 and 20)

He proceeds with a symbolic reading of the significance of the Constitution Hill site:

“The Constitutional Court is just that, [...] a profound moment in history. I believe that high points in history are when art and architecture work very closely together, where there's almost an inability to tell the one from the other. I think that seems to reflect a kind of a real high point in the unfolding of what's happened in South Africa.”



Figure series 19: Sun screens with engravings of heavy clouds and rainfall over Johannesburg.

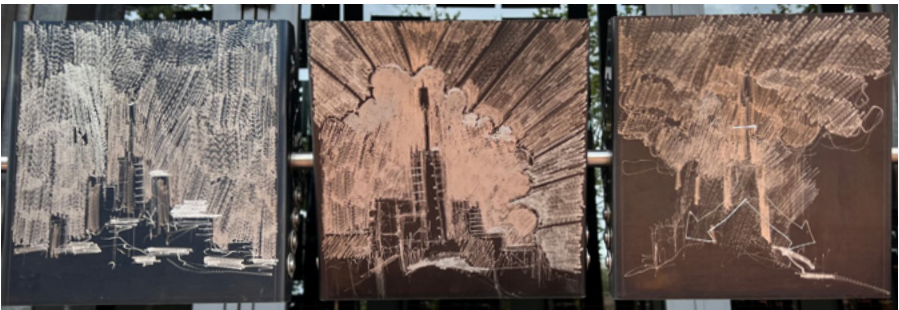


Figure series 20: Sun screens with engravings of the Constitutional Court as a watershed.



Figure series 21: Watching the sunrise over the ocean, Rorke conveys a sense of having travelled far and being unaware of the importance of the continuing journey. The ship, which represents this voyage, is seen from the perspective of the planets in space, representing an awestruck moment of being conscious of existence.

Rorke also relates the story of the rain flowing in different directions to the jurisprudential work of the Constitutional Court:

“[If] a judgment is made by the court, it also goes into all directions [...] the influence, maybe even the impact of the Constitutional Court, is felt as far as Lesotho, southern Africa, [...] it’s something that resonates worldwide, really.”

South Africa, especially Johannesburg and the larger Gauteng province, is dependent on Lesotho for water, speaking further to an interconnected view of different nations. The screens, as part of the Court’s overall design, also relate to this court’s international influence regarding visual thinking about the law. “The Constitutional Court represents the apex of thought, feeling, and ideas at the time. [There’s] something very human about it,” says Rorke.

***“... high points in history are when art and architecture work very closely together, where there’s almost an inability to tell the one from the other.”***

- PATRICK RORKE



## THE PEOPLE'S COURT

The stories that the panels tell aren't set in stone, but remain open to interpretation. Rorke says that the viewer does not need to have everything spelt out to them: "As far as I'm concerned, the interpretive element is as important as my own ideas in making the screens."

According to Levin:

"Normally, artworks that are bold occupy the outside of a building. But I think that this idea of having smaller graphic biographies on the outside of a building brings the enormity of the Constitution, the enormity of this concept, down to individual human suffering."

He refers to the story of a man standing alone, whose parents died of HIV/AIDS, and who was then brought up by his uncle who often fought with him (see figs. 20). "There's drawings of that small little boy being overwhelmed by the uncle and then finally going off and leaving the country, and then dreaming of changing the world."

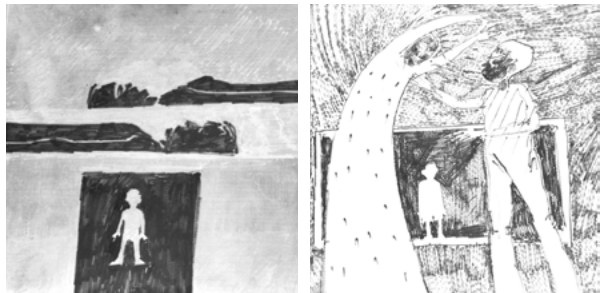
Levin tells about how Rorke found that man again:

"He went to this screen and he said, 'Now I understand why I had to go through that suffering, why I lost my parents, why I had to be brought up by my uncle, so that my story would be on the facade, so that my story is here.' He had this idea that his life had meaning, because his story was captured."

***"...having smaller graphic biographies on the outside of a building brings the enormity of the Constitution, the enormity of this concept, down to individual human suffering."***

- LEWIS LEVIN

Figure series 22: The orphaned young man, whose parents died of HIV/AIDS, also lived with his brother and sister-in-law who resented him. Years later, the man was separated from his wife and child who lived in KwaZulu-Natal, while he worked in Johannesburg, struggling to provide for them, and eventually becoming homeless. His hope for the new Constitution was that it would bring his family together.



*Free thought & speech - (Freedom of expression)*

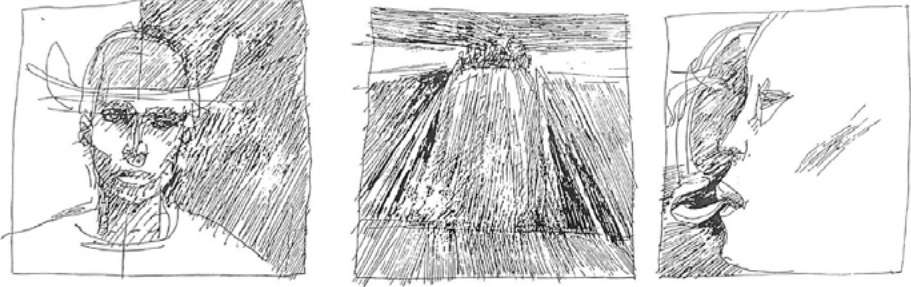


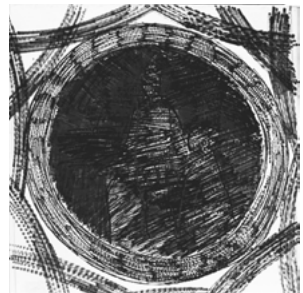
Figure series 23: On these sketches, Rorke created images that illustrate free thought and speech, relating it to the constitutional right of freedom of expression.

Levin relates the sun screens' power to how the work of the Court, often marked by abstract legal concepts, "are just big words from another time and planet, [the average person has] no way of engaging with that."

The sun screens—like other artworks in the CCAC—are intended to be accessible to a broader audience. See, for example, figs. 23 conveying a constitutional right in visual form, and figs. 24–26 that incorporate people's stories into the Court's design, speaking to human hopes and fears.

Lewis adds:

"That's what you hope the Constitutional Court screens would be. It's the kind of precedent of what you want art to be, right? ... [You] want it to be seen by everybody, you want it to be touched. You're inviting the people into your art, not just as observers, but as participants."



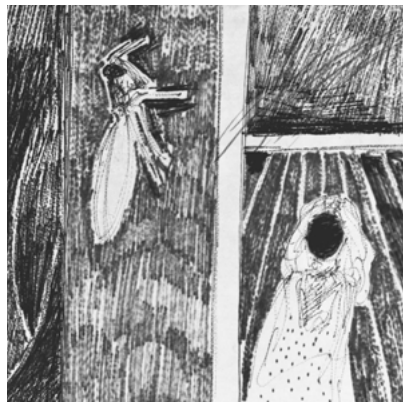
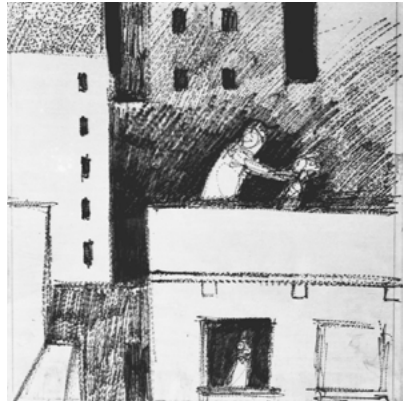


Figure series 22: Speaking to migrant life in Johannesburg, where people immigrate to in search of work, a woman tells the story of her "saintly mother" who came to the city with three rands in her pocket to give birth to her. The woman grew up in Hillbrow where she was often preyed upon and sexually abused by watchmen in the area. She said an important part of her life is communicating with small animals and insects, as depicted by the praying mantis, speaking to how the vulnerable protect the vulnerable.



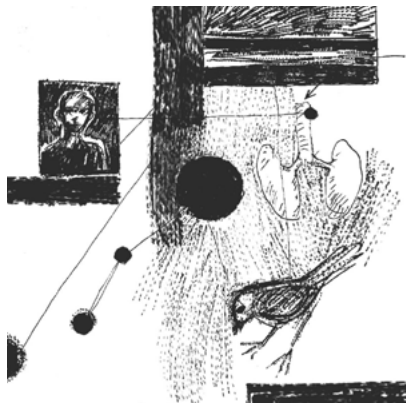


Figure series: 23: A woman dying of HIV/AIDS recalls growing up under the protection of an angel while living alongside a powerful river. Her mother radiated power and one day she saved her from a falling wooden beam. Though the woman is dying, she feels the protective hands of her ancestors around her and observes the relationships between the small and big things in the world. These stories speak to the individual forming part of a whole, under the protection and guidance of elders.



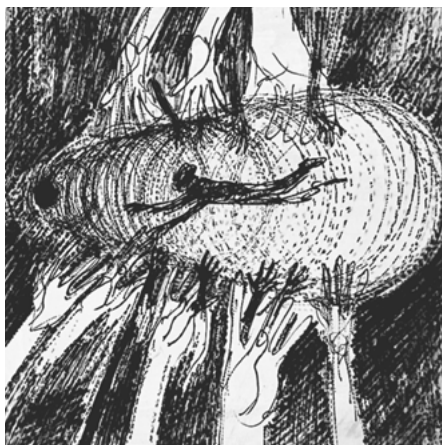


Figure series: 26: An HIV/AIDS patient speaks the loneliness of his journey and his dream of becoming a trapeze artist before he became sick. His life and strength is flowing from him and soon he expects to soar down a tunnel with light at the end.

Ultimately, the sun screens embody deep reflection in their creation, and present an opportunity to the viewer to reflect deeply on themselves. The screens explore a wide array of topics: spirituality, ancestry and religion comes through prominently. Issues affecting South Africans like HIV/AIDS, gender-based and other forms of violence, poverty and the seeking of a better life are also addressed. Stories and themes about being imprisoned at Number

4, death and mourning, nature, compassion, and mindfulness are also seen. Yet the golden thread that ties all these stories together is community. The screens' very making, and their continued significance, is based on connections between people. The stories are at once personal and political, collectively forming a tapestry of the human condition, and signalling the court as the peoples' own.

# A LASTING IMPACT: CONSERVATION OF THE SUN SCREENS

*Thina Miya and Emma Prior*

The sun screens are significant in their durability and robustness, showing how materials that are chosen due to their suitability to a specific environment can ensure longevity. Donovan Dymond, who worked closely with Lewis Levin on the technical making of the screens, was

mindful of the need for the screens to be robust and durable in the production process. The screens, installed outside in an urban environment, needed to be sun, wind and rain-resistant, and able to withstand human interaction as well as rising levels of air pollution.

## SUN SCREENS IN NUMBERS

**19 months**

to make the screens

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**708 panels**

making up the sun screens installation

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**181 artwork panels**

depicting imagery inspired by the artist's interviews with people living and working near the Court

---

**37 stories**

of every day life documented

**32 holding frames**

to support panels constructed

---

**A team of 2 people**

using

**7m high scaffolding**

spent

**64 hours**

cleaning and restoring the sun screens

---

**2 independent museum advisors**

consulted to identify possible conservation interventions

## MADE TO LAST

To avoid rust, and to meet budgetary constraints, a low cost stainless steel developed in the South African mining industry called 3CR12 was used to make the sun screens. 3CR12 is strong, resistant to corrosion, and requires low maintenance. When exposed to the elements, 3CR12's surface patina protects the metal from further corrosion. An electro-

chemical colouring process is used to create a patina, a treatment that was created in South Africa, although later abandoned because colour consistency couldn't be achieved. Working with the last available treatment tanks, the team got the alternating colours they desired by submerging each panel for slightly different periods.



Figure 27: Each screen measures 29 x 28.5 cm. In some instances, the screens measuring 29 x 28.5 cm would leave excessive space at the base of the frame; an alternative dimension for 54 screens that measure 35.9 x 28.5 cm was used on the bottom layer of 22 frames.

All the components for the screens were designed digitally and then laser cut. The non-perforated screens were sent to Rorke who drew images into them using a jeweller's grinder. After he completed this, the screens were sent to implement the colouring process. The frames that hold the screens are made of aluminium as it is a lightweight and

corrosion-resistant metal that naturally generates a protective coating and is not sensitive to the elements. Stainless steel bolts were used to fasten the screens onto the aluminium frame, while insulating washers were used to isolate the two different materials to prevent chemical and other reactions.



Figure series 28: Images of the Court's sun screens before and after they were cleaned, showing saturation of the patina, ranging from a golden-yellow to orange. Acidic rain has left watermarks on the sun screens but has not corroded the surfaces of the screens.

## CONSERVATION TREATMENT

18 years after they were installed, the sun screens are still going strong. However, they need regular cleaning and monitoring to avoid the build-up of pollutants and other damage. The team at Mark Sinoff Exhibits was contracted to assist with conserving the sun screens. The curatorial team consulted with Mark Sinoff, Levin and Dymond in investigating how best to approach treating the screens.

Three interventions were tested to clean the screens without affecting the surface or removing the screens' patina, but to restore their vibrance. WD-40, a commercially available

multi-purpose lubricating spray, and beeswax mixed with artist's turpentine were tested. The WD-40 dulled the colour of the screens, making them appear darker. Natural beeswax, primarily used on bronze sculptures to prevent corrosion, clogged the material's pores, preventing them from reflecting light. Based on the findings, Levin advised for the WD-40 and beeswax to be washed off using warm water, microfibre cloth and dishwashing liquid. The rest of the screens were also cleaned in this way. As a preservation intervention, WD-40 was only applied to the hinges that had some corrosion.



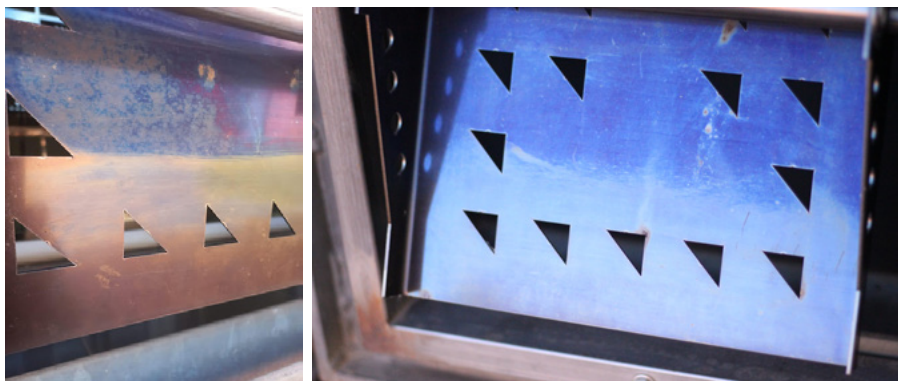


Figure series 29: A sun screen after testing WD-40. Our research found that WD-40 is not corrosive and will not affect the surface of the metal, although it affected the blue tint of the screen, causing a slight fade that turned brown over time. Artist's renaissance wax was tested on the same screen two weeks later. The wax turned the blue hue much brighter than the WD-40 had, however the wax still reduced the natural blue tint of the screen somewhat. To avoid long-lasting impacts of altering the screen's colour treatment, the wax was washed off with soap and warm water.

## COMPARING WITH UNTREATED SUN SCREENS

The curatorial team also compared the sun screens at the Constitutional Court to those found at the Metro Mall taxi rank, which were also designed by Levin. The Metro screens show evidence of air pollution and have darkened over time. The screens, although still robust, are covered by grime. The Metro screens are exposed to harsh pollutants as there is a high traffic flow of hundreds of

taxis passing by throughout the day, and factories nearby, whereas the screens at the Constitutional Court are somewhat protected from such direct pollution. In addition, the Metro screens are made of different mining metals that corrode at different rates in different patinas, compared to the stable 3CR12 metal.



Figure series 30: The sun screens at the Metro Mall taxi rank in downtown Johannesburg when first installed (left), and in their darkened condition in 2022 (right).



Figure series 31: The sun screens at the Constitutional Court after having been cleaned with dishwashing liquid and water.

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Figure series 32: The first image is a scan of Rorke's original drawing, and the second a photograph of the final engraved sun screen. Rorke meant to comment on how humanity had become blinded, that can be related to the lack of justice in the ills of society.



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Figure 33: Patrick Rorke standing in front of the sun screens in 2022.



