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BUILDING THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA



LIGHT ON A HILL Building the Constitutional Court of South Africa

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The publication of this book was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation

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Photograph of Union Buildings, page 31 Alan Yates Courtesy MuseuMAfricA

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ISBN 978-0-9584860-7-1

Printed by Keyprint, Johannesburg

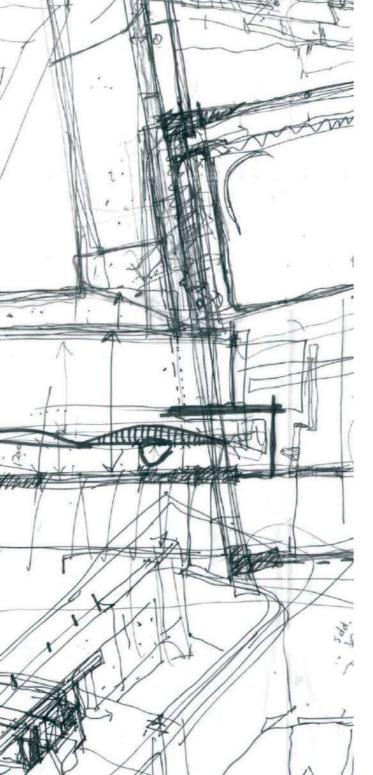
Distributed in South Africa by David Krut Publishing, cc 140 Jan Smuts Avenue Parkwood 2193 South Africa Tel: +27 (0)11 880 5648 Fax: +27 (0)11 880 5648 Fax: +27 (0)11 880 5648

DAVID KRUT PUBLISHING

CONTENTS

	Designing a Constitutional Court for South Africa	06
	Notes from a Competition Brief	10
01	In the Heart of the Cyclone	12
02	Site of Pain and Renewal	32
03	Justice Under a Tree	46
04	Lekgotla (a gathering or council)	64
05	Storing Knowledge	78
06	The Quiet Heart of the Court	102
07	Solitary Retreat	114
08	Conferring with Justice	124
09	Light and Space	134
10	Routes, Streets, Passages	148
	Acknowledgements	172





The new Constitutional Court of South Africa, situated on the site of what was once a notorious prison under the apartheid regime, is a remarkable feat of architectural daring and hope. It is the realisation of the dream of many to have a building in the new South Africa that would celebrate the ideals of a progressive Constitution, commemorate the suffering and struggles of the country's past without slavishly doing obeisance to history and give visible form to the belief that all are equal before the law. This book, the culmination of months of collaboration, celebrates that building.

In 1994, several months after South Africa's first democratic elections finally brought apartheid to an end, the new Constitutional Court came into being. Its judges were temporarily housed in bare Johannesburg offices, and some two years later the search for a site for a new Constitutional Court building began. The judges embraced the challenge of beginning with nothing – hardly a book or a shelf or a chair – and building a court quite literally from the ground up. They were shown several sites and buildings around the country, but none seemed able to address the needs of the new Constitutional Court. What was called for was a place that would be easily accessible to ordinary citizens, and that would embody a piece of history but also reflect the hopes of a young and energetic democracy. It would have to be a site upon which a building such as a constitutional court could stand with dignity, but without the intimidating presence usually associated with courts.

When the judges were finally shown the Old Fort complex on the Braamfontein Ridge in Johannesburg they knew that this was the right place. The Fort had a chequered and troubled history going back to 1896-1899, when Paul Kruger's South African Republic constructed a massive fort around part of an existing jail in order to control the town, the railway and the mines. Johannesburg was taken by the British during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and with the advent of peace the Fort was pressed into service as a prison, Over the years additional buildings accumulated on the site: a "native" prison, known as Number Four, for sentenced black men, a women's jail and an awaiting trial block. Hundreds of thousands passed through these prison doors over the years, amongst them Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela.

When the prison was finally closed in 1983 it was an ominous presence standing between the crowded high-rise apartment buildings of Hillbrow and the leafy affluence of the suburbs of northern Johannesburg. Despite its notoriety, or perhaps because of it, the Old Fort seemed to have all the necessary qualities for a site that would stand at the junction between South Africa's past and future. But it would require an extraordinary building on that site to commemorate and break with the past, to house a Court that would deliberate on matters central to the idea of democracy, to embody the moment – both historical and architectural – and to see into the future.

At the time of the search for a site for the Constitutional Court, the Fort was a national monument and so agreement had to be obtained from the National Monuments Council (NMC) to build on the site. The Department of Public Works and the Johannesburg Metro Council appointed three architects, Derek and Vivienne Japha from the University of Cape Town and Johannesburg-based Herbert Prins, to survey the site and create a brief for an international architectural competition. The competition jury comprised architects Charles Correa (from India) and Geoffrey Bawa (from Sri Lanka), local architects nominated by such bodies as the NMC and the Institute of Architects (Herbert Prins, Willie Meyer and Gerard Damstra), Peter Davey, editor of the British *Architectural Review*, and a selection of laypeople representing a variety of interests: Justice Albie Sachs, Thenjiwe Mtintso, Chairperson of the Commission for Gender Equality, and Councillor Isaac Mogase, the Mayor of Johannesburg. Hundreds of enquiries were made and nearly two hundred entries submitted in anonymous competition. After five entries had been shortlisted, the commission was awarded to a team of young South African architects: the Durban-based omm design workshop with Janina Masojada, Andrew Makin and Erik Orts Hansen, and their Johannesburg partner for the project, Paul Wygers of Urban Solutions.

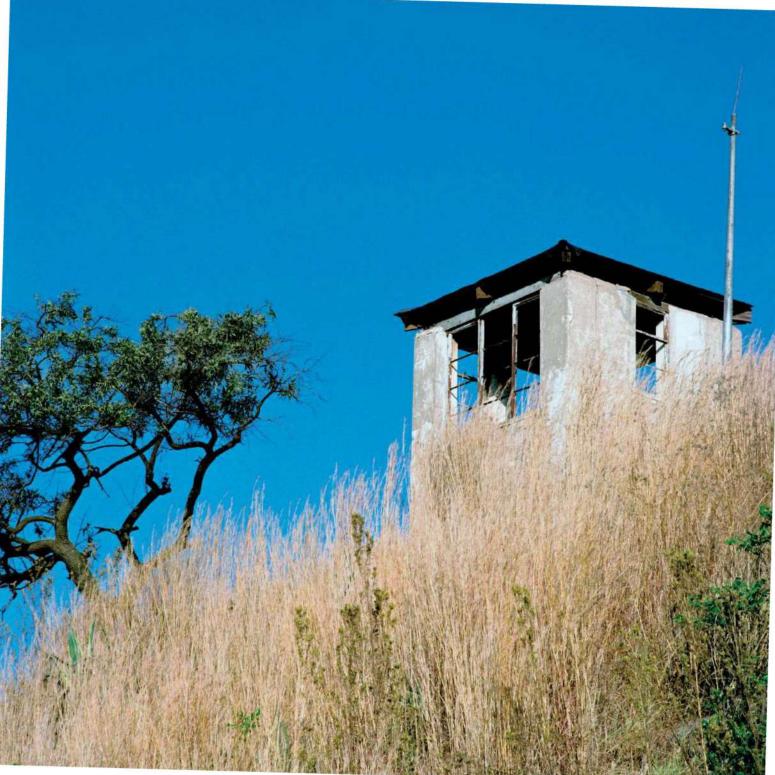
Funding for the project came initially from the Department of Justice and was supplemented by the semi-autonomous agency of the Gauteng Provincial Government, Blue IQ. The Johannesburg Development Agency was appointed to manage the project. Demolition and excavation on the site began in 2001 and on Human Rights Day 2004 the Constitutional Court was officially inaugurated, together with Constitution Square and the beginnings of a museum.

At the inauguration ceremony, Charles Correa likened the building of the Court to the invention of an axe: at some point in human history someone joined a stick to a stone and created something entirely new. This, he said, is what the new Constitutional Court building had done; it had cut decisively through history and completely altered the idea of what court buildings should be,

When it opened, the Court caused something of a stir in the architectural fraternity. It was, at the very least, an unorthodox building, but despite the debates stirred up by such features as the angled columns in the Foyer and the incorporation of old bricks from the demolished Awaiting Trial Block, the warmth and openness of the building were undeniable. It was a court building for the people, expressing a range of cultural expectations of the concepts of justice and democracy. But in addition to its enormous symbolic import, the new Constitutional Court would help to articulate elements of South Africa's architectural vernacular and would become the building around which questions of architectural identity would circulate. It was to become an iconic building, its combination of dignity and accessibility, its warmth and light, and its embodiment of the hopes of a young country.

When I began work on this book more than a year ago, I was delighted to find that I would have almost unlimited access to the Court building, that I would be interviewing such people as Chief Justice Pius Langa and Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso, and that I would work closely with the architects and Angela Buckland, whose work I knew and admired. In 2004, the Artworks Committee of the Court and David Krut Publishing chose the designer Adele Prins, through a book design competition, to create a book that would reflect the spirit of the Court and be a beautiful object in its own right. The project has been a long collaboration and we are delighted that its end result is a book that reflects not only the contributions of those who were interviewed for the text, but also the dedication and generosity of the architects, builders, artisans and artists who have made the Court the extraordinary building that it is.

– Bronwyn Law-Viljoen August 2006



NOTES FROM A COMPETITION BRIEF

Far right Early concept drawings imagining everyday activity around the Court and on Constitution Square Janina [Masojada], Paul [Wygers] and I registered to enter the competition to design the Constitutional Court because we really wanted to win it. As anyone who has entered competitions of this scale and expectation will know, they are an enormous undertaking from a time, energy, commitment and delivery point of view. There is clearly no logical reason to engage in such a mammoth undertaking if it is not with the intention of winning!

Our experience told us that there were three main components that influenced the probability of achieving this objective. They were the brief, the content and presentation of the design submission in response to the brief, and the competition jury. We were only in control of the middle component, but we quickly realised that because the competition was entirely anonymous, the other two components left us well-positioned in our objective to win.

The jury composition, as identified in the brief, was very encouraging to us. A number of the architects on the jury were people that we had admired a great deal from the first time we were exposed to them in our student years; these included Geoffrey Bawa from Sri Lanka and Charles Correa from India. Peter Davey from the *Architectural Review* in the UK represented international exposure and experience and, we imagined, would bring great insight to the competition judging process. The non-architect jurors on the panel had been leaders and prominent people in the struggle to bring about democracy in South Africa; we imagined that they had spent much of their lives envisaging what the nature of our democratic society would be and how it would be manifested and symbolised.

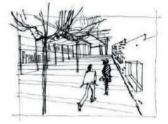
When we received the brief and excitedly skimmed through it, we were immediately encouraged about our chances of success. It seemed as though the brief was asking a question that was close to our hearts as young South Africans who had experienced the extent to which the previous regime had fractured our society and our communities, deeply injured family units and individuals and generally distorted our view of what life in our country could be like. Like all South Africans of our generation, we had been born into a fundamentally dysfunctional society. The advent of democracy meant that the structural "dismantling" process had, to all intents and purposes, been successfully achieved. We now wanted to participate in the rebuilding process and we really wanted the opportunity to answer the questions the brief was asking in this regard: how is the personality of our democracy to be manifested in its pre-eminent building? What does the face of democracy look like when manifested in a building? What does that democracy say when it speaks through the experiences of the users of and visitors to a building designed to reflect the values of that democracy?

One Saturday morning Janina and I drove from our coastal base in Durban up to Johannesburg for our first concept design session with Paul Wygers of Urban Solutions. The drive gave us an opportunity to read the brief comprehensively from beginning to end.

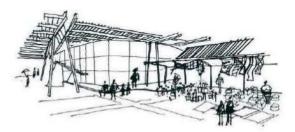
The brief had two primary elements. The first was an expression of the "performance expectations". It spelt out what the building and the precinct within which it would stand should do, what they should represent, how they should be experienced, what values they should express, what place they should take in the development of our country's identity and what the relationship of the architecture of Court and precinct should be to the architectures of our collective, shared and disjointed heritage. The second component addressed the practical needs of the Court and specified the accommodation requirements and envisaged functional relationships.

Looking back on the process, it seems as though all we did through the concept generation, design process, technical development and delivery was to bring all our experiences of being South African to bear upon the values and requirements of the brief. To this extent the brief was the origin of the design and outcome of the project. It was direct in its expectations – in both what it did and did not want the building to be – clear in its functional purpose, and clear in the process envisaged to deliver the precinct and building through the first international, open and anonymous competition to design a public building in post-1994 South Africa.

- Andrew Makin







IN THE HEART OF THE CYCLONE

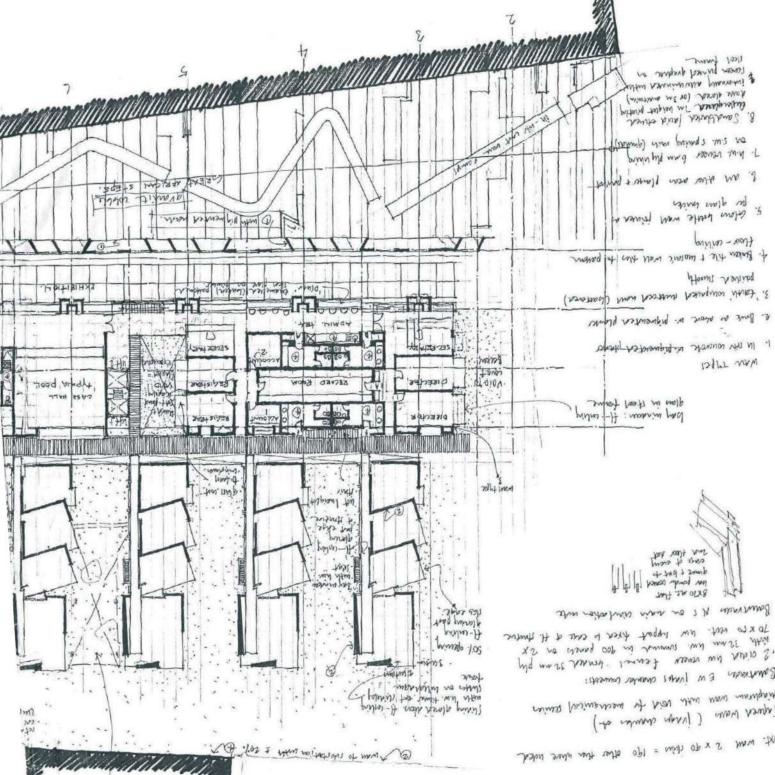
Looking at it we realised how much this site offered. It is right in the heart of Johannesburg. Right in the heart of the cyclone.

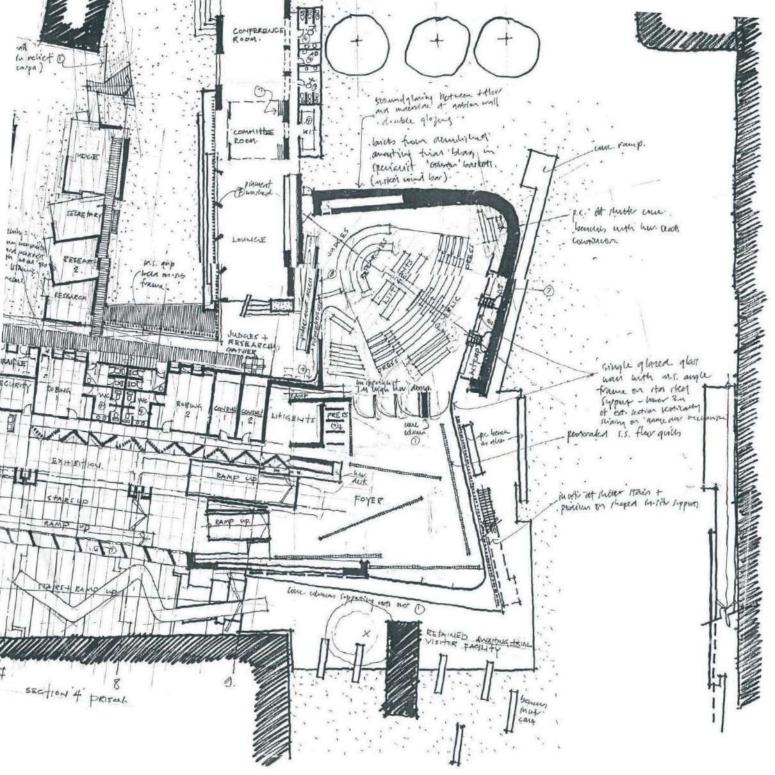
– Justice Yvonne Mokgoro



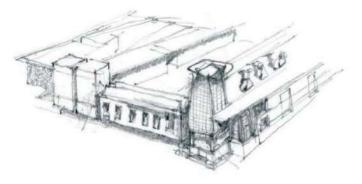
IN THE HEART OF THE CYCLONE











The urban design strategy for the new Constitutional Court and Constitution Hill determined that the previously isolated and impenetrable prison precinct should be reintegrated into the Johannesburg city grid. What was closed by apartheid should be opened. The two most workable north-south and east-west routes across the site were identified. The east-west ones connected the impoverished apartment buildings of Hillbrow to the office blocks of Braamfontein, and the north-south ones also connected Braamfontein across the site, but to the elegant suburbs of the north. The establishment of one of the east-west routes necessitated demolition of the Awaiting Trial Block, a historically important prison building close to the centre of the precinct.

Some still believe that it shouldn't have been demolished and there is a great deal of validity in this argument. But we decided that, in the context of a history in which laws at times forbade people to congregate, it was very important to make a freely accessible public space at the centre of Constitution Hill that celebrated the right to gather. That space should be outside the door of the Constitutional Court.

These access ways resulted in the definition of the site on which we decided to design the building. The decision ensured that as much as possible of the perimeter of the building would be passed by people as they traversed the newly accessible site going about their everyday lives. This would give the building prominence and permit a sense of security for people both inside and outside of the building envelope.

- Paul Wygers

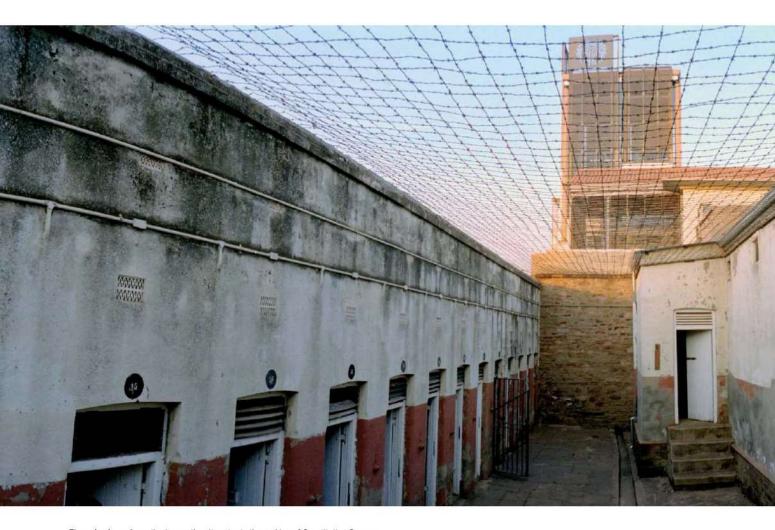
Above right Early architectural sketch of the Court showing the building made up of independently articulated parts

Left The two ends of the Court building are visible here: the glass tower of light over the Foyer and, at left rear, the tower above the Library.

Following pages View of the Court and Hillbrow from the courtyard of Number Four Prison







The only places for gathering on the site prior to the making of Constitution Square were the internal courtyards of the prison buildings. From these enclosed courtyards one could look up and see the sky, the only connection to the world outside. From the courtyards now the views are towards the public spaces of the Court building. The integration of the new building with the existing site structures captures our history, bringing the past into contact with the present. The proximity of the city and ordinary life to this site of historical atrocities is hard to comprehend. The urban design strategy of linking north and south, east and west, and the introverted island of prisons with the adjacent residential, recreational and commercial functions of the city, was the starting point for giving access physically, and in every other way, to the site and its history.

- Janina Masojada







Above Isolation cells of Number Four Prison Right, top Number Four Prison watchtower Right, bottom Number Four Prison courtyard



The architects wanted to create a tower on Constitution Hill that would be a beacon of light without being monumental and that would join the chorus of towers on Johannesburg's distinctive skyline.

Left Interior of the tower of light above the Court Foyer

Below The iconic Hillbrow Tower, visible from almost every vantage point on Constitution Hill



In the brief to the participants in the architectural competition we spoke about a building that would draw on all the different cultures of South Africa without being a pastiche, a bit of this and a bit of that. I don't think that it is an accident, then, that the training to which Janina Masojada, Andrew Makin and Paul Wygers, the winning architects, were exposed encouraged them to look at site-specific, climate-specific, light-specific solutions and to use materials that were local, indigenous, connected to the site. They did not look for high-tech, abstract, formalised solutions. They went for the organic rather than the formal. Their participation in community activities, their connection to the student anti-apartheid struggles of the early eighties and their subsequent experience as young architects involved in community projects were very important, Africa was not, for them, an idealised concept. It was part of the urban environment in which they lived and worked. They felt that they were designing a building not just for other architects, not just for patrons, not just to show off what fabulous sculptural visions they had. Their approach was completely different. It was an inner approach. It was part of a national project, a movement, in which the way they would contribute would not simply make them bland reproducers of a kind of national idea. Rather they would draw on everything that was opening up in the country in terms of values, outlook, technology, vision and ways of doing things. They would take advantage of all that, producing something that was innovative, enduring, and had the strength and the dignity of the processes that had given us freedom and democracy. They didn't have to go to encounter groups or tea parties to learn architectural manners, to achieve a kind of non-racial vision. As far as I know, they weren't even bothered by the theme of Eurocentrism, which occupied quite a lot of polemical space. They knew that they were part of this continent and had imbibed the energy related to what was happening in the country. They didn't have to beat down temptations to replicate Atlanta or Tokyo or another part of the world. They were obviously delighted when they saw Geoffrey Bawa on the jury because he had drawn on Sri Lankan energy in his work, but they did not allow the international profile of the jury to cloud their own vision.

- Justice Albie Sachs

I was talking recently with the CEO of perhaps the biggest retailer in South Africa, who made reference to the failure of Western food retail businesses to gain a foothold in India, no matter how much they have tried. The reason for this failure is because the supermarket is already on the street. The supply chains, and what stock you keep and what people want and so on, don't have any of the baggage that a Western retail system requires and therefore any of the cost, so the big retailer struggles to beat the price of a single product available on the streets of India. Therefore a mass Western supermarket has little chance of success there. So in other words the traditional completely integrated system is more powerful than the imported corporate one.

In the same way, the Court doesn't seek to impose a foreign and pre-established system – whether it be an architectural style or an architectural language or the way in which materials are used – on the fully functioning, stable, working, existing system. It intends to grow out of that fully functioning, stable, existing system and the values associated with it. It intends to turn that into something, to transform it into the noble version of it without alienation, to remain completely connected, fully part of the organism, but the noble part of it.

- Andrew Makin



Left Eastern approach to the Court

Right Looking east from the Court to Hospital Street, with the Hillbrow Tower in the background and the sculpture Moving into Dance by Orlando Almeida in the foreground

The Constitutional Court is an invitation to newness and change. Whereas courts usually are known to be private and daunting, the Constitutional Court is happy, inclusive and open. One feels a participant here. This is a feeling encouraged by such simple things as the levels of the seats in the Court Chamber. In that space one feels that one is part of the whole. Even while there is a difference in roles between the judges and the participants, there is not a vast distance between them, all share the belief in rights for the individual.

The Court overlooks the different lives of Johannesburg – the opulence of Lower Houghton, Rosebank and the other northern suburbs, the squalor and liveliness of cosmopolitan Hillbrow, the brain and buzz of Braamfontein. The Court seems to be at the centre of all of this – weaving all these diverse lives together and reminding them of the oneness of their rights.

- Thenjiwe Mtintso





Above Northern façade of the Library

Far right The Union Buildings in Pretoria, designed by Herbert Baker, are raised above the city and overlook the city's public gardens. In contrast the Constitutional Court building is in the centre of the country's major metropolis, the vibrant, vital and multicultural city of Johannesburg. The Court is an integral part of a site of national memory.

Right The Court against the panorama of Hillbrow



We agreed that the material, the style of the building should move away from the traditional imposing powerful pillar, a "pushing out" building with high walls and perimeters, a traditional court building which scares people away. There is a general feeling about court buildings that you don't want to be there. You don't want to be seen there. They are buildings that you don't want to visit because they spell trouble. We wanted to move away from that and use material that would represent openness, participation – the democratic value of public participation – warmth, welcome to all. At the same time we also needed the value of power, which might easily be translated into respect. So the triple volumes of the building, although they might seem imposing, have a style that is open. Not many dark corners. Right from the door you are welcomed into the Foyer of the Court with a huge, imposing, yet welcoming, eightmetre wooden door. That was no accident. It was part of the plan. We want people to be here all the time. When people come here they must feel welcomed but still respect the institution of the Court.

When the judges file into court, when we walk out of our Conference Room and file through that passage, we are almost directly below the Hillbrow apartments. When you stand there you can look right into the balconies of the high-rise Hillbrow buildings. And the residents of those buildings too can look right down and see the judges through the glass walls. Hillbrow is brought into the Court. It lies between Hillbrow and the Civic Centre of Johannesburg, the economic hub of our country. Almost invariably you see the Court as a bridge between the most depressed part of Johannesburg and the most economically powerful part of the courtry. That fact says much about the need to empower our people. The Court is a symbol of the bridge which is our democracy that intends to carry all people into a life of dignity.

In the afternoon when the kids come back from school and you sit in your chambers you hear them playing and shouting outside. Their voices carry. There is a playground nearby and a park. You feel at home to hear chidren at play so close by. In the beginning people questioned the position of the Court: next to Hillbrow! They didn't even want to think about it, about the whole idea of having this Court on this site. But here it is, converting our pain into democratic joy.

- Justice Yvonne Mokgoro







Right Constitution Square by night showing the remains of the Awaiting Trial Block and the hoarding constructed during renovations to the Women's Jail

SITE OF PAIN AND RENEWAL

I was an African woman who grew up in the township and played some role in the struggle against apartheid and patriarchy. I had even been detained at the very Number Four Prison where the Court was to be built. With all the authority I could muster before the competition jury, I usurped the role of "expert" on black women. I claimed to know black women, their aspirations, experiences, perspectives, fears, joys. Of course I was stretching this expertise too far but I have always believed that situations that are created to advance the cause should be utilised to the utmost.

Anyone could be forgiven for asking what such biological trivialities have to do with the architecture of such an important building. The jury, with a bit of prodding, agreed that these were very important for a constitutional court in a democratic South Africa with the most progressive constitution in the world, one founded on the principles of the Freedom Charter.

My logic was that courts have always been frightening buildings for black women in South Africa – the ultimate incarnations of repression. Women would have been in court for pass offences or for running illegal shebeens, or to witness the trials of their husbands or sons for various offences, including political ones. I thought that if South African women were ever asked to describe their thoughts and feelings about courts they would use words such as injustice, exclusion, marginalisation, dehumanisation, humiliation, fear, repulsion, rejection, distrust, unfriendly, cold, ugly, austere, stern etc. I felt the Court should be everything that was the opposite of these words. What had to spring to mind when describing this Court, our Court, had to be words such as welcoming, warm, embracing, friendly, protective, accessible, humane, just, worthy of trust, reliable, open, participatory, supportive, soft and yet serious, inclusive, people-owned. The building had to project a notion of a protective tree, which in the rural areas is usually used as a court under which elders sit and resolve the problems of the village or villagers sit in community. It had to be like an *imbizo*.

These descriptions obviously covered content, process and form. The work of the architects was to create a form that would embrace most, if not all, of these, I am convinced that they must have thought the jury a little bit insane. The Court, I felt, had to reassure, protect and give women a sense of security if it was about the protection of constitutional rights. The beginning was the building itself: the face of the Court, as that was to be the first point of contact with what happens inside. The building had to be an invitation for women – particularly black, poor and rural women – to come in and talk.

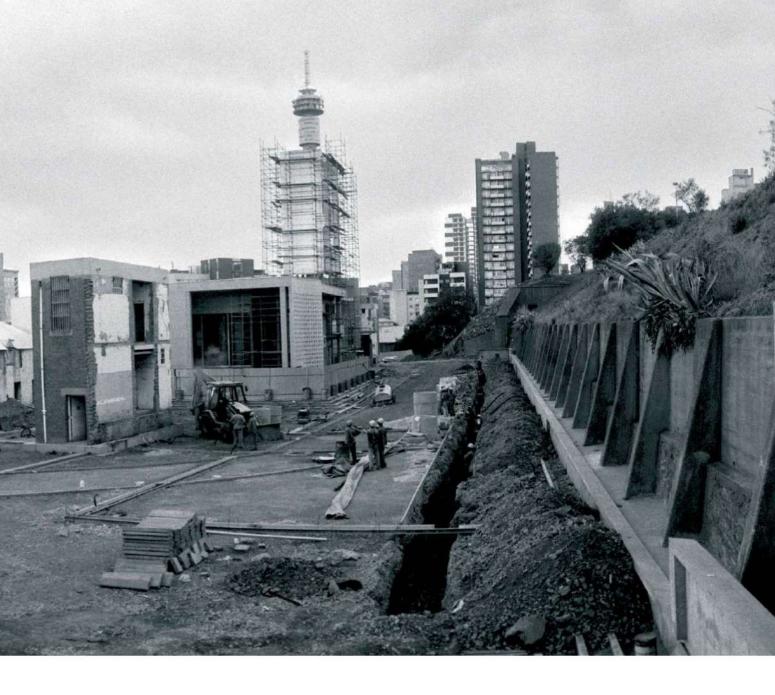
Why are women the litmus test? Someone once put it this way: "If it works for women, particularly black, poor, rural women, then it works for all." I was not that articulate then but all I wanted was that it should make sense for these women. They had always been at the bottom of the ladder in terms of oppression. Their voices had always been shut out or at best muted. Their views, aspirations and perspectives had been on the periphery of South African society. They were the worst affected by injustices at home and in society. They bore the brunt of the apartheid system, and yet they were the most resilient. Their struggles took all forms. My mother, Maradebe, was my point of reference. She had passed on two years earlier but I had a sense of what she would be looking for, having come to this place many years earlier with my two-year-old son to try to visit me in jail, to no avail. I could imagine how she felt and I remembered some of the things she said she felt about me being inside that building and being unable to visit me, about the way she was chased off. I had seen her and many women in the Maplatini (the informal area where I was born) and Mpozolo villages in the Eastern Cape (where she had to send me as she could not cope): their daily lives were nothing but a struggle to survive. The Court had to reflect that it was concerned with their aspirations and voices. It had to physically show the return of their dignity. It had to shout to everyone and anyone in the street that it was about the rights of all. It had to talk to women, reassure them, invite them to come in with their sorrows and complaints. It had to extend a hand of friendship. It had to embrace them. As a friend, it had to laugh and if needs be cry with them. It had to, even in its form, guarantee protection, security, inclusion, accessibility, warmth and friendship. It had to offer an opportunity to sit, observe and participate.

- Thenjiwe Mtintso





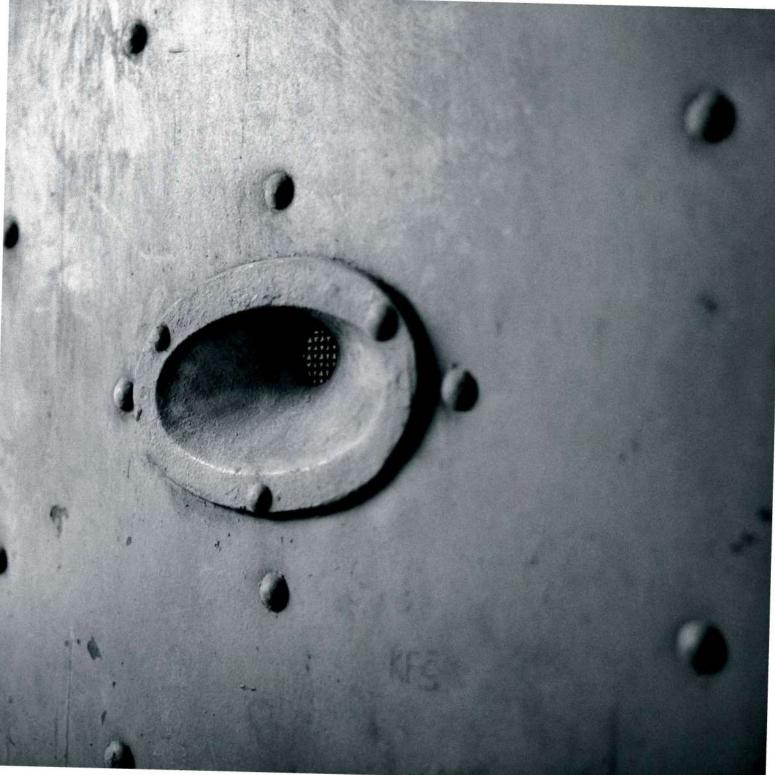
Constitution Square early in the building process with the stair towers remaining in the rubble of the demolished Awaiting Trial Block. Scaffolding encloses a beacon of light under construction on one of the stair towers, set against the Hillbrow Tower to the east. On the right are the ramparts of the Old Fort.



Clockwise from top left Bricks from the Awaiting Trial Block reused in the Foyer of the Court; several old prison doors like this one have been retained in the new building; the two Awaiting Trial Block stair towers in Constitution Square; a staircase from the old prison left intact in the Court, photographed while the building was under construction

Right Detail of a cell door left in place in the new building





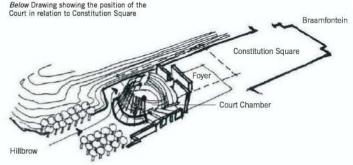




One of the stipulations in the competition brief was that the Awaiting Trial Block be demolished to make space on the site for the new building. In our submission it would make way for a public gathering space. That space has become what the Constitutional Court is about: it is a connection between the city - the people - and the Court Chamber. The Court Chamber and Foyer are placed in the space left over from the Awaiting Trial Block. With the demolition came the desire to commemorate the building and to incorporate its history into the new Court, to recognise that the Constitutional Court is the outcome of a historical process. We wanted the building to reflect that process physically as well as symbolically. So the Awaiting Trial stair towers, which were left behind to mark the footprint of the original building, have become integrated into the functioning of the Court. It was also our intention that the four stair towers would be surmounted by beacons of light that would provide the view of the Court from afar and that would mark a place that is now a free gathering space. The use of the Awaiting Trial Block bricks in the building of the Court Chamber makes a symbolic and physical connection of history and place. Reusing the bricks, or even the prison bars that were later attached to the substation as climbers for plants, suggests a complete intermingling of past and present - there are parts of the Court where new and old stand side by side, indistinguishable from one another. And now the Awaiting Trial Block stair towers stand in the Square with dignity. They are strong reminders of something that was.

- Janina Masojada

Left The Foyer, illuminated at night, is on the public Square and along the route that connects Hillbrow to Braamfontein, up against the Old Fort ramparts. The Awaiting Trial Block stair towers are a formidable presence connecting, in scale, the Court building to the city.





40 There are parts of the Court where new and old stand side by side, indistinguishable from one another. – Janina Masojada

> Above and right Moving from Hillbrow along the side of the Court Chamber towards the Foyer that faces Constitution Square, one reads the building as a collage. New and old become one: textured surfaces of reused broken prison bricks, peeling graffitied prison walls, a sturdy, defending curved solid wall floating over strips of light, an impenetrable solid surface and transparent surfaces layered over one another, binding past and present.





There were several possible ways to approach the building of the Court. One that we saw during the design competition showed huge concrete huts that would have been the Court Chamber, the Library, the Judges' Chambers, with admin up on the hill. It would have been quite striking, but I remember the mayor saying he didn't like something that looked like a game lodge or a casino. To him the design proposed by that entry wasn't an authentic representation of contemporary Africa. The circular hut made of local materials is extremely sensible when you have a pastoral society moving from summer to winter grazing, using local materials. It is weatherproof, relatively warm in winter and cool in summer, but it just didn't make sense to use a form that belonged to a particular setting and to replicate it in expanded form in the building of the Court.

The other possible approach was to adopt an international style. I confess that once upon a time when I called myself an internationalist, I loved the name, I loved the idea, I loved the sense that it was going to involve the whole world, and there would be pure beautiful buildings all over the place, and if they looked alike, well, that would be because reason is the same wherever you are. The theory of this style is that a building is a building is a building, whether it is in Tokyo or Gauteng or Atlanta, It's as if to say that there is only one building, purely as a matter of reason, and to it you add a few touches of local decoration. But if that's so then a court put up in Johannesburg is no different – subject to climate – from a court put up in the Yukon or in New York. The reality, of course, is that you are taking a prototype from one part of the world and you are reproducing it all over the world under the guise of its being universal. But the prototype of this style is essentially a box that makes a lot of sense in northern climates where for much of the year you have to retain heat. But it doesn't make any sense in warmer climates where it actually becomes hostile to people.

It is therefore a mistake to export this style to places where it is intrinsically incompatible with local climate and setting, and culturally an imposition in places where the great majority of people are used to living in areas with courtyards and open spaces. The architect Charles Correa writes very powerfully against an international style that simply adds, in a kind of pastiche, local or regional elements. Of course that is very common in South Africa now in casinos and other such buildings.

What I think the design of the Court does is to build on the traditions of early Modernism with a great emphasis on light, flow, movement, volume rather than mass, and the importance of craft and the human hand. It allows those structural features that are almost abstract in character to carry the emotion, the delight, the solemnity of a building that both represents and celebrates our constitutional democracy. And the African, South African, quality comes through in the openness, the inside-outside character, the transparency of justice under a tree.

- Justice Albie Sachs

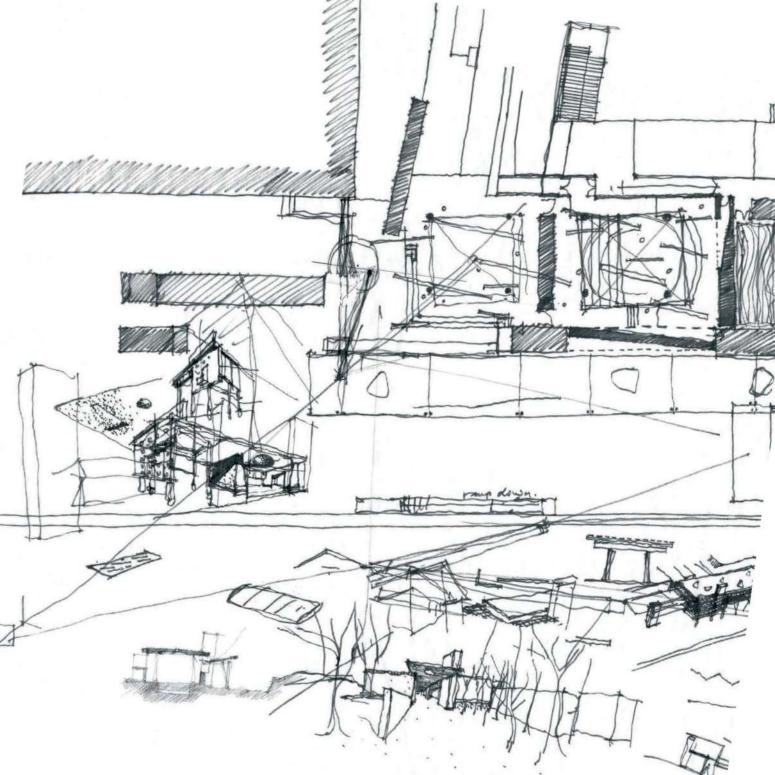
Above The great wooden entrance doors were carved by Andries Botha, Smanga Madala, Richard Maphumulo, Jabulani Mkhize, Dumisani Mthethwa, Ernest Mthethwa, Lindelani Ndinisa, Musa Ngcobo, Richard Shange and Andrew Verster.

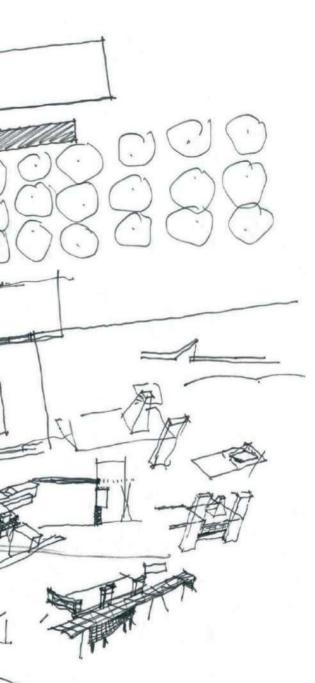
Right The artists Mervin Dowman, Kasia Kwiecinska, Andrew Lindsay, Jacob Ramoboya, Sam Thoka and Mark Zammit created the mosaics at the entrance to the Foyer. The hanging lantern was made by Lindelani Ngwenya.

Below The entablature (in this case a concrete beam) surrounding the entrance to the Foyer is reminiscent of classical Greek and Roman temples. Since the Bill of Rights starts out by affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom, these were the words selected to be cast in concrete. Traditionally, Roman lettering with serifs and all would be used; in the new South African context, each of the eleven judges was asked to write out the words in one of the eleven official languages. The visitor can now see the words in the individual scripts of the judges, and in Braille.











Above Looking from Hillbrow along the southern façade of the building towards Constitution Square. The ramparts of the Old Fort are visible on the left.

Left Early concept drawings showing the eastern section of the Court and its relation to the Square

The inside-outside visibility of the Court communicates something that is somewhere between subliminal and liminal. Perhaps "interliminal", a consciousness of justice under a tree. This is reinforced by the notion of the community. We have lots of public functions in the Court Foyer – book launches, exhibitions – and many events out on Constitution Square, such as debates and discussions on important public holidays, theatrical and dance performances, films. So it really is a public place, used by the public in all sorts of ways.

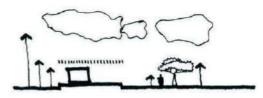
- Justice Albie Sachs

We wanted to design a place in which all people would feel welcome, where South Africans from urban and rural areas, the young and old, could gather without inhibition, and have a connection, a sense of belonging and identity. We imagined parades, protests, concerts and celebrations attended by presidents and school children alike, together and proud.

— Janina Masojada

Right Bars of light travel across the floor marking time and season. In winter the sun penetrates to warm and brighten the Foyer; in summer the angle of light is cut off, allowing for cool relief from the external heat.

Below Drawing showing the relationship between ideas of "inside" and "outside". The Foyer is intended to be as much an inside space as an outside space, its roof a canopy of clouds and leaves.



JUSTICE UNDER A TREE

Both aesthetically and compositionally, the Court Foyer and Chamber were the most difficult components of the building to conceive. As is the case for many architects educated through a system of historic reference, our exposure to pre-eminent public buildings and spaces offered only one, consistent model.

The model was one of authority, monumentalism (or aspiration toward it) and the symbolising of material or spiritual greatness and achievement. In this context, we did, as students, continuously ponder the idea that the conception and construction of these icons of civilisations would have been unlikely without the harnessing and centralisation of very significant authority, power and wealth.

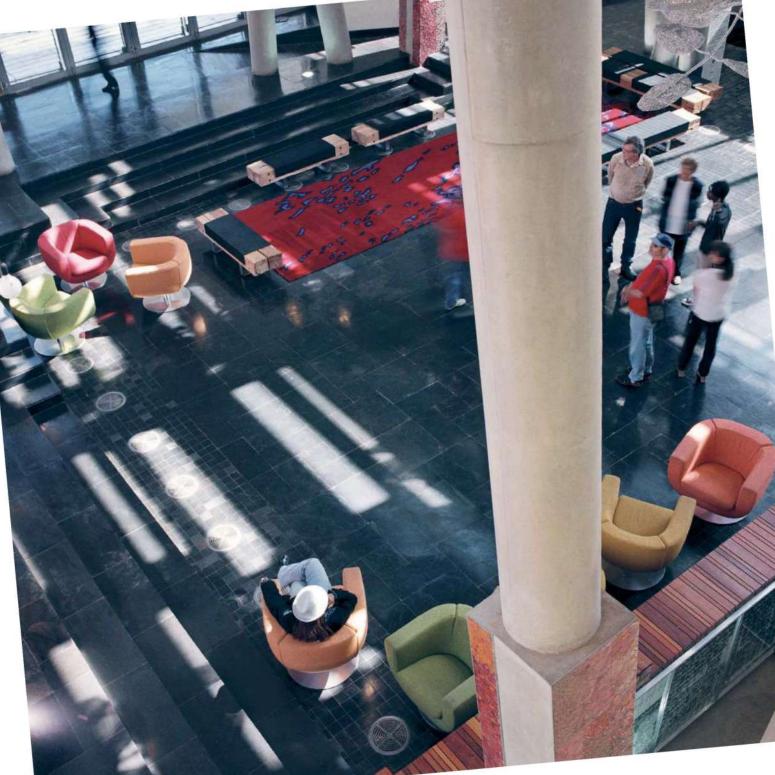
We had grown up in a society in which the consequences of such centralisation wrought deep destruction, pain and suffering and we assumed that that could also have been true in the case of the historical examples that were the tools of our architectural education. Assuming they are finite, how else would the resources to construct such magnificence have been accumulated at the top echelons of societal power without their having been denied elsewhere? The image of the fragile little croft houses and thatch-roofed huts dwarfed in the shadows of the cathedrals of Europe called into question the sustainable relevance of these great symbols to the populations that squatted around them. The same might well have been true in the case of the society that left us the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, the Egyptian and Greek temples and, on a global scale of resource-consumption and concentration, the Empire State Building, the World Trade Center and other iconic buildings of the twentieth century.

Paradoxically, these structures represent, even across vast stretches of time and cultural difference, the inherent and defining human capacity for creation, technological mastery, imagination and conviction.

There was an expectation, expressed both in the design brief for the building and its precinct and in ourselves, that the new Constitutional Court building of South Africa should powerfully and convincingly represent the highest aspirations of our society. Without grandeur, ostentation and monumentalism delivered at great expense, the building should have a strong presence, reflect the hopes and aspirations of all the people of our country, and do this with a level of gravitas that would set it apart from the many other public buildings that would need to be built across the country to make up the backlog of the massive imbalance of apartheid spending.

Perhaps even more so than the Court Chamber, the Foyer is the primary mechanism for the communication of the building's symbolic intent. Rather than being an object in a landscape, it is a space. Rather than generating meaning through form, it expresses meaning in its void. Rather than being embellished on its external surface, either by decoration of surface or daring of technology, its delicacy is expressed on its internal surfaces. The Foyer is somewhere between a hollowed-out solid concrete block and the abstract composition of the concrete planar surfaces of a box; perhaps somewhere between the hollow mass of the Hagia Sophia and the compositional arrangement of the planes of Rietveld's Schröder House.

- Andrew Makin



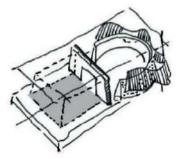


The panels of hand-made ceramics shaped as leaves, lucky beans, flowers and grass on the angled concrete columns in the Foyer are by Jane du Rand assisted by Zama Dunywa, Paul Figuero, Raksha Gobardan, Elias Lukhozl, Thando Mama, Richard Masoka, Vukani Mpanza, Tanja van Zyl and Patrick Xulu. The woven wire chandeliers by Walter Oltmann hang as a canopy of leaves above the Foyer.





The big part of building the pillars was just to make sure we got the geometry right. Because they were freestanding, we had to strap them together and hold them in place while they cured, which meant a lot more propping and support than one would normally need for pillars. If you make vertical pillars, you pour them, and the next day you strip them and they stand by themselves, whereas these things had a tendency to fall over. So the geometry was important: going from square to round and round to square, up and down, trying to get the mix right, and also making sure that the pillar hit the roof at the right angle. It probably looked trickier than it was: we put a bit of thought into it and we had an extremely good foreman in Angelo Ferreira. - Derek Wallace, Contracts Manager



Above Drawing showing the Foyer as a doorway between Constitution Square and the Court Chamber

Left The hands of many contributed to the building of the Court, from the pouring of vast quantities of concrete to the fashioning of each intricate mosaic. It is a real back-to-front building when you think about it, almost like some of the beautiful caves that we know, where on the outside there is a small opening and no expression of the magnificence of the inside, the stalagmite and stalactite cathedral that exists there. The Court turns things inside out. All the glory of a Western classical or Indian classical building that is on the outside of the building is, in the case of the Court, saved for the inside. So when you experience the building in its most iconic form it is as though you are looking at the inside of a beautiful egg, not the outside. How successful that is, or what other things it doesn't deal with, is another issue, but that was a fundamental step towards achieving the conceptual objective, which was dignified when they are in it.

In the Foyer, the columns are rising up, strong, quasi-natural, non-structural-looking elements – although they do a structural job – decorated in a kind of Byzantine way with handmade ceramic mosaics. When you are in that space, you feel like you are looking at the façades of other buildings: the Court Chamber, for example, becomes a building in itself and you are looking at the outside view of it.

When you walk up the Great African Steps, looking at what is the outside of the Foyer – the portico – you are more inside there than you are when you go inside the building. And when you arrive in this space, that verandah or that portico, you have entered into the building without any fanfare. Then when you go into the Foyer, because of the quality of the light and the fact that you can see the façades of the Court Chamber, the Administration Wing and so on, it feels as though you are outside again. Also, where normally you would move up into a space, here you move down into a space, which is something you usually do outside, in an amphitheatre form. So the Foyer is a landscape, or helps create a landscape.

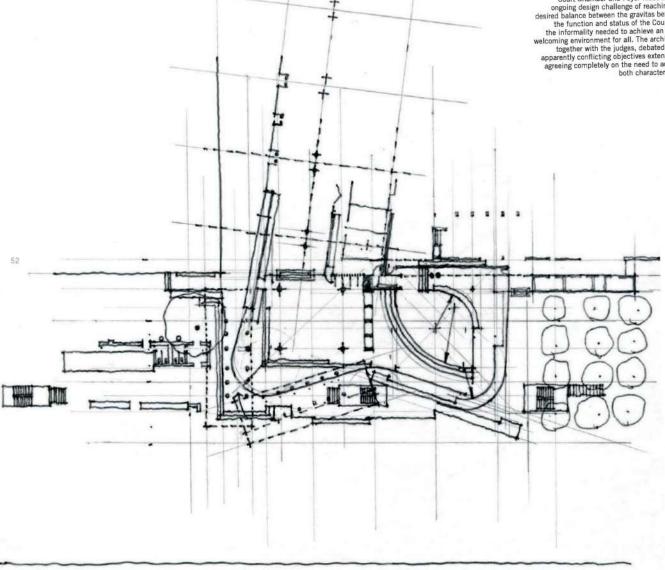
- Andrew Makin

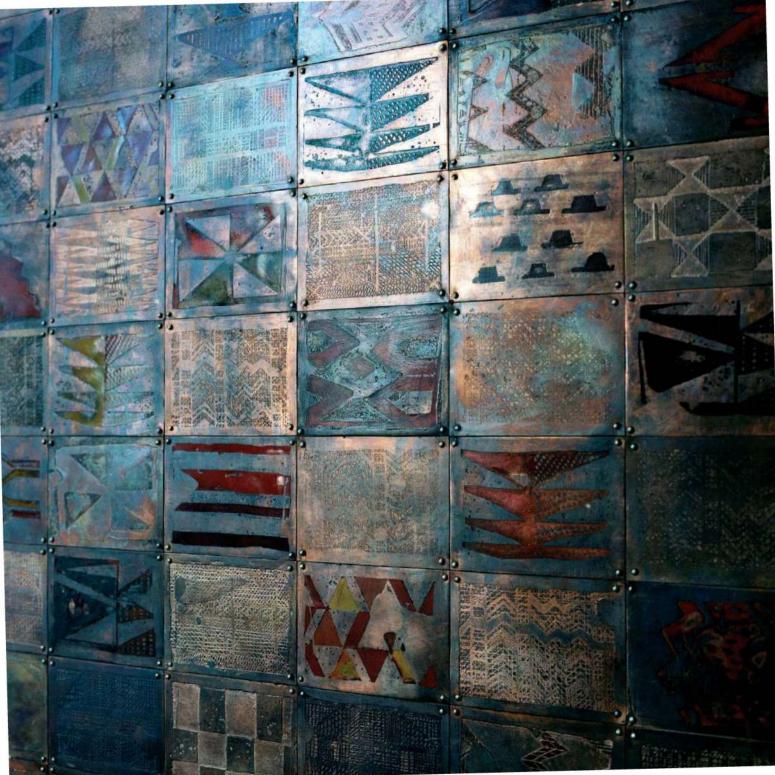
The Foyer really grew out of the necessity of having to give some protection from the weather to a part of Constitution Square. So you would move out of the expanse and the heat of the Square into a place that gave you some degree of shelter and shade, which is what the canopy over the Fover does. It gives you shade and provides a place that welcomes you to sit down, whether on the ground or on the furniture that's there, or just to gather. The door leading into the Foyer, with its tall carved wooden panels, has all the formality of a front door. Because of a desire that all sides of the Foyer would connect to the outside, the glass walls and the screens open up to the Square. Although that might happen infrequently, it is a statement of what the Foyer is about. It is a direct extension of the public space. The crossing of boundaries between the outside and the place where you are formally in the building is almost incidental. It is in complete contrast to the formal approaches to colonial buildings, where you walk up towards an imposing entrance and the crossing over from outside to inside is verv deliberate, involving an encounter with the authority that the building represents. What we were trying to do here was to break down those boundaries and to make the zones between public and private much softer, more democratic, less intimidating. The angled columns in the Foyer inhabit the space, so that when you arrive in this space you don't feel that you are entering in alone because there are already things that are gathered loosely around in some kind of communal engagement.

- Janina Masojada

Right The doors of the Court Chamber are inspired by African textiles, each copper panel marked, coloured and assembled to make the whole. The panels are by artists Verna Jooste, Myra Fassler Kamstra, Andrew Lindsay, Andrew Ramaboya, Sam Thoka and Mark Zammit.

Below Design development sketches of the Berow Design development sketches of the Court Chamber and Foyer illustrate the ongoing design challenge of reaching the desired balance between the gravitas befitting the function and status of the Court and the informality needed to achieve an open, welcoming environment for all. The architects, together with the judges, debated these apparently conflicting objectives extensively, agreeing completely on the need to achieve both characteristic both characteristics.









Left The southern end of the Foyer, looking through to the grassy ramparts of the Old Fort

Right Details of mosaics, lampshades and brickwork lend warmth and texture to the Foyer and other parts of the building

Following pages A staircase from the Awaiting Trial Block left intact in the new building One of the highlights of the planning and building process was the argument I had with everybody when they were designing the pillars down in the Foyer. The pillars were slanting. They looked quite awful and very disordered on the drawings. I thought of Herrick's poem "Delight in disorder" and I questioned why that should be. In fact I opposed the whole plan since it seemed to me something quite untidy. But I was overruled by my colleagues and the architects. The architects simply made a joke about it, and they ended up calling the pillars "Pius Pillars" because when I actually saw them later I rather liked them. They were supposed to depict trees in the forest, and for the architects they contained much symbolism. I see now what they meant. Of course the planning was characterised by those kinds of encounters, when the architects would put forth an idea and we would discuss that idea. During the discussion things would shift because the idea would change or be infused with other ideas, and then something else would come out. It was a very interactive effort.

Each area of the Court developed by the architects was presented to the judges for comment. We evolved a principle that the more the design touched on matters of intimate concern to the judges, the stronger our say would be, to the point even of a veto or an insistence on things of absolute immediate concern. The more the design related to the building generally and the public spaces of the building, the greater would be the discretion allowed the architects. So I recall a discussion on the Foyer. The then Deputy Chief Justice, Plus Langa, was quite alarmed at seeing the angled pillars. Was that appropriate for a court? Some others of my colleagues were also discountenanced by them but we had to arrive at an agreement. Well, this was one of those issues where the architects dug in their heels and, perhaps reluctantly, the judges agreed to the design. It was made very clear that the roof would be as stably supported – in fact even more so if the angles were well chosen – as in a conventional roof design, and Plus felt, well, he could live with it. And of course now we can't imagine the building without the Plus Pillars.

- Justice Albie Sachs





One doesn't inhabit this building without being reminded of what kind of space it is. _____Chief Justice Pius Langa

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Left Cast-concrete wall with coloured glass inserts. Dumile Feni's sculpture History is on the left.

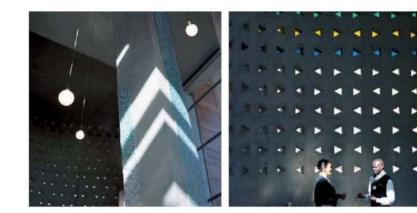
Right Detail studies of a pillar and the castconcrete wall at the southern end of the Foyer

For the curved concrete wall we poured the concrete on site. We did it twice in fact. It stood there for three months but when they put the roof on, it collapsed and we had to repour it.

Curved concrete is quite tricky. The architects wanted big panels and because we didn't really have the systems that everyone is using at the moment, we did it conventionally, shuttering the concrete with steel panels and overlaying it with timber sheets. Because of the curve in the wall we had to do the shutters and then line in the timber – quite a feat of concrete!

The glass triangles set into the wall are three-dimensional and sloping in all directions for the rain to run off. We made the wall with void formers in place, poured the concrete and then whacked the void formers out. The people who installed the glass made templates of the triangles and then cut the glass to those shapes.

- Derek Wallace, Contracts Manager



In our context, cast concrete is relatively easy and cheap to construct and, by virtue of the technology itself and the characteristics of the South African construction industry, using it ensures employment across a range of skill levels in the industry. For these reasons as well as its inherent qualities and attributes, cast concrete is the predominant material of choice for both material and surface throughout the building. The range of its applications is especially visible in the Foyer. Its primal rawness as well as its precise refinedness is explored as structure, material and surface; screen, mass and texture; decorated in itself or receiver of the filigree decoration that direct and reflected light cast onto it, or both.

The downturning concrete wall defining the entrance portico decorated with the bead-like coloured text in our eleven official languages; the internal inclined concrete columns, more like trees than structure; the slightly bowing concrete roof canopy with its north-facing, sunlight-modulating slots, more like sail than slab; and the perforated concrete screen on the southern side of the Foyer, more like punched paper than wall, are the range of explorations of the material.

With small triangles of clear and coloured glass inserts – in the colours of our national flag – the gently curving perforated concrete screen is, from the inside, the rose window of this cathedral to our democracy.

On approach from neighbouring Hillbrow to the east of the building, and having had a glimpse into the Foyer immediately after passing the heavy dry-packed recovered brick walls of the Chamber, one experiences the wall as the foil concealing the internal space of the Foyer before entering it from the west. Its slightly billowing form and, on closer inspection, its richly coloured glass inserts suggest the main entrance before one has seen it, and enable a comfortable transition, through a 180-degree rotation, into the building.

As a freestanding plane, the wall contributes to the looseness of the enclosure of the Foyer as a space somewhere between an internal room and an external verandah; an enclosure and a clearing; an empty and an occupied volume; a clearly defined space and a limitless, edgeless, ethereal one.

- Andrew Makin

Left The shade of the tree is a place of communal gathering, whether for school, meetings of a community with their elders or simple social exchange. This linocut, by Sandile Goje, was identified by the architects at the conceptual design stage as representative of the project brief. Entitled Making Democracy Work, the work has become symbolic of the Constitutional Court building. It represents the elders listening to matters concerning their community. All are assembled under a tree, gathered in the shade, and, notably, a TV cameraman to one side is recording and transmitting the goings-on further afield.

Right The Foyer at night



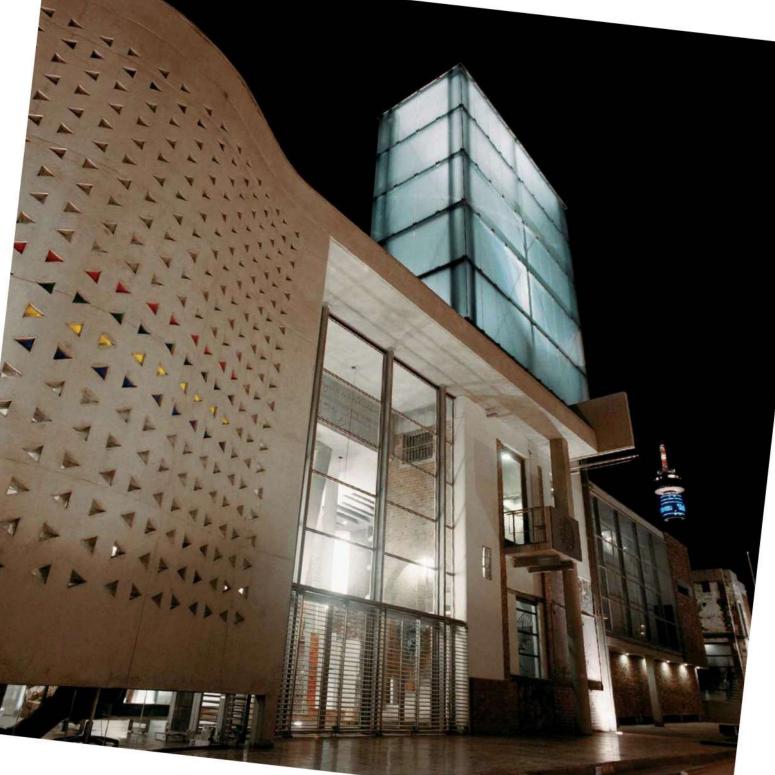
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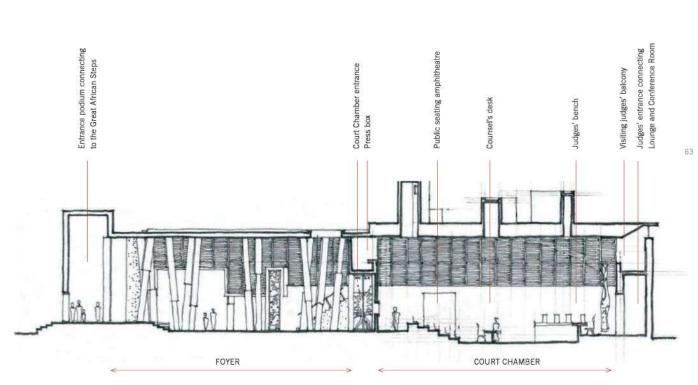
Our intention was that the Foyer would be a piece of Constitution Square that would be securable and from which you would enter the primary parts of the building. It is the most conceptual part of the Court, because it doesn't have a traditional and specific function except simply to introduce people to the experience or purpose of the building. It is like a handshake. It is a book cover, or an album cover. Wherever it is you are going to go in your exploration of the Court, the Foyer gives you all of the components of it in one space, quite calmly, quite unassertively. I suppose it is not a place, it is a space. It is an incidental arrival, the Foyer such an easy extension of the adjacent public paths and places. The shaded interior invites one out of the harsh sun of the highveld. One enters to rest, for relief, for protection, You may enter just because you can, because you have the right to. Stepping up onto the low podium of the entrance verandah, are you inside or outside? The steps function as seats, the logs as benches, the columns as company, the light for warmth.

- Janina Masojada

- Andrew Makin







Above Cross-section showing the direct relationship between Constitution Square, the raised entrance podium, the Foyer and the sunken well of the Court Chamber

Left Curved concrete wall on the southern side of the Foyer and light box extension to one of the stair towers of the demolished Awaiting Trial Block

LEKGOTLA (A GATHERING OR COUNCIL)





A full Chamber on the occasion of the June 2005 retirement of Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson. Judges occupy the bench (to the right and behind) and law clerks are seated in front of the bench (to the left).



We recently held a moot competition in the Court Chamber over which I presided. There were eleven judges present and one of the things I remarked upon was that in spite of the context the competitors seemed to be very comfortable, unintimidated by it all. I think there is that kind of atmosphere in the Court Chamber. I have seen counsel arguing and imagined myself being on the other side, and while I don't think there is anything that will remove completely the intimidating spectacle of eleven judges sitting and staring at you, nevertheless the calmness of the atmosphere and the sense of history in the Chamber make it impossible to look at that courtroom on the inside and not imagine what it stands for – the values of the Constitution, human dignity. You feel those things as you sit there. And I would imagine counsel sitting there – they can't but have that sense. But then you are talking to an enthusiast, you see.

- Chief Justice Pius Langa

What we needed close to the courtroom, so that one could go there and come back quickly, was a robing room and, on the other hand, a secure, withdrawn place for the judges with easy access to the Library. [Justice] Laurie [Ackermann] and I contributed to discussions on the working relationship between the various components of the building.

I was involved at one stage with the High Court building in Pritchard Street, and the extensions there went very badly wrong because the architects were over-concerned with Public Works Department norms and with their own ideas of aesthetics, and had actually never thought about how a courtroom worked. I was Chairman of the Bar at the time and along with some colleagues found that there was no way that the advocates could get into the courtroom. The architects had already fully fitted out the court without taking into consideration such a basic requirement.

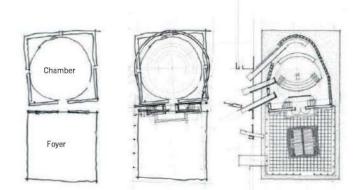
So we went back to the Judge President, who was a very stubborn man, and told him that we had clambered over scaffolding and round the paint tins to go and have a look. But he wouldn't believe us, so we said, "Well, we can't ask you to come to the building site, but can you send your clerk to come and have a look?" And he said, "Right." And after that we managed to get things changed. Fortunately we had a different experience when building the Constitutional Court! The Court Chamber extends dignity to its people in the use of familiar materials and textures, in the colours of the earth, traditional patterns and recognisable forms, but without references to particular ethnic "styling".

Above left Nguni cattle hides are used as panels on the front of the judges' bench. They are sleek, glowing and textured, making reference to traditional royal courts and the draped animal skins adorning kings, chiefs and elders.

Right The carpet design by Andrew Verster originated from a photograph of sunlight through trees casting shadows on the ground. It reinforces the connection to the outside, to light and to time.







The thinking behind the Court building is driven by a commitment to social relationships, rather than to an aesthetic or some other imposed value system. In the old kind of court, which is very much like a traditional office block, when you walked out of the office you proceeded along an internal passage, and walked round and about, up, down, through and over, under, round and about, and eventually you got to where you were going. The experience along that route was extremely uninspiring: enclosed, internal, linear, one-way, physically and socially isolating.

By contrast, in this new Court, when you come out of your office, you leave a private place and move onto public galleries, arcades or a series of streets. If you are a judge and you are going to the Library, you will walk along one level of a gallery, encountering your colleagues along the way. You will see who is around, what is happening, you will look out of the private courtyard across at Hillbrow. You will engage with the world along the way.

A series of drawings that we made show the conceptual design development in the relationship between the Court Chamber, the Foyer and the public space. They show our journey – though not a linear journey – and the difficulty of the relationships between these things, how loose sometimes the enclosures are, and then how formal they become. In more typical designs for courts and other important buildings, one enters the chamber almost as though entering a temple. That is how our design was at one stage: It was a temple with a much more formal relationship than it now has to the public space. We considered the challenge, continuously, of ensuring the required gravitas – a word we struggled with in this project – and an informality

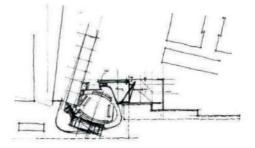
The struggle is illustrated in our drawings and diagrams and is best exemplified in the roof forms. The roof has been many different things. We were trying to make an almost incidental sheltering space, a gathering space under a canopy, the canopy being a tree, a canopy over a defined temple space.

- Janina Masojada

Left From the Court Chamber roof hang light boxes. An acoustic reflector suspended above the judges' bench is made of glass, so that it does not interfere with the form of the roof and sightlines, and set in a framework of steel edged with timber.

Right Sketches showing the design development of the spatial relationship between Court Chamber and Foyer, and the evolution of a seating plan from a circular arrangement to an amphitheatre pattern

Below Early architectural sketch showing the relation of the Court Chamber to the other elements of the building



The Court Chamber was about making a space in the ground where people could gather, where they could sit on a park bench and listen to what was happening. We wanted people to feel that they could come and sit on the steps of the Foyer and eat their sandwiches in the lunch break, and one of the judges would pass by them on the way to get lunch from a vendor in Constitution Square. It was intentional that there would be that degree of engagement between the goings-on in the Court Chamber and the goings-on in the public realm.

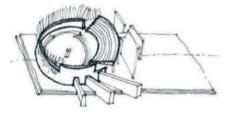
- The architects

We spent a lot of time on the Court Chamber. This is where the public interfaces with the judges in the most intense way. Judging is what we do. We are judging in the public realm, and so the space, its symbolism, the way it functions, were matters of great concern to us. With the architects, we considered the nature of the arc and where counsel should be standing. We insisted that the judges be seated so that our eye-level would be roughly the same as the eye-level of counsel to maintain the sense of equality under the Constitution, to be reminded that people are not coming to plead or beg for constitutional justice, they are not deferring to oracles, they are South Africans, South African litigants and lawyers approaching South African judges working under the South African Constitution to secure their rights. The architects had the idea of reusing the bricks from the demolished Awaiting Trial Block in a number of ways. I think they felt that the pain of pulling down a historic building and recycling the bricks in this very dramatic way was part of that. When we inaugurated the Court on Human Rights Day 2004, we had something like thirty-five chief justices, senior judges from all over the world and a number of South African judges attending. and we went on a tour of the building. Some of the South African judges were very alarmed at seeing the bricks up in the Foyer and the Courtroom and they thought we had run out of plaster. It took some convincing to persuade them that in fact the lack of veneer, if you like, was not only important from a conservation point of view, it was saying something about the openness and the honesty of the justice that was to be dispensed.

- Justice Albie Sachs

When doing elevations, architects often draw the inside walls of the room in order to know what it is going to be like, as opposed to drawing the outside walls of the building as an elevation. So the surfaces that define the space of the Fover were proportioned in the way that one would draw or proportion the exterior of buildings. The Foyer and the Chamber were the last things we got to because they presented a really difficult problem: difficult because there weren't many examples of buildings of this stature trying to achieve this objective, which was to put the primary, important spaces right in the most public outside gathering space, Constitution Square. In the examples one has - the Taj Mahal or the White House or the Mughal palaces in India - there is very often a processional route from the most public spaces to the most private or important ones, in order to do a kind of filtering job, so that when you get to the most important space you are fully aware of where you have got to. All the messages are that you are getting closer to God, or to the head of state, or to a powerful corporate CEO. We wanted to take away that in-between process and put the most important space in the most public space to demonstrate unequivocally that the debating forum for the ongoing dynamic development of our democratic order would be among the people.

- Andrew Makin

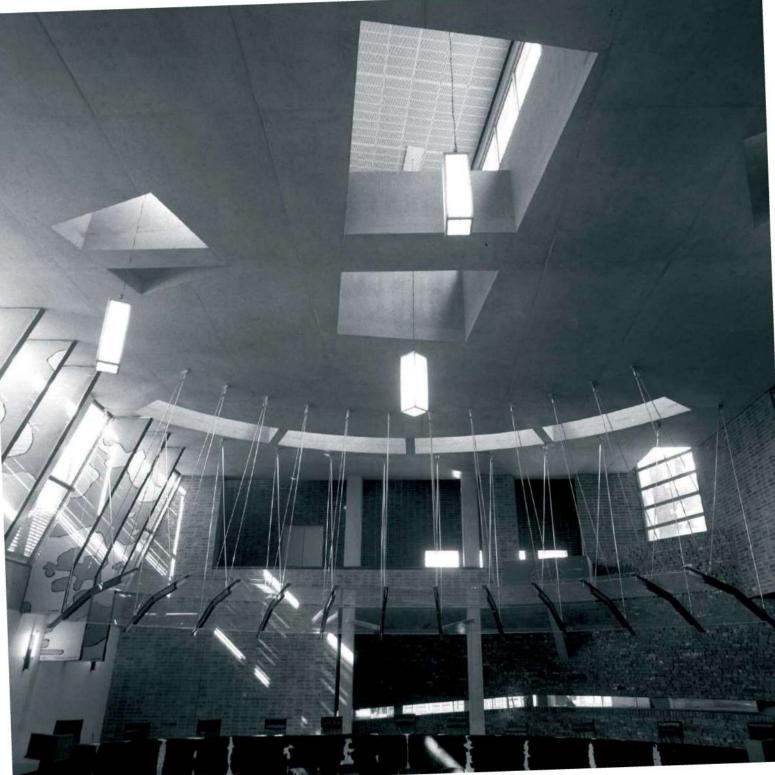


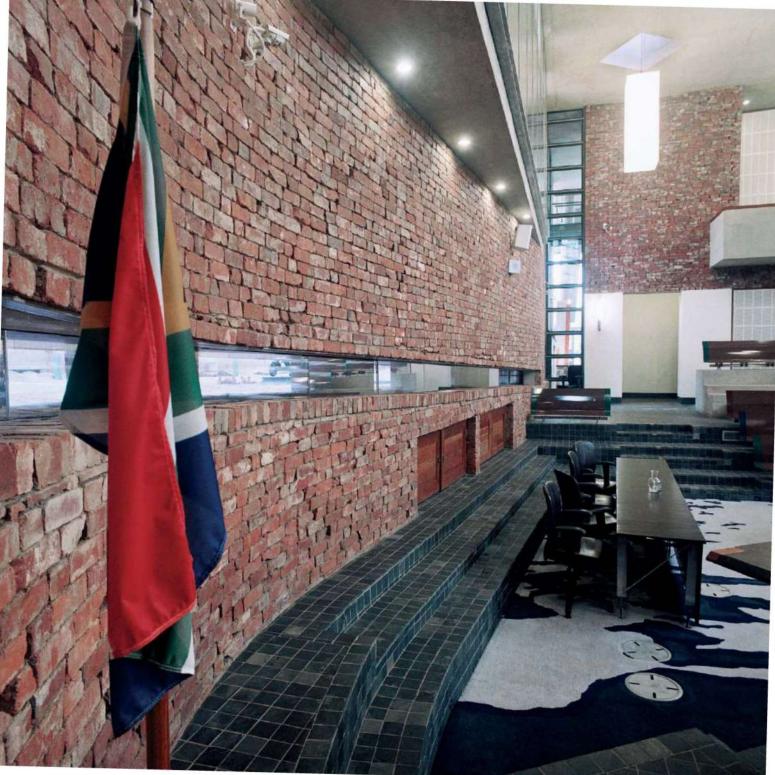
Above Architectural sketch showing the enclosed space of the Court Chamber, left, in relation to the open space of the Foyer



Above Sketch showing the seating in the Court Chamber

Right The roof of the Court Chamber showing skylights and the acoustic panelling above the judges' bench. The Court Chamber was designed in such a way that the need for acoustic amplification would be reduced.







Left The southern wall of the Court Chamber showing the ribbon window and the recycled bricks from the Awaiting Trial Block

Above The ribbon window of the Court Chamber is at ground level outdoors. The idea behind this design feature was to keep judges and counsel down to earth: the feet of passersby are at eye-level from within the Chamber.

Following pages A full Court Chamber on the occasion of the retirement of Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson The long ribbon window was the idea of the architects. As judges, our only concern was that we would have people with their noses pressed to the window watching our proceedings. The ribbon window has turned out to address that concern and to be quite a lovely feature, because when we sit up on the bench we see the legs of humanity moving by and in winter you can't tell if they are women or men, black or white, It amuses me to think that it is a non-racial, non-sexist universe – from thigh to ankle at any rate – represented. So it is a non-intrusive reminder that there is a world out there. On its own it could be gimmicky, but it is part of the total ambience of the building, its sense of openness, of transparency, that flows from the overarching theme of justice under a tree.

- Justice Albie Sachs









Above Ramped route inside the Library

Left The controlled north light dapples the internal storage volume, animating the concrete box. The timber shelving, designed as an integral part of the Library volume, and the leather-bound legal references give warmth, human scale and tactility. The ramped bookstack route is bounded by elements that serve specific functions: a public entrance and librarians' areas topped by a multi-volume space housing the Rex Welsh Collection connects the Library to the Administration Wing and Exhibition Gallery to the west, and book deliveries and processing take place on the eastern side of the ramped stacking area.

The public entrance to the Library is at the end of the Exhibition Gallery. The Library building is separated from the Administration Wing by a courtyard. This separation of the structures enhances the idea that each of the Court's "buildings" is treated as part of a greater whole. Lightweight connections between the building parts are achieved by steel and glass bridges, of which the access to the Library from the Judges' Chambers is a typical example. The same kind of separation occurs inside the Library building where the ramped bookstacks and the Welsh Tower are separated by timber and steel landings at each level and by glass and timber doors on the north façade. Steel and timber balconies protrude from the façade at these separation points, accentuating the parts of the Library building and providing a northern termination to the separating walkway between the Judges' Chambers and the Administration Wing.

82

Right Ramped route inside the Library

Following spread The Library box wraps around the internal garden, defining two sides of the private space. The precast concrete panels of light slots are illuminated at night by the internal fittings and the box becomes a lantern, a glowing and distinct form across from the northern slopes of Parktown.

The Library façade – of precast panels made off-site and then fixed onto a steel structure – is articulated along its length with the introduction of alternative materials (timber bay windows) and attached forms (the cylindrical stairwells). These elements and the play of light across walls make the façade a perforated skin over the inner activity.

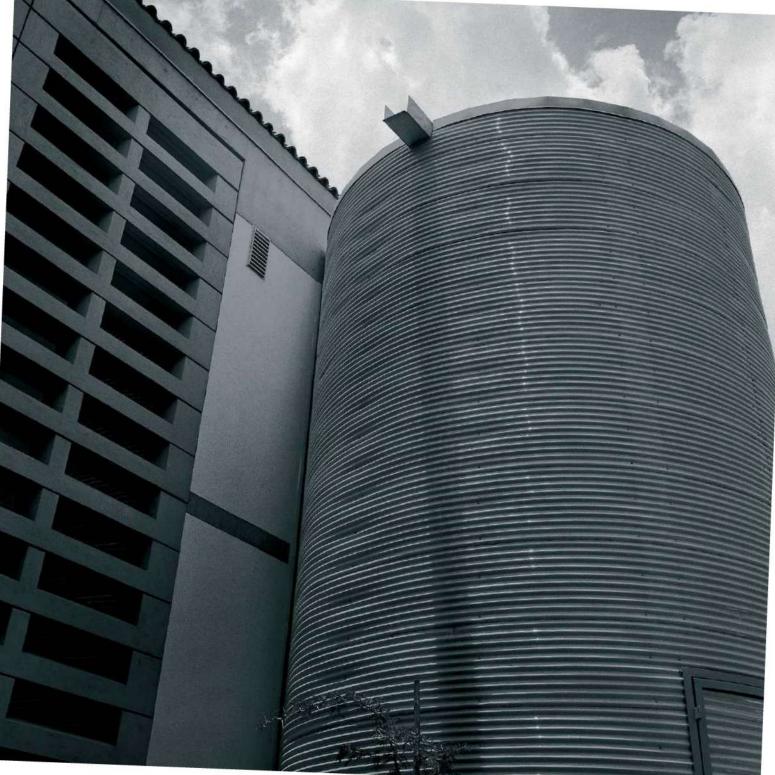








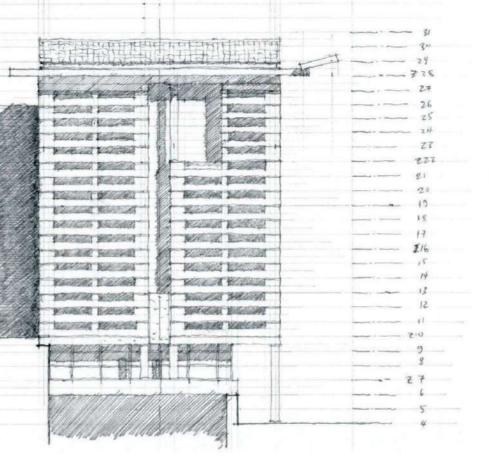




Previous spread The internal garden at night with the windows of the Library illuminated

Left Translucent sheeted cylinders attach to the Library face. These function as stair towers and a book hoist. They stand like agricultural forms in the green landscape of the judges' garden.

 ${\it Below}$ Drawing showing a section of the Library and a stair tower on the left



89

Right Stair tower that serves as a fire escape and a book hoist for the Library. The tower faces onto the internal garden of the Court

Following pages Inside the stair tower. Strips of timber are placed over a Perspex shell that allows natural light into the interior.

At a certain point in the country's architectural history, there was a self-conscious search for a South African identity, and it resulted in some beautiful buildings. But by the 1980s architectural Modernism had run out of energy, and it became very decorative, postmodern, even mannerist. Now there is sufficient confidence in the nation and in the architectural profession that finding a style is becoming more instinctive. The Nelson Mandela Museum near Umtata (by architects Cohen and Judin), for example, is a beautiful building that encloses space in an interesting way, and some of the lodges on the highveld and in KwaZulu-Natal express a variety of sensibilities. In their use of space and decoration they are almost baroque but they nonetheless reflect the regional climate, as well as local technologies and material. In the cities, malls and taxi ranks are hard-core urban responses to commuting thousands and to street trading. That is another kind of direct response to the behaviour of people and to the way that people are moving through the city. There is a confidence now in the way that people are beginning to build and it fails only in some commercial sites where the idea of market forces is being allowed to define the architectural response. In the Constitutional Court we wanted to create a building that responded to the urban metropolis of Johannesburg, to its history, to the way people negotiate the city. But at the same time we wanted to allude to buildings, like water towers and grain silos, that we know, buildings that make use of space in a particular way,

- Paul Wygers









The Welsh Tower fulfils two essential architectural roles. Firstly the Rex Welsh Collection of books is housed on the upper levels of the structure and is given prominence by the architectural space created for it. It is a special collection housed in the highest part of the tower, accessed by staircases configured in an Escher-like manner. A quiet, voluminous space glazed from balustrade height upwards provides a retreat for contemplation. The Welsh Tower is also the dominant landmark when the Court is approached from the north and is part of the overall urban design intent of the completed Hill development.

During the construction process funds became available to extend the Library, so that the original shed structure now extends along its northern façade and turns the corner on Hospital Street. This extension to the Library building provided the opportunity to complete the perimeter of the Court site with building fabric and thus fulfil the original design intent of creating a perimeter block building on the site. The Library extension also allowed for the completion of the southern edge of Solitary Lane, an urban design principle on the Hill that calls for the creation of streets bounded by buildings, and it completed the internal courtyards and gardens of the Court building.

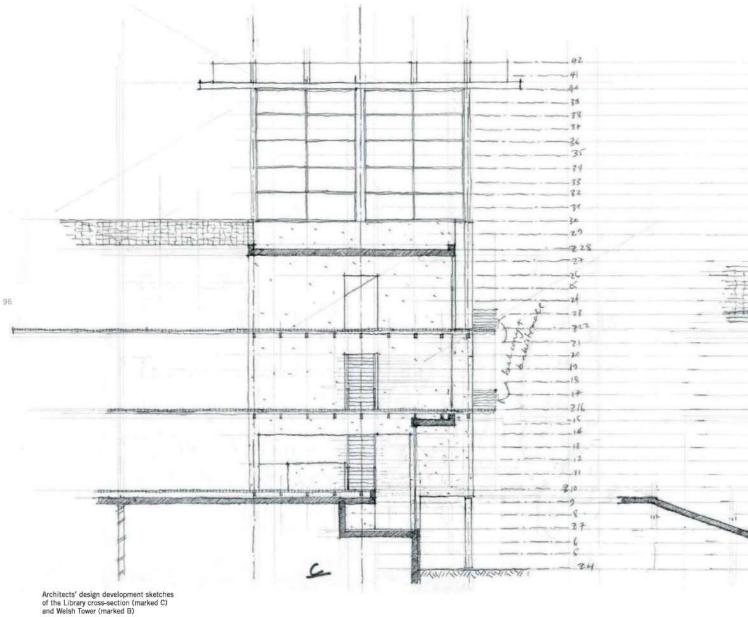
The materials used in the construction of the Library are consistent with materials throughout the Court building. Reinforced and precast concrete provides the structure of the building and exposed concrete surfaces play a primary role in the natural ventilation system. Slate, timber and glass finish the concrete frame. The roof is constructed of terracotta tiles laid on timber and steel trusses.

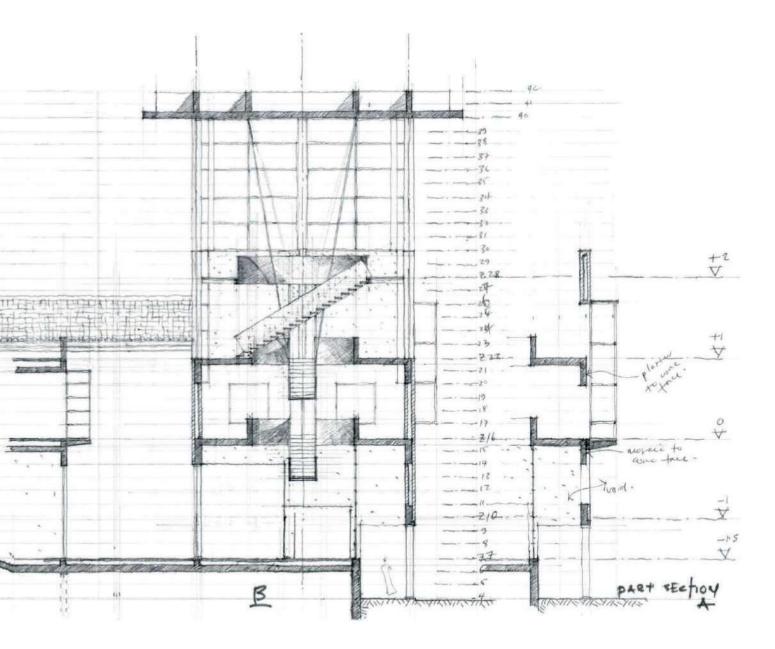
- Paul Wygers

Above In the Welsh Library stainvell we utilised radial parapets so that we could have the staircase coming in at different angles. On the top floor are twelve-metre-high columns with the concrete roof above. Running down the staircase are steel rods for bracing and in the centre is a timber mezzanine deck surrounded by glass walls. The staircase is stabilised by means of a steel spine, which provides stability and structure but allows some movement on the staircase iself. This movement has proved to be an interesting point of discussion for visitors. – Derek Wallace, Contracts Manager

Right Running down through the staircase cavity of the Welsh Library are the airconditioning pipes carrying cool air from the rockstores in the basement. The high tower of the Library is stabilised internally against the wind by means of cross braces.









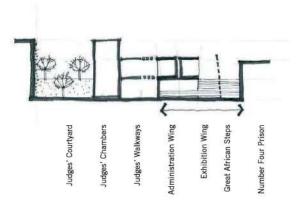


Above Library showing the Welsh Tower on the right and the façade of the building running east-west. The Hillbrow Tower is visible in the background at far left.

> Following pages North-east corner of the building







THE QUIET HEART OF THE COURT

The Library, Exhibition Gallery, and Foyer and Chamber wrap themselves around the sides of the site, forming an internal courtyard. The Judges' Chambers, free-standing three-storey buildings, are fingers into the courtyard – making smaller, more intimate gardens within the larger garden.

The landscaping of the gardens, by Sonya Swanepoel, results in a range of vegetations. Indigenous trees will grow to form a shaded grassed garden, in contrast to the mounded, sculptural cycad sub-courtyards. The Judges' Chambers stand in ponds of water, the largest pool, against the long side of the Library, forming part of the evaporative cooling system of the building.

The Judges' Courtyard is the most private of all the areas of the Court, accessible only to the residents of the building. The competition brief called for a place for contemplation, and our response was a cloistered courtyard, an urban garden, a green retreat. But even from this most private place, one has a visual connection to the Hillbrow apartments beyond.

– Janina Masojada

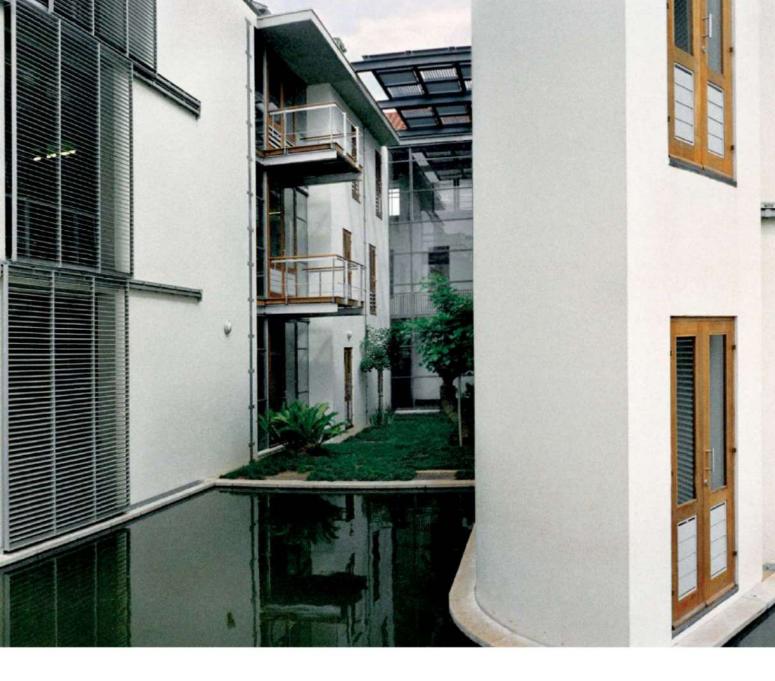
Above Diagrammatic section though the site shows the public to private gradations through the building. The Great African Steps adjacent to Number Four Prison connect to the internal Exhibition Gallery. The parallel Administration Wing separates and serves both the public and private (judges') functions of the building. To the east, connected by walkways, stand the Judges' Chambers.

Right Fingers of garden extending into the spaces between the individual Judges' Chambers





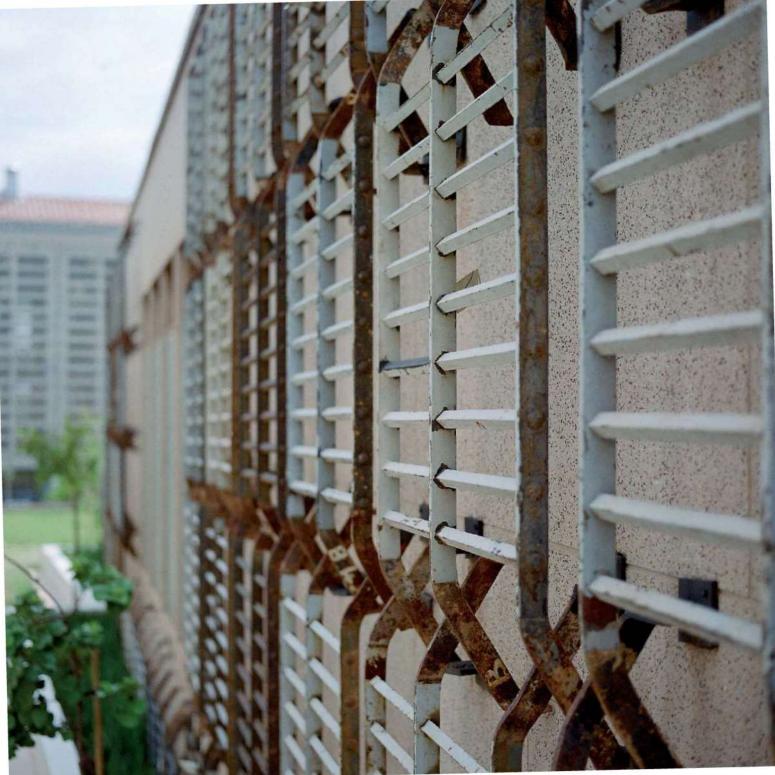
The Judges' Chambers extend as fingers into the ponds, forming intimate sub-courtyards between each block. The lower Courtyard leads up to a higher Courtyard outside the Judges' Conference Room and Lounge.

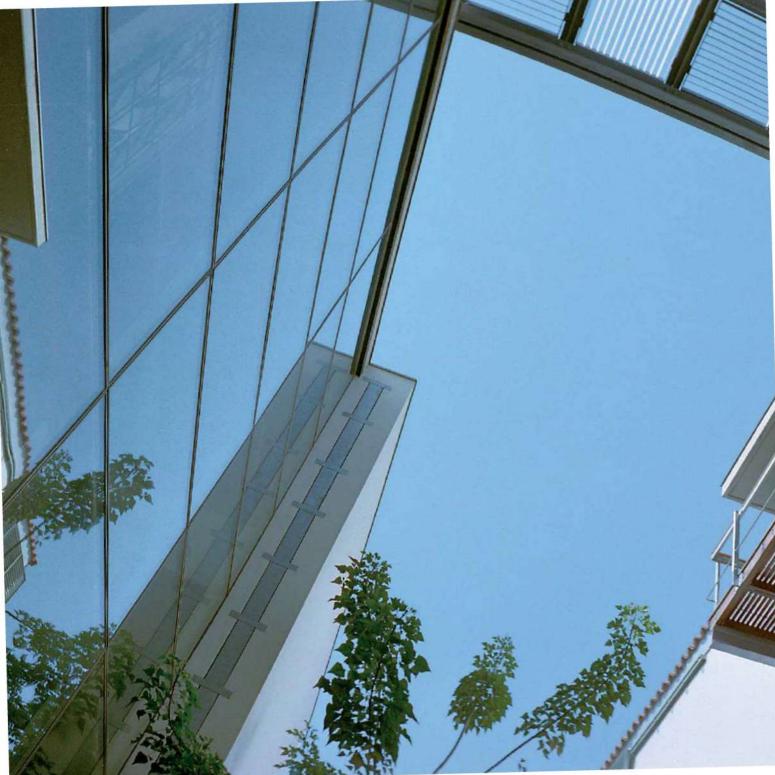


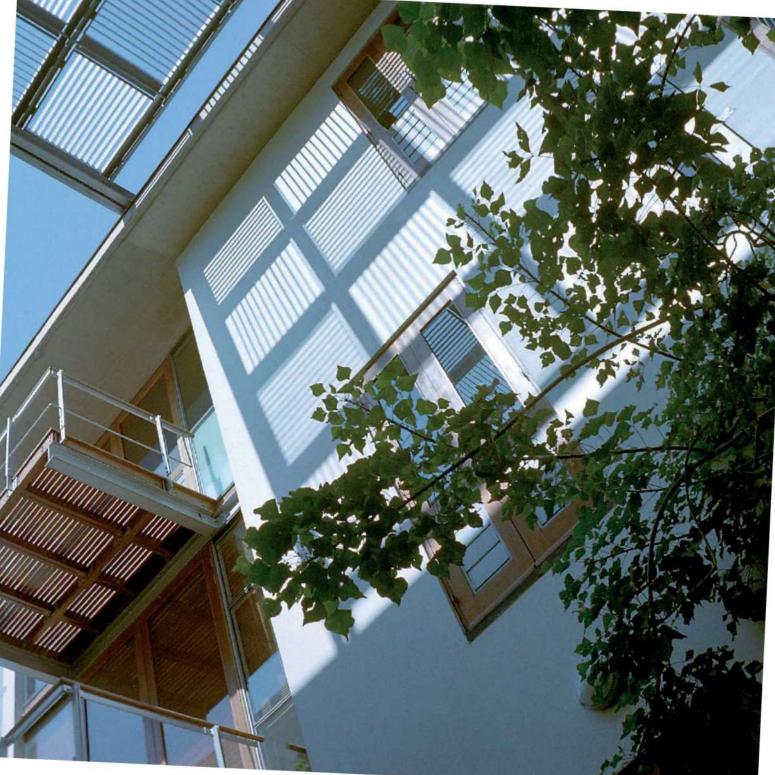
106

Right The lower Courtyard is bounded on the south by the previously existing Johannesburg Power Substation that could not be removed. This building has been clad with the prison bars from the demolished Awaiting Trial Block, eventually to be covered with creepers, so that the building will be transformed into a solid green box.

Following pages Sunscreens above the spaces between the Judges' Chambers animate the plain surfaces with their cast shadows.









Above The Courtyard ponds reflect the buildings and light. Smooth plastered, curved and screened walls contrast, in their solidity, with the screens of the open northerm corners of the chambers.

Right Wilma Cruise's bronze sculpture, Alice, walks in the solitude of the private Courtyard.





The lawn of the Courtyard is enclosed by the Library to the north (right) and the Johannesburg Power Substation to the south. The separate parts of the building are articulated by the bridge/light/void connections evident between the Library and the first set of chambers. These voids allow for long views between otherwise separate areas.



Walking across the grass in the Courtyard makes one feel very alone. If you were religious you would say, "What is Man?" It reminds me of when I was small. I used to lie down and look at the sky and the stars, and somehow be transported into infinity. It has a little of that, even though it is an enclosed space.

- Chief Justice Pius Langa

Right The Judges' Chambers abut onto the internal Courtyard and are separated by gardens and shallow pools. Steel shades between the individual chambers keep sun off the gardens.

SOLITARY RETREAT

The Judges' Chambers are on the route that connects the Court Chamber and the Library, which are the primary two ends of the building, the biggest, most symbolic components of the Court. The first is where democracy is protected and the latter is the repository of legal knowledge and wisdom. The Judges' Chambers are lined up between those two, along the route of the Judges' Walkway over three levels. The independent buildings that are the Judges' Chambers arymbolise the autonomy of the judges themselves. At the same time, however, the chambers are under one shaded roof that extends over the courtyards between the buildings. This combination of separateness and connection is an attempt to align and seamlessly bring together the functionality required of this component of the building and the symbolic reference that is made in its organisation so that they're indistinguishable.

Each of the Judges' Chambers is made up of three components: the researchers' accommodation, the secretary's office area and then, at the end, the most private space, the judge's office. The office comprises a study area, a lounge area and a contemplative niche that opens up through a private door into the Courtyard, the latter ensuring that, as in other parts of the building, there exists a close relationship, perhaps even an ambiguity, between inside and outside. When opened, the large glass doors and screens at the end of the judge's office give the feeling of sitting outside. One can look out across the Courtyard to Hillbrow and beyond. When the doors and screens are closed, however, the space becomes an internal, private room.

- The architects







As individuals we are part of broader communities: families, neighbourhoods, tribes, religious groups, countries. We dance and sing as individuals, but contribute to the impact of the whole. We have our own voices, our own beliefs and our own personalities, and in a democracy, every person has value and rights. But we are "one in many", part of a greater whole, and we embrace that collective spirit in our Court.

In the Constitutional Court, there are eleven judges, representative of the nation's diversity. Together they debate the matters of the Constitution and then they respond and deliver judgment to the people.

In a similar fashion, the Court building is made up of distinct parts. The parts themselves are made up of groups. The Judges' Chambers are a collection of freestanding buildings, separated from the spine of the Gallery, in ponds of water and planted gardens. They are private places for retreat and study. But the collection of these buildings underneath the common sun-shading roof is symbolic of the judges' working together for a common response to matters of the Constitution.

The South African democracy is an accomplishment of unity in diversity. As in dance and song, the individual remains always an individual, but is made stronger by the group. This is the hope embodied in the South African Constitution.

– Janina Masojada

Left The curved external walls of the Judges' Chambers as seen from the south. The Chambers are self-contained but from the outside give the impression of being under one roof by virtue of the sunscreens between them. Internally they are connected by their relation to the Administration Wing and the internal volume of the Judges' Walkways.

Right The Judges' Chambers, lit up at night, from the north-west



Concrete, timber, steel, stone and glass exist as solids and one places them in relation to one another, and in space. But light cannot, in itself, be placed. It is there as a result of the position of these solids within the context of the unchallengeable movement of the sun. It is the spiritual component, that shifts like air and affects the way we feel. The materials of the building were chosen not only for their textural, structural and mechanical capacity, but to be surfaces onto which light would fall and reflect in colour, coolness and warmth, showing scale, volume, silhouette, relief, soft whiteness.

- Janina Masojada

Left View across one of the pools in the Courtyard into a secretary's office on the ground floor 119



The judges had to decide amongst themselves who was going to get which chambers, but once that was decided, each set of chambers quickly took on its own character. What is interesting is how different they all are, not just in the arrangement of the furniture but in the addition of little ornaments and pictures and personal items that the judges have brought in, so that the spaces have become extensions of personalities.



Right A window niche in one of the Judges' Chambers faces the garden, affording a view of the outside world while allowing the space to remain enclosed and private.



CONFERRING WITH JUSTICE

The Conference Room is where the judges, after having considered a legal case on their own, gather to develop their thinking on the case, to seek consensus toward a judgment. It is, physically, acoustically and visually, the most private and secure space in the building because it accommodates the inner workings of the Court itself, the Court as an institution. Its organisation and double-volume space give it something of the quality of a small banquet hall, a feeling enhanced by the presence of an oval table. The philosopher Hannah Arendt makes reference to the idea that a table is a facilitator of democracy since it is neutral territory – just as the street, in the ancient world, facilitated democracy. The table both separates people gathered around it and joins them together, enabling them to retain their autonomy and to engage in debate at the same time.

- Andrew Makin

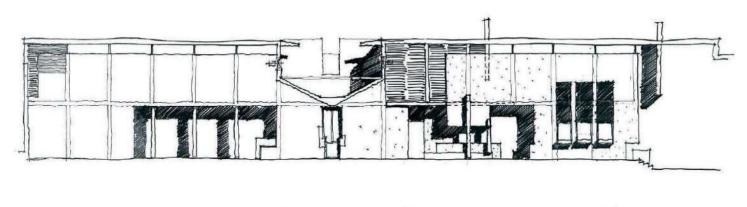
Right Judges' Conference Room



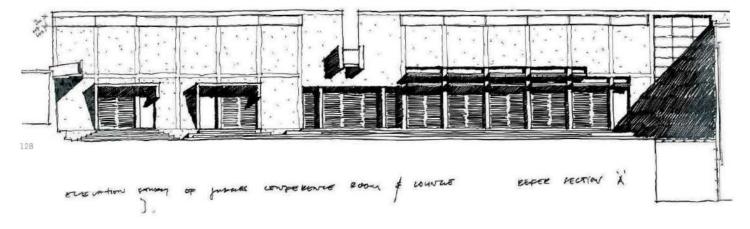


Above The staircase in the Judges' Lounge follows the design of the staircases linking the Judges' Walkways and those in the Welsh Library. The stairs are braced by a steel spine running down through the centres of the risers, a device that allows the stairs to appear light and free-floating.

Right Elevation drawing showing interiors of Judges' Conference Room and Lounge



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Above Elevation drawing showing the exterior of the Judges' Conference Room and Lounge. On the left are concrete trapezoids that extend off the façade of the building to provide shade.

Right The small courtyard adjacent to the Judges' Conference Room and Lounge



Along the length of the Conference Room, glass doors open onto a small courtyard and steel screens provide shade from the sun. This courtyard is fairly private but is also connected to the main Courtyard onto which the Judges' Chambers open. So just as the building's internal spaces are connected to each other, so its external spaces, though each performing a separate function, are linked.

- Andrew Makin

130

The Lounge and Conference Room are housed in a separate, independent "building", but linked both to the Administration Wing and to the Court Chamber. Their purpose is threefold. The Lounge functions as an entrance hall or reception area, a gathering space for the judges before they go into conference to debate and discuss legal cases, It is also a place in which to welcome local or international dignitaries who have entered the Court building through the Foyer. Between the Lounge and the Conference Room is a Committee Room for small gatherings.

- Andrew Makin

Right Judges' Lounge showing sliding screens (right) and doors leading to the courtyard (left rear)





Left Internal walkway to robing and consultation rooms for counsel, lit from above with patterns of sunlight

LIGHT AND SPACE

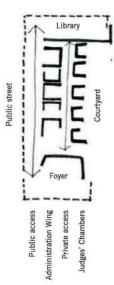
The issue of transparency is a Modernist issue, a traditional, northern hemisphere, Modernist issue. Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House or Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson House, for example, had the specific intention of dematerialisation. They had not imagined that eventually you would be able to build a single-storey building almost entirely of glass, without a single piece of steel in it. Who would have imagined that that would be the modern paradigm? Dematerialisation – as though we have moved through architectural history, from the mass materialisation of the Egyptian pyramids, to abstraction, to elements of the Modern movement, to International Style as epitomised by De Stijl. What do you get after all of that but nothingness, the intention of nothingness, and with that the sublime possibilities of the composition of emotion, feeling, spirit?

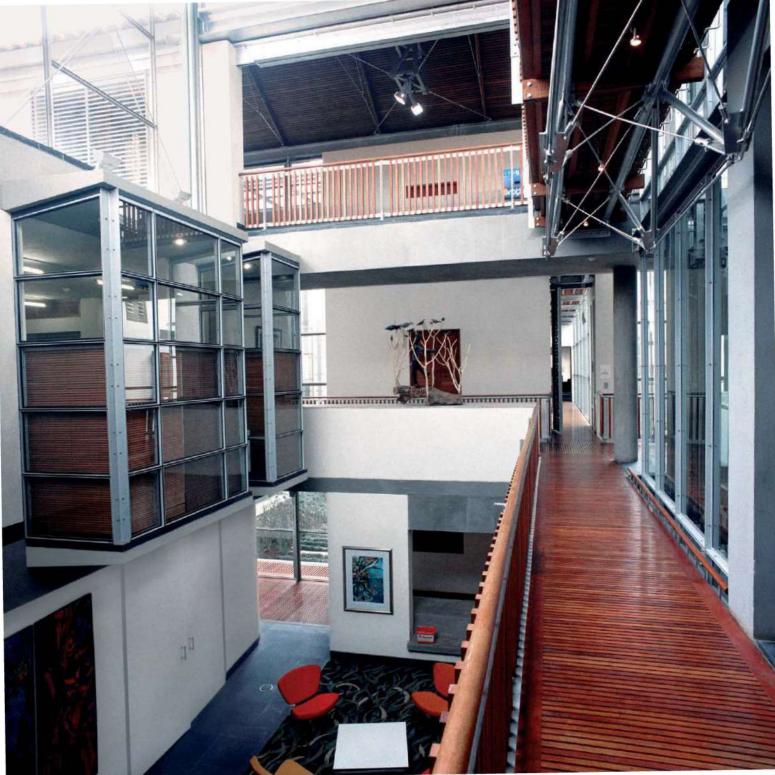
But transparency is a euphemism. It shouldn't mean simply visual transparency. Architecturally speaking, it would much more accurately be described as accessibility where appropriate, public where appropriate, private where appropriate. Contained where appropriate, open where appropriate.

- Andrew Makin

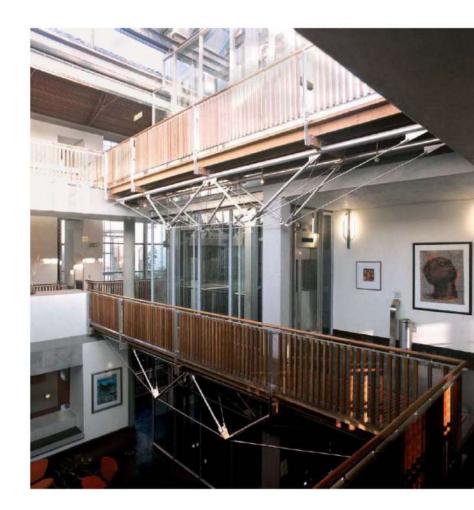
Right The Administration Wing is between the routes on which the public circulates and those on which the judges circulate. It acts as a security barrier and provides service to each group. The judges circulate on an internal route, open towards the internal Judges' Courtyard. The "U" form of the rooms/offices/ meeting areas and the degree of containment relative to the access express how much privacy is required in each space.

Below Drawing showing the relationship between public and private routes in the Court









Left Lobby with seating at the base of the Administration Wing

Right Walkways between the Administration Wing and the Judges' Chambers. The lift shaft is constructed of glass, timber and steel and allows light into the Administration Wing.



Lift housing showing cross bracing and internal steel columns. The glass structure is protected from direct light by steel shading.



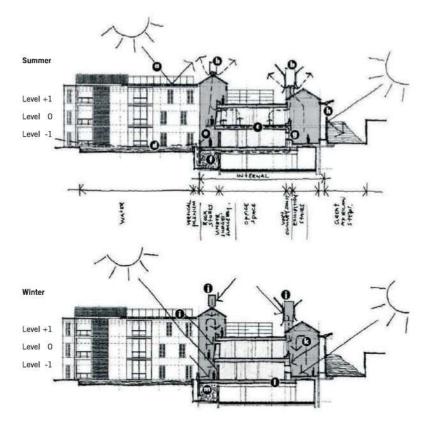


Diagram of the Court's passive cooling and heating system

- a Metal louvres keep sun off external walls
- b Heated air escapes through "chimneys"
- c Cool air delivered into habitable spaces
- through floor voids d Air moves over water and cools
- e Cool air in through low-level openings
- f Rockstores along basement edge
- g Vertical "chimney" ducts
- h Sunscreens keep sun off external walls
- i Metal sun-shading lets sun in during winter
- "Chimneys" heat up in winter
- k Hot air trapped to create warm envelope
- I Horizontal duct-work

m Rockstores

A passive cooling climate-control system, a grey-water system and a wastemanagement strategy help conserve energy and alleviate the negative impact that buildings, by their very nature, have on the environment. Engineer Toon Herman adapted and installed Arup Engineers' passive cooling system. In principle it means "increasing the thermal storage capacity of the building in a bed of rocks in underground chambers", explains Herman. This means the building can store night-air coolness absorbed by the rocks. During daytime hours the rocks absorb and retain the day-warmed air which is then fanned through floor vents into the building. This provides a sustained level of cooling and warming, without conventional air-conditioning plants. The air temperature leaving the rockstore and entering the interior of the building will typically be cooled down from the high twenties to the low twenties. One can expect six or seven degrees off the extremes of outdoor temperatures to create a more moderate interior climate around the mid 20s C, maximum. Awareness of climate prompted a strategy to save water by means of a grey-water system. This entails catching rainwater from roofs for use in toilets, Expensive municipal water is mainly reserved for human consumption. The Constitutional Court tries to set an example, says engineer Vollie Brink.

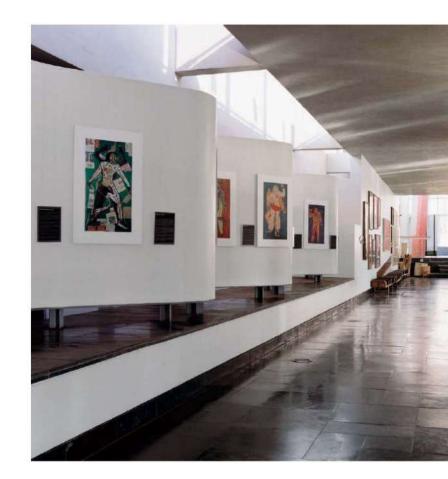
Right This internal courtyard or quadrangle, adjacent to the Exhibition Gallery, is open to the sky. On the left are the granite slabs of *Prison Sentences* by artist Willem Boshoff, marking off the days spent in prison by the eight men sentenced at the Rivonia Trial in 1964. At the eastern end of the courtyard is Willma Cruise's installation The Right to Life, displaying words spoken by Nelson Mandela at the trial, the ideal referred to being that of a free and democratic society.



Right View across the rooftop showing access to the top-level Judges' Walkway (on the left)







Left and right The Exhibition Gallery. The wide slate steps of the Gallery are embellished with small brass nosings. Portrait photographs of past and present judges overlook the Gallery and on the undulating walls is an exhibition of the *Body Maps* created by a group of HIV+ women who participated in the University of Cape Town/Médecins Sans Frontières Memory Box Project.



The glass-encased lift runs down through the Administration Wing.



The most obvious thing about transparency, and therefore the thing we don't give much thought to, is that there is, quite literally, nothing in it. If, however, you insert a screen into a space – and a screen can take on a lot of different forms or be made from a range of materials that can give a variety of different experiences – you introduce the possibility of a thing that mediates or acts as a barrier to that transparency. And that is far more exciting than the transparent, which is nothing.

If you use the word transparency in South Africa it assumes political connotations. But this is something that gives you visual access or defines a relationship or allows a connection to some other place. That is the point of the transparency. From the Great African Steps, for example, you can see into the next zone, the exhibition space. The two places are connected by a transparency that is in contrast to the solid wall on the other side of the steps, which is the section of the prison that remains. The elements that go to make up those two façades are joined by the steps. One façade gives you visual depth, the other doesn't. One allows you to look into other environments, the Exhibition Gallery, or the Judges' Courtyard, which is the most private realm. That is what those transparencies give you: a relationship between things as opposed to nothing.

Consider the Administration Wing, the core of the building. If someone working in a traditional, enclosed office block wants to take a tea-break they would probably prefer to be somewhere where they can see the world go by, not shut up in an internal canteen with no windows to the outside world. You would want to go and sit on the side of the street and talk to your friends and see what's happening. The staff canteen in the Court takes on the form here of a diner. People come and perch on bar stools overlooking the public space of the building. From the Exhibition Gallery you look up and see the administrative staff having their tea and therefore you engage with the internal functioning of the building. When a member of the public walks down the exhibition space, they are given glimpses into the more private areas of the Court. They see the judges walking along their galleries, they see real people who are deciding on the very real issues that affect their everyday lives, and the judges look through into the public spaces and they see people going about their everyday business. One hopes, then, that through this kind of architectural arrangement the building enhances the everyday working experience of those using its spaces and that the public entering the Court is given greater access to its workings, that the place is real, less institutional, less bureaucratic and more an extension, for both the workers and the public, of everyday, normal human existence. That's what generates and defines what the building is. Not the starting point of a style, but the starting point of human interaction.

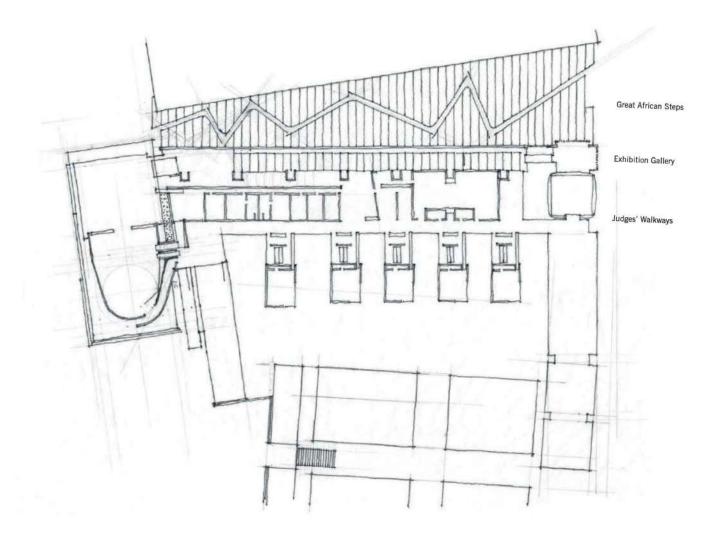
- Janina Masojada

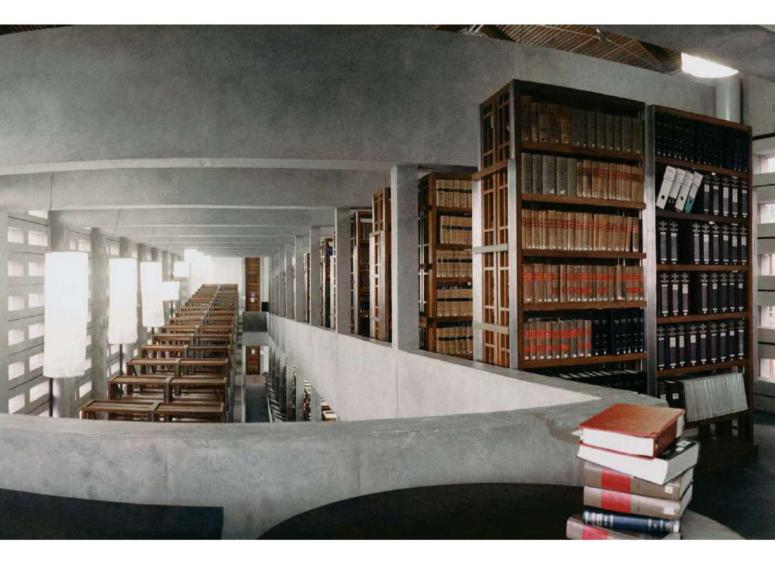
ROUTES, STREETS, PASSAGES

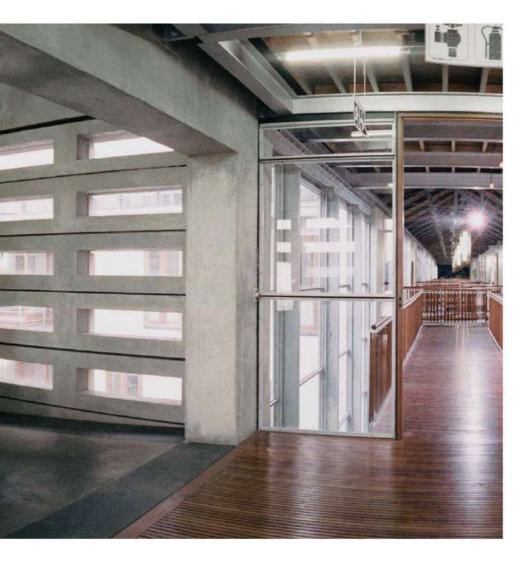
If you look at an aerial view or diagram of the Court, you will see that it is made up of a series of distinct parts, or "buildings", each of which represents one of the functions of the Court. There is the Fover, the Administration Wing, the Court Chamber, the Library, all linked by a series of streets or arcades with courtyards in between them, These separate and make distinct the "buildings". The Foyer, therefore, acts as one of the connecting courtyards: a square around which other buildings gather. You then walk down a public street - the Exhibition Gallery - or down the judges' arcade alongside a collection of buildings with courtyards between them. That's the way the parts of the building connect to make a whole. It was a conscious conceptual intention not to make one singular building but to make a series of connections. The building is made up of distinct parts that all reflect what is going on in the Court. So the Library is a box that stores books. The Court Chamber is an internal, contained, protected environment. The Foyer is a place for gathering. The Exhibition Gallery is like a public street. The architecture arises out of the way these parts are assembled and their fragmented nature integrates the building into the fragmented nature of the site and into the broader context of the city. When you are in the Court you look through the courtyards out to Hillbrow. The components of the Court building and its scale mirror the Hillbrow flats with their balconies and building components.

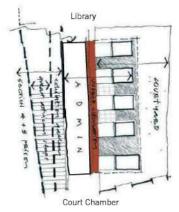
— Janina Masojada

Right Architectural sketch showing the three major north-south routes of the Court building: on the left, the Great African Steps; in the centre, the Exhibition Gallery; and on the right, the Judges' Walkway. Each route is illustrated on the following pages.



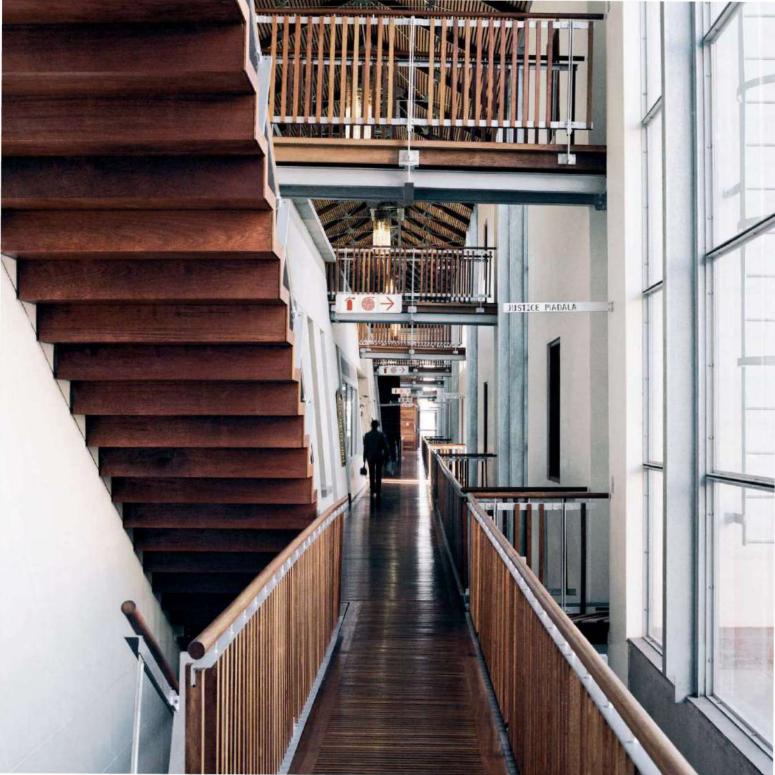


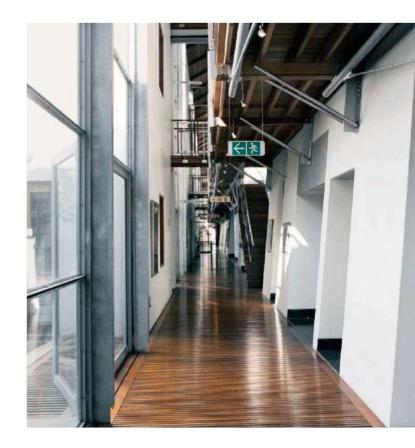




Above Sketch showing the three major routes in the Court. The Judges' Walkways are shaded red.

Left The intersection of the Library and a Judges' Walkway, to the right



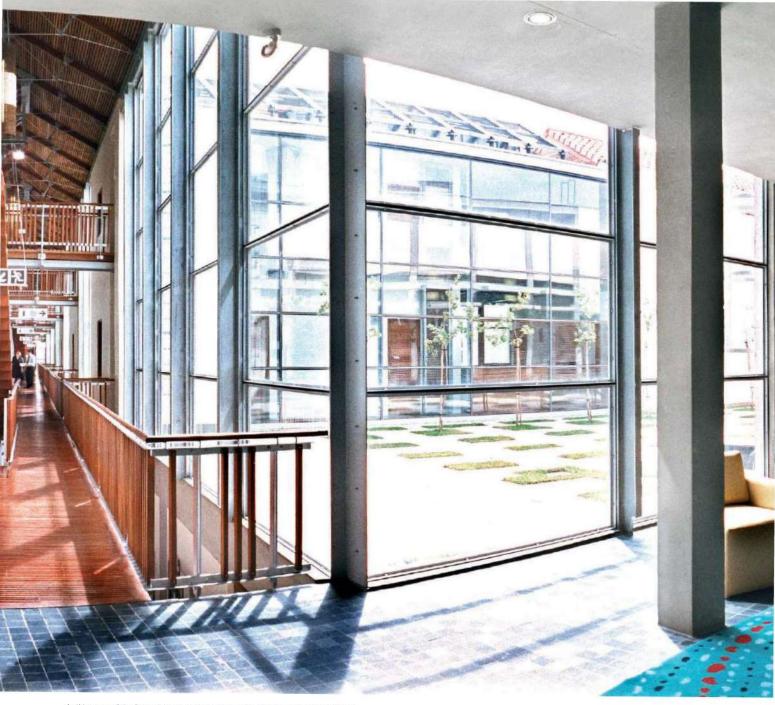


Left The middle walkway, looking north towards the Library

Right The walkway on the lowest of the floors, looking south towards the Court Chamber

It is interesting that the abstract two-dimensional artwork made by artists inspired by Africa, like Picasso or Miró, seems to deal with the idea of flowing undefined space joining and separating defined objects. The same conceptual notion is experienced when moving through a natural landscape like ours. The components of the Court building are linked by a fluid movement between the functional spaces, so that the Court suggests and enables a continuity with the city. In another sense, however, the building generates a typology. It is not a typology of increasing the priority of the routes, revealing an increasing hierarchy of spaces, nor a typology of moving down a passage and having a function left or right of you. Nor is it the typology of standing in the centre and deciding where to go from a central space, as you would in a radial system. Rather, the Court is like a rural system of settlement in which there is an equitable balance between "things" and the fluid space between them.

- Andrew Makin



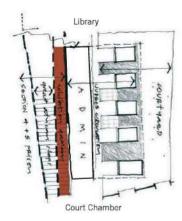
In this corner of the Court, three passages or spaces intersect: the Judges' (ground floor) Walkway, the Courtyard, and the Lounge and Conference Room. This meeting of routes and places is facilitated by the transparency of glass windows extending through double volumes. The carpets are based on designs by Siphiwe Zulu.

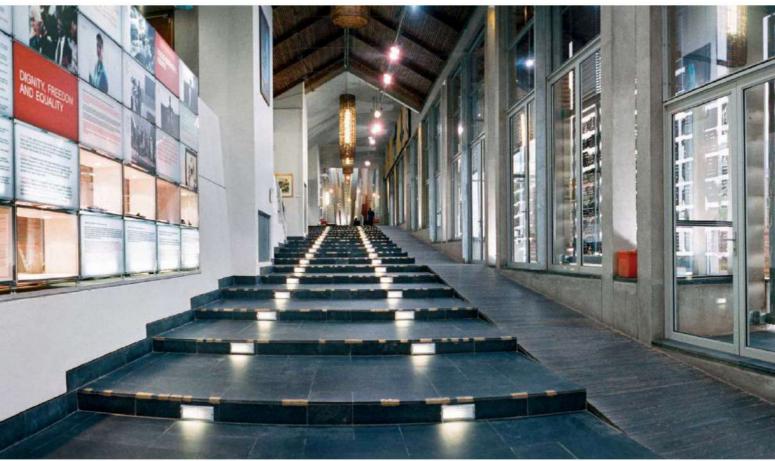




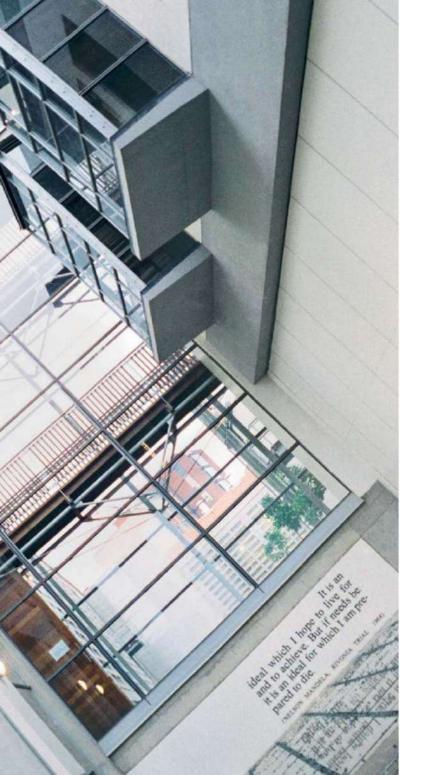
The Exhibition Gallery, with its wide slate stairs adorned with brass nosings by Jabu Nala (*detail above*), runs the length of the building from the Foyer at the southern end to the Library at the northern end. It permits the same meandering ascent or descent of the stairs as do the Great African Steps. The two paths are separated by glass and permeable shutters but are in such close proximity that they seem almost to mirror one another, to create the impression that outside and inside are connected by the thinnest of membranes. The Exhibition Gallery is home to a varied collection of artworks, mostly donated to the Court by artists and galleries.











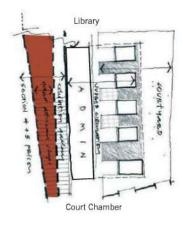
ROUTES, STREETS, PASSAGES





Above left The Great African Steps. The panels on the west-facing windows were made by Donovan Dymond, Lewis Levin and Patrick Rorke,

Above centre Architectural sketch showing the meandering path up the Great African Steps



The Great African Steps are many things, many places. They begin simply as a place between, a seam: as you wander up the hill towards the entrance verandah of the Constitutional Court, towards Constitution Square and the grassy ramparts of the Old Fort, you pass between the solid stone wall of Number Four Prison on the right and, on the left, the west elevation of the Exhibition Gallery of the new Court building.

These walls face one another. One wall is massive and impenetrable, except for the tiny ventilation openings high above the internal floor level. The new façade is lightweight, transparent, layered and covered with sunscreen panels that are illustrations of life stories as told by local residents.

The walk up the Great African Steps is a wandering route. The steps are interrupted by a path that follows the zig-zagging route one would naturally take when climbing a hill. The rural associations extend to the making of places on the steps to pause and sit in the sun, the stepped bricks terracing as in the landscape, inviting rest. The bricks that pave the path were taken from the now demolished Awaiting Trial Block.

Our past and our present, the fragments, the memories and the dreams are woven together as one collective present experience. The individual stories that form this common history are brilliantly illuminated by the western sun as it sets behind the stone prison wall.

- Janina Masojada



Looking north down the Great African Steps with the wall of Number Four Prison on the left



PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

We, the people of South Africa, Recognise the injustices of our past; Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land; Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso. God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa. Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.

> Right The words "Constitutional Court" in the eleven official languages of South Africa mark the entrance to the Court. The coloured letters make a decorated surface that speaks to all South Africans. The lettering, designed by Garth Walker, has its roots in informal street signs.





Constitution Square and the Court at dusk



The Constitutional Court challenges many things we have been brought to believe about courts, both through its architecture and through its inclusion of works of art. I suspect there is no such court in the whole world. It has turned upside down some of the stereotypes about courts. In form and content it extends an invitation to dialogue, it says talk to me, let's sit down and reflect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

omm design workshop and Urban Solutions would like to thank the following personnel for their contributions to this project:

Christine-Ann Paddon, Erik Orts Hansen, Ridwaan Bhana, De Villiers du Toit, Vissie Fourie, Natalie Jasmin, Greg Katz, Benedicta Khumalo, Melissa le Court de Billot, Matabong Letele, Tami Levin, Stephanie Liebowitz, Genevieve Lund, Sam Mahapa, Jonathan Manning, Sibusiso Manze, David Motheke, Sylvia Naidoo, Johan Nel, Riyaz Padia, Mavandile Qasha, Andrea Richards, Philippa Rodseth, Pierre Swanepoel, Mark Wightman, Karen Wygers

The professional team working on the Constitutional Court was made up as follows: Client Johannesburg Development Agency

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Project Architects Janina Masojada Andrew Makin Paul Wygers Christine-Ann Paddon

Quantity Surveyors Hamlyn Gebhardt in association with Koor Dindar

Structural Engineers Arup (Pty) Ltd in association with Sibanye Consulting

Mechanical Engineers Arup (Pty) Ltd in association with Toon Herman Associates

Electrical Engineers VBI Projects

Wet Services DSB Consulting Civil Engineers

Heritage Consultant HMJ Prins Architects

Acoustic Consultants Acusoly

Landscape Architects African Environmental Design

Town Planner Nico Botha Town Planners

Land Surveyor Kirchoff and Associates Fire Consultants LIK Fire Engineering Consultants

Main Contractor Rainbow WBHO Joint Venture

Artists' works visible in this book: Court logo Carolyn Parton

Verandah chandeliers Lindelani Ngwenya

Foyer entrance doors Andries Botha Smanga Madlala Richard Maphumulo Jabulani Mkhize Dumisani Mthethwa Ernest Mthethwa Lindelani Ndinisa Musa Ngcobo Richard Shange Andrew Verster

Foyer chandeliers Walter Oltmann

Foyer and Court Chamber carpets Andrew Verster

Carpets in Welsh Library Storm Janse van Rensburg Siphiwe Zulu

Carpets in Judges' Chambers African Arts Centre Contact Art Sfiso ka-Mkame Romeo Zamane Makhanya

Carpets in Judges' Lounge and Conference Room Siphiwe Zulu

Court Chamber doors Verna Jooste Myra Fassler Kamstra Andrew Lindsay Andrew Ramaboya Sam Thoka Mark Zammit Brass stair nosings Jabu Nala

Mosaics on Foyer columns Jane du Rand Zama Dunywa Paul Figuero Raksha Gobardan Elias Lukhozi Thando Mama Richard Masoka Vukani Mpanza Tanja van Zyl Patrick Xulu

Mosaics on façade Mervin Dowman Kasia Kwiecinska Andrew Lindsay Jacob Ramaboya Sam Thoka Mark Zammit

Sunscreens on west elevation Donovan Dymond Lewis Levin Patrick Rorke

Moving into Dance sculpture Orlando Almeida

History sculpture Dumile Feni

Alice sculpture and The Right to Life installation Wilma Cruise

Prison Sentences installation Willem Boshoff

Neon installation of nine provinces Andrew Verster

David Krut Publishing would like to thank Herbert Prins and Nabeel Essa for their comments on the initial design of the book, Ricardo Fornoni for his attention to detail in the preparation of images, the judges of the Constitutional Court and others who made themselves available for interviews, and the clerks and other staff at the Court who escorted us patiently around the building countless times for meetings and photographic shoots.