

THE FACE
OF A
NATION

FREEING APARTHEID LETTERING
FROM *the*
PRISON *of* OUR HISTORY

THE FACE
OF A
NATION

DEDICATION

...

This project is dedicated to the individuals
that provide the inspiration for designers,
artists, writers and historians.

Those South Africans that through a passion
for truth have left their mark on walls,
on communities and on our past,
and forged the way for all South Africans
to share in our democracy.



A personal story behind the design *of* a unique typeface

for signage application within *the* new

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING

CONSTITUTION HILL

Johannesburg South Africa

2003/4



“The history of our nation is written in pain on these walls.
British, Boers, Blacks have all been imprisoned here.”

Albie Sachs

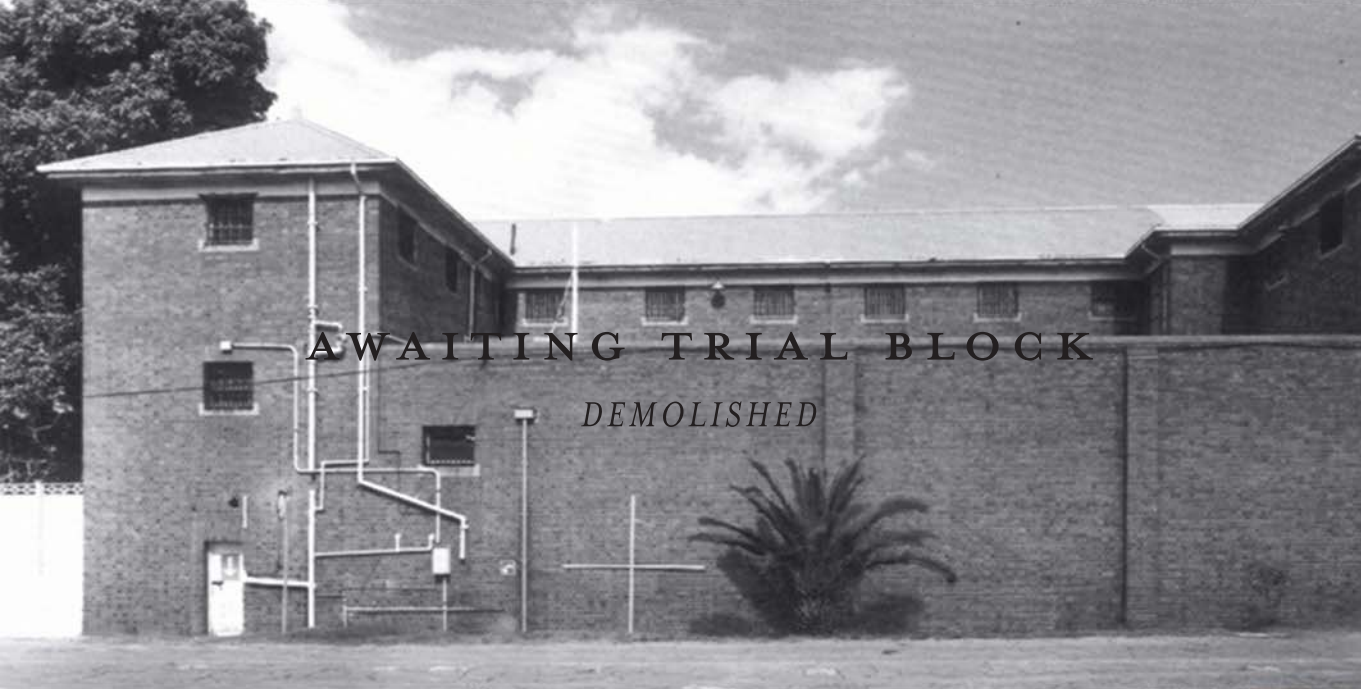
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUSTICE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT TRUST ARTWORKS COMMITTEE



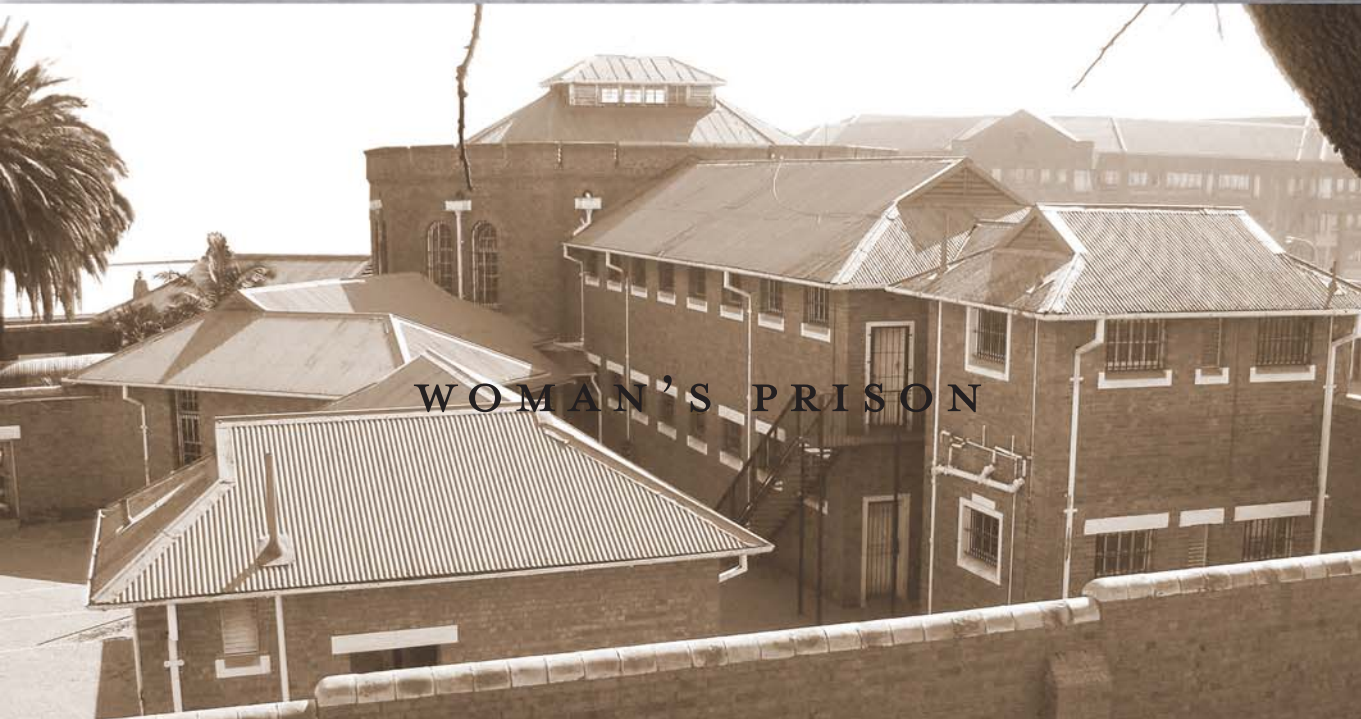
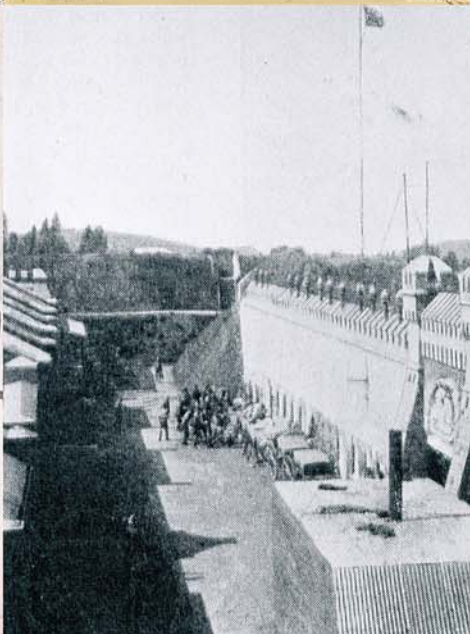
THE OLD FORT



NATIVE GAOL PUNISHMENT CELLS



AWAITING TRIAL BLOCK
DEMOLISHED



WOMAN'S PRISON

SON *of* SAM.
NOW SON *of* HOPE.

• • •

Drawing from the past to enrich our future.

The new Constitutional Court building, overlooking Hillbrow in Johannesburg, is a place of unique humanity. Once a place of incarceration, torture and repression, the Awaiting Trial Block was demolished to form the footprint on which the courthouse now stands. Architects, engineers, artisans, builders, artists and designers united to create a tribute to our country's transformation. Together they have created a structure that is a reflection of our ideals, our dedication to creating a nation of truth, dignity and freedom. It is a building for the people, by the people. Alive with cultural and historical references, with spaces designed for all possible public involvement, the Constitutional Court is a place for South Africans to contemplate the past, present and future of our country.

The bricks that once imprisoned, now protect our democracy.

This is a chronicle of the development of a typeface, commissioned for the interior and exterior signage, and inspired by the graffiti left by inmates and the official prison script that administered them. But more than that, this is a record of a prison's past, where dissident, murderer and drunk shared the spaces and left an indelible mark, both on the walls that incarcerated them, and a history that has shaped us.

CLIENT

The Johannesburg Development Agency
Justices of the Constitutional Court of South Africa

ARCHITECTS

OMM Design Workshop
Janina Masojada Andrew Makin
in association with Urban Solutions

SITE RESEARCH & PHOTOGRAPHY

Garth Walker with assistance from Blake Pickering

GRAPHIC DESIGN & TYPOGRAPHY

Orange Juice Design
Garth Walker

SIGNAGE CONTRACTOR

Eshen & Reid

“ We do not want whispering corridors hung with stiff portraits.
We do not want the Old Bailey, or any other intimidating court structure.
We fought hard for our Constitution. It is the first democratic constitution
South Africa has had. And in honour of that struggle we wanted our own
building, our own court. One that is recognisably rooted in Africa.”

Albie Sachs

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUSTICE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT TRUST ARTWORKS COMMITTEE

BETWEEN *an* AFRICAN CITY AND *the* SKY.

...

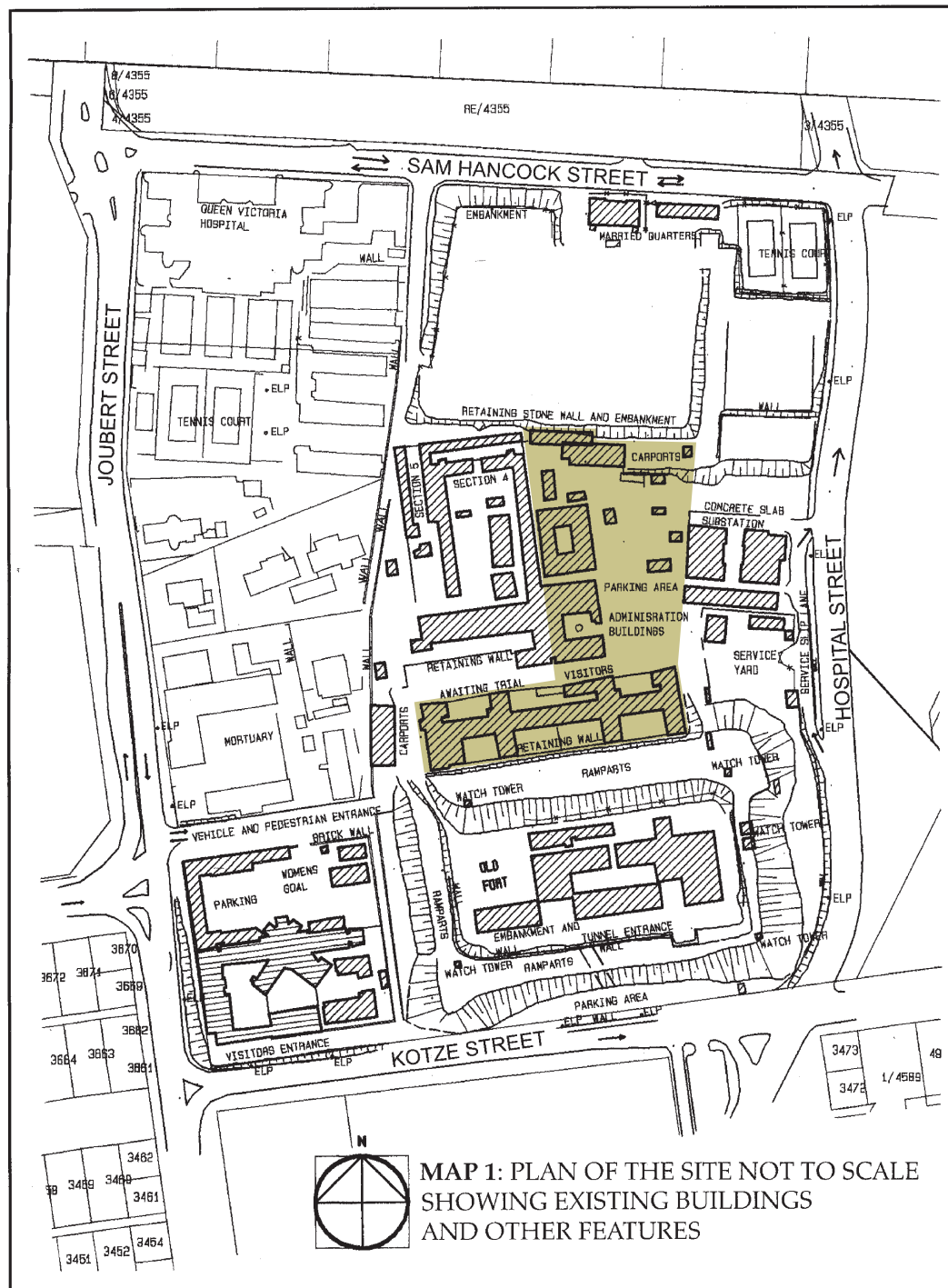
Built by the Paul Kruger government in 1889, the Fort never served as a garrison against an aggressor. Interestingly, the cannons faced toward the centre of town towards Kruger's enemies, the British 'Uitlanders'. A stark symbol of the Apartheid regime, and abandoned since, the Old Fort changed several times over a century, the inmates witness to the changing face of the struggle. From Boer leaders held there in 1900 to the Indian passive resisters in 1913 and the dissenters held in their thousands as a part of the 50's Defiance Campaigns, the prisons detained for crimes minor, political and violent. Inmates included the likes of Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi, Joe Slovo and Helen Joseph.

Every aspect of the development of the Constitutional Court, from the architecture to the art, was awarded on a competitive bid process. This was not restricted to specialists and professionals alone, the invitation to participate was extended to all South Africans.

"This is a minimalist building reflecting the fact that apartheid buildings were born of incarceration. We wanted to reflect the harshness, crudity and horror of apartheid. We wanted something so different because apartheid was so different," says project co-ordinator and architect Sidney Abramowitch.

The site, donated to the state by the Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, sits at the apex of the Witwatersrand watershed. Now known as 'Constitutional Hill', the structure is a landmark for the city of Johannesburg and the nation, as a symbol of peaceful transition from repression to liberty.

OVERLEAF *Historic images from the four prison buildings*



MAP 1: PLAN OF THE SITE NOT TO SCALE
SHOWING EXISTING BUILDINGS
AND OTHER FEATURES

CONSTITUTION HILL JOHANNESBURG: SITE MAP SHOWING AWAITING TRIAL BLOCK AND SUNDRY BUILDINGS
TO BE DEMOLISHED PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW COURT BUILDING

“One of our key themes in designing the building was it should represent South Africa’s multi-cultural diversity and it should exude a feeling of warmth, openness and a sense of ownership to all South Africans. And, of course, it should be functional.”

Andrew Makin

ARCHITECT: OMM DESIGN WORKSHOP

JOHANNESBURG DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

• • •

The design of a unique display typeface for exterior and interior signage
and associated public wayfinding icons for the new
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING
CONSTITUTION HILL
Johannesburg South Africa

• • •

The Brief to the designer

in association with the architects

- The Court did not want a formal signage font
- Sensitive to the history of the site
- Unique / expressive / 'humanist' letterforms
- Reflect a modern high-tech nation
- Legibility to aid low levels of literacy
- 'Friendly' (even playful) letters
- Signage application only (not to be used as a text font)

DOCUMENTING 'THE HILL'

In search of an initial design direction

WINTER 2003

“ I live in Durban, 560km away. Here was a brief to design a typeface for signage on a building still under construction, on a site I had never seen, and with a history I knew little about. Why didn't the Judges make things easy and just use Helvetica Condensed?

So I decided to jump on a plane and go to Jo'burg to see for myself...”

Garth Walker

DESIGNER: ORANGE JUICE DESIGN

THE SITE, BUILDINGS & PRISONS *of* CONSTITUTION HILL

'Transwerke' Apartments

The Native Gaol



The Woman's Prison

The Old Fort

The Old Fort Ramparts

*The Woman's Prison
Historical Exhibition*

THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING

The Main Public Court Entrance

Public and Press Galleries Constitution Court Chamber

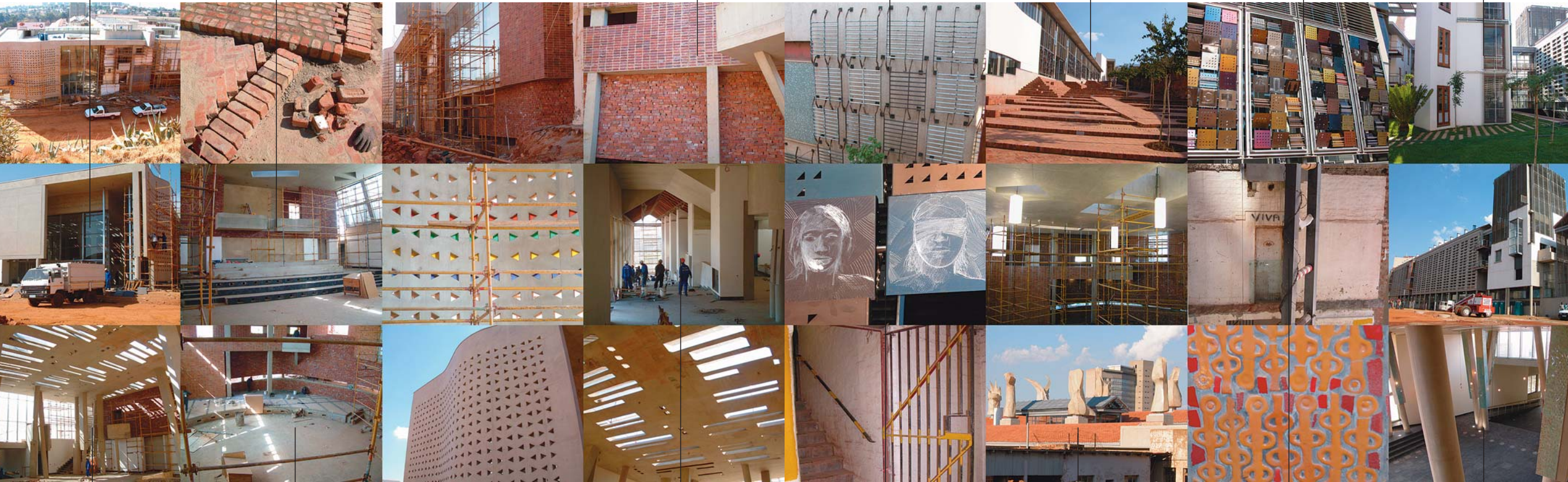
Recycled Bricks from Demolished Awaiting Trial Block

Recycled Prison Cell Window Bars as Wall Decoration

*The Great African Stairway
Recycled Bricks from Demolished Awaiting Trial Block*

Window Shutters facing The Great African Stairway

The Court Gardens



The Public Entrance Hall

The Constitution Court Chamber

Internal Court Public Stairway

Window Shutter Artworks

The Court Roofscape

Prison Related Artwork from Demolished Awaiting Trial Block

The Public Entrance Hall



“After wandering around the court construction site, then the prison surroundings, I stumbled across this storeroom in the Native Gaol. It was piled with junk from the prison admin offices. Thrown out, just like the policies of Apartheid. A fitting end I thought.

By now, I'd started to feel a kind of 'spiritual' force about the site.

I wanted to know more about the people who'd been here. Something they'd left behind.

I needed to find some lettering...”

Garth Walker

DESIGNER: ORANGE JUICE DESIGN

HUNTING THE GHOST
of APARTHEID PAST

...

Time spent staring at the walls.

Walking within the remaining prison buildings on Constitution Hill, there remains in the rooms, as with any structure with an animated past, a sense of its history. The surfaces carry the story; worn floor tiles, bureaucracy beige walls and the remnants of government furniture echo the bygone commotion.

The type needed to reflect the spirit of the place, a sense of the journey. Just as the bricks of the demolished Awaiting Trial Block were used in the construction of the court building, so the typeface needed to be an extension of the building's past. It needed to be a retrospective, a testimonial, to what has been.

The type is inspired by the letterforms, both incidental and official. From the frieze commemorating the building's inauguration cast above the entryway to the Old Fort to the haunting graffiti on the cell walls, the typeface carries a thread of our legacy, the essence of what makes us South African.

DOCUMENTING THE
TYPOGRAPHIC HISTORY *of*
‘THE HILL’

*In search of the letterforms, numerals, graffiti and
surrounding ‘street type’ of Constitution Hill*

WINTER 2003

OVERLEAF *Lettering from buildings on Constitution Hill and surrounds
- excluding the prison buildings*

← Constitution Hill

SPEX
Thymziwote

THIS WAY TO THE NEW MORTUARY

Cell MART
BUZZ OF THE ROAD

TOGETHER, FIGHT AGAINST AIDS
ANC
A better life for all. VOTE ANC

NO ADMITTANCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY
GEEN TOEGANG SONDER MAGTIGING

RANSWERKE

JOIN A COSATU UNION to fight for your rights

Constitution Hill Women's Gaol Entrance

! DANGER !
BEWARE OF OPEN EXCAVATIONS
! KOTSI !
TENDKOMELA MO GO EPIWANG
GA SWA KHURUMETSWA

Rand Light Infantry

Handwritten graffiti in red and yellow.

←
GEEN HARDLOOP OF SPEEL IN GANGE.
NO RUNNING OR PLAYING IN PASSAGES.
HIWE KAPA HO BAPALWE MO PASSAGIN

C10111

♀

Hand icon in a blue circle

Babana
CLOTHES. ABDOUL'S

hair Salen
Nomalanga's

CROWN PERFORMANCE FREE-FLO SYSTEMS
Free-flo
BOLT-ON-POWER
BRANCH MANIFOLDS AND Free-flo SYSTEMS
Exhausts

Constitution Hill Old Fort Entrance

RLI
RAND LIGHT INFANTRY

M JOLI'S
HERBALIST

RH-15YA
20451304
14RF0006
LCD CTRL

DENIM CONNECTION

Handwritten text on a metal surface: NBO, COTE

M.O.T.H. MEMORIAL CENTRE
PLEASE NOTE
MEMBERSHIP CARDS TO BE CARRIED AT ALL TIMES. MEMBERSHIP CARDS TO BE PRODUCED ON REQUEST.
BY ORDER... COMMITTEE
APPLICATIONS FOR CLUB MEMBERSHIP.
KINDLY ENQUIRE ABOUT MOTH MEMBERSHIP WITH DOORMAN
FULL PARTICULARS AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH & AFRIKANS
ALL MONEY TO BE PAID AT OFFICE ONLY.

POSTER & FLYER DISTRIBUTOR
DESIGN
PRINT
083 765 8545

SJI-2 MATT

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NO SMOKING IN THIS OFFICE

74 75

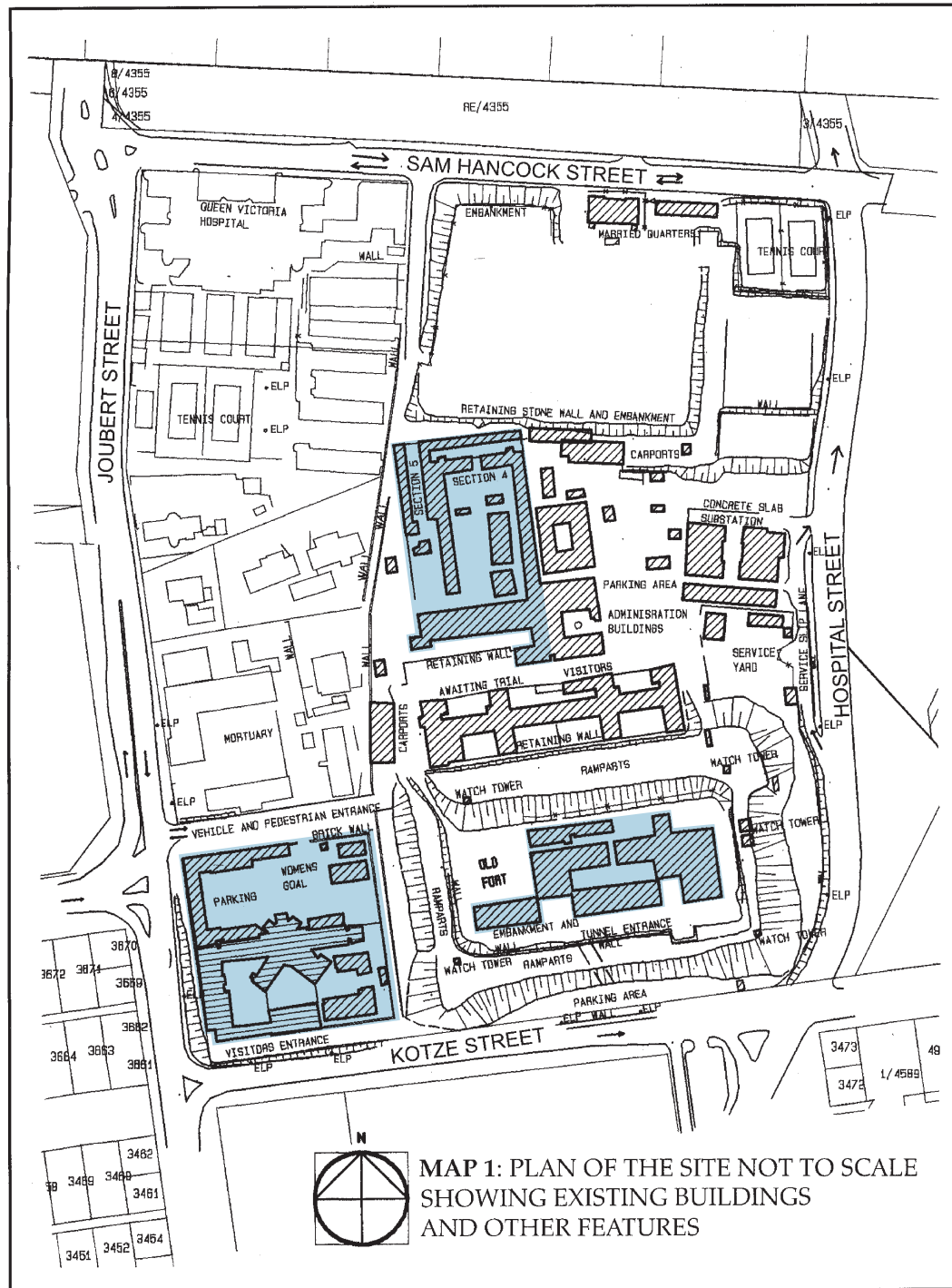
THIS PLAQUE ERECTED BY THE SOUTH AFRICAN BREWERIES LIMITED GROUP OF COMPANIES IN MEMORY OF THE FALLEN MEMBERS OF THEIR STAFF IN TWO WORLD WARS 1914 - 1918 1939 - 1945

AL = 1515 MM
1300 HOLE

Handwritten list of names and numbers on a wall.

Handwritten text on a corrugated metal surface.

G D Sunglasses & Reading Glasses



FREEING APARTHEID
LETTERING FROM *the* PRISON
of OUR HISTORY

...

*Looking for 'Apartheid era' letterforms with which to
inspire the design of the new court font.*

With the search for typeface inspiration from the site and surrounding streets having proved fruitless, the remaining prison buildings would have to provide the inspiration.

A brief investigation of the prisons revealed that as wards of the state, prisoners had little need for signage.

What there was, ultimately generated the final typeface for the Constitutional Court.

“ I remember climbing the stairs to the cells on the top floor of the Old Fort, like so many prisoners before me. Then standing in virtual darkness looking at the walls of cell after cell and finding nothing. Suddenly I came across something scratched onto the wall.

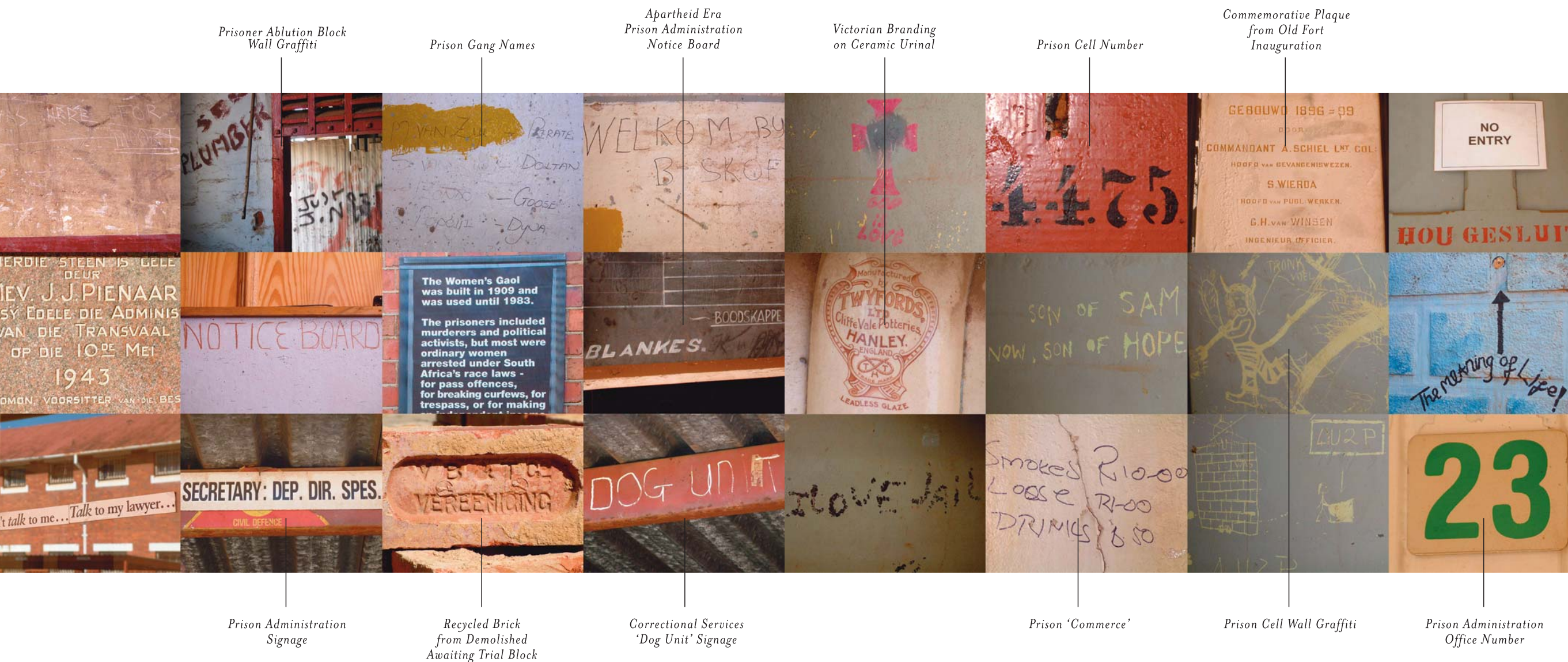
My heart stopped.

Here were the words of someone I'd never know, forever engraved on the grey cement. I knew I had to use them. ”

Garth Walker

DESIGNER: ORANGE JUICE DESIGN

LETTERING FROM THE NATIVE GAOL , OLD FORT AND WOMEN'S PRISONS



Prisoner Ablution Block
Wall Graffiti

Prison Gang Names

Apartheid Era
Prison Administration
Notice Board

Victorian Branding
on Ceramic Urinal

Prison Cell Number

Commemorative Plaque
from Old Fort
Inauguration

Prison Administration
Signage

Recycled Brick
from Demolished
Awaiting Trial Block

Correctional Services
'Dog Unit' Signage

Prison 'Commerce'

Prison Cell Wall Graffiti

Prison Administration
Office Number

THE 11 COURT JUSTICES' HANDWRITING ON THE CONCRETE PANELS
 IN BRAILLE AND THE 11 OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA.
 THE CONCRETE PANELS ARE POSITIONED ABOVE THE MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE COURT BUILDING.

*ku-xaxemeha ka muntu ka ringamama nishuraxeka. Tlomphanojasetho-TekatekanoTokologo
 isidima sobunt'u ukulingana inkululeko manawaadighead qalyheidvnyheid
 fritunngiso anutu inkululekano inkululeko GERITI SA BOTHA TERANO BOLOROLOHI*

*Human Dignity Equality Freedom Kuhlanihwa Kwelintji kulingana inkululeko
 Isithanzi Somunye-Ukulingana Inkululeko Seriti sa botho Tekatekano Kgotlasogo*

HUMAN DIGNITY,
 EQUALITY and FREEDOM...
 ...

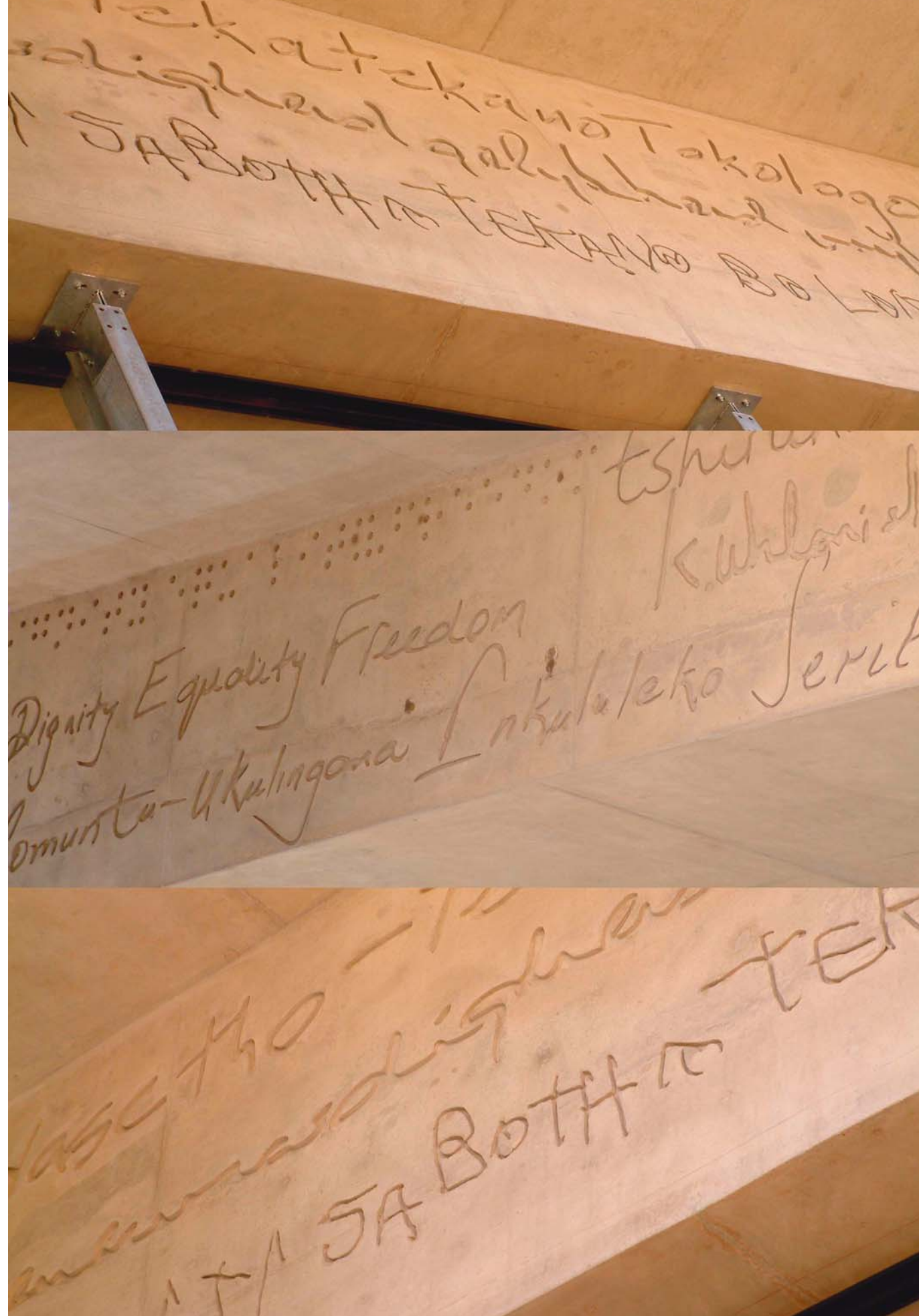
Setting high ideals for future generations.

The architrave above the main public entranceway to the Constitutional Court is infused with a message. Cast in the handwriting of each of the eleven court judges, and written in the eleven official languages and Braille, the opening words of our constitution receive every person entering the building.

Hailed as one of the most progressive and liberal worldwide, the constitution is a statement of our transformation and individuality. "Human dignity, equality and freedom" now presides over the building, where once the contrary held true. It is this juxtaposition that defines us. Our history, our diversity and our identity, starkly unique in world terms, are encapsulated in the spirit of the building and the letter of the constitution.

GERITI SA BOTHA
 TERANO
 BOLOROLOHI

HANDWRITING IN THE SOUTH SOTHO LANGUAGE BY THE BLIND COURT JUSTICE ZAKERIA YACOOB



“By now, I’d photographed every scrap of lettering anywhere on the Hill. These few fragments of lettering would be used as the basis for a totally new font.

For those incarcerated by our past are now remembered in our future. These simple letters would speak for all our nation.”

Garth Walker

DESIGNER: ORANGE JUICE DESIGN

I LOVE JAIL

• • •

Captives and captors, and the marks Apartheid left behind.

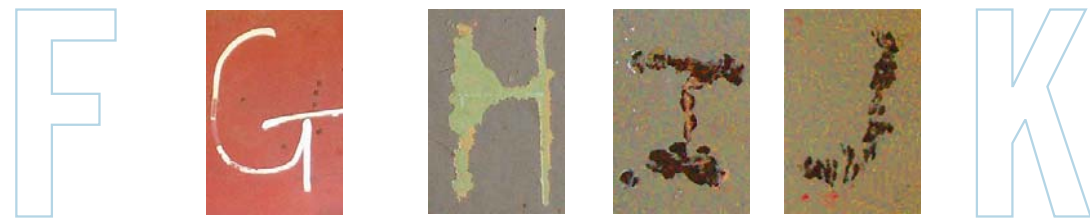
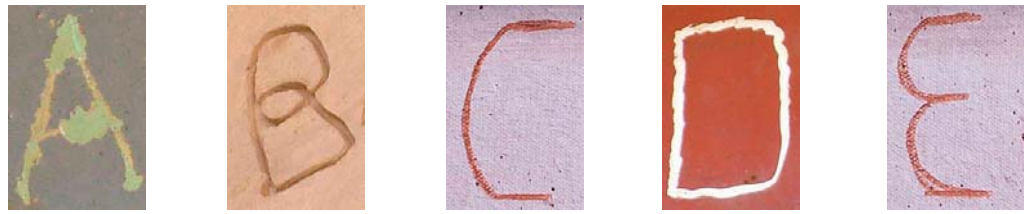
The prisons on Constitution Hill held men and women, black and white, in their thousands over most of the last century. Some were murderers, like the infamous serial killer Daisy de Melker. Others, like Mahatma Ghandi, were held for the strength of their beliefs. It was here that Ghandi reportedly carried out his first experiments in truth, refusing his ration of salt because the black prisoners were not given salt in their food. Scores were held as part of the resistance to the Pass Laws. Many of the prisoners were hanged here.

Little of this sinister past is evident in the buildings, but some of the dark corners still bear witness to those held captive here. Scrawled or scratched into the paint, on doorframes and cell walls, words like *'dog unit'*, *'I love jail'* are the only suggestion of the inmates that spent time here.

And this will be their legacy, the foundation of the typeface for the Constitutional Court.



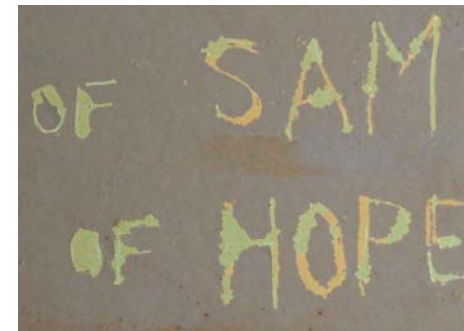
OPPOSITE Selected 'Apartheid' prison letterforms suitable as a starting point for the new font



SUITABLE LETTERFORMS SELECTED AS THE BASIC TYPOGRAPHIC PLATFORM FOR DESIGNING THE FONT



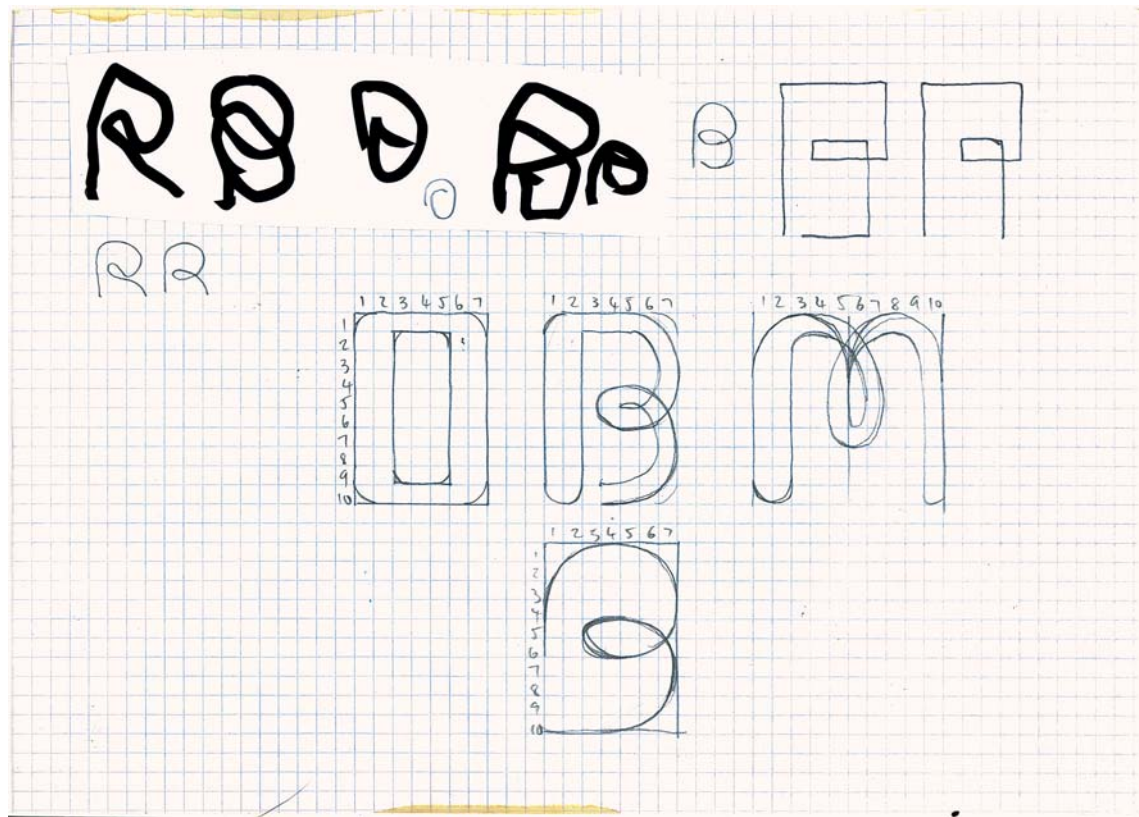
THE HANDWRITING OF A BLIND JUDGE
POIGNANTLY EXPRESSES THE 'HUMANISM' OF THE COURT



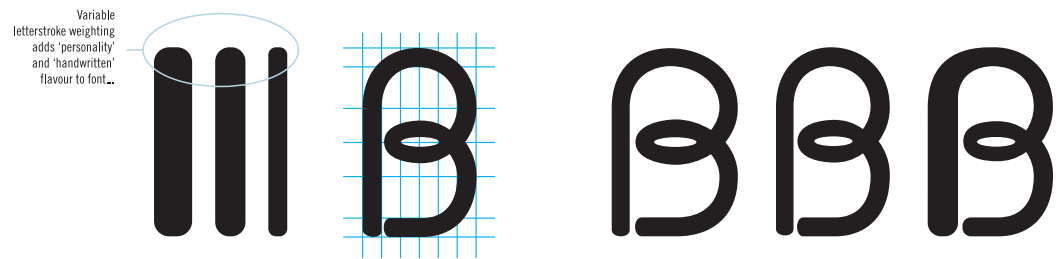
HAND-LETTERED 'THICK & THIN' LETTERSTROKES SCRATCHED ONTO CELL WALL
CREATING LETTERFORMS WITH A DISTINCT 'PERSONALITY'



LETTERFORMS WITH SMOOTH EDGES AND ROUNDED CORNERS
WILL ASSIST EASE OF PRODUCTION FOR THE COURT FONT



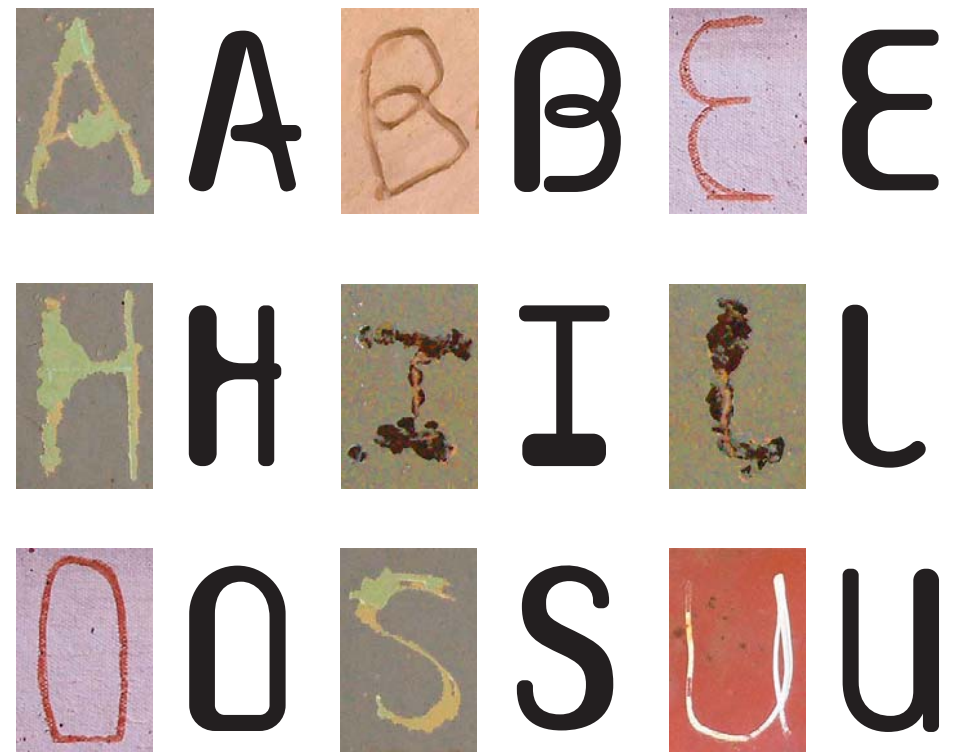
INITIAL GRAPH PAPER SKETCHES FOR FONT CHARACTERS BASED ON THE HANDWRITING OF JUSTICE YACOOB WITH VARIABLE LETTERSTROKES FROM THE 'SON OF SAM' CELL WALL LETTERING



FINAL FONT CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION COMMENCES IN FREEHAND WITH THE LETTER 'B' - THE FIRST TO BE DRAWN ALTERNATIVE WEIGHTS, WIDTH VARIATIONS AND CHARACTER THICKNESSES ARE EXPLORED



ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS SUITED TO THE HANDWRITTEN LETTER 'B' ARE EXPLORED



CHARACTER CONSTRUCTION BASED ON THE SELECTED PRISON CHARACTER REFERENCES



A SAMPLE OF ALTERNATE LETTERFORMS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINAL FONT

THE FINAL TYPEFACE

A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
., " - ? ! & ()

THE FINAL APPROVED TYPEFACE FOR USE ACROSS ALL THE COURT'S INTERNAL AND PUBLIC SIGNAGE

THE FINAL 'STENCIL' TYPEFACE

Suitable for laser cutting from sheet metal

Q Q Q Q
Q Q Q Q Q Q

ALTERNATIVES FOR A 'STENCIL' EXECUTION OF CERTAIN CHARACTERS
- SUITABLE FOR LASER CUTTING

A B C D E F G H I
J K L M N O P Q R
S T U V W X Y Z

THE FINAL FONT WITH 'STENCIL' CHARACTERS WHERE REQUIRED













LASER CUT SHEET ALUMINIUM PROTOTYPE CHARACTER SET







THE COURT JUSTICES' IDENTIFIERS

Court Chamber Justices' nameplates and information signage

CHIEF JUSTICE CHASKALSON
 DEPUTY CHIEF JUSTICE LANGA
 JUSTICE MADALA
 JUSTICE MOKGORDO
 JUSTICE MOSENEKE
 JUSTICE NGCOBO
 JUSTICE O'REGAN
 JUSTICE SACHS
 JUSTICE SKWEYIYA
 JUSTICE YACOOB
 JUSTICE VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

 INFORMATION TSHEDIMOSETSO	
 INFORMATION ILWAZI	
 ARCHIVE ROOM RUMU YADZIAKHAIVI	
 BIBLIOTEEK LAEBORARI	 WERKSWINKEL DITHUTANO
 ODITORIAMO IHOLO YABAPHULAPHULI	 RECORDS ROOM INDLU YAMAREKHODI
 PRESS BOX LIBHOKISI LEKUNGCIVITA	 IKHAWUNTA YOMPHAKATHI PUBLIC COUNTER
 COUNCELS ROBING ROOMS RUMU INE VHAHATULI VHA AMBARELA KHAYO MAGAWENI	

PUBLIC SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

DEMOCRACY AT WORK: VIEWS *of* THE COMPLETED COURT BUILDING

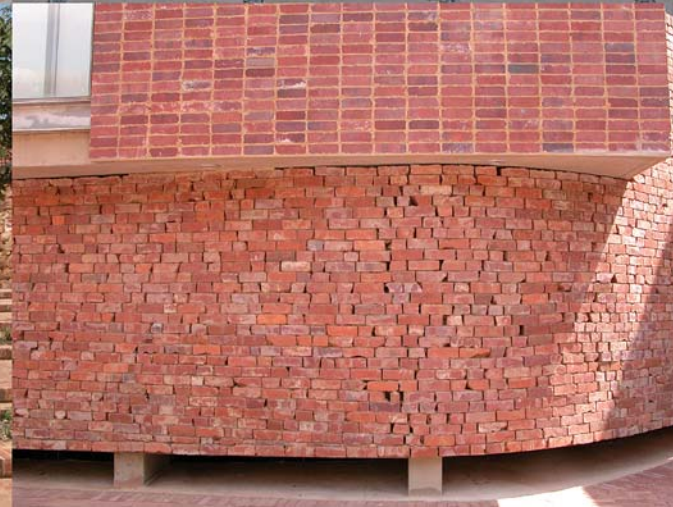
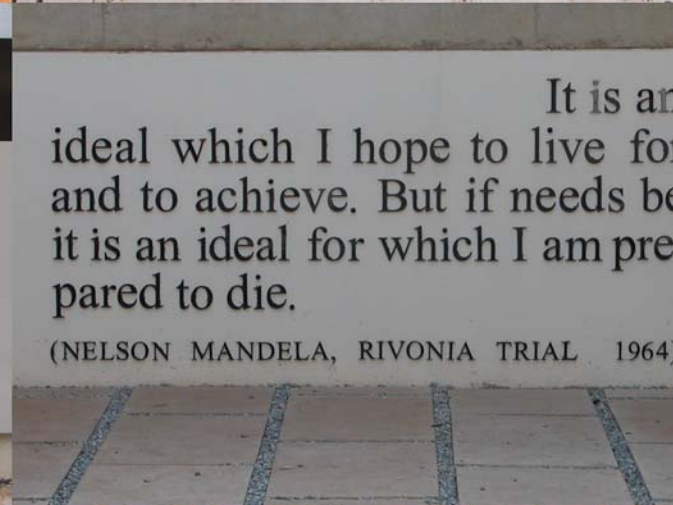
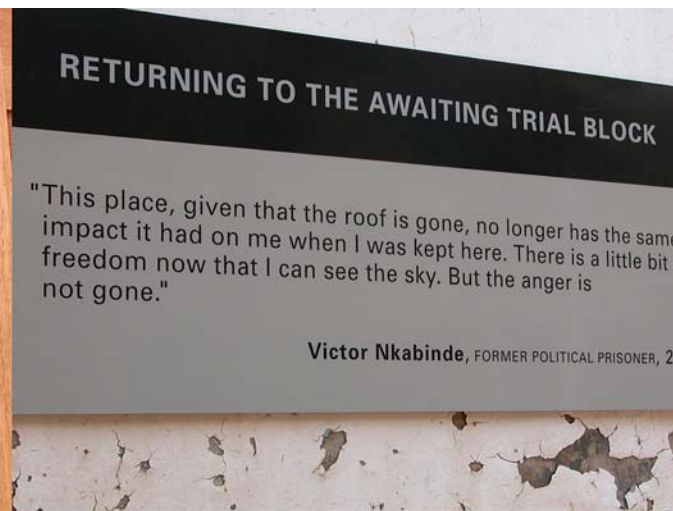
“This is a place of encounter. It is not a forbidding, exclusive, bureaucratic edifice. Everyone is welcome here.”

Albie Sachs

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT JUSTICE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT BUILDING COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT TRUST ARTWORKS COMMITTEE

THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED BY PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI ON FREEDOM DAY, APRIL 27 2004





INTERIOR DETAILING FROM THE COMPLETED COURT BUILDING. A NUMBER OF ARTISTS AND CRAFTERS WERE COM MISSIONED TO PRODUCE PIECES THAT SPECIFICALLY ADDRESSED BOTH OUR HISTORY AND FUTURE AS A NATION

“ My brief was to simply design a typeface based on the history of the Hill. When I finally got to see my font in the colours of the national flag on the Court’s front façade, I hoped that all South Africans would understand why Helvetica Condensed wouldn’t have been right.

The font looked great in the interior too, as it was installed to be seen in relation to the Court’s amazing art collection.”

Garth Walker

DESIGNER: ORANGE JUICE DESIGN

KHOTO SA VUMBIWA
O YEMTSETFOSISEKELO
TSHEKO YA MOLAOTHEO
YOMTHEHOSISEKELO
NSTITUTIONAL COURT
NYEWE LA MOLAOTHEO
OTHE YA NDAYOTE
NSTITUSIONELE
ELO YA MOLAOT





S ROBING ROOMS
AMPARELA HAFHA

PRESS BOX
LIBHOKISI LEKUNGCIVITA



JUSTICE O'REGAN

INTA YOMPHEKATHI
PUBLIC COUNTER



JUSTICE CHASKALSON
CHIEF JUSTICE



BIBLIOTEK
LAEBORARI



THE TYPEFACE APPLIED TO COURT INTERIOR SIGNAGE GENERAL LY VIEWED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE COURT ART COLLECTION

