



An investigation into relevant
examples of court buildings and
heritage approaches.

CHAPTER

Precedent studies

7.



Figure 7_1 Bordeaux Court [image online] available at: <http://www.dpalighting.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Bordeaux-Law-Courts.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04



Figure 7_2 Bordeaux courtrooms [image online] available at: https://www.mimoa.eu/images/9649_1.jpg access on: 2016-10-04

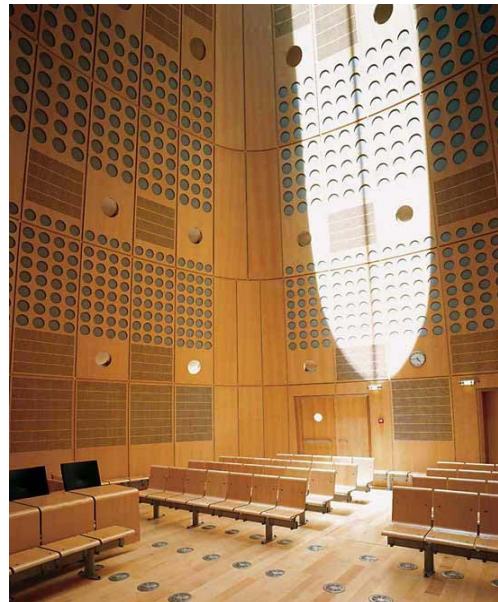


Figure 7_3 Bordeaux courtrooms interior [image online] available at: <https://lostonsite.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/14-tribunal-de-burdeos-04.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04

Bordeaux Court, Bordeaux, France [1998]

Richard Rodgers

In this project Richard Rodgers re-engages in the formation of judicial spaces and the notion of a democratic judiciary. The response is simple and visually enticing. The courts are housed in isolated timber pods, emulating the wine vats the region is known for. Access is allowed directly from street level and many of the traditional thresholds into the court are done away with. The access of the judiciary into the courts is exposed on suspended walkways which cross the public access route (Davey 1993; Ryan 1999).

Through this court Rodgers clearly addresses the tradition of judicial spaces where courts have been perceived as big, monolithic and intimidating structures that have become exclusive and inaccessible. The fragmentation of the spaces allows for visual access of the courts and processes at an urban scale (Davey 1993; Ryan 1999).

Although the architecture allows for a visual access of the process, a method applied in the name of democracy, it risks creating a collection of black boxes which hides the proceedings and rituals that happen behind closed doors. In a true democratic judicial system these proceedings should be physically as well as visually accessible while access is controlled but not restricted. While the access allowed for, from and to, the courtrooms are a clear

challenge to the status quo; it stops short of changing the court spaces itself. In the greater complex the judiciary is still placed behind the court, leaving the courtroom as a type of buffer between the public and the judiciary. This spatial configuration has been in place since the 19th century.

Finally, while the pod-like court spaces go far in fragmenting the court building as a whole, it still results in large monolithic objects which are far removed from the human scale. There are no thresholds to bring the scale down to the human level or elevate the public to the scale of the court. This results in a maintained intimidation and alienation of those who might choose to approach the court without being compelled or accompanied.

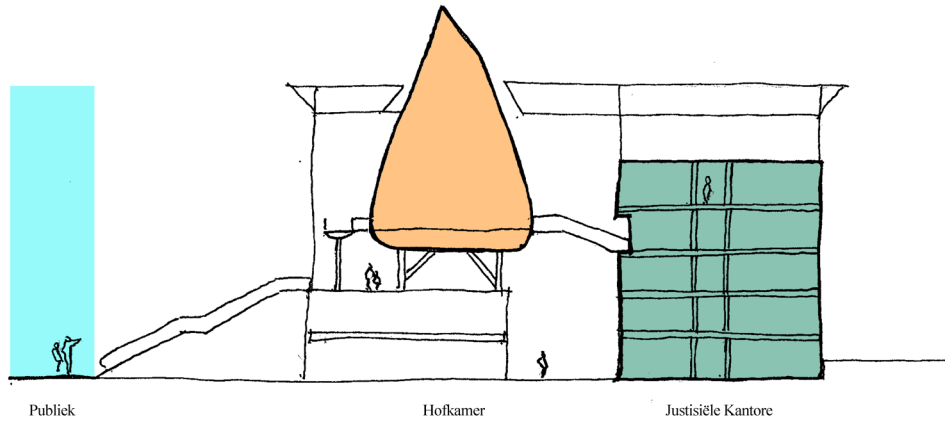


Figure 7_4 Spatial relationship



Figure 7_5 Bordeaux court in relationship to administration wing. [image online] available at: <http://larryspeck.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/2009-0115.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04

APPLICATION:

The Bordeaux Court goes far in challenging the spatial identity of judicial spaces, but in the opinion of this dissertation it does not go far enough. Outdated spatial organisation remains while it is formalistically reinterpreted.

This dissertation aims to address these concerns in the new design. Nonetheless this precedent demonstrates the potential for a shift in how judicial spaces are created and perceived by the public. It also demonstrates how security and public access can be facilitated by a very informal and unrestrictive threshold, a concept pivotal to this dissertation.



Figure 7_6 Entrance to centre [image online] available at: <http://mak.at/jart/prj3/mak/images/img-db/1342454604094.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04



Figure 7_7 Courtyard [image online] available at: <https://aumuangudom.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/nuernberg03.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04

Centre for Documentation, Nuremberg, Germany [1933 - 2001] Gunther Domenig

Kongresshalle is the largest Nazi building to have survived the Second World War. It was designed to host the spectacles that the Nazi regime displayed every year in Nuremberg, and was intended to seat 50 000 spectators under a single roof. Its controversial past has meant that this precinct has neither been completed nor fully utilised in its history. Throughout the years the proposals have ranged from complete demolition to sport stadiums and even a shopping mall. In 1973 it was declared a national monument but has remained underutilised (Capezzuto 2002; Kugel 2002; Van der Hoorn 2002).

The intervention by Gunther Domenig is stark and brutal. Piercing the granite façade with an aluminium and glass arrow, the stairs supersede the classical plinth and lead straight into the interior of the building, through to the other side. This new intervention creates new routes through the building, opening up spaces so visitors may experience Nazi architecture from without and within, without obstruction. The brashness of the design almost prepares one to confront the collection of Nazi documents and artefacts that survived the Second World War and represents a reminder of the conflicting past (Capezzuto 2002; Kugel 2002; Van der Hoorn 2002).

Domenig left most historic walls intact, carving new spaces out of the old existing ones, contrasting the heavy brick and granite work with light aluminium and glass. With this intervention he managed to create a completely new building within the carcass of the old without adding much floor space and achieved new horizontal and vertical circulation, undermining the old order (Capezzuto 2002; Kugel 2002; Van der Hoorn 2002).

APPLICATION:

The intervention by Domenig illustrates a severe approach to dealing with contested heritage, challenging past ideals while making bold contemporary statements. This design approach can be clearly seen in the architectural language applied to the intervention at the Pretoria Magistrate's Court.

This precedent also supplies this dissertation with a disruptive response to revivalist architecture and classical principles while creating new spaces within old boundaries. Finally, the materiality of the intervention provides the dissertation with a possible architectural language.

Figure 7_8 Approach to the Constitutional Court



Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, South Africa [2004] OMM Architects

The Constitutional Court designed by OMM Architects and completed in 2004 is a building which had to fulfil great expectations. This work had to express the principles and values of a young constitution, while showcasing the hopes of a new national discourse in architecture, as well as contribute to a vibrant urban fabric. The site for this new court is situated in the old Johannesburg Fort which acted as a prison complex until the 1980s. A number of important political prisoners were incarcerated here from the time of the South African War until the closing years of Apartheid (Darrol 2003; Makin & Masoiada 2004; Lipman 2004; Nobel 2004; Le Roux & Du Toit 2004).

In order to create a cohesive urban precinct, connections along an east-west and north-south axis had to be established. Furthermore the need of a public square to complement the court building was considered imperative. To facilitate these two considerations the Awaiting Trial Block had to be partially demolished in order to establish this circulation and spaces. The vertical circulation spaces of the Awaiting Trial Block were preserved and treated in different ways. One of these stairwells was incorporated into the new court structure and metaphorically forms a cornerstone of the room in which judgements are delivered. The other stairwells situated

in the courtyard itself have been fitted with lanterns on top, in order to make a contribution to the Johannesburg skyline and define the square (Darrol 2003; Makin & Masoiada 2004).

The court building itself, although filled with symbolism and meaning, is a surprisingly simple building and legible. The public spaces are separated from the restricted judicial spaces by the administration centre and yet a feeling of openness and accessibility is established. The entrance foyer is visually accessible from the square. Once entering through the four metre high timber doors the space resembles that of shade under a tree. From here circulation moves effortlessly into the main courtroom. The transition is unrestricted and almost natural. In the foyer one can also turn to the left and move down the staircase that runs parallel to the great African steps which are outside. This circulation route is adorned by artwork, leading down to the library and public reading room (Nobel 2004; Le Roux & Du Toit 2004).

In the Constitutional Court the thresholds between interior and landscape are radically reduced, just as the thresholds between Constitution Hill and the rest of Johannesburg have been minimalised. This gives the impression of openness, access



Figure 7_9 Entrance to Constitutional Court

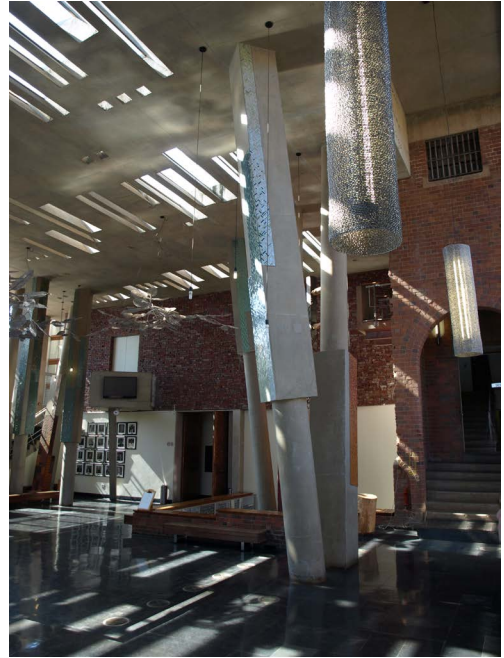


Figure 7_10 Entrance foyer



Figure 7_11 Courtroom

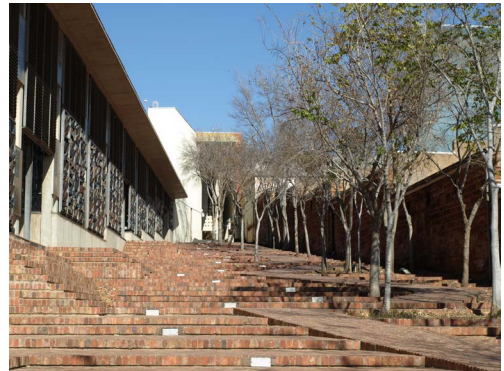


Figure 7_12 Great African steps

and transparency. Considerable effort was made to keep the climatic control inside the court as natural as possible, with heating and cooling relying on rock stores and lighting on large open windows, controlled by louvre systems (Darrol 2003; Le Roux & Du Toit 2004)

APPLICATION:

The Constitutional Court, although different in function from the much lower Magistrate's Court, does offer a precedent on the symbolic and practical accessibility and transparency that a court can achieve. The ease of access to the courtroom and its direct link to main public spaces demonstrate the successful removal of hindrances to the judicial system. This dissertation hopes to achieve this same openness. Additionally, the thresholds between inside and outside spaces are well defined and easily traversed, lifting the customary solemnness and isolation of judicial spaces.

The selective demolition of heritage fabric in order to create relevant and functional spaces serves as a guiding precedent to this dissertation's engagement of the Pretoria Magistrate's Court. Furthermore the reuse of old building elements and materials in the new structure affords guidance in the development of an architectural language.



Figure 7_13 Roof addition [image online] available at: <http://www.noeroarchitects.com/devilliers-hulme-office/> access on: 2016-10-04



Figure 7_14 Original building [image online] available at: <http://www.noeroarchitects.com/devilliers-hulme-office/> access on: 2016-10-04



Figure 7_15 Building after addition [image online] available on: <http://www.noeroarchitects.com/devilliers-hulme-office/> access on: 2016-10-04

24 Alfred Street, Cape Town, South Africa [1901-2001] Noero Wolff Architects

24 Alfred Street is the conversion of a historic warehouse into an office building. The building was constructed in 1901 by Ernest Seeliger for a shipping company close to the harbour. Due to the constant reclamations and interior alterations the building became ever increasingly obsolete for its intended purpose and no longer complied with modern standards and regulations (Architect & Builder, 2006; 24 Alfred Street, 2001).

In their engagement Noero Wolff Architects cleared the interior of dysfunctional stairs and elevators and removed the roof. Their new intervention acts as a hat on top of the new structure, aiming to complement instead of challenging the old, thereby maintaining a balance between old and new. The window layout in the new structure repeats the pattern of the windows in the old building, while the added balcony in turn disrupts the pattern, creating contrast in the composition. The architects managed to create an architecture that is representative of its time, not copying the old but reinterpreting the roof in order to create new space and re-instil its relevance to the city (Architect & Builder, 2006; 24 Alfred Street, 2001).

APPLICATION:

Just as the warehouse, the Pretoria Magistrate's Court has become increasingly obsolete in its function as well as public engagement and yet adds an important historical layer to that part of the city. Thus new intervention is warranted in enabling the building to fulfil a continuous contemporary role as well contributing to its immediate urban context. Just as with 24 Alfred Street any addition needs to be in balance with the existing building, aiming to respect the heritage layers while unashamedly contributing to its continuous relevance.

The setting of the court is in the historic centre of Bordeaux where the urban fabric is defined by city walls and moats. It is here that the extension to the Bordeaux Court was designed and built, overlooking the cathedral and redefining a city block. The court was part of a national rebuilding of the French judicial system and forms part of a greater national discourse (Davey 1993; Ryan 1999).



Figure 7_16 Reichstag [image online] available at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/0d/Berlin_reichstag_west_panorama_2.jpg access on: 2016-10-04



Figure 7_17 Added dome [image online] available at: http://images.adsttc.com/media/images/5624/7602/e58e/ce6d/4400/034b/large_jpg/Reichstag_Dome_at_night.jpg?1445230067 access on: 2016-10-04

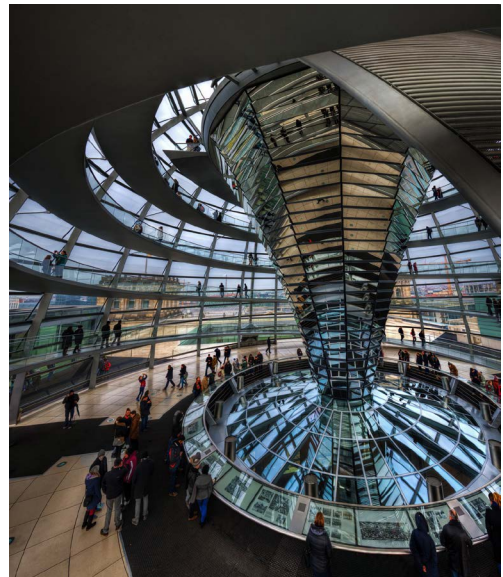


Figure 7_18 Dome interior [image online] available at: http://img13.deviantart.net/ba28/i/2014/080/8/4/inside_reichstag_dome_by_roman_gp-d792lum.jpg access on: 2016-10-04

Reichstag, Berlin, Germany [1894-1999] Norman Foster

The Reichstag designed by Paul Wallot in 1894 serves as a symbol of a tumultuous past that formed the German state as it exists today. During its early years it rarely served the purpose it was constructed for. In 1933 it was burned down, an event Adolf Hitler used to solidify his hold on power. It was further damaged by bombing raids during the Second World War. In the political climate that followed the Second World War, its reconstruction by the west would be seen as provocation by the eastern communist powers. Thus only minimal interior restoration was done during the 1960s (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).

It is in this context that the competition was launched to rebuild the Reichstag after the unification of Germany in the early 1990s. Firstly, through much controversy, one third of the original built fabric was removed and almost all the restoration did in the 1960s. It was decided to leave certain historic elements, amongst which was Soviet graffiti, and stabilise damaged areas in order to preserve selected historical layers. Because of the far-reaching changes made in the interior of the building, the decision was made to express the renewal towards the exterior (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).

The request to replace the dome came from the German Bundestag. Initially resisted by

Foster, he finally recognised the potential for a functional and symbolic intervention that would transcend the inherent imperial symbolism the dome would otherwise communicate (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).

The dome functions as a public interface between the parliament proceedings below and the visiting public. Its transparency symbolises the transparency that all governments should have towards their people and the hierarchy that should exist in a democracy. Unfortunately the intention did not translate into practice and access is not allowed during parliamentary sessions (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).

Secondly, the dome plays an integral role in the energy system of the building. The mirror pillar in the dome directs light into the main parliamentary chamber, reducing the need for artificial lighting. Furthermore, the dome also acts as heat sink in order to release excess heat in the summer. This has resulted in radically reduced energy usage of the building. (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).

The reconstruction and adaptation not only serves to enable efficient use of the building again, but also serves as a symbolic reaction to a contested past and the expression of future hopes and ideals (Davey 1999; Russel 1999).



Figure 7_19 Parliamentary hall [image online]
available at: <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/media/Projects/9013/img0.jpg> access on: 2016-10-04

APPLICATION:

The Reichstag demonstrates that new interventions not only contribute to the spatial experience of the heritage building but can also contribute to the energy efficiency of the contemporary use. Likewise this dissertation will aim to incorporate systems in the new interventions in order to contribute to its operational requirements.

Furthermore it illustrates the value of contemporary element interwoven with the heritage fabric in order to allow for the reinterpretation of the old, instilling it with new meaning. Similarly the dissertation will aim to demonstrate the balance that can be achieved between old and new, while redefining the entire heritage object in a new contemporary discourse.



Figure 7_20 Soviet graffiti [image online]
available at: <http://www.fosterandpartners.com/design-services/interiors/reichstag-new-german-parliament-interiors/> access on: 2016-10-04

