



## Chapter 6. Precedent

# 1. Constitutional Court

Johannesburg, South Africa

## i. Relation to the investigation

The (civic) building was commissioned by the Department of Public Works, with one of the main expressed aims that it become a symbolic space for all South Africans.

## ii. The building

The building aims to depart from the monumental scale associated with traditional civic buildings. Instead the building's stature is derived from its location. The history of the site and the relation of the new use to it, creates a place of extreme significance to South Africans.

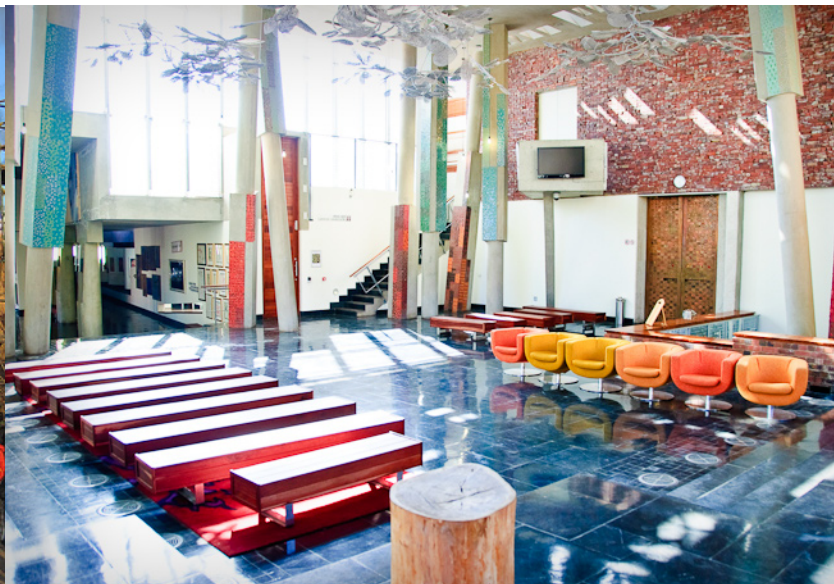
The re-interpretation of the tree, a significant element related to processes of decision-making in an African context, becomes a strong feature in the foyer of the building.

The entrance is clearly indicated and visible from the square.

## iii. Lessons to be learnt

Although the reinterpretation of the tree is well designed, the symbolic significance is lost by its disassociation with the decision-making process.

Although this building is accessible from the square, said square is located in the centre of the Constitution Hill complex, which makes it less accessible, requiring previous knowledge of its location.



## 2. Mphumalanga Legislature

Nelspruit, South Africa

### i. Relation to the investigation

The Mpumalanga Legislature was the first major civic building commissioned by the democratic government.

### ii. The building

The building has a strong relation to its environment. The layout of the complex follows the contours and the building makes use of views across the Olifants and Nels rivers. It is a facebrick building, lending a grounded quality to the complex.

The chamber of parliament is located where the administrative and legislative sections of the building meet, lending it a sense of importance.

### iii. Lessons to be learnt

The building is related to its physical context, but has a more tenuous relation to the cultural context. In terms of the use of space, smaller scale courtyards exist throughout, but the main space around which the complex is organised disappointingly becomes a parking facility.

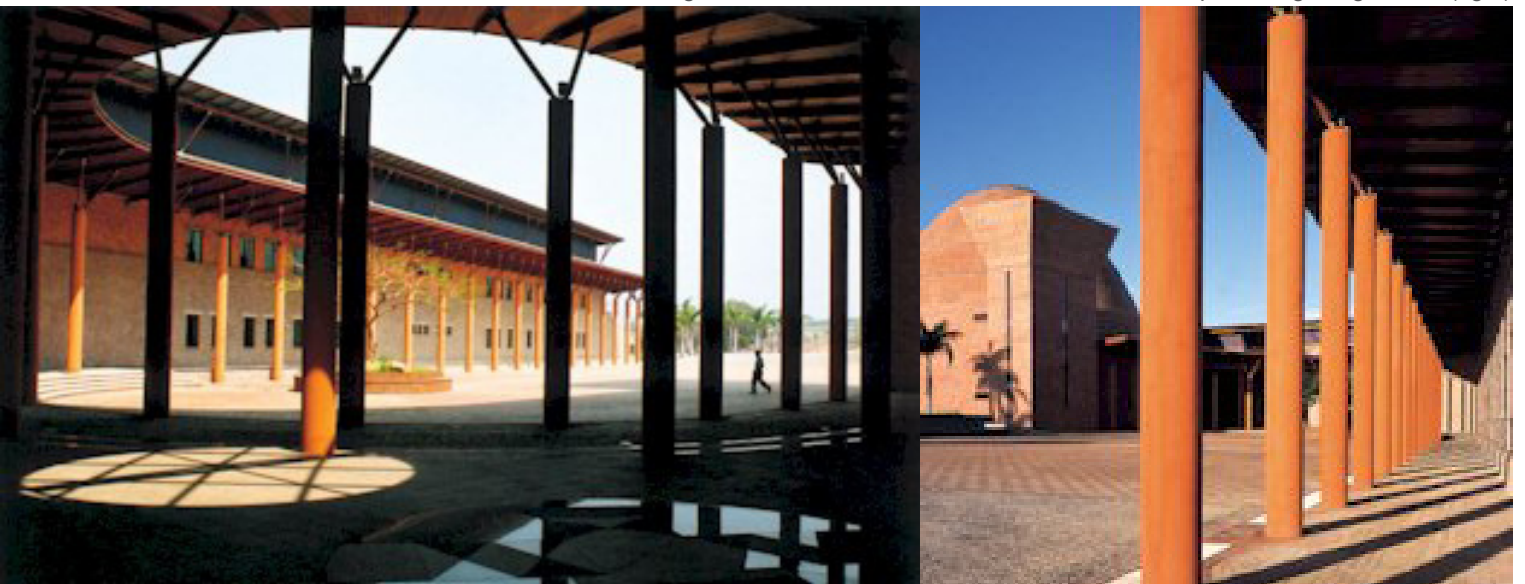
The significant spill-out space becomes an exposed afterthought on the side of the chamber of parliament.

Figure 28: Entrance to the Constitutional Court (opposite, left)

Figure 29: Foyer space Constitutional Court (opposite, right)

Figure 30: Public Square Mpumalanga Legislature (below)

Figure 31: View toward Chamber of Parliament, Mpumalanga Legislature (right)





### 3. Northern Cape Legislature

Kimberley, South Africa

#### i. Relation to the investigation

The Northern Cape Legislature was commissioned by the National Department of Public Works, with the intention of becoming a ‘highly visible, practical and symbolic manifestation of democracy’ (Freschi, 2006).

#### ii. The building

As with the Constitutional Court, the site contributes a large portion of the symbolic significance of the the project. The complex is located on what was during the Apartheid era as a buffer zone. The occupation of this space, linking together the segregated city, is a strong statement of democracy and inclusion.

The main aim of the design was to break ‘decisively’ from European prototypes (Freschi, 2006). This

was to be achieved by the inclusion of Chris Van den Berg, artist, into the design team. The building was intended to become a sculptural work and thereby departing from the monumentality associated with civic buildings.

#### iii. Lessons to be learnt

In the search to break away from architectural styles associated with Colonialism and European models, the building became a study in post-modernism, which is a strongly western-based stylistic influence. Its association with movements such as nihilism causes one to question whether it really has the capacity to express the complexity of the African Democracy.

The artistic influence has lead to a sculptural work, and in that sense has achieved the goal of avoiding the monumentality of classic architecture, but the artistic influence often seems merely decorative.

Figure 32: Public square at Northern Cape Legislature



## 4. Jewish Museum

Berlin, Germany

### i. Relation to the investigation

The Jewish Museum was commissioned with the intention of containing a very specific meaning.

### ii. The building

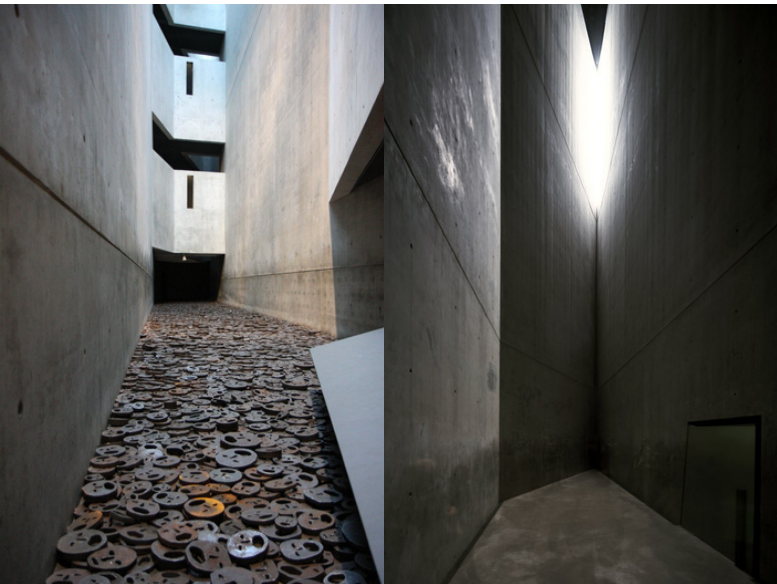
The building does not contain analogous representations of war or concentration camps, instead it achieves the memory of the holocaust by the creation of experiential spaces, eliciting feelings and emotions associated with concentration camps and the holocaust.

### iii. Lessons to be learnt

The building does not relate well to its context. In terms of definition of space and relation to the street it becomes a foreign object in its landscape.

Figure 33: use of sound and texture (below left)

Figure 34: use of light (below right)



## 5. Reichstag

Berlin, Germany

### i. Relation to the investigation

The renovation of the Reichstag was commissioned by the German Democratic Government with the intention of representing democracy.

### ii. The building

The original facade was maintained with extensive use of glass used in the interior of the building, ensuring that the democratic process is accessible whilst protecting and building on the historic significance of the site.

### iii. Lessons to be learnt

Although the building is located on a large urban open space, the traditional monumentality of the building isn't intentionally accessible.

Figure 35: transparent interior, visible council chamber

Figure 36: Copula



## 6. Rachel Whiteread

### i. Relation to the investigation

Rachel Whiteread's work questions the perception of space.

### ii. The project

Whiteread manages to renew the viewer's perception of space. Her projects express space as a central object rather than a mere by-product.

### iii. Lessons to be learnt

Space should be considered as an object to be designed, rather than an undefined element determined by the creation of built fabric.



Selected works of R. Whiteread from top to bottom

Figure 37: Cabinet of Curiosities

Figure 38: House

Figure 39: Library

