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PRECEDENTS:

PRECEDENTS:

- Atteridgeville Magistrate's Court
- Family Court Pilot Project, Johannesburg
- Constitutional Court
- Freedom Park
- Apartheid Museum

This project was extensively hampered by planning regulations, resulting in an essential design of a “house on a plot” with its necessary fences, destroying any sense of place.

The building is a tough concrete frame with brick infill. The trained eye will notice careful incisions of lighting controls in the form of vertical louvers. The courthouse boxes stand proud of the structure with barrel-vault roofs and a clerestory window at the top of the arch.

Inside the courts pine panelled walls are welcoming as they are washed with soft light from the clerestory window. The architects opted for pine instead of the more expensive meranti, allowing them to panel the court from floor to ceiling.

Acoustics seem to be well sorted; absorbent and reflective panels are placed adequately. The aesthetics are derived from function and then composed.

The building is structured around two courtrooms; the typical court plan was simplified, while still fulfilling complex circulation requirements. The courts are penetrated by 'fingers' from the public atrium, and secure offices and cells from the other.

The court passages and foyers make use of conversation nooks, with timber benches slightly recessed. The result is a space where conversations and strategies can be discussed in what suggests privacy in the public domain.

The atrium has a large ramp introduced into the space leading to offices on the first floor. A huge skylight lights this space, where sun is controlled by internal timber louvers over a soft but strong light source. Budget constraints forced simple but ingenious solutions combined in a rich important series of internal public space. (Museum of Struggle Atteridgeville Magistrate's court, *Architecture South Africa Journal of the SA Institute of Architects* 12, November/ December, 2004: 73-75)

Questions posed:

How does one navigate (movement or journey) through the building? :

Movement through the building seems to be quite straight forward and legible. All public accesses are in plain sight. The security entrance is off the side of the main axis running from north to south. The main reception lobby however, directs one away from their natural path towards the court rooms obstructing the view to a person's final destination point.

The staffs have their own back entrance to their respective offices, and public access these offices through the main atrium ramps. This type of access system causes to be of great help with circulation flow.

The main atrium space is seen as a whole where the courts have a symbolic presence of welcoming stately boxes greeting the people it will be servicing.

How is the courtroom accessed? :

Though the court rooms have been diagrammatically explained in the pages previous a brief summary of answers to this question will be given:

The courtrooms are laid out in a complementary fashion, allowing for 'courtyard' spaces to separate each. While awaiting their hearing these spaces accommodate the public, plaintiff and defendant, on the opposite side. Separate rooms alongside the court allow for last minute consultations with legal representatives, in private.

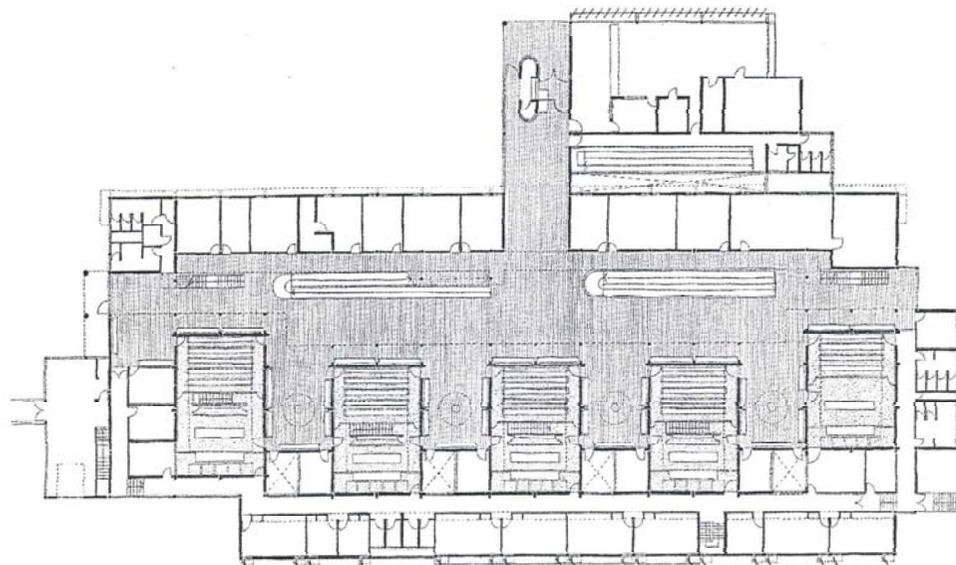
The internal court structure is uncluttered, lit and ventilated by clerestory windows. The Detainee arrives at the courtroom through a set of stairs, coming from a separate detention facility on a lower level. The Magistrate enters from a private passage leading to his or her office.

How does one experience the building? :

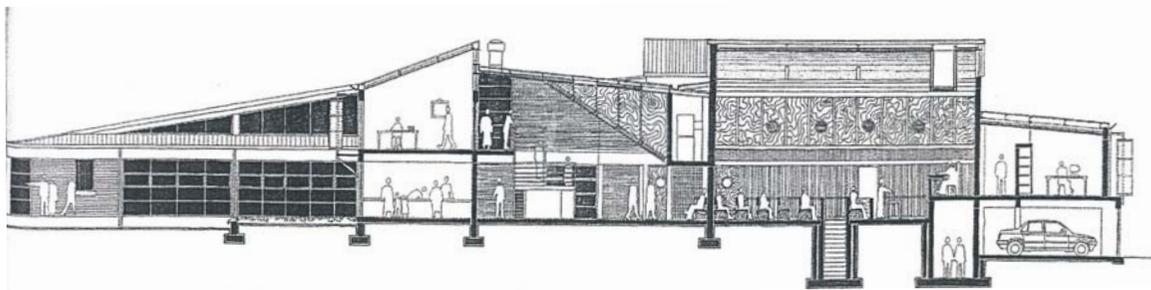
- The building is light and user friendly.
- Natural ventilation and the appropriate use of diffused lighting create a comfortable atmosphere.
- Circulation is legible and there is no real need for signage.

LESSONS LEARNT:

- Appropriate lighting in courtrooms to be indirect.
- Appropriate access circulations to courtrooms, especially with regards a court with detainees.
- Appropriate use of Natural ventilation allows the space to feel natural and comfortable.
- Legible circulation allows for less confusion and trauma.



3_01
Ground floor plan



3_02
Section through building, showing courtroom, atrium, detention facility and magistrates chambers.

Monetary constraints have been identified as a major problem in the running of this pilot Family Court. The building housing this pilot project was not originally designed to be a court; it was renovated at a considerable expense for criminal and civil matters, and is wholly unsuitable for family law matters. It has an excess of courtrooms and not enough waiting rooms. It is extremely difficult to find ones way around the building, with a multitude of narrow corridors and staircases. The insufficient notices and forms made available are either in English or Afrikaans posing a great difficulty to users who are either illiterate or do not speak those specific languages.

The spatial design impacts negatively on accessibility and user friendliness. The majority of users are women and mothers yet there are no baby changing facilities or nursing rooms. (Mills, S. 2004. *Mothers in the corridors of the South African legal system: an assessment of the Johannesburg Family Court pilot project, Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, (4.1): 17-19)

The building as a whole seems to contradict every planning criterion for a courthouse. Creating an even more hostile environment for an already vulnerable person to walk into. The justice system has with this building already allowed themselves to fail in their plight to finding justice for these people with problems.

Questions posed:

How does one navigate (movement or journey) through the building? :

At the initial moment of arrival there is no sense of civic grandeur. This leads one to be almost automatically disappointment with the governments' message of service delivery, supposedly so intrinsically conveyed in the building.

On entering one is inevitably lost, without any view of the inner workings of the building and a staircase must be taken to the main first floor level. Here, signs printed on A4 sheets and pasted on walls with "prestick" are as permanent as the paper they are printed on.

There is no main Information desk on this level and in fact one was never found. This level solely houses maintenance facilities and domestic violence facilities. These have been split in 2 with the level above creating even more confusion and aimless wandering.

The floors above are all entities within a labyrinth, obstructed by people waiting for court hearings or consultation with an official.

There is no typical courthouse zoning (as discussed previous) in this building. The private spaces are the public spaces and the courts are just merely placed randomly on the top floors.

How is the courtroom accessed? :

People awaiting trial either wait in the common corridor or are seated in a waiting area that is, if the level has the accommodation required.

The magistrates enter from a separate entrance, but ironically they still use the same corridor.

Defendants and detainees also use the same access. The public enter from a different door as to the defendant or witness. They sit on wooden benches and no concern has been taken to separate them from the rest of the court proceedings.

Magistrates' chambers are situated on the top floors of the building; however fundamental design opportunities are lost as they positioned in isolation to the courtrooms they serve.

How does one experience the building? :

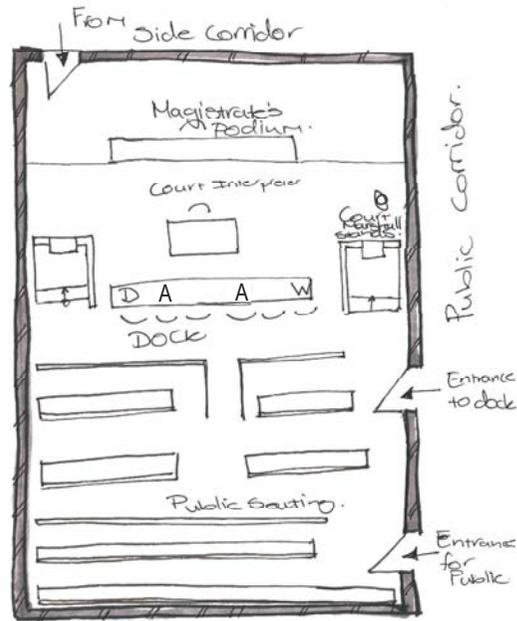
From personal analysis, interviews held and through the findings of Shereen Mills author of: *Mothers in the corridors of the South African legal system: An assessment of the Johannesburg Family Court pilot project*. , relevant factors were deduced:-

There is a huge lack of counsellors primarily due to the lack of support and provision of infrastructure from management.

- There is a major need for child care facilities as most users, (94 % of users in 2004) are parents. The current child care facilities are highly understaffed and child witnesses share the faculties with un-abused children.
- The highly confidential nature of a domestic violence case needs to be addressed, unlike the highly abrasive and non private environment of the domestic violence department in the Family Court.
- There should be a basis of promoting interaction with other departments within the Family Court (divorce, maintenance and domestic violence) as it will aid in the integration of services.- Signage should accommodate for iconography for the quick and easy interpretation of all.
- Most court users found the court procedure and presiding officer intimidating.
- The courtroom environment is not welcoming in the least with most of the courts making up the core of the building and therefore allowing for no natural lighting or ventilation.
- Family Courts should ideally incorporate attributes associated with women, such as empathy and be structured to deal with emotional issues in a non adversarial environment.

Lessons Learnt:

- This type of building needs to have a sense of civic engagement with its users.
- The importance of Information desks and the significance of orientation via the means of unobstructed views.
- How destructive an inappropriate and un-empathetic system and building can be. Leading to greater stress and unresolved issues.
- The importance of creating a relaxed and calm environment for people suffering from victimisation.
- The need for counselling to promote a greater and more effective legal system.
- The need for appropriate legal representation simplifying what can seem to be an incredible feat.



3_03
Diagrammatic sketch of courtroom layout



3_04
Waiting areas, located in all the wrong places. No natural light or ventilation, no views to look out onto.



3_05
A view inside the courtroom, with magistrates podium, court interpreters table and the dock.



3_06
South facade of Family Court pilot project on Market street in Johannesburg.

JOHANNESBURG FAMILY COURT (PILOT PROJECT)

CONSTITUTION HILL:

The project was conceived as a public precinct establishing direct connections with its surrounding context. The focus of the hill is the Constitutional Court itself, a public building of empowering architectural form; representative of an open and democratic society. It has a simple aim: to enhance quality of life in the city and in the building and to give pleasure.

The building plan is structured around the public foyer and court chambers, located in the south wing. The library partly accessible to the public forms the north wing. The two areas are completely visible and easy to reach. The western internal stairs provide access to the public parts of the building and function as a gallery space.

The Judges chambers are housed in series of suites in three levels. All are North facing and overlook a garden courtyard framed by the library extension. The chambers are reached by secure and private walkway that connects to the library and courtroom.

The building is flanked on the Western side by the Great African Steps, an external procession of stairs and contour paths. The steps touch the side walls of the court Building and the old section 4 and 5 prisons. They are constructed of bricks taken from the awaiting trial block building, forming 'a pathway between what was and what is hoped for'. (Deckler, T. Graupner, A and Rasmuss, H, 2006: 19-21)

Questions posed:

How does one navigate (movement or journey) through the building? :

On arriving at the site one is immediately lost when trying to find parking, a temporary sign easily missed leads one to a dingy open piece of land. One instantly feels a sense of disappointment with the facilities of the supposedly highest court in the land. Leading out of the parking lot the urban context of the precinct is made sharply obvious, with out any transitional threshold.

After what can be seen as a pilgrimage of ascension through Great African Steps one is suddenly struck with the anti-climax of being lost in a vast open space. This feeling of disorientation ends as a quick glance to the side reveals the entrance to the Constitutional court. The entrance is humble, and not menacing, as it is brought down to the scale of the user. The square leading to the building allows one to reflect on past and future, with the stair towers of the old fort being retained and incorporated into the complex.

The entrance foyer is accessed through an artistically remodelled gate allowing ones mood to lift. The entrance desk is clean and uncluttered but somewhat small for a large gathering to handle. The logo of the court, 'justice under a tree' is portrayed in the foyer in an overtly craft like and narrative manner. The slanted columns, tiled in colourful mosaics, and wire branches suspended from the ceiling, serve as metaphorical trees. These trees can be interpreted as refering back to cultural Tswana law, where disputes and contracts are settled in a space called the *Kgotla*. This space is usually littered with trees and becomes the heart of the Tswana tribe.

The light level created by skylight boxes in this space allows for a comfortable environment as the public waits for the court hearings. The gallery space housing many great artworks seems to end abruptly without any real view to reflect on. In fact the space seems almost pointless for a person to walk down as there is no real exit or entrance from it.

The judges chambers are clearly separated from the rest of the public, their paths are legible and the spaces they inhabit are light and comfortable.

How is the courtroom accessed? :

The public access the court through a main lobby area linked to the foyer. Their seating is not separated by any means of balustrade and so has a participatory feel to it.

The press, whom are permitted to a balcony level of the court, have access through two side entrance staircases. On the right the staircase is one remaining from the old fort and on the left is a new staircase, an echoing juxtaposition of memory and the present.

The judges have access to the court, via a lounge connecting directly to the main walk leading to their chambers. This lounge has space for catering and the ability to open up to the outside courtyard area.

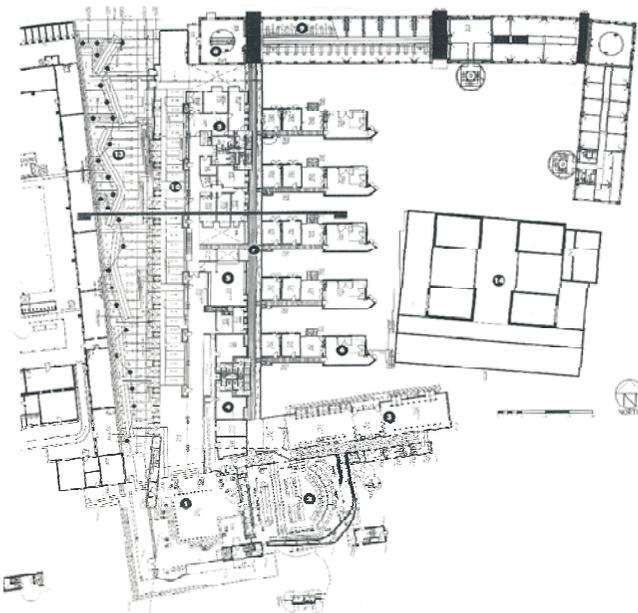
The rest of the judicial representation enter the court Through a side entrance accessible from the foyer.

How does one experience the building? :

- The building seems to have no uniting design language and tends to be overly narrative.
- Dead end spaces lead to confusion and futility.
- The internal environment of the building is pleasant and airy, with a great implementation of passive ventilation.
- The courtroom environment is just as appealing although a little less emphasis on the decoration could have led to a more mature portrayal of the justice system.

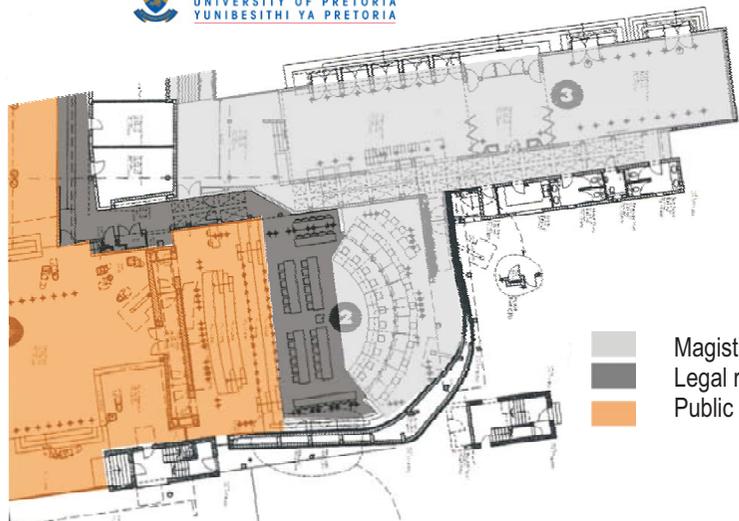
Lessons Learnt:

- -The adaptive re-use to the undemolished stair towers of the old Fort.
- -Spaces need to be continuous and not fragmented to ease cognitive orientation.
- The use of narratives allows for engagement with the user, but can be overtly dramatized at times and seem to be patronizing.
- Gallery spaces need to be implemented as places which one navigates to reach another place; otherwise they tend to be dead end spaces.
- Courts should be humble and have very little distracting ornamentality.



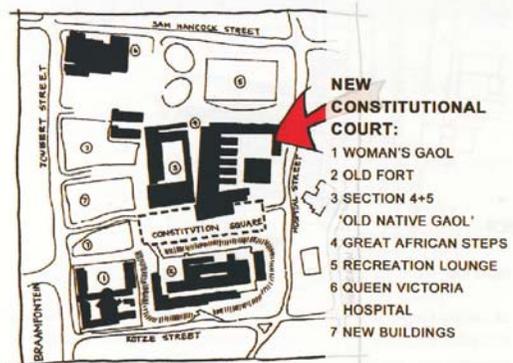
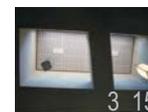
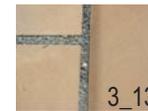
3_07
Ground floor plan of Constitutional Court

- Level 0 Ground Floor
- 1 Foyer
 - 2 Court
 - 3 Judges Lounge, Conference & Council Rooming & Meeting
 - 4 Administration
 - 5 Auditorium
 - 6 Judges' Chambers
 - 7 Internal Walk
 - 8 Bar/Welsh Quorum
 - 9 Collection
 - 10 Sanitation Access
 - 11 Public Auditorium
 - 12 Accessing Space
 - 13 Great African Steps
 - 14 Stairing Sub-Station



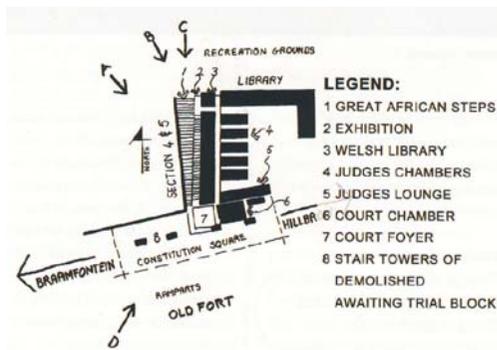
3_08
Courtroom access paths

- Magistrates area and access
- Legal representatives area and access
- Public areas and access



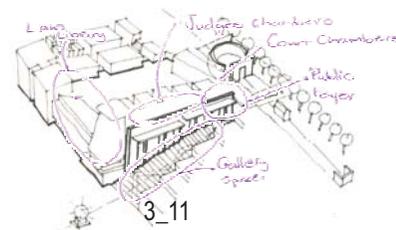
3_09
Figure ground plan of Constitution Hill

- NEW CONSTITUTIONAL COURT:**
- 1 WOMAN'S GAOL
 - 2 OLD FORT
 - 3 SECTION 4+5
 - 4 GREAT AFRICAN STEPS
 - 5 RECREATION LOUNGE
 - 6 QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL
 - 7 NEW BUILDINGS

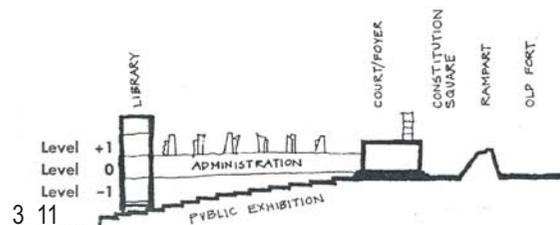


3_10
Elements of the Constitutional Court

- LEGEND:**
- 1 GREAT AFRICAN STEPS
 - 2 EXHIBITION
 - 3 WELSH LIBRARY
 - 4 JUDGES CHAMBERS
 - 5 JUDGES LOUNGE
 - 6 COURT CHAMBER
 - 7 COURT FOYER
 - 8 STAIR TOWERS OF DEMOLISHED AWAITING TRIAL BLOCK



3_11
Axonometric sketch showing elements in the Constitutional court

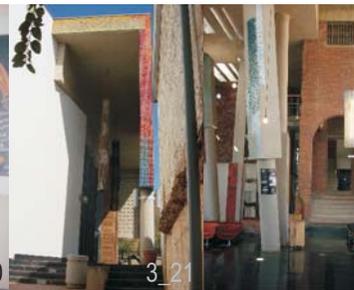


3_11
Section through the site showing the slope down the Great African steps



CONSTITUTION HILL

PRECEDENTS



In the precedent studies which follow lessons learnt based on the empathy in which a museological set up can engage with its users is revealed:

Freedom Park:

The Freedom park is a 52 – hectare site seen as a major gateway leading in to the city of Pretoria from the south. Located on the Salvokop Hill the site was chosen for its symbolic historical and cultural significance. The site overlooks the Voortrekker Monument, juxtaposing history with the processes of moving forward as a united nation.

It is seen as a people's shrine that weaves the story of our origins and the events that shaped the nation of South Africa. Within this narrative the main elements include a garden of remembrance, a museum, a memorial and a gathering space.

The first phase, with the garden of remembrance is intended to become a national symbol for reparation, healing, cleansing, and a place where spirits of those who lost their lives for freedom can rest.

Anchoring the garden of remembrance is a spiral pathway with contemplative spaces along it. This pathway moves up the site in an easterly direction. East being significant here as it is seen as the beginning of a new day and metaphorically the beginnings in the new history of South Africa.

Following the contours of the site, the pathway reaches the *isivivane*. *Isivivane* meaning monument or memorial is a sanctuary, a resting place for those who lost their lives in the fight for freedom. These conflicts include colonial wars and wars of resistance. This contemplative space has been designed primarily with deference to African symbolism and belief systems, but intentionally contains universally recognisable symbols of hope and unity.

African cosmology gives significance to stones, rocks and boulders. The fundamental layout of the 9 rocks, from the 9 provinces was the *Kgotla* meeting place (discussed before). The circular form is also important as it is symbolic of unity, equality and wholeness. A fine water spray has been designed to rise up and drift across the rocks. This 'smoke' signifies the beginning of the spiritual healing, smoke being indicative of the incense that is often burnt at traditional ceremonies and religious ceremonies to signify a holy place and to represent spiritual cleansing.

A wide flat terrace has been created in the slope of the hill. On this terrace a waterfall has been built into the packed – stone wall that frames the terrace. The water flows down the wall and into a shallow pool, reminding the visitor that "the spirit flows and cleanses like water" (Young, G and Darrol. 2004, 23). On the way out a 'spring' of water bubbles into a bowl carved into the top of a large boulder placed near the exit. Here visitors can wash their hands in respect of the place, after paying homage to those who rest here. (Young, G and Darrol. Freedom Park: A landscape narrative of Africa's history and heritage, *Urban Green File*, June, 2004, (9): 18-23)

Lessons learnt:

- The importance of nature as a healing medium
- symbolic African objects such as rocks, trees, *Kgotla* spaces
- The importance of the circular form symbolic of unity, equality and wholeness
- The symbolism of water and smoke to purify and heal.
- Engaging the user by allowing for participatory experiences. Hence, allowing the 'departed souls' struggles to be shared with the user allowing empathy to occur.



3_24
Freedom park master plan



3_25
The *isivivane* is a sanctuary located on a wide terrace built into the southeast slope of the hill where it will see the rising sun through all seasons



3_26
The *isivivane* with 'steam' rising above the rocks. This 'smoke' signifies the beginning of the spiritual healing.



3_27



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3_31

FREEDOM PARK

PRECEDENTS

THE APARTHEID MUSEUM:

The Gold Reef City, Apartheid Museum is located on the outskirts of Johannesburg on land reclaimed from a played out- gold mine. The idea for this project was to create a 'People's Museum'- a step up from the original idea of a village recreation scenario- addressing the history of the various peoples of South Africa.

The long horizontal line of the museum is overwhelmed by the spectacle that surrounds it and sets a discordant tone for the hugely important nature of its content. Due to this difficulty the building had to be screened and turned in on itself, to provide for a 'spiritual building'.

After entry through the black/ white gates one ramps up onto the roof, treated as a landscape. A large bulk of the building and a high, well placed wall shuts out views of the theme park and casino, leaving open a view across the reclaimed mined landscape to Johannesburg. A long flight of stairs leads from this contemplative landscape down into the museum proper. After wandering through the exhibits that stretch along the spine of the long narrow building, one re-emerges into the landscape down into the museum proper.

After wandering through the exhibits that stretch along the spine of the long narrow building, one yet again, re-emerges into the landscape- where emotions are released and the fresh air is welcome. This transition out of the building is gradual, via a hall of remembrance, into a treed courtyard. The landscape and grounds create a contemplative space, stilled by the presence of the building, where one can walk or take a seat in the park, or leave passing the restaurant and shop on the way out.

The architectural qualities of the space act in concert with the content to generate an almost visceral experience of the events described in the displays. Here up and down movement is used metaphorically. Ceiling height is deployed strategically to compress and release the visitors' bodies as they move through. Lighting dramatizes, and in some places sound design encompasses the visitor.

(Findley, L. Red and gold: Two apartheid museums and the spatial politics of memory in 'new' South Africa, *Architecture South Africa Journal of the SA institute of Architects* ,July/ August, 2004: 26-32),(Darroll, L. Urban roots: A history of Johannesburg, *Urban Green File*, December, 2001,(6); 24-29)

Lessons learnt:

- screening of the site as to create a ' spiritual space'
- A landscape of indigenous gardens allows one to return to a place of nature and safety.
- This experiential museum of a nations trauma allows a path for a person to, overcome, confront and work through the conditions in which they are subjected to. These paths can be seen as ritualized acts of empathy and commemoration.

