

4. Context Study

4.1. Site: Pretorius Square

Pretorius Square flanked by the City Hall and Transvaal museum on its eastern and western edges respectively, and intersected by Paul Kruger Street, form an important space along Paul Kruger Street. Together with Church Square, which can be found further north on Paul Kruger Street, are the only two open public spaces to be found along the street. Pretorius Square does not provide what one would usually expect from a square in that it is quite a large open space with poor spatial definition and hierarchy that has resulted in an unmodulated and bland space that functions more as a forecourt to the city hall than a public space.

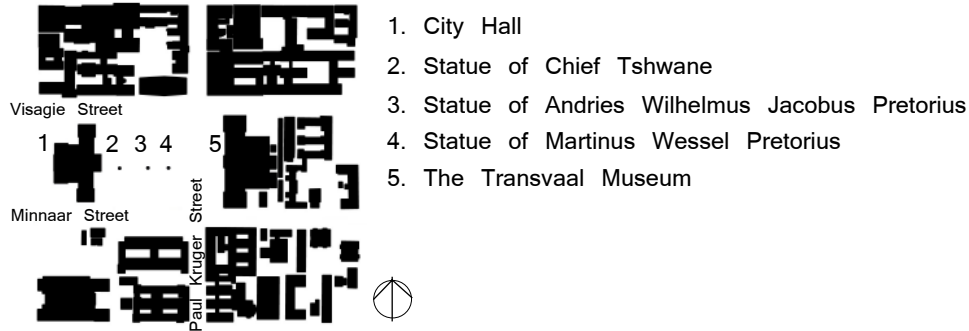


Fig. 30 Pretorius Square and its surrounding buildings. (Author 2007).



Fig. 31 View of the City Hall and Pretorius Square from the Transvaal Museum (Author, 2007).



Fig. 32 View of the City Hall and Pretorius Square parking from Minnaar Street (Author, 2007).



Fig. 33 The Transvaal Museum and Pretorius Square (Author, 2007).



Fig. 34 View of the Transvaal Museum and Pretorius Square from the City Hall (Author, 2007).

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4.2. Colonial Influence

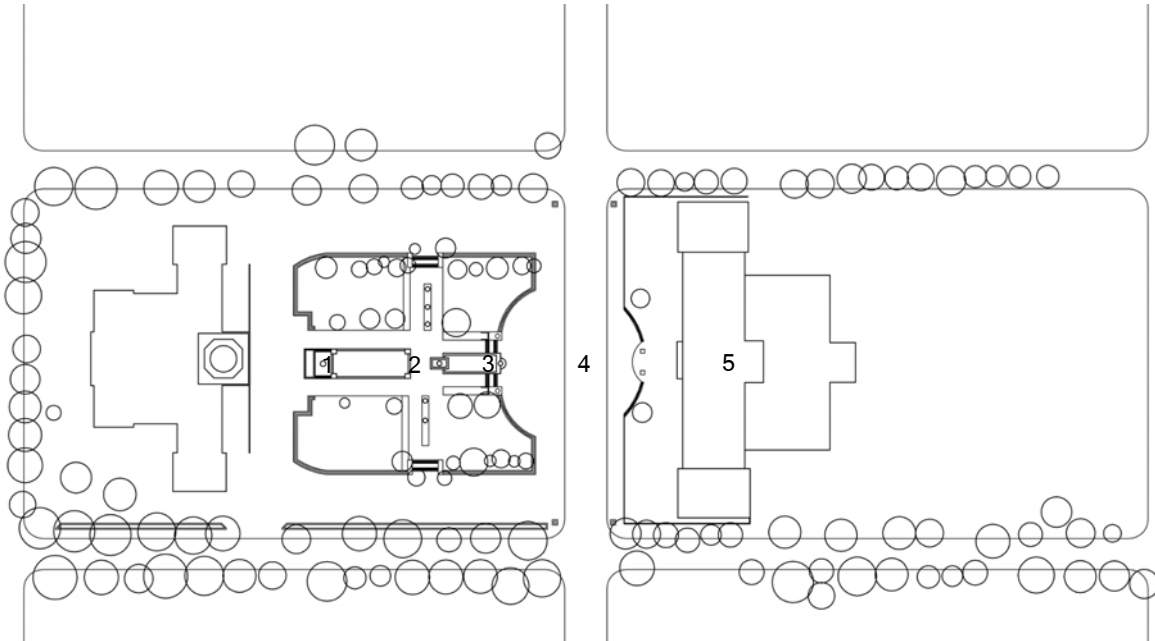


Fig. 34 Existing plan of Pretorius Square (Author 2007).



Fig. 35
1. Pediment
(Author 2006)



Fig. 36
2. Chief Tshwane
(Author 2006)



Fig. 37
3. Andries Wilhelms
Jacobus Pretorius
(Author 2006)



Fig. 38
4. Martinus
Wessel Pretorius
(Author 2006)



Fig. 39
5. Entrance to the
Transvaal Museum
(Author 2006)

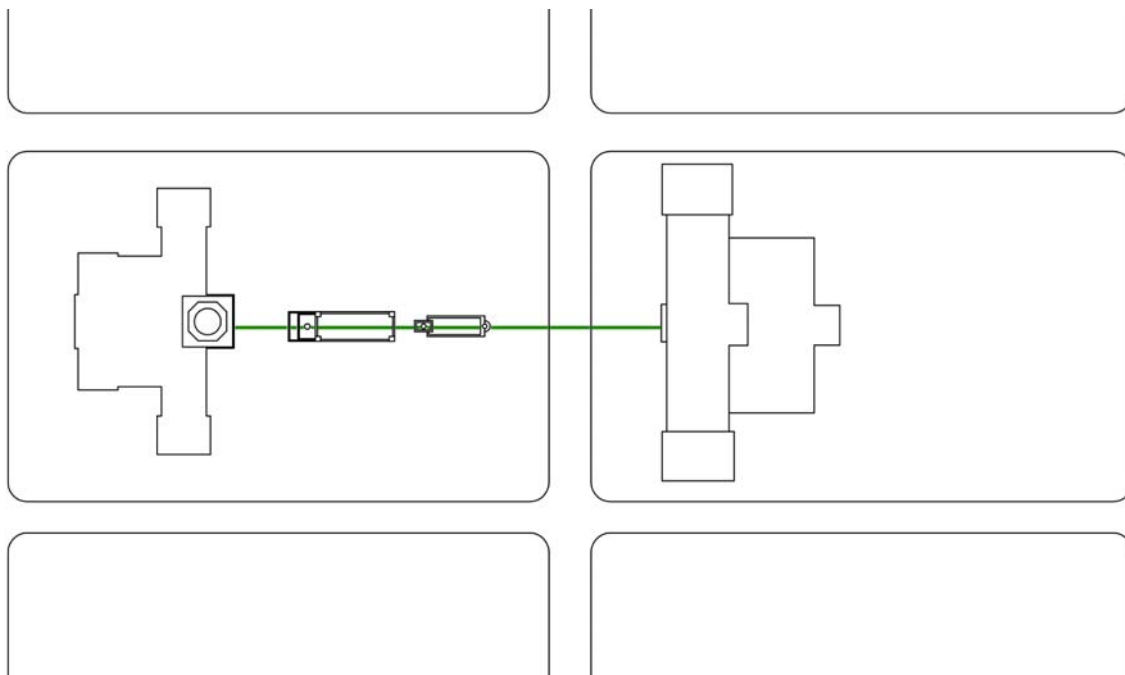


Fig. 40 The visual east-west axis on Pretorius Square (Author 2007).

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4.3. The City Hall

The city hall's architectural vocabulary incorporates a variety of architectural expressions which are evident in the Ionic columns topped with Corinthian capitals that carry a Corinthian entablature together with a pediment, combined they express notions of Neo-classical Architecture. In addition to that there are Art Deco fittings and chandeliers and hand crafted window and door frames that reveal an influence from the Arts and Crafts Movement together with a Neo-Cape Dutch Architecture (Jansen, 2006).

The sculptured pediment, another design by Anton van Wouw depicts the development of Pretoria from 1855-1935 from before the Voortrekkers settled, through to the time it gained its city status and right through to the time of industrialisation and the development of transport (Jansen, 2006).

The materials employed in the construction of the external load-bearing structure are not constant throughout, a variety of materials were used. To begin with, the east façade, looking over Pretorius Square, is made of grey granite. The rear walls were originally cast concrete blocks that were coated with a layer of finely crushed granite, to make it appear as though it was solid granite, but later the crushed granite coating was replaced with a regular plaster and paint finish. The same granite was used to craft the six solid columns and the hand-crafted capitals (Jansen, 2006).



Fig. 41 Eastern facade of the City Hall (Author 2006).



Fig. 42 Ionic columns with Corinthian capitals (Author 2006).



Fig. 43 Pediment by Anton van Wouw (Author 2006).



Fig. 44 Corinthian Capitol (Author 2006).



Fig. 45 Plaster and paint finish of western facade (Author 2006).



Fig. 46 Burmese Teak window frame (Author 2006).



Fig. 47 Art Deco chandelier hanging in the main hall (Author 2006).



Fig. 48 Burmese Teak door (Author 2006).

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4.4. The Role of the City Hall in its Present-Day Context

Originally the City Hall played a very important civic and social role in the city of Pretoria. It was a popular venue for civic gatherings, theatre productions and social functions. In the current urban context these functions either do not take place in the inner-city or they are accommodated elsewhere.

Presently, the City Hall is still a place of activity, but unfortunately on a very low level. The various halls within the City Hall are sometimes as multi-purpose halls to accommodate a variety of functions, and on rare occasions it is used as venue to host weddings and other formal gatherings. Once a month pensioners would come to the City Hall to collect their monthly pension, and every Saturday a small group of people would have their church service in the Councils Chamber. When political protests take place on Pretorius Square the City Hall is illegally occupied as accommodation for the protestors.

One begins to question the role and appropriateness of a city hall in the contemporary African urban context, and simultaneously reject the original intentions of a city hall.



Fig. 49 Mining Works Union Protest on the 18 May 2006 (Author 2006).



Fig. 50 Protestors on Pretorius Square on the 18 May 2006 (Author 2006).



Fig. 51 Protestors outside the City Hall on the 18 May 2006 (Author 2006).



Fig. 52 Protestors using the garden behind the city hall to do laundry (Author 2006).



Fig. 53 Protestors using the City Hall to sleep in (Author 2006).