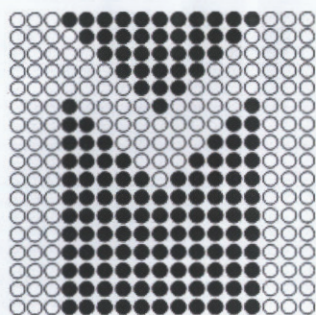


ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION IN SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1994: 100+ PROJECTS

CONVENED AND EDITED BY ALBRECHT HERHOLDT





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CHURCH SQUARE_CBD, PRETORIA

HOLM JORDAAN ARCHITECTS / URBAN DESIGNERS



Project Address **Church Square**
Completed **2011**
Architectural Team **Deon van Aswegen,
Albrecht Holm & Jan
Viljoen**
Client **Main Post Office: SAPOS;
Western Façade, "Ou
Raadsaal" and Palace of
Justice: Department of
Public Works**
Consultants **Deon van Aswegen;
Boltsons**
Photography **Deon van Aswegen & Paul
Evans**
Awards **Western Façade: 1990 Old
Pretoria Society certificate
of Merit;
Western Façade: 1990 SAIA
Conservation Award,
"Ou Raadsaal": 1991 SAIA
Conservation Award**
Website **www.holmjordaan.co.za**

The 33 year long restoration of the Castle of Good Hope between 1969 and 2002 by Gabriël Fagan must count as the longest running restoration project in our history. The 28 year involvement of Holm Jordaan in the ongoing restoration of the Western Façade of Church Square comes a close second.

The preservation of the Western Façade of Church Square was a direct result of public opposition (spearheaded by the Citizens Committee for the Preservation and Restoration of Church Square) to the megalomaniacal redevelopment plans of the then Transvaal Provincial Administration. The fierce civilian opposition, especially during the action year of 1975, led to the scrapping of the redevelopment and the eventual amendment of the Church Square, Pretoria, Development Act (No. 53 of 1972) by Act 65 of 1978, (itself recently recommended for repeal by the South African Law Reform Commission). This preservation is therefore a direct result of growing public awareness that heritage value, tangible and intangible, belongs to the citizens. This is now legally provided for by our National Heritage Resources Act (25 of 1999) through its effective nationalisation of heritage values. So vehement was the opposition to the planned demolitions that the Pretoria News of April 24, 1976, reported: "the public, it seems, just will not take 'no' for an answer". Political will is there to serve the people and their interests. With rumours of plans for the redevelopment of Church Square once again flashing on the horizon like lightning before a storm, politicians and the citizens they represent would do well to remember this.

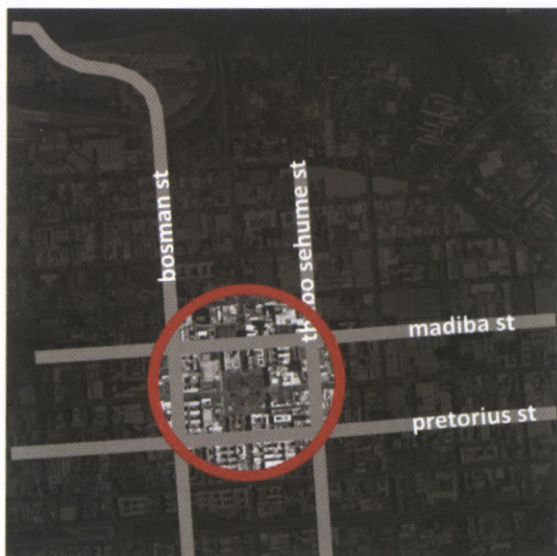
The conservation work undertaken by Holm Jordaan, amongst others, on the buildings on Church Square, including the Raadsaal and Palace of Justice, has preserved one of South Africa's most important public places. The Palace of Justice has seen two restoration projects during this period, as had the Post Office complex. The latter, by Burg, Doherty Bryant & Partners, recipient of a Transvaal Provincial Institute of Architects Conservation Award in 1989, brought about the gutting of the Leck & Emley designed 1892 ZAR State Bank, c.1905 Mint Annex and the c.1906 African Bank buildings, retaining only their façades. At the same time the c.1910 Post Office was restored and has now, along with the remnants of the above mentioned building become the focus once more of restoration, this time at the hand of Holm Jordaan.

This continuous restoration project has highlighted the desperate plight of the heritage architect in South Africa: the absence of quality craftsmanship. In the 1990 restoration of the Netherlands Bank building, a concerted effort was made to locate quality stonemasons. The restoration of the Raadsaal is still regarded as a textbook focus on craftsmanship.

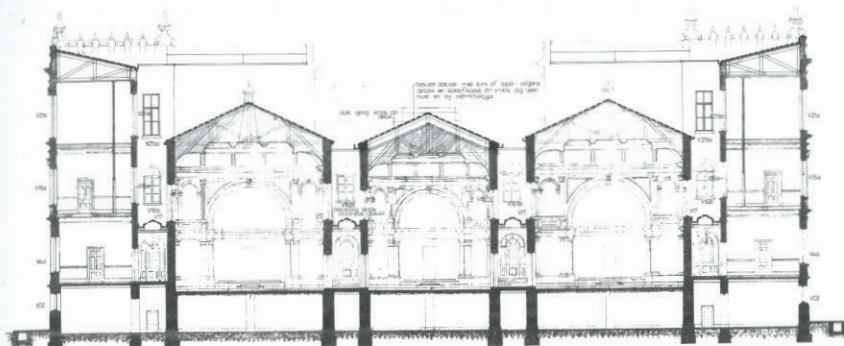
Alas this focus on historical craftsmanship seems to have become impossible, as indicated by the reconstruction of weathered sandstone elements of the Post-Office façade (2011) that saw the application of a polymer-based mortar instead of traditional stonemason craftsmanship. Time will be the judge of the efficacy of this method, though it does not resonate comfortably with the prescriptions of either the ICOMOS Nara Document on Authenticity (Article 13) or the 1979 ICOMOS Burra Charter. The Nara Document specifically includes the authenticity of traditional craftsmanship to foster the retention of knowledge. The Burra Charter advocates a cautious approach. Similarly the decision to cut away the sandstone plinth of the State Bank (or Mint) Building to introduce a new granite plinth (surely a response to current public disrespect for the building?) can be questioned.

The pending (or past?) repeal of the Church Square, Pretoria, Act should sound a clarion call to the conservation community. Church Square in total should be declared a Heritage Area and requires the proper management that only a Heritage Management Policy and Plan can bring.

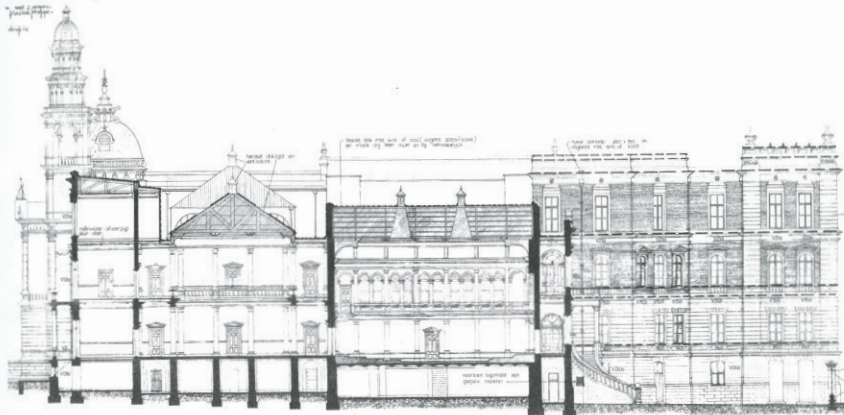
Nicholas Clarke, Technical University of Delft, Netherlands



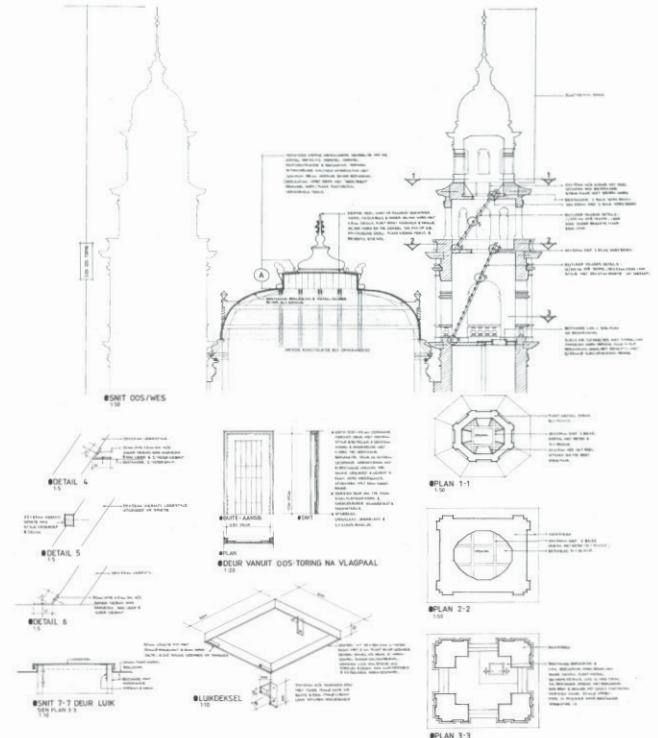
S 25°44'47.31" E 28°11'16.98"



Palace of Justice cross section



Palace of Justice section G-H

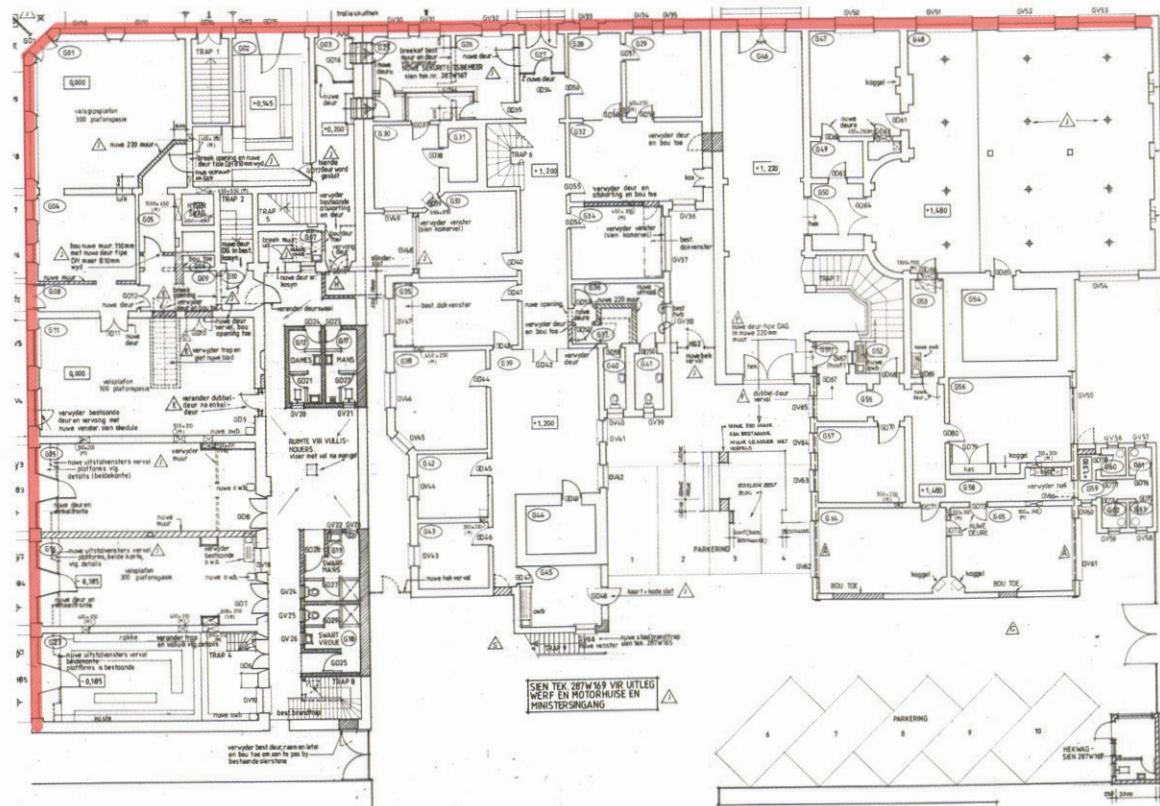


Palace of Justice elevation section detail

Cafe' Richegebou

Law Chambers

Ou Nederlandse Bankgebou



Ground floor plans

