



ARCHITECTURE

26th November 2020

To:

South African Heritage Resources Agency

Application to do interior renovation to the west wing of the Old Fort Warder rooms at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg. The space is to be used as a meeting and event space.

CONSTITUTIONHILL

FOR THE MEETING AND EVENT PROJECT AT THE OLD FORT,
CONSTITUTIONAL HILL, JOHANNESBURG



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1. INTRODUCTION

Please consider this application for an interior renovation for a series of four small rooms located in the West wing of the Old Fort Precinct at Constitution Hill.

Constitution Hill is a Provincial heritage site and these rooms have previously been renovated under heritage supervision and approval as a Coffee shop. We would like to apply to do a reversible and non-intrusive interior fit out in these rooms in order to use the space as a meeting, dialogue and event facility.

Currently these rooms are not in use. The coffee shop that used to run from here after many attempts had to shut down as the site does not have enough foot traffic to sustain a retail outlet. There is funding to upgrade these rooms into an event space that will work on a bookings basis. Events such as book launches and other dialogue sessions that are in keeping with the precincts principles of supporting social justice. This is an opportunity to get the public to engage and be aware of these historic sites. The upgrade comprises the making of two openings within internal walls and upgrading of the existing ablutions to be paraplegic accessible.



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2. HISTORY

The oldest building at Constitution Hill is the Old Fort, where today's grass-covered ramparts and simple exterior belie the artillery that was once mounted on the rampart walls and the atrocities that occurred within them. These walls are enormously thick and strong, built against attack from the outside and escape from the inside.

The Ramparts of the old fort were built by Paul Kruger from 1896 to 1899, to protect the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) from the threat of the British invasion, and to keep watch over the miners flocking to find gold in the village below. The Fort, described by explorer Henry Stanley as "a large and ugly earthwork", was constructed on the plan of Adolf Schiel, who was chief of prisons. The Fort was designed by Netherlands-born state architect Sytze Wierda who also designed the Rissik Street Post Office and many of the official buildings in Pretoria., and took three years to build at a cost of £40 000.

Boers were called up to fight in the war, and the fort was manned by the ZARP, the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek Polisie force. In May 1900 the British marched into Johannesburg and the fort was handed over to them.

Until the end of the war in 1902 the fort served as both a jail and a military base.

Although the fort never saw any action, three men were executed at the fort, the most prominent being Cornelis Broeksma, an attorney from Holland who exposed the appalling conditions at the concentration camps. He was executed and buried at the fort, along with the other two. All three were later exhumed and reburied at Braamfontein Cemetery.¹

The Old Fort – formerly the Johannesburg Jail – is just seven years older than the city itself. Originally established to house the criminals produced by the rising mining town, the prison became the city's first military fort after the Jameson Raid in 1896, when the British attempted to overthrow the Boer government. This led to the Boers building the fort's ramparts between 1896 and 1899, only to lose these lookout points – and the rest of the prison – to British hands in 1900 during the South African War (the Second Anglo-Boer War). When the war ended in 1902, the fort became a prison once again, though this time under British control, with Boer soldiers imprisoned within their former fort. Despite South Africa's changing political landscape in subsequent years, the site remained a site of incarceration and abuse.

The Old Fort always housed white male prisoners, both political and common law. This continued after the National Party came into power in 1948, bringing with it apartheid, a political system defined by segregation and oppression. Although quarters were overcrowded and unhygienic,

¹ Lucille Davie, Jan 24, 2008
<https://www.lucilledavie.co.za/post/2008/01/24/the-fort-undergoes-a-facelift>



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and the isolation cells (the oldest cells on the site) terrifying and traumatic, white prisoners were not physically brutalised in the same way that black prisoners were. All male prisoners passed through the foreboding tunnel beneath the ramparts, but only whites were held in the fort itself. On exception was Nelson Mandela, who was given a bed in the hospital section on his arrest in 1962.

On 27 November 1964, amid a great deal of controversy, the Old Fort was proclaimed a national monument. The Johannesburg City Council opposed the motion, believing that the fort's historical significance was scant and the property more useful for Hillbrow's swelling residents.

But those who supported the fort's status as a national monument argued that it was the most important remaining structure from the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek, the Johannesburg equivalent of Cape Town's Castle. The latter succeeded, though not without infuriating the City Council.

Today, Constitution Hill - the whole precinct - is a provincial heritage site.



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OLD FORT TIMELINE

1892: The first High Security prison is commissioned, sanctioned by Paul Kruger (President of the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR). Prison labour is used to construct the Prison.

1893: The prison opens.

1896: The prison becomes a military fort. The fort takes three years to build and is completed in June 1899.

1899: After the outbreak of the South African War the Old Fort is used by the military for a variety of purposes.

1902: When the war ends the Old Fort is placed under the control of the Public Works department as a temporary prison.

1964: The prison complex becomes a National Monument amongst much controversy.

1983: The prison complex closes.

1996: Constitution hill is chosen as the site for the Constitutional Court.

2001: The court and precinct are developed. The fort precinct under heritage supervision receives stop the rot maintenance. The precinct is declared a National Heritage site.

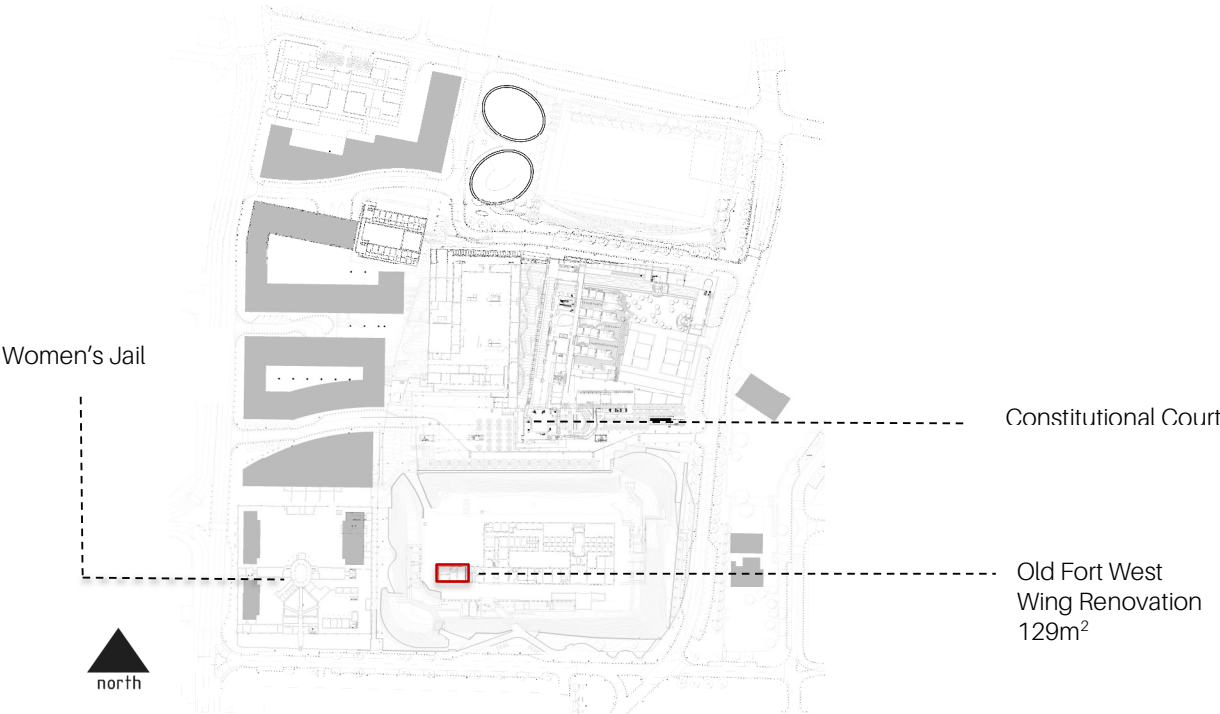
2004: The precinct opens to the public as a museum.

2008: Renovation of the Old Fort



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3. SITE PLAN



LOCALITY PLAN





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4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WEST WING WARDER ROOMS OF THE OLD FORT

HISTORICAL VALUE

Please note that these rooms are not used for exhibition space and are not part of the Male prisoner processing tunnel referred to in the history summary. Also note these spaces are not linked to the two most significant Old Fort inmates Nelson Mandela and Joe Slovo.

Also note similar warder rooms are part of the exhibition on the East side of the precinct.

COURTYARD

The courtyard below the northern rampart has been restored in 2008. The original building that stood in the courtyard has been uncovered and its footprint has been traced in different colour bricks.

It appears there were barracks in the courtyard, built in the early 1900s, when the building was still a fort. In the 1940s and 50s this building was converted into cells, possibly for mentally unstable prisoners. In the 1980s, after the prison was closed down, the Rand Light Infantry moved in, and requiring the courtyard for a parade ground, the buildings were demolished.

During excavations, a round shape was uncovered, thought to be where a large palm tree grew, now transplanted to one of the inner exercise yards, says Flo Bird.²

The rooms in question are adjacent to this yard and no changes are proposed for the yard. As part of the renovation two exhibition panels will be installed to narrate the importance of the courtyard.

² Lucille Davie, Jan 24, 2008
<https://www.lucilledavie.co.za/post/2008/01/24/the-fort-undergoes-a-facelift>



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5. PHOTOGRAPHS AND ELEVATIONS

AESTHETIC VALUE

The space comprises four rooms with large windows, architraves, Oregon pine floors and fireplaces. A fifth room has concrete floor and WC area. Two of the rooms have metal ceilings, while the others have strip pine ceilings. Two of the fireplaces have been bricked in and have no fire surround. One of the fireplaces has a pressed metal surround that will be retained. The fourth fireplace has brick surround that was painted over and the opening bricked-up.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

The area for this application is 129 m². The room are of a high volume.

The rooms have had previous recent upgrades which we would like to reverse to the original in some areas.

The scope of work comprises:

- General maintenance
- Two new openings into internal walls
- Upgrade of ablution facilities to be paraplegic accessible



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Figure 1.1
North External Elevation



Figure 1.2
East External Elevation



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Figure 1.3
South External Perspective



Figure 1.4
South External Elevation



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Figure 2.1
Event Room 01, Internal North Elevation



Figure 2.2
Event Room 01. Internal West Elevation



Figure 2.3
Event Room 01, Internal East Elevation



Request to make new opening

Figure 2.4
Event Room 01, Internal South Elevation



ARCHITECTURE



Figure 3.1
Event Room 01, Internal West Elevation



Figure 3.2
Event Room 01, Internal East Elevation



Request to make new opening

Figure 3.3
Event Room 01, Internal North Elevation



Figure 3.4
Event Room 02, Internal South Elevation



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Figure 4.1
Event Room 01, Internal South Elevation



Figure 4.2
Event Room 01, Internal West Elevation



Request to make new opening

Figure 4.3
Event Room 01, Internal North Elevation



Figure 4.4
Foyer, Internal East Elevation



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Figure 5.1
Toilet, Internal West Elevation



Figure 5.2
Toilet, Internal North Elevation



Figure 5.3
Toilet, Internal North Elevation



Figure 5.4
Toilet, Internal North Elevation



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Figure 6.1
Kitchen, Internal North Elevation



Figure 6.2
Kitchen, Internal South Elevation



Figure 6.3
Kitchen, Internal East Elevation



Figure 6.4
Kitchen, Internal East Elevation



Figure 6.5
Kitchen, Internal West Elevation



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6. PROPOSED NEW USE

Currently these rooms are not in use. The coffee shop that used to run from here after many attempts had to shut down as the site does not have enough foot traffic to sustain a retail outlet. There is funding to upgrade these rooms into an event space that will work on a bookings basis. Events such as book launches and other dialogue sessions that are in keeping with the precincts principles of supporting social justice. This is an opportunity to get the public to engage and be aware of these historic sites.

- To create an inspirational dialogue and event facility at Constitution Hill.
- To re-invigorate a unique, historical Old Fort space in line with long term Constitution Hill objectives.

The events facility will facilitate the ongoing integration of Constitution Hill with the surrounding communities of Hillbrow and Braamfontein.

This facility will play a strong supporting role for existing Constitution hill events, such as Basha Uhuru, the Human Rights festival, Afropunk and book launches and other programs relating to social; justice objective.

This facility will benefit Constitution Hill for marketing and educational purposes and serve as a resource for the future.

The social justice and public nature of this program is fitting for a National heritage site such as the Old Fort at Constitution hill.



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7. SCOPE OF WORK

The upgrade comprises the making of two openings within internal walls and upgrading of the existing ablutions to be paraplegic accessible.

7.1. OPENINGS

The one opening is required to make two rooms act as one larger room in order to be viable as a dialogue and event space. The other opening is required to make the bathroom paraplegic accessible. The principle around the making of the two openings is to be reversable. That is all removed bricks are to be cleaned and stored away so that if in the future it is decided to reinstate these walls, they will be able to achieve this. The openings will not reach ceiling height so as not to affect the ceiling in any way and to retain the separate identities of the two rooms. A portion of where the internal doorway is removed will be kept retaining the ghost of the position of this doorway. At the top beam cut line if the openings a Structural engineer has specified an inverted steel 'T' beam that ensures that the opening is structurally sound without any visible structure. The horizontal cuts will be made carefully with limited cutting of bricks by aligning the cut line to that of the brick bond grid. In order to make clear that these two openings are contemporary adjustments to the building the four sides of each opening will have a finishing solid timber panel that will be painted a single colour to highlight the cut line. The double door that is removed as part of making the opening is to be removed carefully and in order that it does not get lost or disassociated with these rooms it is to be installed on the wall as a decorative reminder of the upgrade of these rooms from prison warder rooms to a public event venue.

Method statement of construction: (Please refer to Engineers drawing)

7.2. ABLUTIONS

The one toilet cubicle room is original with a raised step and brick wall divider. This is to be retained. The pan and basin which are clearly recent fixtures are to be replaced. In the ante room currently, there is one WC and one Urinal and one basin. All these fixtures are clearly recent, and all plumbing surface mounted until reaching the original sewer connection. This is to be retained - with new fixtures in different positions in order to achieve a Paraplegic accessible bathroom. Apart from the paint treatment walls will not be touched, there will be no chasing. New drywall and partitions will be applied Infront of the wall on order to achieve the bathroom configuration. These walls and partitions will be low allowing the integrity of the room intact.

7.3. INTERIOR FIT-OUT

The interior of the rooms is to be furnished and decorated to make the spaces function as an event and dialogue space. All furniture pieces are to be loose and not fixed. Artwork is to be hung on the walls

Wallpaper is to be applied to the walls; however, it is to be of a type that is reversible and removable in the future. Acrylic paint is to be applied to the interior walls, dado rails, interior doors, and windows.



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The current light fittings which are all clearly recent fixtures are to be replaced with new lighting in the form of a track and trunking system stemming from the existing lighting point position. The track and trunking system will be fixed to the ceiling using minimal and thin pin fixtures. The length of the track is limited to only one length per room. This allows for the interior insertion to be reversible in the future, and with minimal fixings so that the heritage structure is preserved. Please see Annexure C with Interior design drawings.

7.4. INTERIOR RENOVATION

There is a total of four fireplaces in these rooms. Only one of them has the original pressed steel fire surround - this is to be retained. Three of the fireplaces have been bricked closed. As part of the renovation we would like to reinstate the fireplaces. Not to reconstruct or apply new surrounds but to merely reopen the fireplaces and to allow a loose grate to be fitted, chimneys cleaned and made functional and the potential for fires to be once again be made here.

7.5. EXTERIOR RENOVATION

The timber windows, doors and round vents are to be sanded, made good and painted. The exterior is to remain intact.

7.6. DISABLED ACCESS

Steel ramp that freestanding and removable is to be used to make the floor accessible to the bathroom.

7.7. EXHIBITION

Part of the upgrade is to include two exterior Heritage exhibition panels that show and explain the significance of the rooms and the significance of the hospital that once stood in the courtyard outside these rooms.

HERITAGE MARKERS

- Women's Jail
- Awaiting Trial
- Old Fort
- Number Four
- Ramparts
- Queen Vic
- Old Mortuary
- Governor's House
- Florence Nightingale Nursing Home


420 x 600
(only format permitted)

Polished Aluminium Panel 3mm
Matt Black Anodised
Laser etched text and image

PRECINCT INFO




OLD FORT




The ramparts of the Old Fort were built by Paul Kruger from 1896 to 1899 to protect the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek (ZAR) from the threat of British invasion, and to keep watch over the miners flocking to find gold in the village below. Reverting to a jail after the South African War, all male prisoners passed through the foreboding tunnel beneath the ramparts, but only whites were held in the Old Fort itself. One notable exception was Nelson Mandela, who was given a bed in the hospital section on his arrest in 1962. Today you can visit the Mandela Cell exhibition that documents Mandela's time at the Old Fort and, with the help of guided tours, you can unearth the stories behind the musty cells and peeling courtyards of Johannesburg's most intriguing building.

PRECINCT INFO




WOMEN'S JAIL




Built in 1910, the grace of this Victorian brick building obscures the pain and humiliation suffered by the many women detained within it. The jail held black and white women in separate sections. The infamous murderess Daisy De Melker was held here, as were prominent activists Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Albertina Sisulu. But the vast majority of inmates were neither murderers nor activists. They were women arrested for pass offences or illegal occupations such as beer brewing. The Women's Jail is closed to the public while it undergoes renovation. Until it opens, the hoarding, which protects the building, has been transformed into a temporary exhibition that honours the contribution of women to the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

PRECINCT INFO



NUMBER FOUR



Number Four is the place where thousands of black men were imprisoned and brutalised, but it is also the place where many learned to survive and defy their jailors. Many of the prisoners were guilty of non-political crimes. But many fell foul of race laws or were guilty of resisting these laws, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Robert Sobukwe. A visit to the Number Four exhibition raises the question of who is a criminal and evokes the experience of what it was like to be imprisoned in this place of darkness.

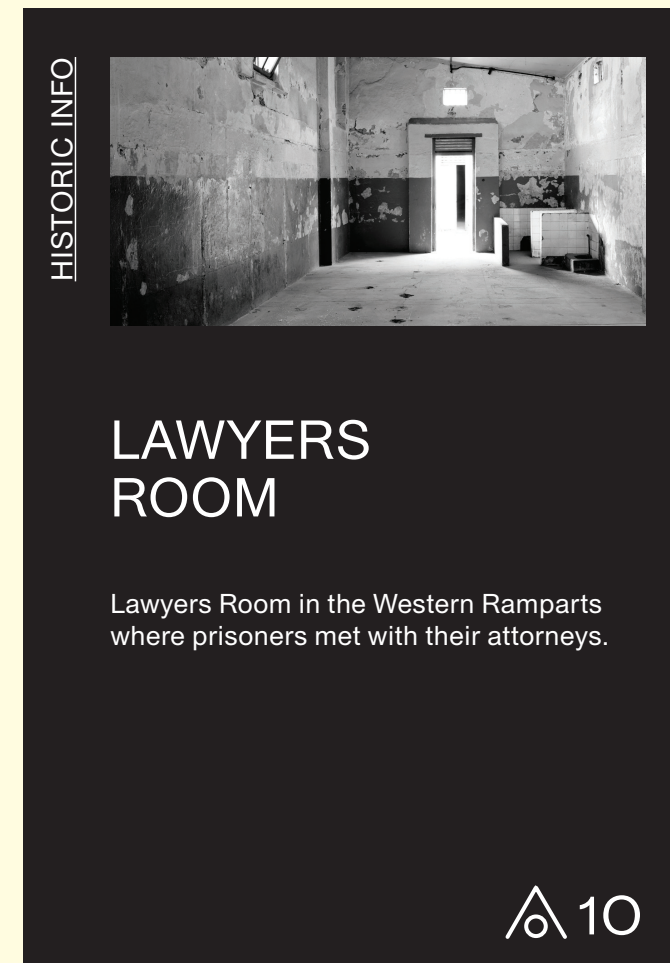
HISTORIC INFO

These panels will identify what particular spaces and rooms were use for both during the time that the prison operated and in the subsequent years. They will also be used for rooms which, although significant for prisoners, are not suitable for visitors to enter - for example, the Visitors Room and the Lawyers Room in the Western Ramparts where prisoners met with their attorneys and the stairwells of the ATB. They should allow for a photograph to be included.

Triangular icons and numbers signifying beacons linked to Conhill App.

420 x 600
(only format permitted)

Polished Aluminuim Panel 3mm
Matt Black Anodised
Laser etched text and image



EXTERIOR CONTENT PANELS

These panels will identify what particular spaces and rooms were use for during both during the time that the prison operated and in the subsequent years. They will also be used for rooms which, although significant for prisoners, are not suitable for visitors to enter - for example, the Visitors Room and the Lawyers Room in the Western Ramparts where prisoners met with their attorneys and the stairwells of the ATB. They should allow for a photograph to be included.

840 x 600
(only format permitted)

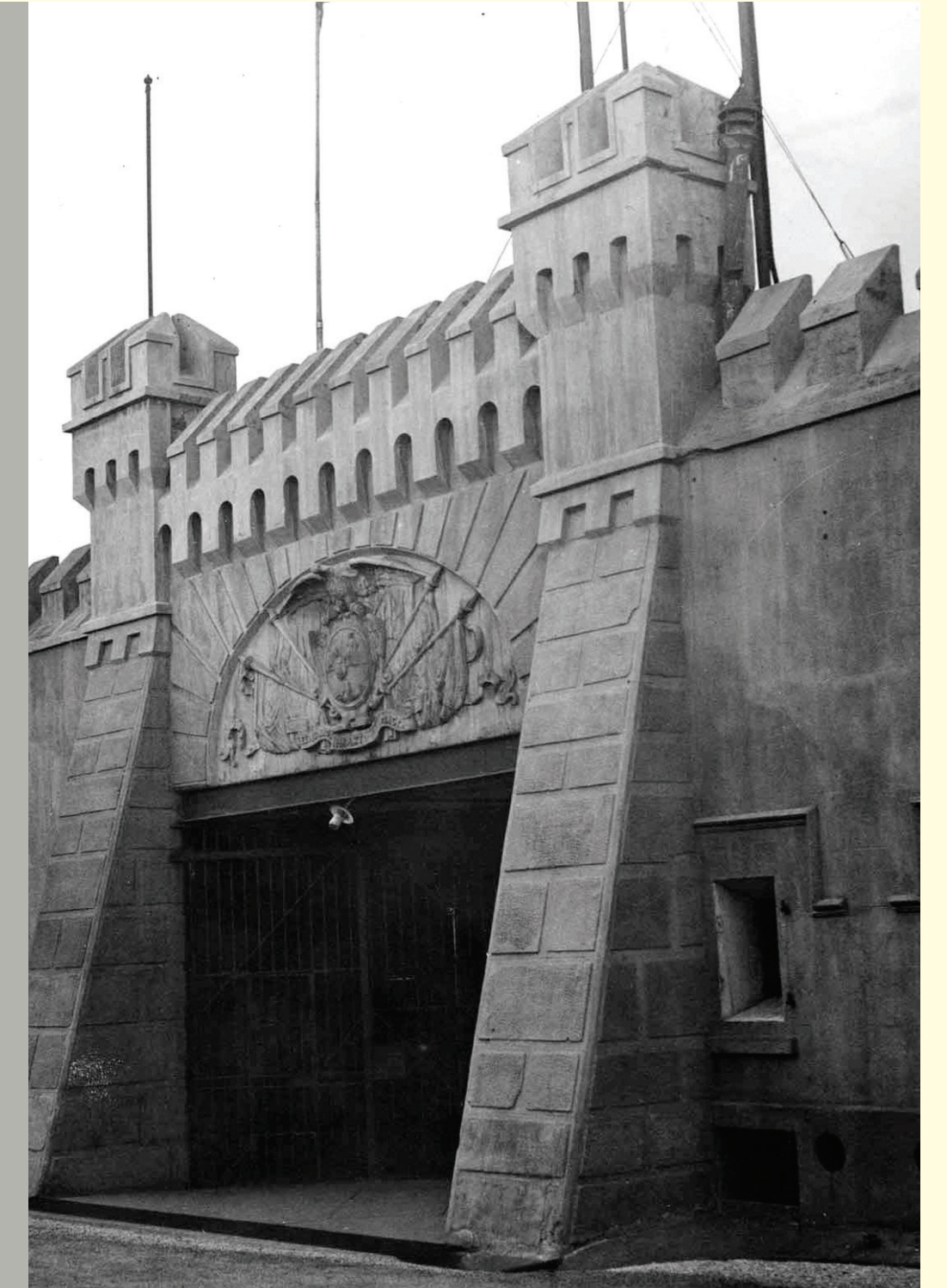
Aluminum Panel 3mm
2 K Grey - Colour match PANTONE 402C
(background section behind text)
2 K White background behind image
Direct Print black text and image

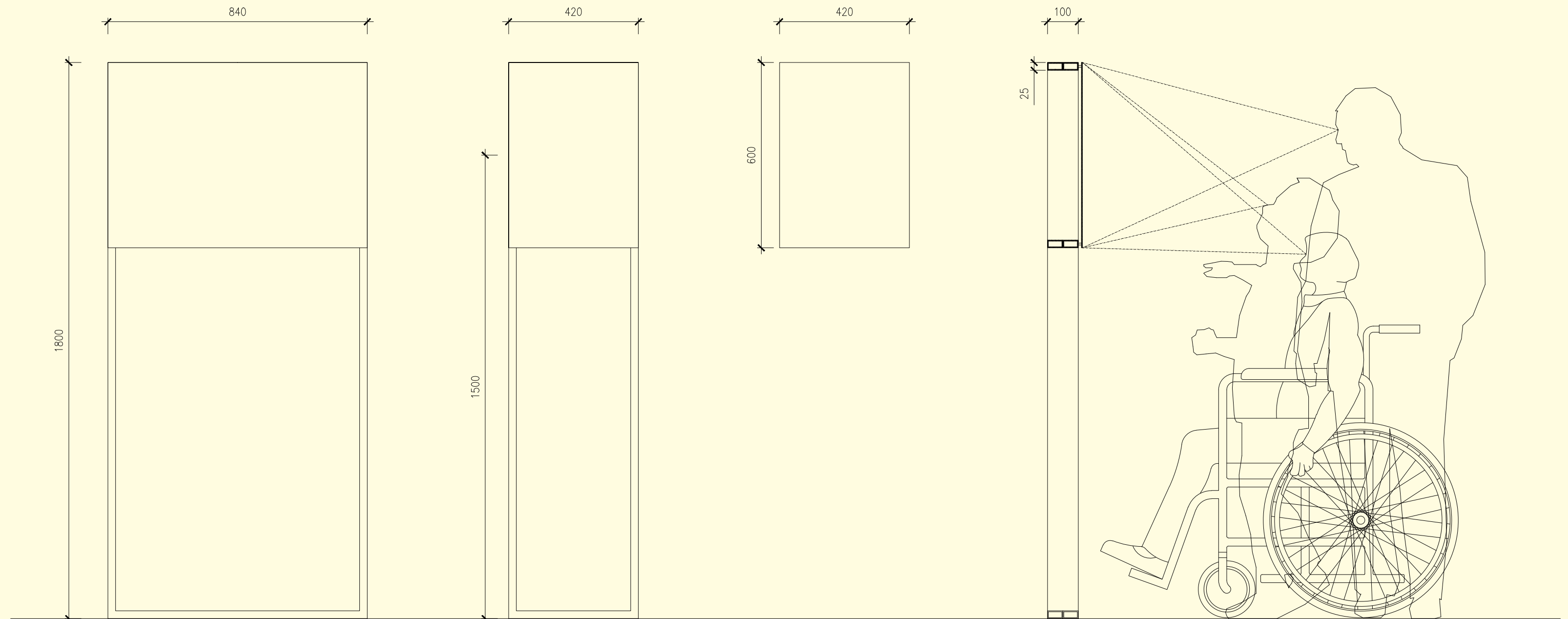
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Old Fort, 1918. image MUSUEM AFRICA





EXTERIOR EXHIBITION
INTRODUCTION PANEL
FORMAT

HERITAGE MARKER ON
STAND

HERITAGE MARKER
FIXED TO WALL
(SUBJECT TO HERITAGE
APPROVAL)

HERITAGE
MARKER/EXTERIOR
EXHIBITION PANEL
TYPICAL SECTION

FRAME: IN POWDERCOATED BLACK STEEL TUBES (2 x 50x25mm)
 PANELS: TEXT LASER ETCHED ON BLACK ANODIZED ALUMINIUM (2MM) ,
 IMAGE DIGITAL PRINT ONTO ALUMINIUM. ALL MONOCHROME. SPACER
 BRACKET AND FIXINGS TO DETAIL.
 EXHIBITION EXTERIOR INTRODUCTION PANELS TO BE BLACK TEXT ON GREY
 BACKGROUND. ALL TO CI MANUAL