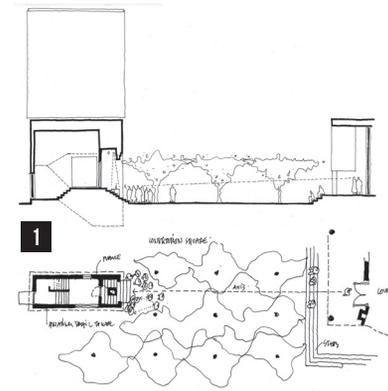


# FLAME OF DEMOCRACY AT CONSTITUTION HILL



*A new addition to this historic site in Johannesburg features historic layering and symbolic details that honour South Africa's journey to democracy.*

*Architects: UrbanWorks Architecture and Urbanism, in collaboration with The Library Special Projects, Photographs: Peter Morey, By: Mike Louw.*

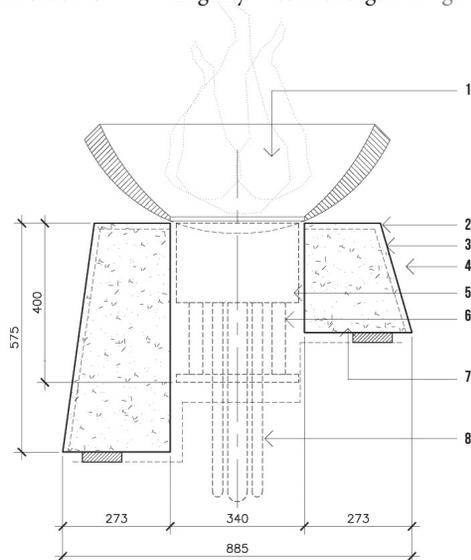
This 16 December marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the South African Constitution into law. In 2011, this small intervention was commissioned to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary date. It captures a sense of our difficult past and the hope for the future the Constitution embodies.

It consists of a series of highly symbolic additions to the existing lightbox that was added to the old awaiting trial tower on Constitution Hill by OMM Design Workshop and Urban Solutions Architects and Urban Designers a few years earlier. The project demonstrates UrbanWorks' ability to work across scales, from the urban to the detail level: A new bank of floodlights sends a beam of light 200m into the Johannesburg sky, equalling the height of the Brixton Tower, while a finely detailed plinth and a gas flare in a copper bowl allows for individual contemplation.

The placement of specific elements was carefully considered in relation to the tower's urban setting and the sightlines from surrounding buildings in order to

maximise its contribution to the public realm, while offering a variety of experiences on a personal level. A series of details that formed part of the original proposal, but which haven't been implemented yet, include 15 copper tile inserts in the cobble paving with the signatures contained in the Bill of Rights, as well as quotes and phrases from the Bill of Rights that were going to be etched into the balustrade uprights.

The power of the site – the flame is directly opposite the doors of the Constitutional Court – and the specification in the brief for a strong statement were key drivers for the design, as was the idea of historic layering and continuity. The subtle additions to the existing tower allow the site's previous narratives to remain present. Like our democracy, this building is a work in progress that encourages reflection on the values and memories that reside in every individual, while also serving as a beacon and an ethereal reminder to society of its own fragility – lest we forget. [Image on following page. >](#)



**DETAIL OF PLINTH AND GAS FLARE:**

1. Copper bowl to specialist detail. Bowl to be safely and securely fixed to plinth and allow for removal for maintenance of gas services. Copper/bronze lining to have 15mm clearance around gas flare surround.
2. Top of plinth to equal top of tread.
3. Stone plinth by specialist manufacturer.
4. 15x25mm cuts into base.
5. Cavity for gas flare services.
6. Gas flare mechanism.
7. 25x25mm recess in contact with existing stair.
8. Gas flare with one 50mm and two 25mm sleeves.

1 Plan and section of memorial. 2 The column of light emanating from the Awaiting Trial Tower.