

# UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN | STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

Call for proposals for design ideas for the memorialisation of the Rustenburg Burial Ground, located on University of Cape Town's Middle Campus

## INTRODUCTION:

This document is an invitation to students to submit proposals for the development of a memorial space on the site of the Rustenburg Burial Ground. It provides background information about the Burial Ground and the processes at the University of Cape Town which have led up to the decision to constitute the space as a place of memory and reflection.

### **Background: *Slavery and transformation***

In 2007, the Rustenburg Burial Ground, located on the University of Cape Town's Middle Campus was rediscovered through archival research commissioned by the University.<sup>1</sup> UCT became aware of the significance of this rediscovery as an important site on its Middle Campus and in the city. It was then that the university executive had the foresight to commission a Public Participation Process (PPP) prior to the current development of building plans for the Middle Campus.

This initiative emerged in the difficult context of city-wide contestations over burial spaces in Cape Town where dispossessed publics opposed developers in many sites across the city. The presence of colonial-era burial grounds had, in recent years, troubled stable notions of development in the postcolonial city and often these spaces have been seen to 'complicate' urban planning processes. The subsequent success of the Rustenburg Burial Ground public participation initiative is a result of UCT's early engagement with stakeholder communities and individuals, and the resultant consultative proposals for the memorialisation of the space.

What became evident from broader city debates current in Cape Town was that there were competing discourses of the dead, and of the space of the dead which played themselves out through public participation and heritage practice. In the UCT Stakeholder Forum many questions were debated at length during meetings from 2007-2010. These included questions such as: what does heritage practice do with the dead? How does heritage resource management deal with histories of dispossession and slavery? What are the roles of professional disciplines and heritage agencies in the recovery of memory and in the renegotiation of space? How do publics participate? Although these questions remain surprisingly vexing to many whose frame of reference is the colonial city, in the case of the Rustenburg Burial Ground UCT has managed to find ways through these points of contestation towards a positive set of plans for both the physical memorialisation of the place as a public space in the city and the establishment of processes for the creation of an on-going discussion as part of a 'community of memory'.

This initiative has also followed the statutory requirements for heritage practice contained in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act of November 1999 by the Archaeological Contracts Office and with heritage practitioner Andrew Berman, with the PPP being facilitated by Nosipho Consultancy.

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<sup>1</sup> Documented in: Titlestad, S, *Preliminary Historical Analysis of Archival Research Findings for the University of Cape Town Upper Middle Campus Burial Ground*, Professional Reports, 2007 and 2006.

The design ideas competition for the proposed memorialisation of the Rustenburg Burial Ground will contribute in marking the presence of this important history in a layered landscape forming an integral component to the University property and the new School of Economics building. Importantly too, the site also sits in relation to the historic Upper Campus, and the broader Rondebosch, Groote Schuur and Table Mountain landscapes of which it is part. The Rustenburg site is a reminder of other pre-existing landscapes dating from the pre-colonial period, through to the Dutch ‘agricultural’ period and the Rhodes / Baker era to the early UCT period over which the Middle Campus designs dating from first the 1930’s terracing and later through the 1970’s concept plan are overlaid. UCT is recognised as one of the finest university campuses in the world and the new memorial will be a memorial to those dispossessed of land and freedom in Cape Town’s colonial past.

The current project is, appropriately, led by Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Crain Soudien, whose engagement with histories of dispossession in Cape Town is widely respected, towards an integration of histories from the pre-colonial period and slavery to the present.

### **Brief for Project**

UCT is looking to students to generate ideas as curators/artists/landscape artists/historians/heritage design practitioners to complete the work of an integrated memorialisation strategy in three areas:

***01: Introduction of a fitted Interpretation piece to act as a narrative history of the site and its history in the dedicated space identified in the School of Economics Building (Middle Campus);***

***02: Reconfiguration of the adjacent cemetery platform and precinct in order to integrate the indoor/outdoor spatial relationships;***

***03: Introduction of an appropriate complementary artistic installation within the precinct of the site context.***

Applicants should use the information available through previous research conducted, that given at the information session, and, where necessary, source new information for display. Consideration should be given to the history of the site *over time* and not just focus on the initial period of slavery, although this is of course, an important element. The information provided should inform the viewer of the broader issues of dispossession in Cape Town of which this site is symbolic. As such, stories about the successive landscapes and publics affected and involved at Rustenburg from the pre-colonial era to the University might be represented, alongside the story of the physical development (and destruction) of the burial place.



Figure 1: Architect's impression of the new buildings at UCT's Middle Campus. View from the north. (Image courtesy: Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects)



Figure 2: Perspective view of the proposed memorialisation garden from the south-east, showing the New Economics Building (right) and All Africa House (left). Image courtesy Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects.



Figure 3: Aerial view of the memorial garden, showing the terraced landscape and adjoining staircase, passing All Africa House (left) to the Kramer Law Building (top). Image courtesy of Van der Merwe Miszewski Architects.



Figure 4: View from inside the memorial garden space, showing the glazed enclosure in the area in which the historic wall was found during archaeological investigation of the site which forms a focal point in the memorial space. The south façade of the New Economics Building is also shown depicting the windows from the interpretative space inside the building from which visitors to the site may view the memorial area.

***01: Introduction of a fitted Interpretation piece to act as a narrative history of the site and its history in the space identified in the School of Economics Building (Middle Campus);***

This calls for a design and spatial strategy for a permanent exhibition centre fitted into the interior space allocated in the south end of the School of Economics Building. The space overlooks the burial ground memorialisation space and is intended to provide the visitor with interpretive information about the history of the site.

The installation may be didactic in nature or take a more symbolic, interpretative line,. Importantly, the display needs to be robust and designed as a ‘stand alone’ exhibit as the space will not have a permanent curator. In other words, no elements of the display should require maintenance (such as is the case with video or audio displays), nor should the display be envisaged as a ‘process exhibit’.

The content, form and shape of the exhibit(s) is open for suggestion and may include some or any of the following: didactic boards containing historical images and text in any form; sculptural elements; functional interpretation elements such as specially designed viewing benches and the like; and/or murals or etchings onto the window glass.

***02: Reconfiguration of the adjacent cemetery platform and precinct in order to integrate the indoor/outdoor spatial relationships;***

The space for memorialisation marks part of the original Rustenburg Burial Ground (a part of the space is under the All Africa House), a significant and sensitive area which will be publicly accessible and an important memorial space – not just within the University, but within boarder Cape Town.

Figure 7 show lines approximating the original position of a walled cemetery area that existed prior to the 1930s; and Figure 8 is an archival photograph of the walled space in a woodland. The site is a terraced space between the Economics Building and All Africa House.

The proposal should address the dual dimensions of integration with the adjacent narrative centre, whilst imaginatively representing the lost history of the site through a memorialization strategy.

***03: An appropriate complementary artistic installation within the precinct of the site context.***

The design should include a proposal for a three dimensional intervention in the external space that interprets an aspect of slave heritage / the burial ground in order to appropriately activate engagement with the outdoor area.

All designs should be robust and durable as this is an outside area – open to the weather and with unmonitored public access. The choice of materials, and the placing of elements should be clearly indicated in submissions and to scale.



Figure 7: shows lines determined from archival research and archaeological verification approximating the original position of a walled cemetery area that existed prior to the 1930s. Image source: Geoff De Wet UCT Planning Office archives.



Figure 8: an view of the walled cemetery space that existed at UCT prior to the university's grand terracing projects of the 1920s. A remnant of this wall was unearthed during archaeological excavations undertaken by the Archaeological Contracts Office in 2008/9 and is intended to be displayed as part of the site – see Figure 4. Image source: Geoff De Wet UCT Planning Office archives.

## **TIME FRAMES**

Call for entry:	11 September 2014
Submission of proposals:	21 September 2014 [11.00-12.30 at the narrative space]
Public Display:	24 September 2014 [HERITAGE DAY]
Potential Opening:	01 December 2014

## **QUESTIONS:**

QUESTIONS MAYBE SUBMITTED BY EMAIL TO JUDITH DU TOIT:

**judith.dutoit@uct.ac.za**

QUESTIONS AND REPSONSES WILL BE MADE PUBLIC AND UPLOADED TO THE VULA SITE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

## **SUBMISSIONS:**

### **EACH SUBMISSION SHOULD COMPRISE:**

AN A1 VERTICAL FORMAT SHEET

A 3-D REPRESENTATION [EG. A SUPPORTING CONCEPT MODEL OR DRAWING]

## **ANONYMITY:**

ENTRANTS SHOULD SELECT AN INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY CODE COMPRISED OF 2 DIFFERENT LETTERS FOLLOWED BY THREE DIFFERENT NON-CONSECUTIVE NUMBERS. THIS SHOULD BE INSCRIBED ON THE REAR OF ALL MATERIAL SUBMITTED AND ON THE FRONT OF A SEALED ENVELOPE CONTAINING A SHEET IDENTIFYING:

**INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY CODE:**

**TEAM ENTRANT NAMES:**

**E-MAIL CONTACTS:**

**TELEPHONE CONTACTS:**

ENTRIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO JUDITH DU TOIT WHO WILL BE AVAILABLE TO RECEIVE THEM IN THE NARRATIVE SPACE AT THE NEW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS BUILDING

**BETWEEN 11.00AM - 12.30PM on MONDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2014**

# LIST OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON VULA [vula.uct.ac.za]

## Reports:

TITLESTAD, S et al [2006]

Preliminary Historical Analysis of Archival Research Findings for the University of Cape Town Upper Middle Campus Burial Ground

TITLESTAD, S [2007]

Preliminary Historical Analysis of Archival Research Findings for the University of Cape Town Upper Middle Campus Burial Ground

## Plans / Maps:

Historic and current Drawings; Plans and Elevations of the site.

## Images:

Historical and current images from the site

## Call for Proposals:

## Press Release:

## Submission requirements:

List of Drawings Models  
Anonymity code identification