

Landmark building resumes her rightful place

Innes Chambers, named after Sir James Rose Innes, Chief Justice of South Africa from 1914 to 1927, is a downtown landmark positioned in the Johannesburg central business district, opposite the South Gauteng High Court. Originally the offices of the Johannesburg Bar, Innes Chambers was purchased by the Department of Public Works (DPW) at the turn of the century and redeveloped as the Johannesburg offices of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). Activate Architects was responsible for the restoration.

Built in the 1960s, Innes Chambers is distinctive for its Y-column façade screens and white mosaic tiles. Although not a heritage building (it is not yet 60 years old), it is a beautiful example of Modernist architecture, and the client and architects decided at the outset that every attempt would be made to retain and restore original heritage elements.

The brief from the DPW was for functionality and efficiency and included the refurbishment and upgrade of all services to energy efficiency standards, the inclusion of contemporary office space and the creation of an auditorium for large meetings, lectures, etc.; all without compromising the original design and the landmark status of the building.

At the time work started, the building was in a state of some disrepair and there were no original drawings, so the entire structure had to be re-measured, which took time. Restoring the exterior proved to be a labour of love – to repair the substrate, thousands of mosaics had to be removed and replaced to restore the building to as-new status.

The interior of the building was gutted and existing office partitions and ceilings removed and replaced with new drywall. Existing windows, façade panels and frames were replaced with high performance curtain walling and double glazing to provide a high performance façade, enhancing the thermal performance of the building envelope and



reducing the energy demand on the HVAC system.

Only the ground and first two floors of Innes Chambers are public-private spaces, and it is in this central portion of the building that the raked auditorium is situated. Its creation required the partial demolition of existing 1st and 2nd floor slabs, but the new suspended concrete auditorium roof forms an outdoor garden atrium which functions as a pause area, consisting of two deck zones and a section of soft landscaping. An undulating Hunter Douglas slatted timber ceiling has been installed throughout the areas and congregation spaces, including the auditorium, along the north end edge of the building.

Delta Softline 1200x600T5 ceiling tiles, chosen for their efficiency and top quality indirect light, illuminate the offices, which make up most of the building (from the third to the 11th floor), the meeting rooms and boardrooms.

Installing suitable lighting for the ceiling presented more of a challenge. Architect Leane Fernandes of Activate Architects explains that to present the ceiling to best effect she and Glen Kwasnik of KKA Consulting Engineers wanted more than a standard downlight. Catherine Feher of Regent Lighting suggested a combination of Linear Micro LED and Linear Maxi T5 fixtures. The Linear Micro, which offers 24 W/m at 4000 K was slim enough and able to

