

# Cape Town's castle to be renovated

Construction and renovation company GVK-Siya Zama has been contracted for the renovation and repair of South Africa's oldest building, the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town.



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The first stone of the Castle of Good Hope, a pentagonal stone fortress, was laid by Commander Zacharias Wagenaer in 1666 and construction was completed in 1679. It replaced the original clay and timber fort called the Fort de Goede Hoop built by Jan van Riebeeck upon his arrival in the Cape of Good Hope in 1652.

The Castle was declared a national monument in 1969 and the Military Museum officially opened in 1995.

Over a period of 21 months, the seven buildings within the Castle walls will be repainted and have new carpentry installed. The deteriorated waterproofing on the roofs and ramparts will be replaced and the stone moat walls and banks will be repaired. The project also includes the refurbishment of murals, renovations to the Dolphin Pool and specialist plaster repairs.

## Well-known architects

Dr Gabriel Fagan and his wife Dr Gwen Fagan, who have been involved with the restoration of the Castle and subsequent repair projects since 1969, are the architects appointed for the project. Their knowledge of heritage work and dedication to the Castle assist in the sensitive approach to preserving the original fabric.

Specialist restorer, Jan Corewijn, who researched and restored the original murals during previous restoration attempts on the Castle, will again repair the murals that have been damaged. "As dictated by the Dutch interior decorating style of the day, the building featured murals and friezes on its walls.

These were painted over every five years and redecorated with the latest trends from Europe - resulting in several layers. Over the years, some of these have peeled off due to damp. By scraping back the layers we are given a timeline of how the decorating styles changed with time. We have now repainted the original murals and reconstructed the friezes by hand," says Corewijn.

The pool, which was filled in by the British during the 19th century for use as a parade ground, was excavated and reconstructed in the 1980's. Over the past 30 years, the bottom screed and plaster on the walls have begun to erode, crack and flake due to the use of harsh chemicals in the pool, necessitating the GVK-Siya Zama crew to carry out repairs on this piece of architectural history.

## **Specialist methods**

As the building is about 350 years old, specialist methods have to be employed to patch-up the plaster. This involves removing loose plaster and repairing it with a weak plaster mix, skimmed over with a lime putty mix and painted with limewash.

Despite the complexity of the work involved, GVK-Siya Zama has hired and trained local people and provided them with jobs for the duration of the project. To date over 130 people have been employed and trained as painters, bricklayers and carpenters, with 45 undergoing learnerships with the Department of Public Works. In addition, two people have received training as quantity surveyors.

The R84m project is due to be completed in September 2016 and was commissioned by the Department of Public Works as instructed by the Department of Defence.

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