

Market Theatre

Johannesburg,
South Africa

Aesthetic and functional renovation of the most iconic theatre in Johannesburg

The Market Theatre is an icon in South Africa, not just because of its architecture and unusual origin (it was formerly an Indian fruit market) but also because for 20 years it was a symbol and place for the fight against apartheid.



Technical details:

Name: Market Theatre

Location: Johannesburg, South Africa

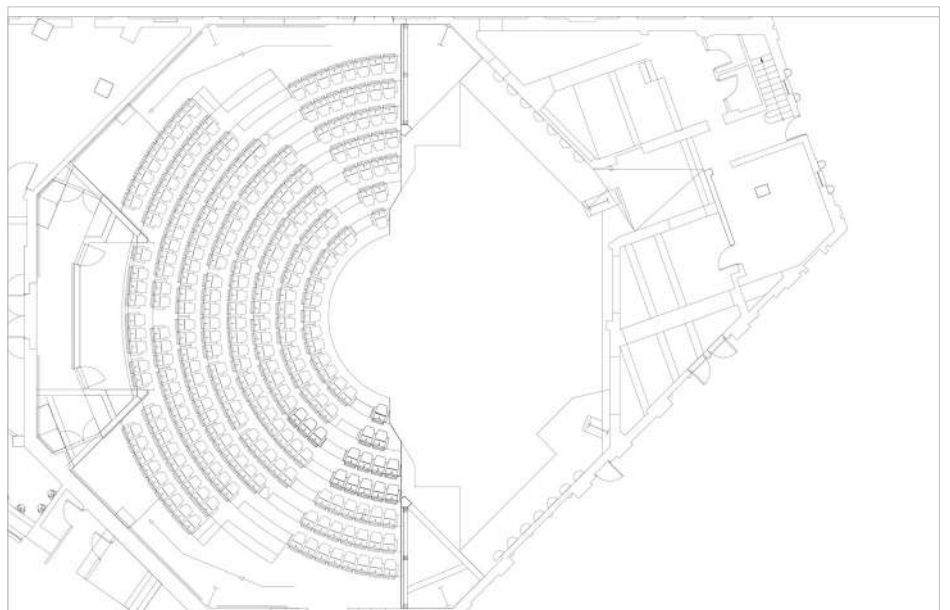
Architecture and design: Albonico Sack Metacity

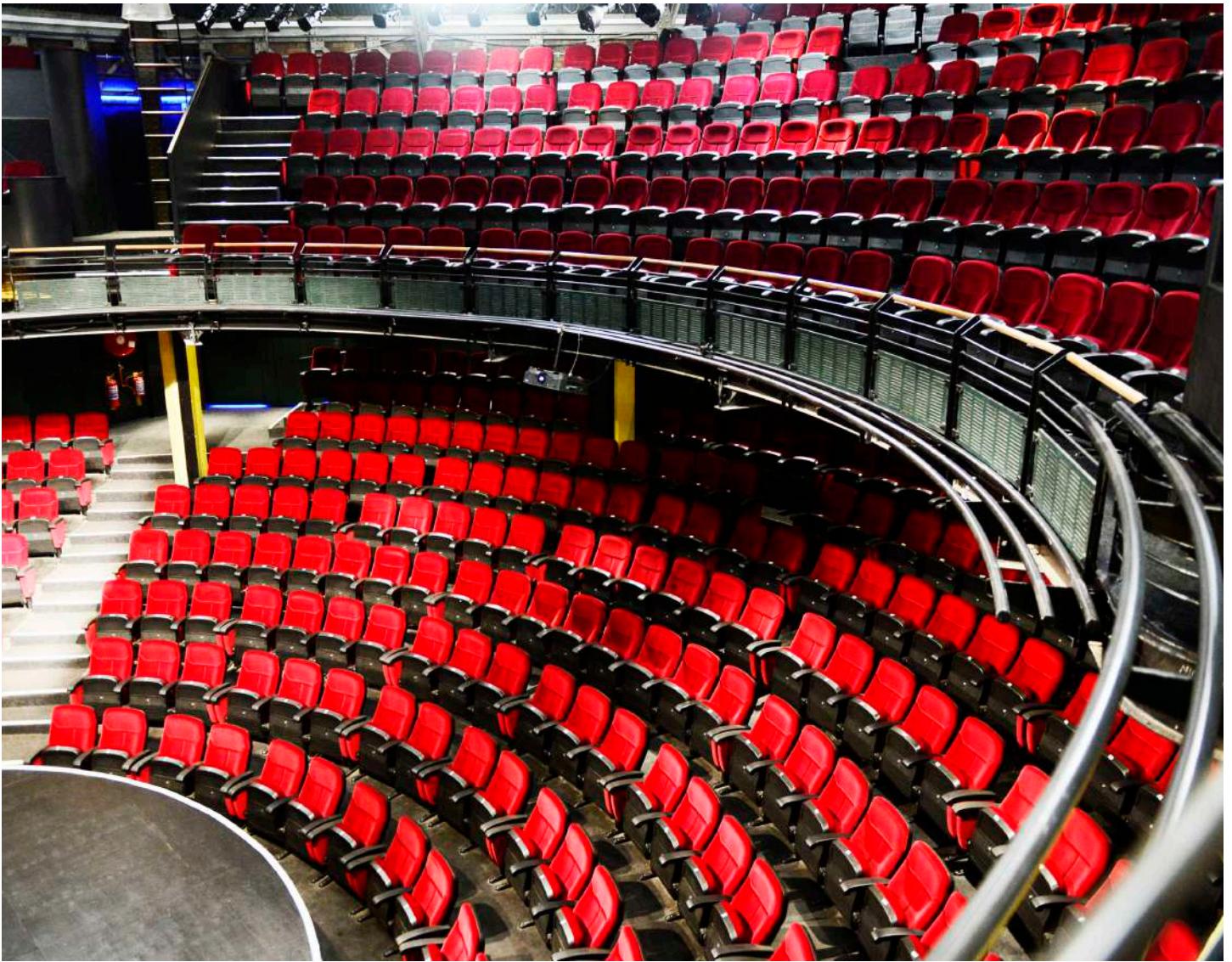
Property: Market Theatre

Capacity: 450 seats

Product: Top 5036

It was opened in 1976 and always carried the conviction that “culture can change society”. The original building dates from 1913 and is a historically listed building, which is why the architects at Albonico Sack Metacity could not carry out any structural alterations. The renovation respects the original architecture as a whole. Not even the old signs for the market stalls were changed, and remain as they were.





Challenges and solutions

The renovation had various aims, which included bringing the building into line with new South African safety regulations and increasing the main theatre's seating capacity. The increase in capacity in the main hall, which at the time contained 380 seats, had to be done while allowing more space for the audience and not the other way around. Given that it is a historic building, the renovations had to be carried out without altering the perimeter walls, which meant that Figueras' work was particularly challenging.

In order to increase seating capacity, Figueras re-organised the seats into stalls in the shape of a Roman amphitheatre. Seats were added in the central areas with better visibility and seats in areas with restricted or no views were removed. Thanks to the shape of the irregular rows at the edges and by experimenting with various sizes of seats, each row gained a larger number of seats and, at the same time, the final visual effect of the auditorium was unified. In the circle, the rows were arranged in steep banks, which meant that the seats had to incline -4° so that the sight line was good.

Product supplied

The product that Figueras recommended was the 5036 TOP. This an extremely hard-wearing seat and one of Figueras' most comfortable products, a fact that made it the customer's choice. Its

adaptability is ideal for a space of this type, as it comes available with two different sizes of back rest which means uniform rows can be created by mixing different widths. By using different anchor bolts, it was possible to adapt the seats to the concrete floor in the stalls and the wooden floor in the circle. The seat is upholstered in red velvet which gives it an added decorative touch.

