



Media release: Constitution Hill wins museum association website award

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Constitution Hill has won a 2017 South African Museums Association Speaker and Publications award for its website, www.constitutionhill.co.za.

The awards were announced at a ceremony at the Western Cape's Skilpadvlei Wine Farm on 26 October. The association is the professional body for museums in South Africa and aims to support museum management that promotes the country's diverse natural and cultural heritage for the enrichment of all South Africans and visitors.

The Constitution Hill website is "well designed, very interactive, informative and visually stimulating", said SAMA awards chief judge Leon Steyn. "[It is] one of the best and most complete museum websites I have ever seen."

Constitution Hill is very excited to have won the SAMA accolade, said its CEO, Dawn Robertson. She said the website's interactivity is a deliberate part of the organisation's "digital-first" strategy.

"Until the launch of our new website, Constitution Hill focused on engaging visitors and audiences on-site. In 2016 we developed our digital strategy, which redefined how we would take a digital-first approach across all aspects of our work.

"We wanted to engage not only with current visitors, but also with past and future visitors to the site. By embracing the open nature of digital, presenting information in a clear context, and emphasising powerful images and video, we have developed a website that not only has information on our exhibitions, but enhances engagement with the entire Constitution Hill experience."

Robertson said Constitution Hill's website is purposefully information-rich, "particularly regarding the stories we tell, the memories we hold and our work in constitutionalism". It also pays acute attention to visitors' immediate needs, such as the site's physical location, opening hours and online ticket sales.

In a bid to increase participation, the website also incorporates blogs, event listings, newsletters and user-generated social media content.

Integrated communications agency [Flow Communications](#) revamped the Constitution Hill website in 2016, and designed and launched the mobile application.

This year's SAMA competition focused particularly on the theme, "Contested Histories: Saying the Unspeakable in Museums".

Constitution Hill, in Johannesburg, is a living museum that tells the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The site is a former prison and military fort that bears testament to South Africa's turbulent past and, today, is home to the country's Constitutional Court.

There is perhaps no other site of incarceration in South Africa that imprisoned the sheer number of world-renowned men and women as those held within the walls of Constitution Hill's Old Fort, Women's Jail and Number Four prison. Nelson Mandela. Mahatma Gandhi. Joe Slovo. Albertina Sisulu. Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Fatima Meer. They all served time here. But the precinct also confined tens of thousands of ordinary people during its 100-year history: men and women of all races, creeds, ages and political agendas; children too; the everyman and the elite. In this way, the history of every South African lives here.