

OLWAZINI SCIENCE & CULTURAL MUSEUM GOLDEN HORSE CASINO, PIETERMARITZBURG, KZN

ARCHITECTURE & LANDSCAPING

Architecture

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The Olwazini Discovery Centre is a science and cultural museum located within the Golden Horse Casino complex in the Scottsville racecourse, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The museum was developed to increase tourism within the region and, in particular, was developed to educate developing communities in simple science concepts and to maintain cultural knowledge.

Murray & Roberts, Durban Metropolitan Council and Chantelle Ilbury, of Scienceworks, a consultant to Akani Msunduzi – the owners of the Casino – who funded the project, approached Egg Designs of Durban to consult on this project.

The partners of Egg Designs, Roche Smith and Greg Dry, faced a difficult project, as the museum is positioned under the racecourse grand stand concourse, which is a long, narrow, sterile environment. The objective they set was to establish criteria of connecting African ethnicity with science. Specifically, they did not want to go the ethnic route. In essence the need was for a rural South African environment with a sophisticated overall feel reflecting the science aspect.

Egg Designs director, Greg Dry, explains: "We wanted to create a new concept of cladding the walls and columns with gabion baskets to provide certain rawness and to link the baskets to the art of ethnic weaving. The rocks within the baskets also created a texture which alleviated the sterility of the environment. They had seen the double twist woven mesh gabion baskets being used in roadwork developments between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, and had wondered if they could be used as a décor feature, when they built their own home. This provided them with an excellent opportunity to explore this concept further. They approached Rikesh Maharaj of Maccaferri/African Gabions in Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal, to assess the viability of this project. Rikesh said: "Gabion cladding was developed for the many columns in the centre. Similarly, 2,5m high free standing walls were also designed and constructed internally and externally".

For the columns, special L-shaped units were manufactured to be placed together around the rectangular columns. The units were made from a single piece of mesh and bent at strategic points to form the units on site. Two units were laced around the column to form the cladding, without any further adhesive for the columns. Braces were used from the outer to inner facing to eliminate bulging. The gabions were unusually thin, only 200 mm thick, to maximise floor space.



Olwazini Science & Cultural Museum

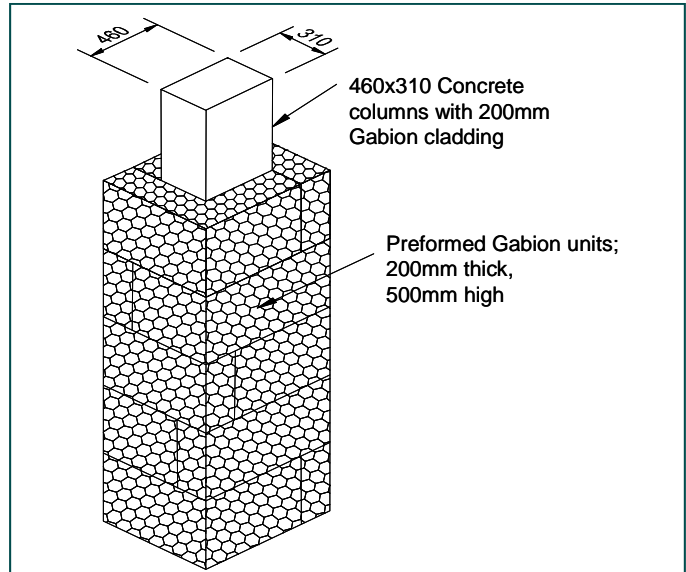


Interior 2,5m high Gabion wall

The free standing walls were constructed with standard gabion units which were cut and shaped on site to allow for discrepancies in the casting of the columns, which reduced the transport costs of the materials.

Free on-site installation training and technical assistance in the form of advice and AutoCad drawings were provided by Maccaferri/African Gabions to both Murray & Roberts and Egg Designs. In this way cost was kept to a minimum.

“A very unique structure has been completed,” concludes Egg Designs director, Greg Dry.



Cross section of columns with L-shaped cladding



Columns with L-shaped cladding



Exterior 2,5 m high free standing gabion wall

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