

New canteen and computer room at Affies completed

Construction work of a new ground level canteen and upstairs computer room at the Afrikaans Hoër Seuns Skool in Pretoria has recently been completed.



Riaan Visser from +27 Architects was drafted in to create a design which would be a modern appendage to the school but still one which would pay homage to the historical buildings on site. The new extension can be seen as a mix of modern and classical design, so although the original buildings on the grounds are very traditional, the new addition represents the current school going generation.

A cafeteria and a first floor learning centre make up the double-storey centre, named 1920 in honour of the year the school was founded. The cafeteria is a stylish, modern area with a television, photographs of the colourful history of the school and a black polished concrete floor interspersed with reclaimed parquet floor panels running at angles. The light fittings, specially made by a local artisan with a 1920's look, hang from scaffolding planks over the serving area, while two long refractory tables, made from Oregon pine, fit in perfectly with the style of the building.

Choir practice and socials

Apart from being a practical space for dining, Visser created the area to be multifunctional and practical space for its learners, and it often doubles as a function area after hours for choir practice, socials and sports events.

Upstairs is a state-of-the-art learning centre, which acts as the reading and study area with an integrated library and computer. After hours, the building is used to host both internal and external events. The back of the building which faces the parking lot is notable for a custom designed concrete seating area, which the children use as a waiting zone after school.

While the new structure maintains elements of the 94-year-old buildings around it, Visser wanted to ensure that it still had a modern twist. "When I started working on the design I took inspiration from the English brick style in the original building, and also followed the initial design with the gables of the new centre."

Low maintenance

Visser says that it isn't often that facebrick is used in his projects as it is perceived as an expensive material. "Yet the long-term low maintenance issues offset any additional cost," he notes. Contractor, Hansie du Toit from Van Rensburg Building Contractors, was awarded the tender for the job primarily because the company had previously demonstrated that they could lay facebricks.

"They weren't the cheapest, but we had seen their facebrick work and knew that we could rely on them to do the job right first time," says Visser. "It isn't easy to lay facebricks well, and the English bond work added to the complication." The selected facebrick from Corobrik was used as it was the closest match to the original red bricks used in the other buildings on the ground, and it complements the red corrugated iron roof.

Galvanised aluminium sun screens were been positioned to shade the dark aluminium windows of the cafeteria in summer while planter boxes soften the area. The boundary walls were constructed with pillars and wrought iron in the facebrick, while vertical breaks in the wall offer openings to add interest and glimpses of the outside through the walls.

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