

ENVIRONMENT

When love and knowledge unite

One pandemic and loads of teamwork later, Ulwazi Educare Centre officially opened its doors in Delft on Saturday 3 September.

Built out of recycled and repurposed materials, the centre shows what can be accomplished when a diverse group of inspiring South African activists come together.

At the core of this innovative project stands Uthando (Love) South Africa. The local, non-profit organisation (NPO) based in Harfield Village links tourism with community development projects. Through partnerships, Uthando, in cooperation with Great Commission United (GCU), has raised funds to transform six early childhood development (ECD) centres into world-class buildings, with Ulwazi Educare being the latest.

Ulwazi "Knowledge" Educare Centre was started by Patiswa Patience Bangani in 1998. In 2018, James Fernie of Uthando was introduced to Bangani and Peter McIntosh, of Natural Building Collective (NBC), by Helen Lieberman of Ikamva Labantu. It is during this meeting that the idea of an ECD centre constructed out of recycled and repurposed materials was born.

With construction due to commence in April 2020, plans and fundraising for the building were underway. But then Covid-19 struck. With construction finally started in September last year, the centre was ready to welcome its young learners one year later.

Bangani says they were so excited to move into the new building.

"The school is just beautiful, a place of love and caring. The space is full of creativity, the children are going to be so inspired to do well. Thank you to the sponsors, builders and everyone who contributed to all the elements of the school and the additional elements such as the astroturf, jungle gym," she says.



Ulwazi Educare, constructed by Natural Building Collective, is built from tyres, plastic bottles filled with rubbish (eco bricks), polyurethane film set waste blocks and recycled materials. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Fernie says with approximately four million children under the age of seven not attending a pre-school or ECD, their efforts in this regard are small in the broader scheme of things.

"But they are sincere and heartfelt. We must never stop striving to fulfil the promise of our young democracy, that all of these millions of children deserve the right of attending a decent pre-school where they can have the opportunity to learn, dream and be safe during the day," says Fernie.

With NBC at the helm of construction, about 1 700 tyres were used in the building. McIntosh shares that these tyres were sourced from a tyre depot, managed by the Waste Bureau in Atlantis.

"As all the tyres were in one location, we were able to utilise the same size for the entire building. Large car tyres with a tread width of 265 mm were used for the entire building. The fill-material for the tyres comprised of recycled building rubble from a nearby yard, mixed with other recycled

earths."

Once filled with earth, each tyre weighed 170 kg, equating to over 289 tonnes for the total weight of the completed building.

"The cob method is a mix of sand, clay and straw which was used extensively in the building. Around 60 cubic metres were used to build the internal walls and pack out the tyres.

"Natural plasters were applied internally and a layer of cement plaster applied externally for extra durability, from a maintenance point of view," explains McIntosh.

About 6 000 eco-bricks, supplied by Green-set, were used for some of the interior walls from upcycled Polyurethane film set waste. Hilton Cowie from Envirolite built the prototype machine, making it possible to recycle the first Polyurethane set-build waste.

In addition, cob was used for the internal walls and other places to save on materials and create art. Recycled doors and windows were used where possible.

Not only is the end result strong and dura-

ble, the ECD is also a feast for the eye thanks to the talents of ceramics artist Andile Dyalvane.

Co-founder and creative director at Imiso Ceramics, Dyalvane created beautiful art on one of the interior walls of the school. He says before he starts working, he calls on the spirits of the ancestors to get clarity as to what they want him to communicate.

He says the symbols he creates capture the essence of healing, peace, love, unity and honouring the ancestors.

With the proverbial paint just dry on Ulwazi, Uthando has launched its next fundraising campaign, this time to raise the funds needed to build Goal50 Edu Hub Early Childhood Development Centre (ECD) in the community of Heideveld.

"We are launching a global crowdfunding campaign to raise the R12 million required to build the centre, with the idea that 'many hands make light work'," says Fernie. ▶ For more information or to donate, visit www.uthandosa.org or email jamesfernie@uthandosa.org

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Groot Constantia and Koena Art Institute have curated a heritage programme that will run throughout the month at the wine estate. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Art and culture come alive at winery

This September visitors to Groot Constantia can share in a complimentary showcasing of South Africa's rich heritage, such as Khoe & San (Khoi-San) poetry and colourful Rieldans-inspired art.

Groot Constantia and Koena Art Institute, dedicated to the preservation of the Khoe & San heritage, have curated a programme that will run throughout September (Heritage Month).

Celebrating the Riel in Art, the Iziko Education Department and Koena Art Institute will present an educational art showcase, titled *Dans Laet die Stof Staan*, throughout the month. This visual and audio exhibit – aimed at senior phase school pupils in particular – centres on a celebratory dance that is rooted in San and Khoi traditions, called the Rieldans.

Local artists whose work will be

on display, include Andries Dirks, Anthony Roach, Marlene Liebenberg and Terence Visagie.

The centre is open between 10:00 and 17:00. Entry to the exhibition is free.

On Saturday 17 September, spend an hour with Dr Diana Ferrus for a poetry reading of *I've come to take you home*.

Written in 1998, by Ferrus, the poem is about Sarah Baartman, now recognised as the first-known black female victim of trafficking. Ferrus wrote the poem in the midst of the French reluctance to release Baartman's remains from the Musée de L'Homme; and the popularity of the poem is widely believed to be responsible for the return of Baartman's remains to South Africa in 2002.

The event will take place in the Groot Constantia Iziko Learning Centre next to Jonkershuis Restau-

rant, at 14:00. Attendance is free of charge.

Later that same day wire artist Tavengwa Dahwa will hold a workshop. It will take place in front of Groot Constantia Cloete Cellar, between 10:00 and 15:00. The cost is R110 per person. On Saturday 24 September, the South African musical group Sibondha n the Irry People Band will get visitors' feet tapping with smooth Afro and Latino rhythms. The band has shared the stage with well-known musicians from around the globe, such as Malika, Mambote from Congo, Eclips from London, and many more. Then event will take place in front of Groot Constantia Manor House and next to the Cloete Cellar, at Simon's Restaurant. Join at 12:00 to 12:20 and 12:30 to 12:50. Attendance is free of charge. ▶ For more information, visit www.grootconstantia.co.za