



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

Headquarters of the National Statistics Office, Pretoria:

Meaningful symbolism made of metal mesh from GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) office in Pretoria plays a key role in the thriving Republic of South Africa's journey towards becoming one of the most important emerging nations. By building a new headquarters for Stats SA's 3,500 employees, at a cost of 100 million Euro, the country has acknowledged the importance of the national statistics office.

The 31,800 square meter office building on the outskirts of the government district and a short walk away from Freedom Park, was designed by South African architecture firms GLH and Terra Ether. In addition to integrating different historical structures, the aim was to visualize the work of Stats SA. The architects opted for a design with various references to the country's culture and tradition. The result was a building reminiscent of a gigantic drum with five fingers. The zigzag roof of the main entrance is evocative of the graphs which Stats SA uses to present the results of its surveys. The five surveys are represented by five finger-shaped blocks arranged one behind the other. Each of these fingers has its own unique identity created through color and the shape of the roof.

However, the real symbolism is found in the rotunda at the main entrance, with its visually seamless covering of shimmering OMEGA metal mesh from GKD – Gebr. Kufferath AG. It lends the fully glazed architecture the appearance of a drum, which, in African culture, is considered as an invitation to communicative cooperation. The architects have used this



WORLD WIDE WEAVE

symbol to highlight the core task of the statistics office, which is to collect and provide information. Over 500,000 stainless steel buttons were applied to the domed shell by hand, following a design by Marius Botha. Countless local workers attached the buttons in four different sizes, some natural, some bronze colored, using self-locking nylock nuts and M3 spacer bolts at the precisely defined positions. The pattern had previously been copied onto the mesh panels from templates. It is inscribed with the image of a counting tool from the Stone Age and thus communicates the work of the statistics office at another level. The 2,280 square meter, ten meter tall mesh shell follows the curvature of the building with exactly plane-parallel tension. In addition to the extraordinary aesthetics, the cladding is also an effective form of solar protection for the glass rotunda. The robust construction of the circumferential balcony platforms also provides reliable fall protection.



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