

2020
INNOVATION
AWARDS





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DESIGN
AFRICA

Whether it's a showstopping art installation, interiors overhaul or pace-setting new build, we want to see the designs changing the look of modern Africa.

ANDBEYOND

ANDBEYOND SOSSUSVLEI DESERT LODGE

Date(s) the experience was first offered

16 October 2019

Please outline the project's context, including its natural and cultural surroundings.

andBeyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge is situated on a private concession in the Namib Desert. The design is inspired by the natural surroundings – shapes, changing colours, expansive views and minerals. The suites are designed to shield guests from the harsh environment but allow them to feel at one with the landscape.

Traditionally, the region's Nama people built only what was necessary, carrying and using the bare minimum. Accordingly, interiors have been kept minimal, placing the focus on the surrounding terrain to inspire the lodge design and choosing 100% natural materials wherever possible. Locally sourced sand, stone, bleached wood, steel, metals and glass have all been used.

Namibian artisans were commissioned to create basketware for the lodge and a Namibian-based craft initiative made the bespoke wool hangings and rugs.



ANDBEYOND

In the Namib's climate of extremes, we have also used sophisticated, environment-friendly design solutions to power luxuries such as air conditioning and private plunge pools. In fact, we have harnessed the very harshness of the desert environment to run the lodge through solar power and other systems.

Tell us about your design brief, challenges and key objectives.

Our brief was to immerse guests in the environment by referencing and exposing the unique characteristics of the Namib. Challenges such as the remote setting and the beautiful but also extremely sensitive environment were embraced in the refurbishment, keeping the same lodge footprint but giving it a new and modern take. The aim was to reinvigorate the guest experience but also reduce the human impact on the landscape. This was achieved through the use of sophisticated technology and by making better use of existing spaces.

The architecture and the technology work hand-in hand to reduce the lodge's impact, offsetting the impact of luxuries like air-conditioning against the amount of energy produced or water recycled. Careful attention has been paid to the movement of the sun to maximise use of the outdoor spaces and with the incredible night skies in mind.

How does this project challenge perceptions of design in Africa?

Our intention has been to create the ultimate desert escape, setting a new standard for how luxury and sustainability can interact in a harsh environment. By making small changes, we have been able to create much bigger and luxurious places while causing as little impact as possible. Each suite is basically its own power plant, with unobtrusive solar panels on the roof that power a highly effective grey water recycling system and a rainwater harvesting tank. The entire lodge generates over 100 000 litres of grey water per month. Each suite also has a fully independent solar hot water system.



GORGEOUS GEORGE HOTEL

GORGEOUS GEORGE

Date(s) the experience was first offered

18 April 2019

Please outline the project's context, including its natural and cultural surroundings.

Created from two beautifully restored heritage buildings, one Art Deco and the other Edwardian - originally stitched together in the 1940s, Gorgeous George is the first to join the Design Hotels™ stable, a hand-selected worldwide collection of privately owned and operated design forward and culturally rooted hotels.

International award-winning interior designer Tristan du Plessis has created a concept celebrating timeless and contemporary African design that showcases locally manufactured high-end South African decor.



By dressing the raw, urban bones of the building, such as the steel window frames and concrete beams, with a bold palette and pieces from top South African talent which include furniture by David Krynauw, Gregor Jenkin, Dokter and Misses and Porky Hefer, whose crocodile swing chair certainly turns heads. Custom murals from local artist David Brits are featured in every room as well as the hotel's indoor outdoor plant-filled rooftop and pool.

Gorgeous George is ideally located on the historic and famous tree lined pedestrian avenue of St. George's Mall in downtown Cape Town, offering its friends an authentic Cape Town experience filled with intriguing history, cultural heritage, creative arts, interesting markets, boutiques, antiques stores and world-class restaurants, bars and nightlife.

Tell us about your design brief, challenges and key objectives.

When the building was first bought, the intention wasn't to create a hotel per say, but when the opportunity arose to having an indoor restaurant connected to a wind sheltered rooftop area with a pool housed in an old tower- right smack in downtown Cape Town it was a no-brainer.

The restaurant itself was conceptualized for external guests, to really be the "living room for the neighborhood" the guests of the 32-bedroom hotel were seen as an added bonus. It's new to South Africa to have a hotel culture where people will meet at a bar in a hotel like they would in NYC or London; and we wanted to fill that void, our way. The renovation of the two heritage buildings [by South African architecture studio Urbane Citizen] took over 3 years; it wasn't easy to keep the essence of the existing building but still push the interiors into something really fresh. Du Plessis designed the interiors to showcase the structural elements of the buildings, which had been concealed in the past.

How does this project challenge perceptions of design in Africa?

We had the intention from the start to responsibly-source the bulk of interior products and finishes within a localised radius in and around Cape Town which besides reducing our carbon footprint also supported our local industry of service providers and artisans. Gorgeous George is one of the biggest creative collaborations South Africa has seen to date. A live showcase of the country's best design talent, lighting and furniture have been sourced from David Krynauw, Gregor Jenkin, Studio 19, Douglas&Co, and Dokter and Misses, Porky Hefer while murals from artist David Brits are featured in every room.



KRUGER SHALATI

KRUGER SHALATI - THE TRAIN ON THE BRIDGE

Date(s) the experience was first offered

Opened December 2019

Please outline the project's context, including its natural and cultural surroundings.

Kruger Shalati Train on a Bridge is a new product set to open in 2020 in the Kruger National Park which will further establish South Africa as a leader in the luxury tourism space. This includes a top-of-the-range accommodation establishment that will attract more global tourism within the luxury category. The project is also geared to celebrate and publicise the history of the Park. The Train on a Bridge is a unique tourism offering that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere: refurbished train carriages suspended on a railway line on a bridge suspended over a river in the Park, affording travellers incredible opportunities to view wildlife from above.



The Kruger Shalati Train on a Bridge is a product located on an existing, unused railway line with a historical background. The hotel building is made from a previously used train. All design elements take account of the environment, and we use solar power to minimise the use of coal-generated electricity. The project also takes account of recycling, and the focus is on eliminating single-use plastic and paper.

Tell us about your design brief, challenges and key objectives.

All design elements were done with the environment in mind.

The reinterpretation of luxury train travel sees the original train carriages reinvented as fixed hotel rooms suspended over the Sabie river, offering guests awe-inspiring views. A key element of the design involves maximising the feeling of being in the natural surroundings. Floor-to-ceiling glass panels in the rooms invite nature in and allow guests to take in the glorious location and wildlife.

The interiors needed to be luxurious, incorporate the rail history, and reflect the very best in South African design, while being sensitive to the setting.

In the carriages, space has been added for extra width to create a feeling of luxury and comfort. It was vital that the interiors, while showcasing African excellence in design, complement the experience while not detracting from the view.

The concept of a train on a bridge suspended over a main river in a national park with the big 5 roaming underneath has received much recognition on a global scale, and one of the most anticipated product to open world-wide according to. number of leading publications,.

How does this project challenge perceptions of design in Africa?

While Africa is well known across the globe for adventure travel and for safaris, but most often accepted with the colonial perception of a safari - tented structures or thatched lodges, most likely with traditional African tribal crafts and patterns. we challenge this by creating a brand that screams African excellence in contemporary and innovative design. the property is clearly influenced by African elements, without being the obvious and expected. collaborations with young and upcoming African designers has been crucial in developing a product which not only challenge the convention to create a beautiful and unique product seen no where else in the world.





ULTIMATE SAFARIS

NAMIBIA

TRANSFORMING SOSSUS UNDER CANVAS INTO CAMP SOSSUS

Date(s) the experience was first offered

April 2019

Please outline the project's context, including its natural and cultural surroundings.

Whilst not a conventional entry into this category that is normally concerned with the opulence and luxury of modern day design, Camp Sossus embellishes every aspect of our declared intention to help redefine Namibian luxury. Our own definition of this encompasses sustainability, privacy, exclusivity, experiential focus, and total flexibility, all whilst being perfectly comfortable. We can provide all of this at an affordable price as we have moved away from the opulence, and consequent high pricing that is generally associated with luxury, while still focusing primarily on our environmental and conservation footprints as well as overall sustainability. Evolution is a fact of life as is the case with all living organisms, and 2019 saw Sossus Under Canvas transform and evolve into Camp Sossus, growing and adapting to the prevailing desert conditions.



However, the philosophy of our tented camps remains unchanged. They still offer a truly sustainable “back to nature” experience, allowing guests to touch, smell, feel and experience the wild but with their feet firmly in the dust that covers Namibia. This ultimate connection with earth, culture and wildlife in a very up-close and personal way gives an experience that is exclusive in the real sense of the word!

Tell us about your design brief, challenges and key objectives.

Desert weather conditions were certainly the biggest challenges involved here, and taking these into consideration whilst still ensuring the uniqueness of the desert location was fundamental to the design. Built in a natural amphitheater formed by a south-facing granite outcrop, the orientation of the tents meant natural shade and cooling from the predominant south westerly winds, and no need for any artificial cooling systems. Additional shading was created through the use of almost 500 recycled oil drums, all of which were destined for landfills. East facing dry pack walls using local stone protect tents from the winter sand storms and not one single cement brick was used in the building of this camp.

Furniture was built mostly from recycled metals, oil drums, wooden pallets and other recycled woods. As a result, this camp is virtually invisible from any distance and carries the lowest environmental footprint of any camp in Namibia.

How does this project challenge perceptions of design in Africa?

Design in the world of luxury travel has taken opulence and consumerism to new heights and it has now become necessary to prove how this is offset in order to justify it! Consciousness is the new luxury, and this project is all about consciousness! Create an environment built almost entirely from materials destined for landfills, provide services that don't put pressure on natural resources like energy and water, and influence travelers whilst in your care to become more conscious beings who leave you with a new perspective of our world and their place in it! This is CAMP SOSSUS!



WILDERNESS SAFARIS

**THE REINVENTION OF JAO CAMP, OKAVANGO DELTA,
BOTSWANA**

Date(s) the experience was first offered

June 2019

Please outline the project's context, including its natural and cultural surroundings.

After undergoing a complete reinvention, Wilderness Safaris' new Jao Camp reopened in the heart of Botswana's Okavango Delta in June 2019. In addition to featuring five spacious tented suites, Jao revealed its two new exclusive Villas for the first time, as well as a fascinating Centre of Knowledge museum and gallery. Here, the emphasis is on learning and sharing information about the area and its denizens, from a two-storey high giraffe skeleton to geographical maps and Okavango history.



The unique layout of the camp draws you into this special area, with all elements of the rebuild embracing the true essence of the Delta. This is encapsulated in the beautiful colour palette of creams, greens, soft purple and yellow, incorporating a unique botanical theme throughout the design, with special emphasis placed on the abundant water lily. The main area is elevated into the tree canopy, and an exquisite spa, tucked away under palm trees, features two new circular treatment rooms that were finished with impressive saligna-laminated beams, rosewood-clad ceilings and rosewood floors, and are surrounded by tranquil water ponds. At the main pool, there is a unique nest-like canopy pavilion for dappled shade, which projects out over the floodplain – perfect for sundowners.

Tell us about your design brief, challenges and key objectives.

We had eight-and-a-half months to complete the transformation of Jao Camp, and were proud of our various craftsmen who worked tirelessly to make this happen in such a remote wilderness location. Having to replace our old substructures gave us the opportunity to enhance the special features that we always loved about Jao, to make improvements and incorporate extra touches.

We made the most of our camp environment, with buildings blending into the tree canopy whilst offering stunning views and honouring our commitment to be as eco-sensitive as possible. Lead architects, Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens, who designed the original Jao in 1999, took a fresh and contemporary approach to the sense of adventure Jao always had – creating a collection of different spaces that take the visitor on a spatial adventure through the Delta. The design is also rich in history, showcasing the Kays family's dedication to the Jao Concession for over 20 years.

How does this project challenge perceptions of design in Africa?

Jao is a place that is dedicated to the conservation of the Okavango Delta and its unique ecosystem – the waters and the dry land, and the plants, birds and wildlife that call it home. In addition to being 100% solar powered, its new power plant works on one of the biggest Victron inverter systems in the world, and features the largest lithium-ion battery bank in southern Africa. Rather than being a part of any known architectural language the abstract forms in the architecture, and the movement through them, open up a whole new conscious and subconscious world of bio-mimicry, becoming part of nature itself.

